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'Different Courses, Different Outcomes?' A comparative study of Communicative Competence in English Language learners following 'Academic' and 'International Understanding' courses at High Schools in Japan

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'Different Courses, Different Outcomes?'
A comparative study of Communicative Competence in
English Language learners following 'Academic' and
'International Understanding' courses at High Schools in
Japan

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Declaration

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Abstract

In Japan, where the traditional focus of English teaching has been on knowledge of a foreign language as a system, increasing emphasis is now being placed on the ability to communicate internationally. Achieving competence in a foreign language may be the result of many factors including teaching methodology, instructional materials and personal motivation. This thesis examines how much communicative ability depends on classroom input, and how important other factors are in achieving success in written and spoken English.

Two different English courses currently offered in Japanese high schools – 'International Understanding' and general/academic – are examined, and their effect on communicative competence, language knowledge, motivation and attitudes to teaching and learning English are analysed.

Two groups of learners were traced throughout their 1st-year at senior high school, and their learning experiences are situated within the educational, and specifically English language learning, context of Japan, where the influence of societal pressures and public examinations conflicts with the need to learn English as a means of global communication.

After locating the research within the literature on communicative language teaching (CLT) and EFL policy and practice in Japan, a working definition of communicative competence is proposed against which to evaluate the communicative ability of the learners.

A mixed-method approach was taken to gather data on the teaching and learning process on the two courses, employing questionnaires, interviews, classroom observation and tests of written and spoken communicative competence and overall proficiency in English.

The findings demonstrate that those learners following the International Understanding course have generally increased their communicative competence as measured by essay and oral interview tests, and have improved their scores in an English proficiency test recognised in Japan as a marker of academic achievement, to a statistically greater degree over those learners following a traditional EFL course. Significant differences were also confirmed in motivation.

Although further research into similar specialist English courses is needed, this study provides one case in which the two opposing goals of ELT in Japan of communicative competence and academic achievement successfully converge.

The implications of the study are that with relatively small changes in teaching methods, yet substantial changes in teacher attitudes, the problem of communicative ability in Japan might be addressed.

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Chapter One

Introduction

With the increasing reliance on English as a global language (Graddol 2006) in fields as diverse as media, technology and commerce, a greater emphasis is being placed on the ability to communicate in English. As a result, English language education around the world is turning its focus towards practical skills to encourage learners to be able to actively use the language in interactional contexts rather than to study English merely as an academic subject, and teaching methods are being adjusted accordingly. Indeed, in a growing number of countries a working level of practical English is considered advantageous, if not expected, for many employment opportunities, with English often being seen as a 'basic skill' comparable with numeracy and literacy. In East Asia, governments 'have come to see English language education as an important factor in meeting their political, economic, and societal goals' (Butler 2007:11), and Japan is no exception in this, with its Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter MEXT)'s policy stating that 'it is important for all Japanese people to aim at achieving a level of English commensurate with average world standards' (MEXT 2003a:1). It must be noted that 'communication' is almost always interpreted as in spoken mode, yet, as acknowledged by MEXT (2003a:1), to 'acquire comprehensive communication abilities' includes the development of all four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

However, despite a highly acclaimed national education system and much interest in private foreign language (FL) teaching and learning, the commonly held view by academics and laymen alike is that the Japanese have poor English communication skills (Oka 2003). Moreover, not only do others identify this reluctance or lack of

ability to communicate in English, but the Japanese themselves are only too ready to acknowledge this problem.

It has long been recognised by Monbusho (Ministry of Education) that foreign language education 'has an important role to play in the age of internationalisation' (Parmenter & Moody 1999:143) and that all Japanese people need to communicate globally to 'enhanc[e] Japan's international presence' (MEXT 2003a:i). Therefore, the 2003 'Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities"' (MEXT 2003a) was drawn up in order to improve the communicative ability of students in full-time education. Included are proposals for improving teacher training, classroom management, teaching methodology, and the setting up of different types of schools and courses with a stronger focus on English language teaching (ELT), as described below in Chapter Two. But, is the communicative ability of all Japanese students improving on account of new measures implemented through MEXT's Action Plan? Are the aims and objectives unrealistic, and the time allocated for language learning insufficient, irrespective of the teaching and learning process? And, are specialist ELT courses successful in nurturing higher levels of communicative competence in their students? The purpose of this thesis is to address some of these issues in an empirical fashion.

1.1 Initial interest

My attention was drawn to the issue of varied communicative ability in a second language during my extended experience of teaching multilingual classes of learners of English in a university applied language studies department in Britain. While Japanese learners scored reasonably well, if not equally well as students from other language backgrounds on the institution's cloze placement test, they were assessed consistently lower on the oral interview test. Thus, although the cloze test technique is considered to be an effective indicator of communicative ability (Oller 1979:39,

cited in Weir 1990:3) as well as of overall foreign language proficiency, demonstrating a competent level of grammar, vocabulary and collocations, this second language (L2) knowledge was not reflected in oral production in the classroom. This mismatch between knowledge and performance became a source of tension in speaking skills classes, where students from backgrounds such as Europe and the Middle East found it difficult to accommodate the limited and reticent spoken contributions of Japanese students in communication activities. Related issues such as low-level participation in multi-ethnic classes when studying abroad (Miller 1995:37), differences in turn-taking patterns (Sato 1990:113), consensus decision-making and avoidance of public disagreement (Condon 1984:14), and only talking when specifically called upon (Anderson 1993:102) have been documented over the years in the literature on Japanese EFL learners.

Furthermore, a similar inability or unwillingness to participate orally was apparent in almost all Japanese learners in the above-mentioned university department, whether students or graduates of English or of other disciplines. However, after several months of in effect language immersion through full-time study and local home-staying, students gradually began to speak more spontaneously and to interact in English with fellow students, and with teachers, both in and outside of class, as their L2 knowledge became activated for communication purposes.

Such anecdotal observations relate not only to students, but were also formulated regarding Japanese teachers of English, during my involvement on Monbusho (since 2001 MEXT)-sponsored year-long programmes for high school English teachers in the same university department. The Ministry of Education (MOE)'s aim in sending English teachers abroad was for them to learn communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches which could then be implemented in Japanese English language classrooms and disseminated to other teachers locally. This would facilitate a

transition from traditional Japanese ELT methodology to enable MOE policy goals of achieving communicative ability (MEXT 1989) to be realised.

In addition to adjusting to the role reversal of becoming learners themselves again, these teachers experienced problems of not fulfilling expectations of English teachers of other nationalities in regard to oral fluency when reflecting upon and comparing their methodologies and teaching contexts during the course. Through such discussions it became apparent that even English teachers in Japan had little opportunity for using spoken English, and thus lacked both confidence and practice in expressing themselves orally in the target language. Few of the MOE-sponsored teachers had taught English for communication purposes, stating that they needed to concentrate on grammar and reading skills to prepare their students for high-stakes examinations. Hence, some seemed reluctant to develop their repertoire of teaching skills and activities, finding CLT (discussed in Chapter Three in detail) on the whole irrelevant to their teaching contexts. Others, although enthusiastically embracing the opportunities to acquire new ideas, materials and methodologies while studying abroad, feared such teaching input would not be appropriate or acceptable in their work contexts, where little time is allocated to, or available for, communication and production activities, and that upon return to Japan they would be pressured into reverting to their former teaching style. They, therefore, anticipated that they would be unable to utilize the communicative materials and activities they had developed during the course in Britain in their classes in Japan. Such feelings are echoed in Lamie's (1998) conclusions from her research with MOE teachers in a different U.K. university department, and more recently, in Kurihara and Samimy's (2007) findings on a four-month MEXT programme in America. Thus, although Monbusho 1989 reforms affecting these groups of Japanese teachers of English between 1995 and 2000 were already advocating the importance of developing communication ability

(MOE 1989), the practicalities of the L2 classroom were likely to remain unchanged.

As a result of my involvement with the Japanese learners and teachers, my interest in English education in Japan increased. It is apparent that English language knowledge is being effectively learned, but since only a small minority of Japanese students has any opportunity to study abroad, how can the ability to communicate be developed under the circumstances described by those MOE-sponsored teachers? This led me to want to discover more about the situation of ELT in Japan, and to investigate this apparent reluctance or inability to communicate in English.

My recent experience of teaching in universities in Japan, where English is in effect compulsory for all students regardless of the subject in which they are specializing, increased my interest in what happens in ELT in schools. As opportunities arose to teach at, and observe in, senior high schools of various academic levels, my curiosity increased regarding the differences in student production in the target language. In schools which were typically following traditional methodology (as detailed in Chapters Two & Eight), learners appeared unable, or reluctant to try to speak in the language they were studying, both in and out of class. This was in contrast to three senior high schools offering specialist courses similar to those advocated in MEXT (2003a) noted in section 1 above. In each of these establishments, students seemed to be both willing and able to communicate orally in English, and to contribute enthusiastically and fairly extensively in a variety of L2 contexts in class, as well as in personal interaction with myself and other foreigners. However, little evidence of written L2 performance was observed in any of the schools visited.

Insights into these two systems increased my interest in how Japanese students are being taught English, providing the inspiration to analyse these apparent differences in ability to communicate in English, and to investigate what aspects of course content and other personal circumstances may result in, or contribute to, such

notable differences in target-language production.

1.2 Rationale for the study

If the goal of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate through both written and spoken skills in that language, as is the case for English as an international language, it should be assumed that after several years of study some level of oral communication ability will be achieved. However, circumstantial evidence so far suggests that typically six years of study at school in Japan does not on the whole result in an ability to communicate in English (McConnell 2002:123; McVeigh 2002:151). The exception seen so far seems to be in the context of specialised high school courses where students appear to be able to communicate in English so much more effectively than those at more traditional schools, even including those regarded as top academic establishments, since a different emphasis is placed on teaching and learning English. Opportunities as a guest lecturer for both types of schools has raised my awareness of the willingness and ability to interact in English of students on specialist programmes and those who follow general English courses more typical of those described in the literature on ELT in Japan. Personal interest and professional involvement has hence motivated me to explore both types of English courses by examining in depth and systematising differences, in order to draw academic rather than anecdotal conclusions. Two learning contexts were, therefore, selected to attempt to assess both spoken and written communicative ability as well as overall L2 proficiency of the two groups of students, to explore if there are reasons for this lack of ability or willingness to use the language that stem from the English education system, and what other factors may contribute to it.

To summarise so far, a general problem has been identified in that many Japanese learners seem unable to use English as a means of communication despite six or more years of study and investment of effort in EFL. That is, they seem to learn the

language system (i.e. grammar) and be able to read complex texts intensively, but do not, or can not, actively use the language in either written or spoken mode to a similar level.

Findings from a concurrent study (Fraser: in progress) underline this problem. In an attempt to substantiate generalisations about the Japanese lack of communicative ability with empirical evidence, a survey was conducted on 200 state-run and private university, junior college and technical college 2nd-year students, which included learner self-assessment of their English skills on a three-point scale (good/average/poor). Findings show a low self-rating on L2 communication ability, with 64% assessing themselves as 'poor' at speaking, 43.5% at writing and 48.5% at listening. Considering that all had studied English for at least 8 years, and several were currently majoring in English, it is revealing that so few believed their skills to be 'good' – 2.5% speaking; 7.5% writing; 11% listening – despite a majority (71.5%) stating that they liked speaking English.

This was, however, a problem long recognised by MEXT, prompting their 2003 policy to introduce change through the implementation of several measures intended as solutions (detailed in Chapter Two) including the introduction of specialist English courses in senior high schools. I have, therefore decided to look not just at courses representative of traditional approaches to see what the influential factors are, but also at the proposed solution, to examine whether the factors which are problematic in the traditional courses are being reduced and/or if other factors become evident in the new programmes. Hence, this study aims to investigate, in the form of comparison of two cases, being two high schools representative of the specialist 'International Understanding' and traditional courses respectively (described in Chapters Two and Eight), whether this problem is a result of the way in which English is taught in schools in Japan, and/or whether other factors influence the

learners' ability to actively use English.

1.3 Situating the study within the Literature

Although much has been written about Japanese education in general (see for example: high school – Rohlen 1983, 1984; Finkelstein, Imura & Tobin 1991; Rohlen & Björk 1998; LeTendre 1999; Hyde 2002; Shimahara 2002; elementary/pre-school – White 1987; Sato 2003), the majority of ELT research is university-based, with any senior high school-level literature focusing on traditional language teaching methodology and assessment. There seems to be a paucity of studies on high school courses of the nature proposed by MEXT (2003a), with to date only Koizumi & Katagiri (2007) on specialist 'SELHis' (see Chapter Two) having been identified, outside Ministry-related documents.

To differentiate from previous studies on content, teaching methodology of high school English, and motivation and attitudes towards EFL in Japan in traditional high schools, this investigation concentrates on specialist 'International Understanding' courses.

Hence, it is hoped that this research into the previously undocumented territory of International Understanding courses, the precursors of SELHis, will be a welcome addition to the body of FLT literature on Japan.

1.4 Organisation of the thesis

The function of each chapter in this thesis is to contribute to the construction of an overall picture of how communicative competence is developed in two different types of English language course at the senior high school level. This will be achieved by contextualising ELT in Japan and defining communicative competence, before outlining the methodology utilized to conduct the research into the communicative ability of the participants on the two ELT courses under examination.

The intention is to present a range of evidence to examine the hypothesis that following an International Understanding course results in greater communicative competence in English. As so many topics and areas of research are covered within this study, rather than attempting to address all aspects within one comprehensive literature review chapter, each issue will be discussed in relation to its theoretical context as they arise throughout the text. Thus, each chapter will contain critical discussion of related studies and relevant literature in the fields of research methodology and foreign language teaching in conjunction with examination of the context and data analysed within this thesis.

Before attempting to describe and examine the two designated schools, it is necessary to situate these learning experiences within the overall context of education, and specifically ELT, in Japan. Chapter Two, therefore, outlines how foreign languages have traditionally been taught, and the reasons and goals for ELT in Japan. It then looks at reforms and policies suggested by MEXT, the current problems and aims of MEXT, including the need for the Japanese to communicate in English, and their intentions for implementing these changes in ELT. Two opposing goals resulting from the reforms at school level are examined, and the influence of societal pressures and the public examination system on education in general, and on ELT in particular, are discussed. Thus, the purpose of Chapter Two is to discuss possible reasons for the problem of limited communicative ability in FL learners stemming from Japanese society as a whole, and from the Japanese education system, in particular ELT methods, and then to detail policy changes, including the introduction of specialised English courses proposed as solutions to this issue, in order to contextualise the present study.

Although MEXT stresses the importance of communicative ability, no clear definition emerges in the policy documents. It is therefore necessary to examine what

is meant by 'communication' and 'communicative ability or competence', and then to explore how such skills can be taught and acquired. Chapter Three, therefore, provides a critical discussion of definitions of 'communicative competence', to construct a framework of aspects of L2 proficiency against which to compare the English language abilities of the two specific groups of Japanese L2 learners in this study. Having thus arrived at a description of communicative competence, which is the goal of FLT, it is necessary to consider how that goal can be achieved. A commentary on communicative language teaching methodology, a potential solution to the problem highlighted earlier in this chapter, is then presented. Next, the relevance of CLT to the Japanese context and in particular how aspects of CLT could enable Japanese learners of English to develop communicative competence, is discussed. Thus, the purpose of Chapter Three is to examine the literature on communicative competence and the theory and practice of CLT in an attempt at arrive at a working definition of communicative competence relevant to the Japanese context of the present research.

After defining the concept of communicative competence in terms specific to the Japanese learning context, discussion then returns in Chapter Four to the overall research hypothesis that specialist International Understanding courses develop greater English communicative ability in their learners than do courses adopting traditional methodology, and to ways of presenting evidence to support, or reject, this hypothesis. Four discrete but inter-related research questions are then presented, with an overview of how each factor is to be systematically addressed in the study. Thus, in Chapter Four the two groups of learners and the learning contexts to be investigated are detailed, and reasons for their selection are expanded upon. The overall design of the research and each specific stage of the data collection procedure are then outlined. Justifications for selection of particular research methods and

instruments are made, with the reliability and validity of each instrument being discussed, and modes of analysis and interpretation are explained. Consideration is also given to reflexivity, and to ethical issues of the study such as consent, objectivity and field relations.

The following five chapters aim to present evidence to test the hypothesis. Each chapter addresses one of the research questions by analysing and interpreting different types of data collected as outlined in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five steps outside the classroom environment to explore factors external to the learning and teaching process which may affect communicative competence. Opportunities experienced by the learners for using English in extra-curricular activities, the home environment and other situations unrelated to the school context are examined and discussed in this chapter.

A change of style is effected in Chapters Six and Seven where concrete evidence from written and spoken data is presented in order to compare communicative competence of the students according to the framework presented in Chapter Three. Acknowledging that communicative competence does not only refer to 'fluency' and spoken performance but encompasses other language skills and knowledge, Chapter Six first examines evidence of written communicative ability among the participants, with Chapter Seven investigating oral production of the target language under both test and classroom circumstances. The aim of Chapters Six and Seven, therefore, is to establish whether there is a quantifiable difference in communicative competence between learners experiencing specialist and traditional ELT courses in these two Japanese senior high schools.

In an attempt to understand the learning and teaching processes at the two schools under examination, aspects of course content, EFL materials, teaching methods, classroom behaviour and language-learning motivation are described in Chapter

Eight. Conclusions are drawn on how the two courses differ, and suggestions are made as to how this may influence the learners' communicative competence.

The discussion of the Japanese education system introduced in Chapter Two, with its emphasis on and societal importance of examinations, is developed further in Chapter Nine. Here, analysis of high-stakes public examinations in English, and their recognition as indicators of academic achievement, is presented. Evidence of the linguistic competence of the two groups of participants, as measured by one such proficiency test, is then compared with their written and spoken competence as demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven.

Findings throughout the thesis are summarised in Chapter Ten, with conclusions drawn on the effectiveness of International Understanding courses as one solution to the problem of limited communicative competence among Japanese learners of English. Implications of the results of the present research for learners, teachers, schools, society in general, and in particular in relation to the new MEXT (2008) policies for 2013 to be implemented from elementary to senior high school levels, are outlined. The thesis closes with a discussion of areas in which future research related to this study is needed. Tables of data are presented in the Appendices.

Chapter Two

The English Language Teaching context in Japan

The increasing need in a globalised world to use English as a means of international communication and cross-cultural understanding (Ito 2002:38; Graddol 2006) and how that 'changes the conditions under which language learning takes place' (Block & Cameron 2002:5) is reflected in changes in English language education in Japan. These changes over recent years are a response to demands by politicians and the media for increased 'internationalisation' and 'globalisation'. The numerous interpretations of these two 'buzz words' all involve a reassessment of education, where 'for internationalization to succeed, education … must inculcate the values and skills commensurate with citizenship in a global society' (Ehara 1992:282). Moreover, the teaching of English seems to be the key to moving forward globally, as 'English is seriously considered to be one of the essential tools for human resources in the new era for the new generation' (Tanabe 2004:5). This is acknowledged by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT), who state that 'for children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language' (MEXT 2003a:i).

Although it is widely held that 'raising the ability to communicate with foreigners is a key remedial measure to boost Japan's position in the economic and political arena' (Butler & Iino 2005:26), it is believed that the English ability of the Japanese population is currently inadequate, despite wide-ranging praise of many aspects of the Japanese education system (Stevenson 1996:95; Cave 2001:173; Phillips 2003:169). This view is supported by evidence of poor performance in English proficiency tests such as TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication – see Chapter Nine), where, for example, Japan was ranked 22nd out of 24 countries in

2005 (TOEIC website), and in TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in which although China and the rest of Asia have 'shown a marked improvement', Japan has remained near the bottom of the ranking for three decades (McVeigh 2002:151; Yoshida 2003:290).

Indeed, not only do 'outsiders' draw attention to the poor communication skills of Japanese learners and professionals, the Japanese themselves are acutely aware of this shortcoming. Criticism ranges from the mild, that few Japanese 'speak English very well' (Hane 1996:163) or 'possess a fair command of English' (Kobayashi 2001:70), to the rather scathing 'it is rare to find a Japanese student who, after six years of English, is able to engage in even a marginal dialogue with a speaker of English' (Martin 2004:50). Such comments are, furthermore, supported by evidence of student dissatisfaction with English skills acquired in school (Koike & Tanaka 1995:19; Sakui & Gaies 1999:483; Fraser: in progress).

2.1 Societal reasons for the apparent failure

Potential reasons for the less than successful level of English communication displayed by many Japanese people may be identified on both societal and educational levels, ranging from the Japanese character and the lack of exposure to spoken English, to the time spent on studying, and the methods adopted for teaching English in the Japanese education system, each of which are now discussed.

2.1.1 Japanese uniqueness

Arguments abound in the '*nihonjinron*', or 'theories on the Japanese' literature (Doi 1973; Reischauer 1978) that due to the 'sociological, psychological and linguistic uniqueness of the Japanese people' (Kubota 1998:300), Japanese learners think uniquely and therefore cannot learn English easily. These views are criticised as promoting uniformity and harmony for political interests, attempting to preserve a

Japanese identity from post-war westernisation (Dale 1986; Befu 1993 cited in Kawai 2007; Wilson 2002; Klein 2002), and appearing to prevent the spread of English (Kubota 1998:300). McVeigh (2002) suggests the related 'linguistic mythology' that 'outsiders' cannot learn Japanese, or by implication understand Japanese culture, reiterating Miller's (1982) argument that 'many Japanese students assume that in the same way foreigners cannot acquire Japanese, they themselves cannot acquire other languages (such as English)' (ibid:41), as one reason for why education institutions 'do not accomplish their aims' (ibid:3). Hino (1988:53) meanwhile dismisses the 'Japan is unique' theory as 'misleading'.

2.1.2 Exposure to English

As to the argument of limited exposure to English made by MEXT (2003a:10), the counter-argument is beginning to appear that 'cross-cultural encounters in person are no longer realms of unrealised dreams for Japanese learners of English. Chances for them to meet people from different cultures either in Japan or abroad are increasing tremendously' (Ito 2002:46). It must be noted that since the introduction of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme in 1987, which imports and employs young native-speaker graduates as assistant language teachers in junior and senior high schools throughout Japan (see Brumby & Wada 1990; Wada & Cominos 1994; McConnell 2000; Tajino & Tajino 2000; MEXT 2002; Kushima & Nishihori 2006), almost all students, and therefore their local populations, will have come into contact to some extent with English speakers in their everyday lives. The 'national obsession' (McVeigh 2002:92) of the *eikaiwa* (English conversation school) business is still thriving,, despite a downward trend in the last five years attributed to 'the sluggish economy and the fallout from the Nova corp. bankruptcy', Japan's largest language school, in October 2007 (*The Japan Times* 17/9/09), and likewise the market for books advocating a range of tips and techniques for learning English and

preparing for public English examinations such as TOEIC and EIKEN (see Chapter Nine). Indeed, MEXT (2002:3) recognises that there are 'thousands of' English language schools in Japan, which 'offer opportunities for additional practice to those who aspire to fluency', and that 'the special position English enjoys in Japan is also reflected in the quantity of English education programs on TV and radio, tape-recorded English lesson programs, and newspapers, magazines and books targeting people endeavoring to learn the language'. In addition, daily news bulletins are accessible in either Japanese or English, an abundance of American and British films both on television and DVD can be viewed with the original soundtrack in English (Sakui 2007:50), public announcements throughout transport systems are given in both Japanese and English, and songs in English enjoy wide popularity. Hearing English in some form every day is, therefore, almost unavoidable in Japan, not least in the 10% (Stanlaw 2004:289) of Japanese language itself that consists of loan words adopted and adapted, sometimes due to pronunciation almost unrecognisably to non-Japanese speakers, from English as '*katakana* words'. The written form of English is even more ubiquitous in advertising, in media and adorning everyday products and packaging (Kubota 1998:297; MacGregor 2003), with the increasing use of the internet adding to Japanese involvement with written English. Thus, English pervades innumerable aspects of daily life in Japan, refuting 'lack of exposure' claims (McKay 2002:19; MEXT 2003a:13; Martin 2004:53).

2.2 Japanese education

Along with reasons attributable to Japanese society in general, the process and methods of FLT in Japanese schools are said to constitute a major problem for achieving L2 competence. Furthermore, the perceived purpose of studying the language still appears to have a strong effect on the learning outcome; a brief look at the history of FLT in Japan should serve to illustrate the root of this problem.

2.2.1 Historical overview of ELT in Japan

Foreign language teaching was formally established in Japan in the 1890s, where English was mainly learned orally from foreigners (Shimaoka & Yashiro 1990:11) with the practical purpose of obtaining knowledge to further their aim of modernisation of the Japanese system and technical development. During the Meiji era (1868–1912) the examination system for entrance to university and employment, and its associated strict competition, was created (Shimahara 1988:46). A rise in nationalism from the 1900s caused English education to be regarded as an academic pursuit which became adopted as a screening process for elite education (Butler & Iino 2005:27–8). The first external innovation was introduced by Harold Palmer, working in Japan from 1922 to 1936, with the initial purpose of correcting pronunciation (Yamamoto 1978:152). He employed his 'Oral Method' (1921), developed in the belief that ''speech' was the most important of the four language learning skills' (ibid:153), and in which all reading and writing were excluded. The oral method was, however, criticised and misunderstood, and its effect was minimal (ibid:158). After being discouraged during World War II, English education was then reintroduced and its role as an academic yardstick was firmly established by 1956, with the inclusion of English in senior high school entrance examinations.

A second attempt at implementing change was made in the 1950s–60s by Charles Fries and the English Language Exploratory Committee (ELEC) who, with the intention of helping Japan forge better relations with the rest of the world through English education, introduced the 'Oral Approach', the goal of which was 'revolutionizing English language teaching in Japan and ultimately producing a new generation of Japanese who could speak English fluently' (Henrichsen 1989:194). The failure of these imported innovations was likely due in part to their being too original, and inappropriate for the Japanese context (see Henrichsen 1989). After

experimenting with audiolingualism in the 1950–60s, to which high school teachers and students were 'not receptive' (Koike & Tanaka 1995:17), the first significant restructuring of the system came about in 1973, with English conversation featuring as one of the four specified secondary school courses, but a reduction in class hours in 1978 reverted the emphasis onto reading and grammar (Lamie 2005:158).

Debates on education reform in general throughout the 1980s (see Schoppa 1991; Roesgaard 1998; Hood 2001a) resulted in the National Council on Education Reform (1984) which called for pressures imposed by university examinations on secondary education to be lessened (Shimahara 1988:48), yet no change in the exam bias was reported since pre-war times (Koike & Tanaka 1995:17). Monbusho publicly acknowledged the failure of ELT in 1986, citing five areas of concern: lack of exposure to English, lack of confidence in communicating in English, large classes, difficult materials, and adherence to traditional teaching methods, yet did not refer to the examination system as a contributory factor (Lamie 2005:161). Proposed MOE revisions published in the 1989 New Revised Course of Study placed an emphasis on oral communication, culture, and international communication (Lamie 2005; Koike & Tanaka 1995) through the introduction of the JET programme and the establishment of Aural/Oral courses A,B,C, which focused on conversation, listening, and speech, debate and discussion, respectively. The intentions were:

> To develop students' basic abilities to understand a foreign language and express themselves in it, to foster a positive attitude toward communicating in it, and to deepen interest in language and culture, cultivating basic international understanding.
>
> (Monbusho 1989:98 quoted in Lamie 2005:162)

However, a subsequent, rejected, suggestion by the Obuchi government in 2000 to adopt English as Japan's second official language in order to cope with globalization, encouraged nationalism (see Hashimoto 2002), underlining the fact that the teaching of English cannot be politically neutral (Phillipson 1992).

Before examining the most recent ELT innovation, an overview of the present educational context in Japan may help to contextualise these proposed changes.

2.2.2 The current ELT situation

Compulsory education in Japan spans nine years (six years elementary and three years junior high school), with 96.1% of students continuing to senior high school, and 71.8% following some kind of higher education (MEXT 2003c). MEXT oversees all public (i.e. state-run) education, providing guidelines on how education is to be administered throughout school and university, a 'Course of Study' for what is to be taught, and authorises textbooks for appropriate content and levels. It also covers welfare of students, and recruitment and further training of teachers. A parallel private system does operate, but, with the exception of certain prestigious private universities and their feeder schools, public education is considered to be of a higher quality and status.

Studying a foreign language, in reality English, is the norm throughout high school in Japan, i.e. from age 12 to 18, and has been compulsory since the introduction of the 2003 Course of Study. Suggestions that English should be introduced in elementary school have been resisted and a course on international understanding has been introduced instead, which in practice is often used to introduce 'taster courses' in English (see Chapter Five). English is, moreover, essential for students aiming for higher education, as it is almost always tested in university entrance examinations.

The Course of Study also suggests textbooks to be used, from a range authorised by MEXT, which reflect the aims and objectives of the curriculum, and dictate the number of language items to be learned. Thus, English textbooks redesigned for 2003 onwards have an emphasis on developing communicative abilities in learners. Although written in another context, Sercu's (2000) observations seem pertinent to

Japanese ELT:

> Education has to be understood in its societal context. Changes in society
> may be expected to find appropriate reflection in curricula.

<div align="right">(Sercu 2000:26)</div>

It can be said that the importance of education is emphasised in Japan due to its relatively homogeneous society, where divisions between class and economic status are less distinct than in many countries, and it is suggested that 'education is the main means of social reproduction' in a society 'where status is based on educational background rather than class or birth' (Goodman 2003:21). Hence, parents push their children to succeed at school, as the gateway to good jobs, salaries, marriage prospects and support for their old age. With such an emphasis on the value of education, students enter elementary school with greater parity of 'social and cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1976) than in many societies, on account of parental support and early secondary socialisation at kindergarten. Goodman (2003:22) further describes Japan as a meritocracy where anyone can succeed in education regardless of background, but concedes that financial support still has significant influence.

Of the five perspectives on curriculum outlined by Richards (2001:114), 'academic rationalism' perhaps best describes the Japanese system, where the content of the subjects forms the basis of the curriculum, and the aim is to master the information for mental discipline, not for wider social reasons. The overall methodology in Japanese schools is that of a transactional transfer of information from teacher to students, with the knowledge base unchallenged as learners just listen, accept, memorise and reproduce in examinations. The rarely questioned pressure on students to strive for examination success to the exclusion of all else underlies the value Japan places on education, and is an accepted social norm.

Despite what seems a rigid, restricted ethos, as society and education are so closely bound together, radical change of the education system is unlikely to happen,

because of attitudes and expectations. That said, however, when turning to the issue of the new guidelines for teaching English in Japan, several attempts at innovation, change and development of individuality are noticed, contrary to what is generally accepted about education in Japan.

2.2.3 Current ELT policy

The present ELT reform outlined in MEXT's 2003 'Action Plan', 'the first government-directed campaign launched for the specific purpose of improving the national standard of English education, and thereby English proficiency' (Hato 2005:35), was developed in response to repeated criticism that, with the focus on 'exam English' (*juken eigo*), English education 'did not meet the various needs of Japan for globalization' (Butler & Iino 2005:33). The accompanying 'Course of Study for Foreign Languages' (MEXT 2003b), introduced in April 2003, is in effect a national curriculum specifying objectives, targets, language elements and treatment of content for each prescribed English course, along with guidelines on teaching methodology. Seven domains of the Action Plan (MEXT 2003a) to be implemented over five years are outlined below (Table 2.1).

Similarities noted with its predecessor (Lokon 2005:8) seem to indicate that previous attempts to reform aspects of ELT have failed. Indeed, MEXT recognises that its 2003 reform will only succeed if all 'parties related to English education … seek to realize this goal by making improvements to the system from their respective positions' (MEXT 2003a:ii).

Whether the 2003 policy has been successful may be evident in data collected in 2006–07 for the present study, but even at the time of writing (2009), many obstacles are seen to remain. Several criticisms both practical and theoretical raised in relation to previous MEXT policies, as well as comments on the 2003 version, are now

discussed.

Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities"

. Goals to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities"

On graduation from a senior high school, students can conduct normal

communication with regard to topics, for example, relating to everyday life.

. Action to Improve English Education

1. Improvement of English classes.

2. Improving the teaching ability of English teachers and upgrading the teaching system.

3. Improving motivation for learning English.

4. Improvement in the evaluation system for selecting school and university applicants.

5. Support for English conversation activities in elementary schools.

6. Improvement of Japanese language abilities.

7. Promotion of practical research.

Table 2.1 Outline of MEXT 2003 Action Plan

2.2.4 Criticisms of the current ELT policy

A serious criticism of policy changes in English education in Japan, as in many

contexts (Holliday 1994a), is that western CLT concepts have been transferred

wholesale into a vastly different teaching environment, causing a 'mismatch between

imported terminology and the reality of the situation' (LoCastro 1996:46), without

the necessary research and preparation before implementation (see Chapter Three)

Although MEXT's (2003a) proposals appear beneficial in theory, they neither take

into account the reality of the Japanese context, nor are they working on changing the

fundamental issues of class time and size, teacher attitudes, examination pressure and

traditional learning style which cause methodology in Japan to remain fixed. The

Japanese ELT context, therefore, clearly illustrates the concept of 'situated evaluation' (Bruce & Rubin 1992, cited in Sakui 2004:155), where there are two forms of curriculum, the 'documented version' which suggests the ideal practices to use in teaching contexts, and the 'realized version' which shows the reality of how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom (ibid).

A major practical obstacle to implementing the suggested methodological changes is class size, where within a class hour (50 minutes) it is not feasible for one teacher to monitor 40 students engaged in pair- or group-work, or for each learner to contribute orally. Despite the Action Plan stating that streamed classes of approximately 20 students will be implemented (MEXT 2003a:5), little evidence of this has been noted. In addition, although textbooks redesigned to support the teaching of MEXT 2003 goals purport to focus on communication skills, they are simple and mechanical, with little complex communicative strategy development (Taguchi 2005:4), and still remain based on structure analysis, direct translation and audio-lingual drills (Browne & Wada 1998:105).

Less concrete issues relating to ELT are also problematic, including a lack of confidence and ability in teachers' oral English (see Chapter Eight), resulting in avoidance of activities requiring them to speak a lot in English in class. As a poor model of teacher L2 fluency is unlikely to encourage learners to communicate, MEXT implemented several measures to improve teachers' spoken English (MEXT 2003a:7–10), including vacation training courses, and attainment of over 550 in TOEFL examination, but opportunities to study overseas, rather than being expanded, have in fact been restricted, to the point where in certain prefectures teachers no longer experience the Monbusho programmes described in Chapter One and in Lamie (1998).

Teacher beliefs as well as confidence can undermine the adoption of new methods.

As Sakui's (2004:159) research found, most teachers believed that grammar teaching was necessary before attempting any communicative tasks, and focused strongly on accuracy in class. She concludes that 'while believing in the importance of CLT, they felt the need to primarily conduct teacher-fronted non-communicative activities. This has led to a dichotomous curriculum realization consisting of two distinct methodologies' (ibid:158). Thus, although the Action Plan states that 'instruction mainly based on grammar and translation or teacher-centered classes are not recommended' (MEXT 2003a:3), classroom observation reveals that traditional teacher-fronted, grammar-translation methodology, described in 2.3.2 below, continues to be prevalent in Japanese high schools, even in classes for Oral Communication (Browne & Wada 1998:108; Sakui 2004:157; Taguchi 2005:7). Students cannot learn to communicate by receiving input without opportunities for language production and practice, and hence, classroom reality demonstrates that Japanese ELT is 'a language-knowledge receiving process, rather than a skill development process where students use English as a tool for communication' (Taguchi 2005:10).

Problems arising from what happens in the language classroom, and from the resulting pressures of the system of assessment, are now discussed in more detail.

2.3 Educational reasons for the apparent failure

The three main obstacles to the acquisition of communication skills through ELT in Japan, those of class time, predominant methodology adopted, and the nature and influence of high-stakes examinations are now examined.

2.3.1 Time

Among the educational arguments, one obvious reason for this inadequate L2 performance is that not enough time is spent on foreign language teaching in Japan.

A total of 740–930 hours over six years (Hato 2005:40) is 'not enough to achieve an intermediate or higher level of English proficiency' (Kobayashi 2001:67), a point concluded by the Ad Hoc committee in 1984 (in Koike & Tanaka 1995). When comparisons with FLT in other countries are made (Norway: Byram 2008; Canada: Takagaki 2003; Hato 2005:40) it becomes clear that MEXT's goal of it being 'important for all Japanese people to aim at achieving a level of English commensurate with average world standards' (MEXT 2003a:1), where learners can conduct 'normal communication with regard to topics, for example, relating to daily life' (ibid) is 'inordinately optimistic' (Hato 2005:42) in the allocated class-time, especially when compounded by problems of the linguistic distance between English and Japanese.

2.3.2 *Yakudoku* **methodology**

Reliance on *yakudoku*, a traditional method of foreign language instruction in which 'the main focus seems to be on translating the foreign language text into Japanese' (Gorsuch 1998:8), is described and criticised throughout the literature on ELT in Japan.

This predominant method for English teaching in Japan has its origins in the initial foreign language study of Chinese over a thousand years ago (Suzuki 1975, cited in Hino 1988:48), and derives its name from 'translation' (*yaku*) and 'reading' (*doku*). This method being used to translate Dutch from 1857, was then applied to the study of English from 1859 (ibid:49). It must be remembered that throughout Meiji era (1868–1912), as in the case of Dutch and Chinese, the purpose of understanding a foreign language was to acquire knowledge from the outside world, and thus the emphasis was on reading and translating information into Japanese to disseminate to others.

Although *yakudoku* was criticised strongly as long ago as 1911 (Hino 1988:51), its prevalence is noted throughout research into Japanese ELT, despite the fact that MOE documents (1978/79 onwards) have not specified or encouraged its use, demonstrating that it is 'not necessarily something that is politically imposed upon the teachers by the administration, but it is a long established tradition which exists at a deeper level of the sociolinguistic structure of Japan' (ibid:48).

Survey findings in 1983 and 1985 (Koike *et al* cited in Hino 1988:46) that 70–80% of Japanese teachers were using *yakudoku* are reinforced throughout the 1990s (LoCastro 1996; Hadley 1997; Browne & Wada 1998; Gorsuch 1998), where the language of instruction 'was observed to be overwhelmingly Japanese' and 'students never actually produced any English' (Gorsuch 1998:21–2). The situation in which 'teacher led and dominated line-by-line translation remains the preferred teaching methodology most students will encounter' (Mulvey 1999:131) is still reported in more recent qualitative research on Japanese English teachers (Sato 2002; McConnell 2002; Sakui 2004; Sato & Kleinsasser 2004; Hiramatsu 2005; O'Donnell 2005), illustrating how deep-rooted this method continues to be, even though its 'detrimental effects' (Hino 1988:47) are often highlighted. *Yakudoku* perhaps persists to date due to it being easily manageable in large classes, not requiring spoken L2 skills of the teacher, efficient to convey information (by using L1) and thus effective for examination preparation, and as teachers themselves learned English through *yakudoku*, it may be the default methodology for them to fall back on when confronted with uncertainty (Tomlinson 1999). Although 'the tradition of using the grammar translation method is … practically synonymous with English education in Japan' (Bamford 1993:64), reliance on this way of learning may develop linguistic knowledge at the expense of language skills (Law 1995:219).

In short, studies over the years concur that '*yakudoku,* long the subject of criticism

for its pedagogical deficiencies, remains the accepted and primary teaching method'
(O'Donnell 2005:313), due mainly to pressures caused by the examination system.

2.3.3 The examination system

The greatest hurdle in Japanese education is the testing procedure to secure a place at
a university or college. Despite much discussion over entry requirements (eg:
Aspinall 2005:209–10) and proposed reforms by MEXT (2003a:13–14), written
examinations in at least three subjects remain the most heavily weighted element of
the process.

The first stage for all senior high school students applying for state-run universities is
to sit The Center for University Entrance Examinations Test ('Center Test'),
introduced in its current form in 1990, with a listening component only for the
English test introduced from 2006, and designed to set a national standard for
students proceeding to university (Aspinall 2005:203). Purporting to reflect the high
school curriculum (DeCoker 2002:143), this exam really tests overall proficiency, as
does the similar multiple-choice format examination, the 'Daiken', open to non-
graduates of high schools. Marks achieved in these exams serve as an indication of
which universities a student could realistically aim for.

The second stage, the examinations for individual universities, invariably includes an
English test, regardless of the faculty or subject applied for. English examinations
typically contain two to six reading comprehension passages, plus translation,
discrete-point grammar, and essay-type questions, with 60–120 minutes allowed for
completion (2006 data). Such multiple-choice and short-answer question-types have
received criticism for being too objective, factual, reliant on memory and allowing
no individual interpretation (Rohlen & Björk 1998:20; Aspinall 2005:205), with
content of 'little cultural value … mostly useless outside the examination system'

(Yoneyama 1999:53), and providing very little scope for demonstrating individual language production ability.

Furthermore, as level of difficulty of examinations enhances university status (Fujita 1985:154), many contain texts with a reading difficulty beyond the ability of the candidates. Analysis of text difficulty in university examinations based on the Flesch readability index results in averages of 60.95 (1994) and 64.4 (2004) (Kikuchi 2006:85), where average native-speaker readability is estimated at 60–70 on this scale (ibid:82), inviting speculation upon their expected and actual pass-mark. Because the notions of pass and fail are paramount in selection tests, results are interpreted by norm-referencing, in order to accept only a certain percentage of applicants. Although unable to establish exact passmarks due to 'a culture of secrecy … in the setting and marking of exams' (Aspinall 2005:205), private correspondence indicates a range from 'very poor to 90+%', and 'ideally 60+%, but in reality most candidates are accepted'. Likewise, Mulvey cites pass-marks of 60% (1999:127) and 45% (2001:13) for university faculties of English education.

In addition to transition examinations, many Japanese are increasingly under pressure to take public tests of English, for reasons of status or employability, the most popular being TOEIC, or 'Test of English for International Communication'. Since TOEIC 'focuses on English used in industry and commerce' (Chapman 2005:11), it hardly seems relevant for high school students, yet many are pressured into taking it. An 'average' TOEIC score is 450–650, yet Japanese candidates typically score 400–600 (ibid:14–15). As TOEIC is a norm-referenced, multiple-choice test of listening and reading, with no evaluation of productive skills, it assesses at best only some communicative skills. Furthermore, as it does not profess to test pedagogic ability, its suitability for evaluating teachers could be questioned, yet in 2003 all high school English teachers in Japan were obliged to sit this test to comply with MEXT's

stated targets for English teachers to attain 730 in TOEIC (MEXT 2003a:7). Despite revisions in May 2006, including the use of more varied English accents in listening input, TOEIC still has business-focused content and still fails to test productive skills, rendering it an invalid indicator of general language ability.

The fact that neither public nor university entrance exams really test Japanese students' ability to use English productively is a cause of concern to both the ELT community, who fear even greater washback effect (the 'influence of testing on teaching and learning' (Gates 1995:101, cited in Brown 2000:2)) as competition increases, and to learners, who after six years of study still feel unable to communicate in English.

2.4 Areas of apparent success: specialist English courses

Despite the somewhat negative impression given so far in this chapter, there are indications that communicative ability is being achieved in some areas of Japanese education, even though an analysis of whether MEXT considers there has been an improvement, and how this is being measured, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

One of these areas is in schools offering specialist English courses, a brief overview of the conception and establishment of which is now presented.

Stemming from proposals by the Chukyoshin advisory body to the Ministry of Education in April 1991 (MEXT website) that 'specialised courses should be promoted in high schools in order for Japan to be able to cope with the new era' [translation], and concurrent with the introduction of Aural/Oral textbooks A,B,C (documented in 2.2.1 above), courses with foci including science, art, and English were introduced into selected senior high schools throughout the country in the early 1990s. Within the prefecture under examination in this study, due to pressure from the teachers' union against encouraging elitism, four schools of mid-level academic

status were chosen to host English courses, along with two others focusing on physical education and music. However, apart from the recognised specialist status, little assistance was given by the Board of Education of the prefecture in terms of funding for reduced class sizes or extra staffing, and their initial success depended on novelty value and the hard work of enthusiastic English teachers (interview: Mr Z [school Y]).

A second wave of innovation, in which similar courses were set up in three schools of the second academic ranking in the prefecture, but under a different name of *Kokusaikyoyo*, translated as 'International Studies' or 'International Understanding' courses, was introduced (1999, 2001, 2002). It is on these courses that enhanced learner communicative ability was observed by the writer leading to the formulation of the research project described in this thesis.

Although a detailed description and analysis of one example of the *kokusaikyoyo* system is presented later on (see Chapter Eight), a brief overview of the aims and content of such courses is necessary at this point to clarify the research context. According to the websites of these three schools, which to maintain anonymity are not referenced here, the rationale for offering *kokusaikyoyo* courses is to develop interest and understanding of global and cultural issues, and to prepare learners to become active members of an internationalised world [translated summary].

While 'International Understanding' students for the most part follow the same curriculum as their general course peers, more time is allocated to social studies and English, with the study of a second FL from a range of Asian and European languages being undertaken in the 2nd year of the programme. This does, however, necessitate a reduction in class hours for some other subjects. One further aspect of these courses is the opportunity for involvement in local community events and the emphasis on activities in which English can be practised and utilised, such as speech

contests. Overseas students may join or visit the classes, and educational trips abroad may be offered. An extra budget for inviting guest speakers on international or language-related topics is allocated, and two native-speaker assistant teachers are usually based at these schools to allow for more team-taught lessons and to afford frequent opportunities for intercultural exchange.

One class of up to 42 students out of a 240–320 annual intake follow a designated 'International Understanding' course throughout their three-year senior high school career, and such courses typically attract a significantly higher proportion of female applicants.

Specialist courses are again under focus in the current policy (MEXT 2003a:4) in which the pledge that by 2005, '100 schools will be designated as Super English Language High Schools' (SELHis), where 'practical research' on English curriculum development will be undertaken, is proposed as a measure to increase communicative ability. Even with the intention that 'the results of the program will be disseminated' (ibid), SELHi programme content and effects on students' ability are not widely documented.

Schools designated for a period of three years as SELHis are usually already offering an 'International Understanding' or specialist English course, but research is lacking on their pre-SELHi content and outcomes. Thus, the present study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining in detail one high school offering an 'International Studies' course (*Kokusaikyoyo*), which is a likely candidate for SELHi status in the near future.

Information on what happens on such courses is so far mainly anecdotal, and gleaned from either limited personal observation and involvement or discussion (often off-the-record) with teachers and Assitant Language Teachers (ALTs) from the JET programme working in such schools. To date no in-depth study of if, and how, these

courses improve learners' English ability has been undertaken, and thus little evidence is available to assess whether specialist English programmes are developing the levels of communicative ability that MEXT aims to achieve.

2.5 Focus of the present study

Since '*only* by making comparisons can we properly defend our position on most questions of importance which require the making of judgements' (Phillips 1999:15), the selected International Understanding course school is examined in comparison to a more typical, traditional academic senior high school within the same prefecture, so that the benefits, variations, problems, and potential of the different system can be identified, and reflected in the mirror of the status quo. The following research questions were therefore formulated in order to examine multiple aspects of the two educational contexts:

> (i) Do International Understanding courses enable learners to attain a higher ability to communicate in English than general courses?
>
> (ii) What differences in course content may affect learners' ability to communicate in English?
>
> (iii) What factors excluding the taught course affect learners' communicative ability?

In addition, on account of the social demand factors discussed earlier under which academic achievement is understood in Japan, i.e. as measured by examinations (see Chapter Eight), a further question became necessary:

> (iv) What is the relationship between communicative ability and academic achievement in English?

The term 'communicative ability' mentioned throughout this chapter will now be analysed in relation to interpretations provided by MEXT and definitions and discussions found in the wide-ranging literature on L2 education and research.

Chapter Three

Communicative Competence

Throughout the preceding two chapters, as indeed throughout much of the literature on foreign language learning, the terms 'communicative competence' and 'communicative language ability' occur frequently, as if they are now universally understood without further explanation. However, within the context of the present study, in order to establish how far the goal of communicative ability in ELT in Japan (MEXT 2003a) has been achieved, clear definitions of the concept of communicative competence and related terminology must be provided.

To that end, an overview of the conceptualisation of communicative competence is followed by an explanation and a comparison of models thereof in applied linguistics research, before their relevance to FLT in general terms is examined. Discussion then turns to the interpretation of communicative competence within the Japanese context, to examine how appropriate the concept is within the present Japanese education system, with specific attention being paid to the expectations of MEXT (2003a:i) policy, and its proposals for 'cultivating "Japanese with English abilities"' through the implementation of communicative activities in class. A working definition of communicative competence, incorporating components from the literature which are appropriate to the present Japanese senior high school context is then presented, against which data collected in this study will be analysed.

3.1 Communicative Competence: definitions

Although the emergence of the concept of communicative competence is associated with a shift from grammar-biased language study in applied linguistics literature in the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. Austin 1962; Halliday 1970; Savignon 1972), it is the social anthropologist Hymes who is credited with the coinage of 'communicative competence'.

Hymes' (1972) communicative view of language arose in contrast to the two separate aspects of Chomsky's (1965:3) theory of 'competence', the system of internalised rules which enables language to be created and understood, or the idealised native speaker-listener's 'perfect', or abstract grammatical, knowledge of a language on the one hand, and on the other 'performance', which refers to what the speaker actually says, and which, however, 'often imperfectly reflects the underlying competence' (Paulston 1992:40).

The notion of communicative competence evolved to address an observed problem that 'linguistic competence does not adequately account for how a language is used or the forms that occur in actual use' (Ingram 1985:226). Moreover, the concept of competence as proposed by Hymes (1972) emphasised the importance of the social context in which language is used, and the sociolinguistic norms of appropriateness to be observed of 'when to speak, when not, what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner' (ibid:277), encompassing 'rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless' (ibid:278). Thus, in Hymes' theory, being communicatively competent entails acquiring both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to if and how much something is formally, i.e. grammatically, possible, feasible, appropriate, and actually done (Hymes 1972:281).

Although focusing on the real speaker-listener in social interaction (Savignon 1997:17), Hymes' definition was formulated from the stance of anthropology, not language education, with again the concept of the native speaker as central to what is linguistically possible and appropriate.

3.1.1 Communicative competence: models for language teaching

When the significance of Hymes' (1972) theory of communicative competence was recontextualised for language pedagogy purposes, various models were proposed,

notably by Canale and Swain, in order to 'serve as a set of guidelines in terms of which communicative approaches to second language teaching methodologies and assessment instruments may be organized and developed' (Canale & Swain 1980:1). The theoretical model of communicative competence proposed in the seminal works of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) incorporated four components of inter-related areas of knowledge and skills involved in effective communication, summarised as:

grammatical competence: knowledge of syntax, phonology, lexis;

sociolinguistic competence: understanding of social rules of contexts;

strategic competence: employing strategies to maintain and repair communication;

discourse competence: understanding of textual organisation and relation of parts.

Frequent attempts have been made to refine the original notion of communicative competence, with Canale and Swain's model being elaborated upon to incorporate different emphases and for different purposes. Bachman (1990:14), with a primary interest in language assessment, employed the alternate term 'communicative language ability' to encapsulate 'both knowledge of, or competence in the language, and the capacity of implementing or using this competence', and involving language and strategic competences along with psychophysiological mechanisms (ibid:81). Within this model, language ability is defined as having two components of language competence and strategic competence, positing that in combination they 'provide[s] language users with the ability, or capacity, to create and interpret discourse, either in responding to tasks on language tests or in non-test language use' (Bachman & Palmer 1996:67). One weakness of this model is that although highlighting strategic competence, 'a general (i.e. non-language-specific) ability that allows one to make use of one's language knowledge in appropriate ways to meet one's communicative goals' (ibid:42), by sub-dividing language competence into organizational (grammar; textual) knowledge, and pragmatic (sociolinguistic; functional) knowledge, the remaining three competences of the Canale and Swain model are, in effect, subsumed into a single

component of 'language knowledge'.

Whereas Bachman reduces Canale and Swain's four components to two, in Faerch, Haarstrup and Phillipson's (1984) model, communicative competence is expanded to contain five elements, in which 'fluency' is categorised as a separate component. Fluency is distinguished from strategic competence, which 'presupposes a lack of [accessible] knowledge', in that it covers 'speakers' ability to make use of whatever linguistic and pragmatic competence they have' (ibid:168). Although the term 'fluency' is 'normally reserved for speech' (Hedge 2000:54), Hedge also includes this component in her description of communicative language ability (ibid:56), in which she categorises Canale and Swain's sociolinguistic competence under pragmatic competence, thus de-emphasising the social aspect made prominent in Breen and Candlin's (1980:90–1) work.

In a move away from native-speaker language as the model or target, as also evident in Faerch *et al* (1984), and from the emphasis on language users as producers of oral language, Savignon stresses that communicative competence is:

> functional language proficiency; the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between one or more persons belonging to the same (or different) speech community (communities), or between one person and a written or oral text.
>
> (Savignon 1983:303)

Two important points are raised here. Firstly, language is not only spoken, but includes both 'the transmission and reception of authentic content' (Kramsch 2006:251), that is, the understanding of input is necessary to generate appropriate language production, and this entails expression of 'real' information and ideas, not just 'correct' language items as learned. Secondly, the contexts in which interaction takes place deserve greater consideration as the nature of English and other foreign language learning changes and the idealisation of 'native speaker' no longer represents 'an adequate or acceptable point

of reference' in ELT (Kenning 2006:364). Reference, explicit or implicit, to the native-speaker model is criticised variously as inappropriate to the role of English as an international language (EIL) (Berns 1990; Paulston 1992; Kramsch & Sullivan 1996), where language should be defined not in terms of what is 'socioculturally appropriate in native-speaker communities', but as what is 'adequate for international contexts of use' (Widdowson 2004:360). Hence, a different dimension of 'intercultural competence' – 'the communication between two (or more) speakers who do not share the same set of communicative competence' (Paulston 1992:116) – should be included in any current view of communicative competence.

In their model of communicative competence, intended as a comprehensive checklist of language points and content base for syllabus design, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995; 1997) include sociocultural, as well as linguistic, strategic, and actional, along with their core discourse competence. Similarly, Savignon's (2002) 'inverted pyramid' classroom model, which still emphasises 'the interactive nature of [the] relationships' (ibid 1997:50) between the four components, combines elements of Canale and Swain's, and her own earlier works (Savignon 1972, 1983, 1997). While the early development of strategic competence in this model is a notable feature, it is the readjustment of 'sociolinguistic' (Savignon 1997:49) to 'sociocultural' (Savignon 2002:8) that is significant for a wider view of English language teaching, an element which Hymes had included but which had been missing in the first applications of his work to FLT.

While reconceptualisation of communicative competence has recently involved consideration of the role of English as a global language or lingua franca (Leung 2005), and for technological purposes (Kenning 2006), an attempt to describe components of overall language competence that is theoretically applicable to any language (CEF 2001) is particularly interesting for its potentially wider application.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereafter CEF) developed from the Threshold Level objectives and syllabus for foreign language learning, which attempted to specify what was needed in order to achieve a reasonable degree of communicative proficiency (van Ek 1975; van Ek & Alexander 1980). The conceptualisation of communicative competence in CEF (2001) involves three components of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences, each comprising 'knowledge and skills and know-how' (CEF 2001:13); these are discussed in section 3.4 below. Major differences from the Canale and Swain model are seen in the combining of discourse and strategic competences into one component of 'pragmatic competence'; the use of a wider 'linguistic' rather than their specifically grammatical label even when the content is similar; and the inclusion of inter-cultural competence within sociolinguistic competence (Heyworth 2004:14).

Although due to varied interpretations and overlapping terminology no single all-encompassing definition has emerged, there is consensus in the literature that communicative competence has an underlying cognitive knowledge system with language performance as its surface manifestation (Lee 2006:351–2). It is also dynamic, relative not absolute, applicable to written and spoken language, and context-specific (Savignon 1997:14). The concept of communicative competence is particularly influential in language education in that it was instrumental in redefining L2 instructional goals and proficiency targets, and how these can be realised through language teaching. Accepting therefore, that communicative competence – this ability to use as well as understand a language – is the goal of foreign language teaching (Littlewood 1981:1; Savignon 2002:6), models of communicative competence provided the foundations for communicative language teaching (CLT) by being translated into 'a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teachers and learner roles and behaviors, and for classroom activities and techniques' (Richards & Rodgers 2001:158).

3.2 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach based on principles reflecting a communicative view of language and language learning, which underpins a wide variety of classroom procedures (Richards & Rodgers 2001:172), and in which Douglas Brown emphasises that:

> communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to heretofore unrehearsed contexts in the real world.
>
> (Douglas Brown 1997:13)

Although an in-depth examination of the rationale for adopting CLT and of examples of activities representing good practice are beyond the scope of the present study, an overview of what are accepted as basic principles of CLT is necessary to contextualise the discussion of the appropriateness of a communicative approach to EFL in Japan later in this chapter, and the analysis of both observed classroom practice and teacher perceptions of ELT presented in Chapter Eight below.

3.2.1 CLT: What it is

As CLT is a language teaching approach 'grounded in a theory of intercultural communicative competence, that can be used to develop materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning' (Savignon 2002:22–3), it should be adaptable to any teaching circumstances, and as such is not constrained by any particular textbook or curricular materials (ibid). It is, however, subject to certain principles which serve as guidelines, as summarised by Berns (1990:104 in Savignon 2002:6) below, for the selection and development of appropriate classroom materials and procedures:

1. Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication. That is, language is seen as a social tool that speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to someone for some purpose, either orally or in writing.

2. Diversity is recognized and accepted as part of language development and use in second language learners and users, as it is with first language users.

3. A learner's competence is considered in relative, not in absolute, terms.

4. More than one variety of a language is recognized as a viable model for learning and teaching.

5. Culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence, in both their first and subsequent languages.

6. No single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed.

7. Language use is recognized as serving ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions and is related to the development of learners' competence in each.

8. It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language - that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning.

Although CLT has dominated research and discussion on FLT for over thirty years, and is still considered the most plausible basis for language teaching, the fact that CLT is 'understood to mean little more than a set of very general principles that can be applied and interpreted in a variety of ways' (Richards & Rodgers 2001:244) may be to its advantage or detriment, depending on the viewpoint of the practitioner. Whereas following a method based on a strictly ordered syllabus and specially prepared materials may be considered easier to manage, having the flexibility to prepare and sequence classroom content appropriate to the particular group of learners is a great benefit of this approach.

Many interpretations of what a CLT syllabus may involve have been proposed in the literature – the Threshold Level (van Ek 1975); notional (Wilkins 1976); interactional (Widdowson 1979); functional/structural (Brumfit 1980); task-based (Prabhu 1987). The appropriateness of content to context is paramount however, as the essence of CLT is the focus on the learners and their communicative needs (Savignon 2002:4). Thus, the classroom process should prepare learners to be able to use the L2 in contexts they are likely to encounter.

3.2.2 CLT: What it is Not

Dissatisfaction with the implementation of CLT from the viewpoints of all participants involved in language teaching may result from an incomplete understanding of the underlying theory and practical focus of the approach, and a narrow interpretation (Howatt 2004), or misinterpretation, of the range of possible techniques and activities. Misconceptions of CLT among teachers, of not teaching grammar, teaching only speaking, doing pair-work and role-play, and expecting too much of teachers, evident in Thompson's (1996) research, demonstrate this point. Four commonly held assumptions on what is expected in a communicative classroom, summarised from Savignon (2002:22–3), serve to clarify what CLT is not:

(i) CLT does not entail face-to-face oral communication to the exclusion of all else, as it is equally applicable to reading and writing activities which involve learner interaction with the text.

(ii) Pair- and group-work is not a requisite of CLT. Although benefits are acknowledged in creating opportunities for interaction, enforcing communication between learners in FL activities is inappropriate in certain classroom contexts.

(iii) Special materials are not necessary, as any materials can be used to develop communicative competence depending upon how the teacher implements them and how the learners interact with the input.

(iv) CLT does not exclude all focus on form and only concentrate on expression of meaning. As linguistic competence is acknowledged throughout the above models as an essential component of communicative competence, an understanding of the grammatical and discourse systems underlying language use, along with awareness of sociocultural appropriateness, should be incorporated within communication practice in the classroom.

However, as with definitions and models of communicative competence itself, interpretations and applications of CLT may be inappropriate due to the nature of the learning context into which they are implemented. Among other issues to be taken into account is cultural appropriacy (Holliday 1994a,b; Kramsch & Sullivan 1996), which

encompasses not only practicalities but also cultural patterns of interaction at the societal level which may result in a failure to implement CLT.

3.2.3 Criticisms of CLT

Three areas of general criticism raised against the widespread adoption of CLT question the appropriateness of native-speaker competence as the goal of ELT; the cultural appropriacy underpinning CLT pedagogy; and problems of creating real communication in the classroom.

It is argued that attaining native-speaker communicative competence is neither realistic nor necessary (Widdowson 2004:361) in that it causes problems for teachers who 'do not have a perfect knowledge of the foreign language' (Paulston 1992:104), and ignores the identity of learners in EFL settings who are taught to speak and write only according to native-speaker conventions (Byram 1997). Furthermore, the validity of native-speaker norms is questioned in view of the role of English as a world language (EIL) (Alptekin 2002:57).

Secondly, as importing western pedagogy may conflict with social, cultural and physical conditions (Pennycook 1989; Holliday 1994a,b,1997), and with ideological values in role relations which are not appropriate to all contexts, a broader notion of the cultural appropriacy of CLT and how it is adapted to the circumstances and sensitivities of the region is advocated (Sullivan 2000).

Thirdly, the over-emphasis on oral production often noted in interpretations of CLT, where communication is 'generally taken to mean reciprocal spoken interaction' (Widdowson 2004:370), is criticised for causing CLT to be 'reduced to the implementation of certain types of activities, without engaging learners in real communication' (Arnold & Douglas Brown 1999:6). When actively engaged, learners appear on the surface to be communicating because they are speaking, but even when

the content is neither meaningful nor interactive, the priority seems to be on doing activities, not on considering how language is learned. As CLT methodology may not be directly relevant to social contexts in which English is hardly used outside the classroom (Holliday 1997:411), facilitating meaningful interaction which is based on a multifaceted view of communication and language use (Kramsch & Sullivan 1996) is a particular challenge for teachers.

In an East Asian context, Kam (2003:26) further highlights the cultural constraints facing the implementation of CLT by suggesting the methodology fails because of teachers' 'inadequate command of English, poorly designed teaching materials and the size and power structure of the typical classroom' where a particular type of teacher-pupil communication of question-response-comment is the norm.

Although such criticisms are clearly justifiable in many educational settings around the world, these arguments may not always be pertinent to the Japanese context.

3.2.4 CLT in Japan

CLT approaches are often characterised as those which:

> generally emphasize the necessity of large amounts of appropriate comprehensible input (ideally of 'authentic', context-bound language samples); meaning is perceived as more important than form – that is, comprehending and expressing personal meanings is valued more highly than grammatical accuracy; and corrective feedback is believed by some theoreticians to be largely irrelevant.
>
> (Mitchell & Myles 2004 quoted in Schultz 2006:252)

It is hardly surprising, then, that CLT is criticised as being inappropriate for the Japanese context where emphasis on accuracy for examination success is paramount. It may also indicate why much of the literature on Japan appears to report failure (Lamie 2005:161), or at best insignificant results, of attempts at the implementation of CLT over the years (Koike & Tanaka 1995:19; LeTendre 2002:30; Lokon 2005:8).

An examination in relation to the Japanese ELT context of the five factors to be addressed before innovation is a success, as summarised by Hedge (2000:70), will illuminate areas in which CLT is likely to be culturally inappropriate.

   (i)   'the degree of compatibility between the existing teaching philosophy and the innovation'

As noted in section 2.2.4 above, criticism is levelled at attempts to adopt western CLT methodology into a very different teaching environment (LoCastro 1996:46), without prior research and preparation. Law (1995:219) reinforces this point in that successful reforms 'must address the specific issues of English language ideology in Japan, and not ground themselves in theories imported from other cultural situations or naive idealism'. Although MEXT 2003 policy, as indeed its predecessors, advocated the adoption of communicative methodology, the teaching philosophy predominant throughout Japanese education and across all subject curricula continues to be examination-focused.

   (ii)   'teachers' perceptions of its relevance to students' needs'

Regardless of teachers' own opinions on teaching English for communicative purposes, and indeed what students themselves think about being able to communicate in a FL, pressures outlined in point (i) above remain the guiding force in ELT in Japan. Even though research illustrates that many high school students see the relevance of learning how to communicate internationally, by appreciating native-speaker-taught classes (81%) and enjoying speaking English (76%) (Fraser 2006a), the need to pass examinations is uppermost in their minds, and especially so as students approach their final year of high school. English teachers, therefore, who appreciate CLT aims and would ideally implement communicative activities in their classes, feel restricted by what they perceive as learner needs to succeed in the prevailing competitive culture of high-stakes examinations. Thus, in many classrooms the effect of MEXT 2003 guidelines, outlined in Chapter Two, are not being felt at all, with ELT still

concentrating on language as knowledge rather than as a communication skill (Taguchi 2005:10), and where both pedagogical and assessment methods reflect 'concern for grammatical correctness over communicative competence, reading ability over speaking skills' (Stanlaw 2004:287).

(iii) 'availability of resources'

In the case of Japan, as elsewhere, resources including staffing and time are those considered crucial to the success of the innovation. As discussed in Chapter Two, problems of limited hours for English lessons and large classes present obstacles for CLT, as does the sidelining by examination pressure of authentic input from materials, technology and English-speaking teaching assistants (ALTs).

Secondly, if we consider the teachers themselves as 'resources', it is important to note that teacher training in communicative methodology is lacking, with data from the frequently cited studies on teachers and students by Browne and Wada (1998) and Sakui (2004) revealing inadequate teaching methods with questionable understanding of the communicative approach and possible activities for its implementation. Browne and Wada (1998:101) found that only 3% of academic high school English teachers had studied TEFL, while the problem of lack of confidence in L2, and hence failure to provide a good model of communicative competence for learners is cited by Sato (2002:66) and Taguchi (2002:6). Serious issues result from a lack of appropriate training, both initial and in-service, to inform teachers of good classroom practice and to develop their confidence for using L2 in class, which would then provide more extensive exposure for learners, especially with assistant language teachers (ALTs) in team-teaching contexts.

While positive aspects of the JET programme for employing young native speakers as ALTs are highlighted (Koike & Tanaka 1995:20; Browne & Wada 1998:107; McConnell 2002:138), overall there are mixed responses to ALTs (Hadley 1997:8), with Samimy &

Kobayashi (2004:253) considering them threatening for Japanese teachers, and Crooks (2001:35) focusing on their lack of experience and training.

(iv) 'the extent of agreement between the classroom procedures of the new approach and the existing way in which teachers conduct classroom activities'

A great difference is evident between the classroom practice in CLT methodology as outlined in 3.2.1 above, and the predominant style of pedagogy in Japanese schools as detailed in Chapter Eight below. As seen in Chapter Two, many researchers report that teachers continue to follow traditional teacher-fronted *yakudoku* methodology, involving choral reading, repetition and rote-learning (Sakui 2004; Hadley 1997), and described picturesquely, but rather extremely, as 'dreary' hours with Japanese English teachers, 'most of whom drone away in Japanese explaining the grammar and pronunciation of a language that they themselves have rarely even heard and certainly cannot speak' (Miller 1982:233).

(v) 'the relative advantages of the innovation'

Under the present conditions in Japan it could be argued that people do not need English in their daily lives, and that the primary function of English is as a selection tool for employability and higher education, as explained in Chapter Two. In this case, traditional ELT methodology is more effective for achieving these goals, and the adoption of CLT approaches in the classroom may be thought to disadvantage learners in achieving the required examination success. The innovation would therefore not be seen as advantageous at all to learners under such circumstances.

Discussion of these five factors in relation to current English education in Japan indicates that CLT as it is commonly envisaged is not culturally appropriate.

3.3 Communicative competence in the Japanese context

The final point (v) in 3.2.4 above is perhaps the crucial factor, in that the advantages of

the innovation depend upon the interpretation of the new method. That in turn is dependent upon the conceptualisation of the underlying goal, which in this case is communicative competence. If the definition of communicative competence is relevant to the target learners, then a suitable framework for developing syllabi and materials can be arrived at. In the case of Japan, however, there may be a mismatch between what is meant by communicative competence and what is possible or necessary under the circumstances within the country geographically, society as a whole, and its education system.

It is, therefore, important to ascertain what the concept of communicative competence held by makers of educational policy actually is, to which end an examination of the 2003 Action Plan (MEXT 2003a) is now undertaken to identify how MEXT defines and interprets communicative competence in its stated goal of 'cultivating "Japanese with English abilities"' (ibid:i), and how this underpins the suggestions made for classroom procedures in its guidelines (MEXT 2003a) and course of study for senior high school English (MEXT 2003b).

3.3.1 MEXT's (2003) concept of communicative competence

Although Wada, involved in ELT reforms and prominent in the initiation of the JET programme for ALTs as a former member of Monbusho, states that 'the developers of the reform have often referred to the framework for communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983)', and Savignon's (1983) 'inverted pyramid' hypothetical classroom model (Wada 2002:33), the term 'communication abilities' rather than 'communicative competence' is employed throughout recent policy documents (MEXT 2003a,b). However, in no part of these documents does MEXT provide a definition of 'communication abilities', nor specify which components of underlying models of communicative competence are being adopted.

Even though 'communication abilities' are mentioned repeatedly throughout the Action Plan (MEXT 2003a) and Course of Study (MEXT 2003b), both of which are documents intended to be read by academics and professionals in education who may be expected to be conversant with the communicative competence literature, no clear description of the theoretical conception of communication ability is given as a foundation of MEXT's suggested areas for reform and classroom activities. It could be argued, of course, that policy documents are not the place for definitions, and that since it could be assumed that the intended readers are familiar with the literature, there is no need. There is also the possibility that nuances of the original Japanese wording have been lost when translated into English.

Achievement of communicative ability as a concrete goal is not elaborated upon or exemplified by relevant data, except in the statement that 'It is important for all Japanese people to aim at achieving a level of English commensurate with average world standards based on objective indicators [public proficiency tests] such as STEP, TOEFL, and TOEIC' (MEXT 2003a:1). However, making comparisons with levels of attainment in other countries based on public examinations can only test certain aspects of communicative competence, as discussed, and demonstrated for STEP, in Chapter Nine below. Furthermore, TOEFL, which is designed to assess particular aspects of English ability required for post-graduate study at North American universities, is not directly applicable to the 'normal communication with regard to topics relating to daily life' that MEXT (ibid) cites as its aims.

Through close examination of MEXT (2003a,b) documents, however, inference to components of Canale and Swain's (1980;1983) model of communicative competence can be detected.

   (i)   grammatical competence

Explicit references to grammatical competence are found, as may well be expected in

guidelines for initial stages of L2 learning. The necessity for students to 'have a knowledge of grammar and vocabulary' (MEXT 2003a:2) entails teachers to 'develop activities' using English (ibid:7), which is again reflected in the 'Treatment of Language Activities' in the Course of Study (MEXT 2003b:7), which covers pronunciation, grammar and sentence patterns. The 'English Language Elements' are then specified in a list of five sentence patterns and grammar points to be learned (ibid:15), and an addition of 400+ new words to the junior high school syllabus of 900 basic grammatical and everyday words. Moreover, attainment of the goal of communication ability is dependent upon grammatical competence.

(ii)   sociolinguistic competence

Through its stated goal that after junior high school all learners will be able to 'conduct basic communication with regard to areas such as greetings, responses, or topics relating to everyday life' (MEXT 2003a:1), the development of sociolinguistic competence is acknowledged, and here the implicit sociolinguistic context of interaction is between Japanese classroom participants, and between Japanese students and ALTs (ibid:2, 7). As ALTs are almost always from backgrounds termed as BANA countries (Holliday 1994b:4), with, for example, 71% being from North America in 2009–10 (JET 2009), the reality of a native-speaker model of English reflects Canale and Swain's implied native-speaker communicative competence.

Although reference is frequently made to enhancing understanding of other cultures (MEXT 2003a:4, 7, 10), and the importance of 'respecting other people's points of view and ways of thinking' (MEXT 2003a:18) is acknowledged, the appropriateness of language used will invariably be within a Japanese-to-native speaker context, of learners and ALTs, or the occasional local person 'proficient in English' as proposed by MEXT (2003a:7).

(iii)   strategic competence

Very little evidence of intention to develop strategic competence is apparent, with the only points linking to Canale and Swain's definition being the use of 'expressions that are required in asking for repetition and paraphrasing' in the Course of Study 'Treatment of the Language Activities' section (MEXT 2003b:8) which indicate strategies for successful dialogic communication.

   (iv)   discourse competence

As reference to manipulation of connected and lengthy texts is minimal, acknowledgement of discourse competence is only implied in indications for communication activities in the Course of Study by the suggestion 'to organize and present/write down information obtained by listening or reading, one's own ideas, etc. and to understand what is presented' (MEXT 2003b:8, 10), and more explicitly in the Writing course for 2nd- or 3rd-year students 'to write with due attention to the structure and development of passages' (ibid:13).

This analysis shows that, although proposing general policy reforms and making suggestions for areas to be covered during classroom activities, MEXT (2003a,b) does not present a clear enough definition of its goal of communicative ability to be used for the purposes of the present research. Inferences to Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence are apparent, but it can be concluded that all components thereof are not equally applicable to the Japanese high school EFL context. Furthermore, it is inappropriate as it stands to be used as a framework upon which to structure targets, methodology and content, or against which to investigate or assess the English language ability of Japanese learners. It is necessary, therefore, to establish what knowledge and skills are needed for using English to communicate effectively and appropriately for the Japanese context, i.e. what components of communicative competence from theoretical models discussed in 3.1.1 above are most relevant for formulating a definition of L2 proficiency against which to compare the EFL abilities of the two groups of learners in

this study.

3.4 A proposed working definition for communicative competence

The viewpoint taken in the following proposed definition is that communication of information and ideas – 'getting our message across' (Savignon 1997:9) – is central to language use, and therefore to be communicatively competent entails making the language work to convey one's ideas and to decode those of one's interlocutors.

Although grammatical, or linguistic, competence is of great importance, and as such is included in all models of communicative competence discussed in 3.1.1 above, achieving absolute competence is not possible since 'all knowledge of language is partial … never as developed or perfect in an ordinary individual as it would be for the utopian 'ideal native speaker'' (CEF 2001:169). Hence, an adequate level of grammatical and phonological accuracy that does not impede comprehension on the part of the receiver is proposed. This is, however, not to the extent when focus on accuracy restricts creative use and reduces the message to simple, safe, known linguistic content and repetition of taught formulaic expressions. Linguistic competence, therefore, entails ability to manipulate knowledge of language into meaningful combinations to express one's ideas and needs as appropriate to the communicative purpose. In addition, language use should be appropriate to the context in which it takes place, and thus sociolinguistic competence is included in this working definition.

While acknowledging recent works which are critical of the native-speaker model from a World Englishes stance (e.g. Leung 2005), expanding circle countries (Kachru 1992) tend to have a strong desire to acquire a native-speaker variety of English (McKay 2002:70). Moreover, in certain contexts, including Japan, this native-speaker idealisation is the accepted model, especially for purposes of assessment, in particular grammatical and phonological competence. Despite the resulting idea of failure from

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not achieving this ideal, it is often the desired model among Japanese students, especially for pronunciation (Fraser 2006a; Matsuda 2003; Matsuura, Chiba & Hilderbrandt 2001), where fear of linguistic imperialism (Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992) is not so prevalent as in ESL contexts.

Furthermore, native-speaker-like communicative competence is a realistic model, since the most likely L2 encounters for the Japanese are with native speakers. This is particularly true for high school students whose lack of opportunities for frequent interaction in English (MEXT 2003a:10) limits their exposure to non-Japanese culture to what they encounter via media and technology, ALT examples, and textbook input (Fraser 2005). What can be expected of Japanese students, therefore, is some awareness of 'native-speaker norms' of language use, both linguistic (pronunciation; vocabulary), and sociolinguistic sensitivities to appropriate behaviour and topics and content. Thus, although relevance may be questioned in relation to the Japanese context where learners rarely communicate in English outside class, aspects of definitions of sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain 1980; CEF 2001) are incorporated into this proposed definition.

For other aspects of L2 ability within the definition, the CEF (2001) term 'pragmatic competence' is preferred over Canale's (1983) 'discourse competence' involving higher-level textual competence than is likely to be achieved in Japanese high schools, as it encompasses elements of discourse and strategic, or functional, abilities. Pragmatic competence in this definition is taken to include both some awareness of structure and discourse, and of communication strategies necessary for performing communicative language functions successfully. Although CEF (2001) includes 'fluency' under functional competence within their component of pragmatic competence, a separate category for fluency will be specified within the proposed definition.

Fluency here is taken to mean the holistic impression on the receiver, which reflects the

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user's ability to focus the receiver's attention 'on the message by presenting a finished product', not on 'the working of the production mechanisms' (Lennon 1990:391–2). It therefore encompasses 'flow' in which fragmentation by lack of cohesion in writing and excessive pausing and hesitation phenomena in speaking are reduced or avoided, and 'quantity', in which very short texts and simplistic sentence patterns in writing and monosyllabic oral responses are minimised.

The resulting working definition, adapted from CEF (2001:108–29) descriptions, comprises:

> **Linguistic competence**: grammar/phonology/lexis – understandable and demonstrating range, quality and some knowledge of collocation.

> **Sociolinguistic competence**: awareness and employment of markers of social relations, politeness conventions and appropriateness of content/topic.

> **Pragmatic competence**: discourse – awareness of how messages are organised and arranged; strategic/functional – employment of communication strategies to perform functions to make the meaning clear.

> **Fluency**: concerning the holistic impression on the reader/listener – quantity of output involving flow of ideas and effective expression of meaning; levels of pause and hesitation which do not detract from understanding the message.

This preliminary overview, which is linked to the above analysis of the CLT literature, forms the basis of the framework presented in more detail and used for analysis in Chapters Six and Seven of data collected in this study.

For the purposes of the present research, this means that communicative competence is the ability to express and understand information and ideas in both written and spoken modes, in order to:

> demonstrate sufficient understanding of received messages to respond appropriately in terms of **linguistic competence** by using understandable pronunciation/orthographic conventions and syntax, and a suitable range of lexis and expressions to make one's message clear to the receiver;

demonstrate **sociolinguistic competence** through audience awareness of cultural content expressed and appropriate behavioural patterns in relation to politeness conventions;

demonstrate **pragmatic competence** by negotiating meaning through employing communication strategies such as circumlocution and clarification to initiate and ask for help where required;

demonstrate **fluency** in producing appropriate amounts of connected output (written or oral) to convey meaning under the pressure of real time and without excessive hesitation.

The above outlines the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences and fluency which will be investigated in the following chapters as an operationalisation of the concept of "Japanese with English abilities". Students and teachers are allocated four years, or approximately 380 hours (MEXT 2002:2), of EFL instruction to pursue these competences.

Having thus produced a working definition of communicative competence for the specific context of this study, it is now possible to identify evidence of what constitutes this communicative ability within the data collected of L2 use by the participants in this research, in order to address the main research question:

(i) Do International Understanding courses enable learners to attain a higher ability to communicate in English than general courses?

The following chapter, therefore, explains the research programme devised for this study in order to investigate how far, and in what ways, a specified sample of Japanese learners are attaining communication abilities, in relation to the definition of communicative competence proposed above.

Chapter Four

Research methodology

As the purpose of this study was to examine whether and to what extent learners following two different EFL courses at Japanese senior high schools achieve different outcomes in terms of communicative competence, it was necessary to devise a research plan which could amass enough evidence to examine all relevant factors.

This chapter, therefore, firstly describes the thought processes and decisions made in consolidating an appropriate research design to achieve the aims of the study. It then details the context in which the research took place, the instruments employed to collect data, and the methods adopted for analysis thereof. Problems arising throughout the study and related ethical issues are also outlined.

4.1 Planning procedure

Having formulated the hypothesis, based on personal involvement in the field, that

> 'following an 'International Understanding' course results in greater communicative competence in English',

the most appropriate research methods and techniques for investigating the two learning contexts had to be selected, before an overall plan of the procedure could be finalised.

The operationalisation of the construct of communicative competence into an observable, measurable entity involved generating a working definition of communicative competence from which the following research questions were developed to explore and measure the specified aspects thereof:

(i) Do 'International Understanding' courses enable students to attain a higher ability to communicate in English than general courses?

(ii) What differences in course content may affect learners' ability to communicate in English?

(iii) What factors excluding the taught course affect learners' ability to communicate

in English?

(iv) What is the relationship between communicative ability and academic achievement in English?

Appropriate research instruments were then sought to gather data to address each question and to produce an in-depth description of the evidence of, and reasons for, the development of communicative competence among the two groups of learners. Following a review of research approaches available to best achieve the objectives of the study, the design outlined in 4.2 was then proposed.

4.1.1 Selecting a research approach

When designing a research plan, the importance of selecting the most appropriate objectives and approach cannot be underestimated (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:114). Therefore, deciding which research paradigm, and then which methods and techniques to employ in order to collect data that would adequately reflect the context under examination, required much consideration. The first decision of whether to situate the study within a qualitative or quantitative research tradition is dependent upon the nature of the inquiry. Educational research seeking to identify causal relationships or to use findings to generalise or make predictions would focus on quantitative data. On the other hand, if the purpose of the study is to contextualise and interpret social phenomena, qualitative data are usually better suited (McKay 2006:7).

Certain areas of research are immediately assignable to one paradigm which then suggests appropriate methods for designing a study and for data collection, including a range of instruments for potential use. However, for other research topics, the decision is not so clear cut, and adhering to one approach may not be to the advantage of the project. In such cases, it may then be preferable to explore aspects of both approaches, since 'quantitative and qualitative inquiry can support and inform each other' (Miles & Huberman 1994:310).

A distinction has traditionally been drawn between quantitative and qualitative paradigms (see Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000), but researchers in the social sciences are increasingly regarding them as a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Brown 2004), and are acknowledging the advantages of studies combining both types of data and the respective uses of them, as 'each highlights "reality" in a different, yet complementary, way' (Lazaraton 2005:219). Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods and data is no new idea, as Glaser and Strauss (1967:17) suggest there is 'no fundamental clash between the purposes and capacities', but a 'mixed methods' approach has recently been gaining recognition (see Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003). Although 'still an emerging field', it has a 'capacity to produce a more comprehensive answer to the research question than a pure method alone would' (Dörnyei 2007:303).

The present research may therefore be best described as a mixed method study, since it uses both qualitative and quantitative data in order to achieve its objectives. Elements adopted from the two research approaches and the rationale for their selection are now detailed.

4.1.2 A mixed-method case study

As the over-riding factor in research design selection is 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen *et al* 2000:91), available options were explored, to make the design consistent with the objectives of the research (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:153).

The objectives of the study could have been achieved by simply adopting an experimental design employing a suitable communicative pre-/post-test to measure improvement, or differences in improvement, of the two groups over the academic year. However, the difficulties of identifying a test which assesses overall communicative competence and not just or mainly linguistic competence (see Hughes 2003; Weir 1990) would have necessitated the use of other research instruments to ensure a fair

assessment was being made. Moreover, this design would not have explored all aspects implicit in the hypothesis, since a purely quantitative analysis cannot explain how and why something has happened, but can only produce statistical results, i.e. show groups and their tendencies to differ. Thus, the decision was made to combine instruments that would generate evidence of background details, opinions and observed phenomena to support the findings of the test, as 'different research approaches can share the same aim and can be seen as different ways of examining the same research problem' (Fairbrother 2007:45). Furthermore, through adopting a mixed-methods longitudinal design, the context can be examined from various angles and viewpoints to provide a 'more comprehensive means of legitimizing findings' (Dörnyei 2007:62) than just two snap-shots in time as with test-retest. A qualitative approach using 'a wide range of interconnected methods' (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2) was therefore selected.

The study is thus partly located within qualitative traditions of ethnography which are 'person-centred' and hence 'particularly appropriate to … the field of language teaching' as they have the power to 'represent the particular' as events occur (Richards 2003:10). However, quantitative methods of data collection and analysis are also drawn on in order to fully examine and describe the educational context under consideration. As, for reasons of time and practicality, intensive anthropological participant-observer fieldwork could not realistically be undertaken in the schools, a fixed-term case study seemed more appropriate. Although qualitative research is criticized for the outcome being 'ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data' (Dörnyei 2007:38), and not being scientific or critical (Cohen *et al* 2000:181), case study can involve quantitative data in its aim to present a detailed description of a specific instance that can be illustrative of a more general principle (ibid). Although an intrinsic case study (Stake 1995) undertaken to better understand this particular context, it is hoped that the findings will have direct relevance to other similar ELT contexts in

Japan. By using quantitative data the study has greater potential for replicability, and through the support of empirical evidence, trustworthiness of results is increased. It is, therefore, concluded that a mixed-methods case study fits the purpose of the present research, keeping in mind that despite benefits inherent in empirical studies,

> for what they lack in generalizability, case studies compensate in depth and detail of portrayal, offering an opportunity to appreciate the unique complexity of particular contexts.

<div align="right">(Kinginger 2008:113)</div>

4.2 Design of the study

This study involved a one-year, longitudinal investigation into two different English courses at Japanese high schools, hereafter schools F and Y, in order to compare and analyse content and outcomes in relation to the development of communicative competence of the learners, to test the hypothesis that following an International Understanding course results in greater communicative competence in English. Although in Stevick's (1980:4) view 'success' in language learning 'depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom', in this study it is considered important to investigate each element of the teaching and learning contexts. Hence, what is used ('materials'), how ('techniques'), what language is produced ('linguistic analyses'), and external factors which may influence L2 learning, in addition to observation of the learning situation ('inside'; 'between') in the two specified classroom contexts are examined.

Instruments to collect both quantitative (proficiency tests; questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews; observation; document analysis) data are employed within the design. The processes and methods adopted throughout the research year are represented diagrammatically in Appendix 4a.

Three phases of data collection provided evidence for the examination of materials, methodology, course content and objectives, student and teacher perceptions, and of L2 ability in various modes and situations.

Phase 1

Phase 1 was undertaken as early as possible in the academic year – which runs from April to March – with the intention of ensuring that data collected would reflect information and opinions of students commencing their new phase of school life, and who had experienced as little intervention from and familiarity with the senior high school ELT system as possible.

In order to establish overall proficiency levels of English at the start of senior high school (i.e. after three years of learning English at junior high school), the reading, grammar and listening components of a Pre-2nd level EIKEN examination (described in detail in Chapter Nine) were administered to all student participants, with the oral interview being conducted on a random 20% of the two populations of 39 and 41 students respectively. A questionnaire to elicit background information along with language learning experiences and attitudes was undertaken by all students.

Phase 2

The second phase involved the collection and description of course objectives, intended schemes of work to cover, timetabling, materials, methodology, and related extra-curricular activities. Classroom observation to examine and describe issues such as management, participation, dynamics, feedback and use of L1/L2 was undertaken.

Within this phase, questionnaires were administered to all Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) who were directly responsible for the day-to-day teaching of the two groups. In addition, other JTEs in the English department at school Y and those who taught 2nd- and 3rd-year International Studies students at school F were asked to fill in the

questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and several JTEs involved in each course at both schools. The purpose of the second phase of data collection was to gain insights into the teaching and learning process by investigating and describing what both students and teachers did in class, to describe the content and context of the courses and to examine and document teacher involvement, motivation and teaching styles.

Phase 3

In Phase 3 the same proficiency test was administered again to all students, with the same oral test being given to the same sample groups of students, in order to compare proficiency levels on the initial and end-of-year tests. A similar, but modified, questionnaire with additional questions focusing on English classes experienced throughout the year was given, to compare attitudes to ELT and motivation for studying English, as well as to trace changes in these responses over the course of one year.

It was intended that after obtaining a range of data throughout the study, in addition to collecting evidence of learner L2 competence from pre- and post-tests, that the overall situation of English language teaching and learning on the two different courses could be comprehensively described.

4.3 Context

So that the study may be replicated, and for clarity for the reader, the context of the research is now elaborated upon. In order to investigate the issue of the apparent inability or unwillingness of Japanese L2 learners to communicate in English, outlined in Chapter One, two senior high schools were identified which exemplify the two different courses mentioned in the preceding chapters and described in detail in Chapter Eight.

4.3.1 Schools

In an attempt to control for variables when comparing the two cases within this study, both schools were selected from within the same prefecture, since policies and circumstances can vary between boards of education in different regions. In addition, selecting schools within a similar environment minimizes differences often noted between urban and rural schools (see Rohlen 1983; Rohlen & Björk 1998) related to diverse socio-economic factors.

Both are long-established institutions (F founded 1901; Y founded 1923), with similar semi-rural catchment areas and facilities, and a comparable student roll of around 960 annually. These two groups of learners are now described.

4.3.2 Sampling

Although the methodology selected for the present research includes elements of experimental design, in that two groups are being compared, Classes F and Y are not an experimental and control group since the two groups of learners were not selected randomly.

Since a specific phenomenon was the object of the investigation, i.e. L2 development of learners following an identified course, random sampling was not an appropriate way for selecting subjects for this study. The decision was made to use a non-probability sample, or purposive sampling (Cohen *et al* 2000:103), because a particular group was targeted 'in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself' (ibid:102). A 'naturally occurring group design' (Brown 1988:155) was therefore adopted in which comparisons between 'the performances of students in naturally occurring classrooms' (ibid) can be made.

It is acknowledged that although broadly homogeneous, these two groups are not directly comparable, since F learners deliberately chose to apply for the International

Understanding course at school F. It could, however, also be said that students at school Y made a conscious decision to apply for an all-round high-level academic education, and that both groups were similarly subject to rigorous entrance procedures and examinations before being accepted on their respective courses.

The number of participants was determined by the number of students enrolled on the International Understanding course (40) at school F, constituting a 'cohort', that is, a group with common characteristics tracked over time (Cohen *et al* 2000:174). One male student, (F29), however, dropped out just before the initial phase of data collection, and therefore took no part in the research. As this school has a policy of accepting one overseas exchange student each year for the purpose of improving his or her Japanese language skills, a female New Zealander joined the class for eight months. She was, however, encouraged to converse and study in Japanese, and as a native speaker she was for the most part excluded from the data collection. This group was matched by a comparable class of 41 students, being one of six parallel classes following a general academic course at a different school (school Y).

4.3.3 Participants

Participant groups consisted of 39 students (29 female; 10 male) on the International Understanding course, and 41 students (23 female; 18 male) in the general academic class. All were 1st-year senior high school students aged 15 at the start of the data collection. By investigating students on entrance to senior high school, influences and impressions external to the course itself could be recollected, such as experiences of junior high school English lessons, before the participants became immersed in their new learning environment. The initial phase of the project was therefore implemented as early as practicable in the school year.

All participants had previously studied English for three years at junior high school,

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with several of them having earlier English learning experiences in private language schools (see 5.4.4). All had undergone some form of English test as part of the selection procedure for entrance to their chosen senior high school (see 8.1.4).

Although data were collected from all 80 learners via proficiency tests and surveys, due to constraints of time, a random sample of ten students selected from a class list for each group were asked to take the oral component of the test. In addition to the students, all teachers of English, both Japanese and native-speaker ALTs involved with the teaching of these two groups of learners were included in the research process, through responses to questionnaires and interviews. Details of participants involved in the study are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

School F: International Understanding course				School Y: Academic/general course			
39 students age: 15–16 29 female; 10 male				41 students age: 15–16 23 female; 18 male			
9 teachers: 6 current JTEs; I former JTE; 2 ALTs				10 teachers: 8 current JTEs; 2 ALTs			
FT1	female	30s		YT1	female	40s	
FT2	Mr S	30s		YT2	male	60+	
FT3	female	40s		YT3	male	40s	
FT4	male	40s		YT4	Mr Z	40s	
FT5	Ms H	30s		YT5	male	50s	
FT6	male	20s		YT6	male	40s	
ALT	Rick male	20s	American; in his 3rd year at school F	ALT	Lena female	20s	American; taught August 2005 – July 2006
ALT	Annie female	20s	Canadian; in her 2nd year at school F	ALT	Harry male	20s	American; taught from August 2006
Former JTE	Mr A		responsible for setting up course F		Mr M	60+	
					Mr H	40s	Head of 1st-year English

Also: Mr N, an EIKEN test oral examiner

Table 4.1 Participants in the study

4.3.4 Ethical considerations

Protecting the anonymity and rights of subjects in research is essential, as is the

avoidance of fabrication or falsification of data. As a basic principle of research is that

there should be no detrimental effect on participants (Oppenheim 1992), in this study

anonymity is maintained for both schools and all individuals involved. No real names of

schools, students or teachers are revealed in this thesis, with all participants referred to in code. Thus, schools are labelled as F (International Understanding course) and Y (general course). Students are coded as F 1–39; Y 1–41. For each school, teachers are identified within the text by a title and letter, and a code of school (F/Y) and teacher (T), such as Ms H (FT5), and Mr Z (YT4). The four ALTS involved have been given pseudonyms of Lena (Y), Harry (Y), Annie (F) and Rick (F). The identities of other informants are similarly protected by coded references, such as Mr A.

Direct quotations involving, for example, names and places, are masked to avoid any identification. The information shall remain anonymous, being for the purpose of the thesis only, and shall not be made available to the school as a reflection of the students' work. After acceptance by the School of Education's ethics committee, all prospective subjects were given consent forms to sign their agreement to participate, after receiving written and verbal explanations of the project from the researcher. As students are beyond compulsory education age, yet still considered minors until the age of twenty in Japan, explanations and consent forms in Japanese were sent to their parents (see Appendix 4b). Summarised findings after completion will be made available to both schools and to participants who have since moved on, in English and/or Japanese.

To minimise stress or other adverse effects, it was made clear to students that test scores would have no impact on their school records, and that interviews and observations were conducted for the purpose of collecting information and opinions, not for assessment of English proficiency. The same applied for questionnaires, for which responses were invited in English or in Japanese.

4.3.5 Reflexivity

As researchers are 'inescapably part of the social world that they are researching' (Cohen *et al* 2000:141), the issue of reflexivity – the impact of the research on the

researched and on the researcher – must be addressed. Several inherent problems may be encountered by researchers whose methodology requires face-to-face interaction in the research context, involving both how to relate to the participants and how those participants react to the researcher and perceive their role and the purpose of the research; these can affect those making initial contact as well as those already known to the subjects.

In this particular instance, due to the close network of ELT professionals within the region, my role as researcher was neither that of complete insider nor outsider. Although not directly connected to either institution, my previous involvement with both schools may have been advantageous in gaining acceptance from the teachers and in generating interest in the research project itself. As well as being invited to teach special lessons on different aspects of English at both schools over several years, a precedent for my conducting research on learners on courses F and Y had already been set, through a study in 2005 (see Fraser 2006a). Furthermore, through my various roles within the county as a teacher-trainer on MEXT (see Table 2.1 point 2) and ALT-training workshops, my teaching methods and interest in developing Japanese ELT were already familiar to many F and Y teachers.

From the reactions to my presence, I concluded that my credibility within the prefectural ELT community enhanced the co-operation of the staff and enabled my research to be received more favourably than had there been no pre-existing professional relationship. It thus seems that I was perceived as an insider involved in the daily teaching of English locally, rather than purely as an outsider academic researcher or assessor, and therefore as a positive influence on, rather than a threat to, their teaching and learning contexts.

Furthermore, awareness is needed not only of the effects of the researcher upon the subjects and their reactions to involvement in the research, but also of the selectivity

and bias in examining sources and data within the study. Researchers must, therefore, be critical of 'how their values, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, actions, feelings etc are feeding into the situation being studied' and ensure that their personal views 'do not hold precedence over the views of the participants' (ibid:239).

Thus, it is essential that researchers are aware of preconceptions about the contexts examined and therefore critically scrutinize their own ideas and involvement, and 'acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research' (ibid).

In the present case, awareness of personal preference for certain teaching methods adopted on course F when in teacher mode must not obscure or influence the researcher's examination and interpretation of what is happening on course Y.

4.3.6 Field relations

Personal involvement within the research context may raise concerns over how subjects in the study are affected by the existing relationship, and the objectivity of reported findings. It is, therefore, even more important for researchers to retain neutrality when there are pre-existing field relations. Although interesting and useful findings can result from case studies, for example, of bilingual language development of one's own children, or action research on one's own class, it must be difficult to remain impartial to the behaviour of those with whom there is a close involvement. Studies where subjects are known and/or connected to the researcher may be therefore prone to a lack of objectivity. However, although it is essential for the researcher to retain neutrality and objectivity in any study, it is at the same time often necessary for there to be some link between the researcher and the context, if not the subjects, of the study for both initial interest and access to the research situation.

4.3.7 Access

As with so many aspects of life in Japan, access to visit schools, invitations for

occasional involvement in events, and indeed offers of employment tend to materialise through personal contacts. Permission to conduct research at school Y was ensured due to a long-standing friendship and professional connection with a member of the English department, who was, however, not involved in the teaching of the year-group being studied. Through the same contact, introductions were made to several other senior high schools in the region, which led to opportunities for me to variously observe lessons, give specialist classes, assist with an English club, and provide occasional teacher-training seminars.

Of the three schools offering International Understanding courses within the prefecture, school F was selected due to continued contact with Mr A, who was instrumental in initially designing and setting up the course in 2002, and as such was able to contribute much useful background information (see Chapter Eight). He had, however, been reassigned to another high school before the research period commenced.

Thus, neither main personal contact was directly involved in teaching the students under examination, and hence it is believed that although their initial connection was essential to the project, their actual influence on the students in the research context was negligible. Also, although as an occasional guest lecturer over the three years prior to the data collection period, I was known to several members of staff and some senior students in both schools, none of the first-year students had met me prior to the start of the research phase, and thus impartiality should have been maintained.

4.4 Design modifications

Although permission to conduct the research was readily given by both schools, teachers are always extremely busy and curriculum demands and timetabling are very tight, so any intervention needed to be as unobtrusive as possible, since the continued goodwill of the teachers and the schools was being relied upon, and therefore had to be

ensured.

Also, as timetabled lessons can be reorganised due to frequently scheduled examinations and other academic or sporting events, classes can suddenly be cancelled, and hence such changes needed to be accommodated into the plan, as flexibility on the part of the researcher had to be maintained. As a result, tests were undertaken in the two schools on slightly different dates, as it was not possible to conduct research simultaneously in each school, as would have been the ideal situation.

Contrary to the initial plan, time and logistics did not allow for the intended intervention in English lessons by the researcher and/or English teachers, in the form of implementation of specific tasks to demonstrate, or provide information on, learner communicative competence. Thus, instead of collecting classwork during specially designed lessons, the decision was made to ask all students to produce a piece of extended written work at the end of the research period. The intention was that by all writing an essay on the same topic, evidence of written communicative competence comparable between groups F and Y would be produced. Moreover, this modification from the original research plan would enable the collection of more directly comparable data than may have resulted from the intended intervention activities.

Since twelve students [F=4;Y=8] were also absent for all or part of the data collection, a complete picture of each population cannot be made, and these omissions need to be accommodated into the overall design and analysis process. It is important to note that Mr M (Y) did not return the questionnaire, and retired from the school at the end of the academic year. Also, surprisingly perhaps, the Y head of English for the 1st-year students (Mr H) did not fill in the questionnaire either, whereas all (F) teachers, regardless of whether they had major or minimal involvement with the International Understanding course, completed the questionnaire.

When dealing with people, it is neither possible nor ethical to control all related factors,

including absence from school of participants on occasions when research was conducted.

4.5 Methods of data collection

Within the present research design, five distinct data collection methods are required: testing, questionnaire, interview, observation, and document analysis.

The title of this thesis questions whether providing different treatment actually does produce different results. To establish how the two courses differ from each other, both objective and perceived differences must be established. Objective differences include course aims, syllabus content, number of class hours, pedagogical materials, assessment procedures, extra-curricular experiences, and staffing, while perceived differences are shown through students' and teachers' impressions, goals, attitudes, motivation and background influences, in addition to teachers' involvement, experience and personal qualities. The outcome, or effects of a year of study, should be apparent in the types of communicative abilities displayed by learners, that is, whether all four components of communicative competence specified in 3.4 (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic competences and fluency) are developed and demonstrated, or only that of grammatical competence. Objective evidence is discovered through document analysis and factual interview and survey questions, whereas perceptions are elicited through open-ended questions in interviews and questionnaires. The 'different outcomes' become apparent in results of tests, execution of classroom activities, and through observation.

As multiple research instruments were employed in this study, only brief explanations of the procedures are presented here with detailed accounts of selection, justification, administration, and analysis being mostly given within the relevant chapters below. Procedures for collecting and analyzing quantifiable data are described fully in Chapters Six (essays), Seven (oral tests), Nine (proficiency tests), and Five & Eight

(questionnaires). The exception is in Chapter Eight, where space only permits discussion of the findings of observation, interviews and document analysis, and hence these qualitative instruments are detailed in sections 4.5.3–5.

The five research instruments employed in this study, summarized in Table 4.2 are now described, and are included in Appendices 4c–k.

Instruments	F	No. of people	Y	No. of people
Tests				
EIKEN [1]	May 2006	37	May 2006	40
EIKEN [2]	February 2007	39	February 2007	39
ORAL [1]	June 2006	10	June 2006	9
ORAL [2]	February 2007	7	February 2007	9
ESSAY	June 2007	37	June 2007	40
Questionnaires				
Teachers	October 2006	6	October 2006	6
Students [1]	May 2006	39	May 2006	37
[2]	February 2007	39	February 2007	39
[3]	February 2009	38	February 2009	24
Observations				
[1]	26 June 2006		6 June 2006	
[2]	26 June 2006	5 lessons	18 July 2006	5 lessons
[3]	18 December 2006		13 November 2006	
[4]	18 December 2006		28 November 2006	
[5]	16 February 2007		2 February 2007	
Interviews				
Structured	Mr N Eiken oral examiner February 2008 Mr A 2nd February 2005 (setting up of Course F)			
Structured (taped)	4 ALTs Rick: October 2006 Lena: July 2006 Annie: December 2006 Harry: October 2006			
Semi-structured & informal	Mr S (FT2) Mr Z (YT4) Mr T (YT3) ALTs Mr M ALTs			
Document analysis	MEXT Policy documents School Information: curricula: Textbooks			

Table 4.2 Implementation details of research instruments

4.5.1 Testing

Within any study, testing may be necessary to measure levels and to enable individuals and groups to be compared (Cohen *et al* 2000:80). The specific purpose of including the test-retest technique within this research design was to establish entry-level English language knowledge of the participants at the start of the high school course, and for comparison with results on the same test at the end of the research year. Post-test results were also used as a marker of academic achievement in English, to explore its relationship with communicative competence, to address research question (iv).

EIKEN Pre-2nd level English proficiency test, the target that students should attain before graduating from senior high school (MEXT 2003a:2), was selected as the most appropriate test instrument for the study. A detailed description of EIKEN examinations and reasons for the selection of EIKEN Pre-2nd test are discussed in Chapter Nine. The pre-test, EIKEN [1], comprising listening, grammar and reading questions, was administered under normal classroom circumstances in May 2006, to ascertain whether groups F and Y were comparable at the outset of the research, and repeated in February 2007 to measure changes in academic achievement over the year.

As the main focus of the study is learner communicative competence in English, research instruments were required to assess the development of communication ability among the participants. The oral component of EIKEN Pre-2nd examination was used to evaluate spoken communicative competence, and for logistic reasons, ten randomly selected students from each group underwent this oral test in the pre- and post-test phases of the design. Administration procedures and assessment criteria for the oral interviews are described in Chapter Seven.

Due to the above-mentioned design modification (4.4), a final testing instrument – essay writing – was administered to both groups in June 2007 to assess the development of written communicative competence after one year's input and experiences on courses F

and Y. An in-depth discussion of the theme and purpose of the essay test, and how it reflected components specified in the working definition of communicative competence (see 3.4). is given in Chapter Six.

4.5.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are extremely popular research instruments in the social sciences as they gather large amounts of information quickly and in a readily processible form (Dörnyei 2007:101–2). Surveys can provide factual, behavioural and attitudinal information on respondents in a non-evaluative way (ibid:102–3). Questions can be open-ended in which respondents provide factual information (fill-in questions), or are invited to write an opinion or description, or closed-ended, requiring selection from a specified range of answers (McKay 2006:37). Rating scales are widely used, since they 'afford the researcher the freedom to fuse measurement with opinion, quantity and quality' (Cohen *et al* 2000:253).

Open- and closed-ended questions and rating scales are combined in the four questionnaires employed in this study (see Appendices g–j), in order to obtain quantifiable data to summarise and compare the two populations, and qualitative data to understand the backgrounds, habits and opinions of the participants.

Although open-ended questions in both questionnaires and interviews are important in qualitative research (Silverman 2005:291), as a disadvantage of open-ended questions is that it may be 'difficult for the researcher to make reasonable and valid comparisons across informants' (Johnson & Weller 2002:499 quoted in Richards 2003:64), some way of eliciting information on the same areas from all informants is needed. Thus, closed-ended questions are also included in questionnaires in order to collect quantifiable information, even though categories in dichotomous and multiple-choice question-types and ranking scales may be too narrow or biased (Oppenheim 1992:115).

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Items included in the teacher questionnaire were based on surveys by Browne and Wada (1998) and Gorsuch (2000) to enable reference to results of previous studies, as well as for comparison between schools F and Y. Slight modifications were made to the questionnaire for F teachers so that data specific to the International Understanding course could also be elicited (see Chapter Eight).

Two student questionnaires were compiled to provide data from the learners' viewpoint, with a third questionnaire being administered to both groups just prior to their leaving high school (see Chapter Ten). Questionnaires were administered during class time by the main English teacher for each group (F=Mr S; Y=Mr Z). This ensured a high return rate, with only students absent on those particular days failing to respond. Thus, for questionnaire [1] data for students Y3; Y10; Y19; Y21, and for questionnaire [2] Y12; Y40 are missing. Items adapted from Gardner (1985) and Ramage (1990) were included, as explained in 5.2.1 below. Student questionnaires were written in both English and Japanese to minimize misunderstandings and to increase the chance of obtaining extensive, reliable responses. Students were invited to reply in L2 or L1, as fully as possible.

All Japanese responses have been translated and all quoted comments are presented in English. A very high return rate on questionnaires was achieved, yet answers were not always as transparent as hoped for. Although the questionnaires had previously been piloted on other similar populations (see 4.6.3), straight-forward and highly detailed answers could not be guaranteed, however clear the wording of the questions. Ambiguities may have arisen in translation due to indirectness of Japanese discourse as well as what students may have considered important to include or to deliberately omit. Discrepancies also occurred when a similar question was asked in both questionnaires, and where information given in questionnaire [1] was enhanced, or sometimes contradicted. The researcher is aware that follow-up interviews with all students would

have clarified and expanded upon answers received, but due to constraints of time in the busy high school schedule, and the desire not to over-intrude, any such extensive data collection was deemed inappropriate.

A further problem resulted from failure to make questions precise enough on what may have been considered sensitive topics such as family circumstances (see 5.2.1), where more detailed responses had been anticipated without further prompting.

4.5.3 Observation

As classrooms constitute a distinct context for research (Mackey & Gass 2005), conducting mixed-methods research enables the researcher 'to understand the intricate tapestry of classroom events' (Dörnyei 2007:176), and thus including observation within the combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments was deemed essential to the present study. Lightbown (2000:438) describes the purpose of classroom research as 'to identify and better understand the roles of different participants in classroom interaction, the impact that certain types of instruction may have on FL/SL learning, and the factors which promote or inhibit learning'. Thus, employing varied methods, not just observation, can provide a rich source of information on the learning contexts. By recording direct evidence of what is happening, rather than relying on self-reported perceptions or interpretations of an event or phenomenon in surveys or interviews, observation techniques provide a more objective account.

Observation enables researchers to collect data on physical, human, interactional and programme settings (Cohen *et al* 2000:80), all of which are necessary for creating a complete picture of a situation in a case study. Classroom observation typically focuses on specific aspects of the teaching and learning environment, rather than providing a fully detailed ethnographic account of the context, with the researcher adopting a

non-participant role. Although not feasible to be present constantly in the classroom, as in true ethnographic longitudinal studies, it was desirable to observe a range of lessons in each school in order to construct an image of what happens in a typical EFL class at schools F and Y. Within the research method of 'classroom observation' several options are available as ways of amassing information on classroom behaviour and content, in order to gain 'a fuller understanding of the language classroom and what goes on there' (Allwright & Bailey 1991:xviii). Data collection methods were thus examined with the aim of identifying and documenting evidence of student communicative competence and the circumstances which help to generate output in the L2 as defined in 3.4.

Over the last 30 years in classroom research, a favoured instrument for recording incidences of production, interaction and management has been the 'observation schedule' (see Allwright & Bailey 1991 appendix B for examples). The use of schedules helps to provide a structure for observation, to increase observer objectivity and to generate specific observation data (Sheal 1996:188–9). In addition, by using a structured observation schedule, reliability is increased, as data collected can be compared across contexts and times. However, as 'recording a phenomenon does not necessarily lead to understanding the reasons why it happened' (Dörnyei 2007:185), other sources of data are required to complete the picture.

Despite their potential for generating interesting data, schedules have been criticised for their obvious drawbacks. Using a schedule narrows the focus, may distort data by labelling behaviour (Wolcott 1994:159), and tunnel-visions the process (Bailey 2001:118), so must be used to 'serve rather than direct' the observation (Spada & Fröhlich 1995:10).

However precise a category appears to be on a schedule, the ambiguities of real-life behaviour often present difficulties for the recorder. If, for example, an incident is witnessed that does not fit exactly into a category, how can it be reliably accounted for?

In addition, the physical effort and time pressures for one researcher of watching and noting occurrences may result in inaccuracies, or in important incidents passing unnoticed while the recorder was writing or occupied in timing another event. Moreover, schedules designed for general use cannot always match the specific focus of a study, and hence categories may not exist for certain aspects of classroom behaviour considered crucial by the researcher. Since the intention was to collect evidence of communicative competence in amount, mode and quality of student L2 output, interaction patterns and classroom management, several frequently employed existing schedules (see Allwright & Bailey 1991 appendix B) were evaluated for appropriateness. Of those examined, COLT (Spada & Fröhlich 1995) was selected for trialling on account of it being organised around four underlying issues of 'the nature of communicative competence, the influence of social contexts on its development, the effects of instructional variables on L2 learning and the influence of individual learner characteristics' (ibid:2), and focused on 'instructional processes' rather than on 'learning outcomes' (ibid:5).

The COLT schedule consists of two parts, with the first, COLT A (see Appendix 4k), aiming to identify content, organisation and modality of classroom behaviour, and dividing the lesson into activities (e.g. a dialogue) and episodes within them (e.g. teacher models dialogue; students choral-read dialogue). Distinguishing between actual activities or stages – episodes – within them under the pressure of 'real time' has potential for causing problems and delay while deciding. In addition, several of the columns are irrelevant during many episodes (e.g. time sections). More divisions in 'participant organisation' such as S → S; S → small group; group → group would make the instrument more sensitive. Furthermore, the 'materials' section was not necessary, since all input was collected, photocopied, examined and analysed separately before and after each observed lesson (see Chapter Eight). Nonetheless, there were several reasons

for employing this schedule, one main advantage being that each occurrence could be timed precisely. Whereas 'fieldnotes' may describe in a wider sense, they are not so clear-cut on timing and the exact number of times a particular feature happens may not be recorded as accurately in unstructured notes.

Whereas COLT B analyses teacher–student verbal exchanges, it results in very detailed discourse analysis, and also involves obtrusive video-recording of classes. COLT B needs much time for learners to become accustomed to the presence of a video camera in the classroom which may incur the 'observer's paradox' (Labov 1970), in which the act of observing contaminates the data collected. In addition to the potential for technical problems, it was deemed inappropriate to impose further on the schools in this way. For these reasons, only COLT A was trialled in preparation for this study, with relevant issues, such as L1/L2 use, time off-task, initiation, and sustained speech, explored in COLT B being captured through fieldnotes, which incur fewer problems of intrusion and logistics. Furthermore, having previously experienced how a combined coding/note-taking proforma facilitated obtaining a broader range of observed data as a researcher on a classroom-based study (see Gilroy, Fraser & Parkinson 1997), I was cautious about relying solely on one method of observation data collection. Indeed, Richards (2003:104) voices concern that observation schedules 'cannot offer the rich possibilities that are inherent in freer observation', as with fieldnotes. However, although Grbich (1999:134–5) advocates that researchers simply observe without taking notes on site, like Richards (2003), I considered it necessary to write while observing, rather than to rely on memory. For this reason, both fieldnotes, including diagrams of interaction patterns, and an observation schedule were combined for classroom research.

Prior to the research, COLT A was piloted five times in high schools (40 students) and colleges (20 students) classes, and found to be helpful for quantifying time spent on activities and identifying student modality, but less successful for clarifying interaction

patterns among participants. Although considered appropriate in theory, when actually piloted, COLT A was found not to amass enough data for the purposes of this research. It failed to accommodate data on team-teaching and did not allow enough scope for examining student production, and was therefore deemed useful but not directly applicable to the classroom context under examination. Hence, a combination of parts of COLT A, along with fieldnotes on open observation, was deemed more likely to capture what really happened in the observed lessons. Although 'fieldnotes provide a human, interpretative dimension to observational data' (Bailey 2001:118), they do not readily quantify the content of lessons. Parts of COLT A were therefore used to provide quantifiable data on occurrences of specific features in the observed classes, in order to produce objective evidence for comparing the two groups of learners.

One final consideration for classroom research is that reactions by those observed, or Hawthorne effect (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:108), need to be taken into account, such as defensive, untypical or negative behaviour due to assumptions that observation equates with evaluation (Richards 2003:127). Thus, maintaining an unobtrusive, yet friendly, demeanour was important to minimize potential feelings of threat among participants. In this case, cordial working relations already established between the researcher and staff at both schools seemed to stave off such reactions.

4.5.4 Interviews

As 'interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we can use to try to understand our fellow human beings' (Fontana & Frey 1994:361), the intention was to interview various participants throughout the research period. The typical qualitative interview is a one-to-one 'professional conversation' (Kvale 1996:5) where the purpose is 'to obtain descriptions of the lifeworld of the interviewee' (ibid:5–6), in either single or multiple sessions. However, selection of interview types – e.g. structured, semi-structured, unstructured (Kvale 1996); informal conversational; interview guide

approach; standardized open-ended interviews (Patton 1990) – depends upon degree of structure and 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen *et al* 2000:270). When conducting interviews, several issues must be taken into account, including sensitivity to people and situations, to nuances as well as facts (Wengraf 2001:64). Subjectivity, and the difficulty to ascertain truth, is also an issue to be considered, since subjects may respond and react in different ways if they have a vested interest or hidden motivation, and thus may wish to present a particular opinion or image (Wallace 1998:127). One further problematic aspect is power relations, that is 'the asymmetrical relationship between the participants' (Nunan 1992:150).

Several types of interview were included in the present study. A structured question list was used to interview both Mr A, where the purpose was to obtain facts on the setting up of International Understanding course F, and Mr N, to gain an examiner's view on assessment procedures for EIKEN oral testing. The initial interview with each ALT followed a structured format to elicit directly comparable information. These were also the only interviews to be tape-recorded, as their content was also related to ongoing research for ALT training.

Semi-structured interviews with teachers at both schools were conducted using pre-prepared questions and prompts to encourage interviewees to elaborate fully. The approach taken was to engage teachers in natural conversation about English education when opportunities arose, rather than organizing formal interview sessions, since some teachers were willing and available to talk more often, and others were busy, hesitant, or not so approachable. Notes were made concurrently or immediately afterwards. Unstructured discussions also took place before and after observed lessons with the relevant teachers and ALTs, relating to lesson plans and content.

Although originally the intention was to interview several students, this was abandoned due to difficulties of logistics and increased stress. The issue of power relations is

particularly pertinent to student-teacher/adult interviews, even when conducted in the L1, and so responses to written questionnaires were relied upon to provide the voice of the learners instead.

4.5.5 Document analysis

The final method employed for obtaining information on the educational context in question was examination of documents and records, or data from non-human sources (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Although written documents have the advantage of being factual and easy to repeatedly consult, they may lack objectivity or have been deliberately enhanced for some purpose. Two sources of documents relating to government and individual school policies were identified for analysis. In order to gain insights into the decisions and plans of policymakers specific to ELT, all relevant documents by MEXT were examined. The Action Plan, setting out policies to be implemented to improve English education (MEXT 2003a), the course of study for English in junior and senior high schools (MEXT 2003b), and a document outlining formal education at the elementary and secondary levels (MEXT 2003c) were available in English translations. As a general document outlining the course of study for all subjects, which includes specifications for teaching hours (MEXT 2003d) was only available in Japanese, relevant parts were identified and translated by a colleague. Several recent documents relating to changes to be implemented from 2011/2013 could also be consulted in English. Ministry websites were accessed for factual information relating to educational and societal issues in Japan, and assistance in translation was requested when necessary.

To clarify details about the two schools under investigation and to obtain information on matters such as timetabling, student rolls and facilities, school brochures and websites were consulted, references for which cannot be disclosed for reasons of anonymity. Details about both schools were also elicited through interviews with members of staff.

However, information relating to assessment of learners for acceptance to these high schools (see 8.1.4), scores in public examinations, and junior high school academic records were considered confidential, so access to such documents was not granted to the researcher, causing a modification to the planned research design (see 4.4).

4.6 Issues of validity and reliability

As validity is a requirement of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, all studies are subject to scrutiny over the quality of their methodology and the legitimacy of their findings. Several types of validity are defined in the literature, with terminology differing according to the research approach adopted. With respect to quantitative data, a distinction is made between internal validity, concerned with the degree to which variables that could affect the outcome of a study are controlled for, external validity, dealing with the extent to which findings of a study can be generalized to other contexts, and construct validity, which deals with the degree to which the research instruments measure the construct under examination (McKay 2006; Dörnyei 2007). Thus, in a quantitative approach, validity can be addressed through 'careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data' (Cohen *et al* 2000:105).

When working with qualitative data, however, a parallel concept of 'trustworthiness' is suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985:218), in which 'credibility', the truth value of a study, and transferability, the 'applicability' of findings to other contexts, correspond to internal and external validity. 'Honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved' (Cohen *et al* 2000:105) may thus address these criteria.

The related concept of reliability, also described variously, concerns precision and accuracy, and is 'essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents' (ibid:117). In the analysis of quantitative

data, internal and external reliability may be assured through inter- or intra-rater reliability checks and by providing estimates of reliability through statistical procedures of correlation and variance (Bachman 2004). In relation to qualitative data, reliability involves a 'fit' between data recorded and what typically occurs in the context examined, 'i.e. a degree of accuracy and comprehensive coverage' (Cohen *et al* 2000:119). A critical discussion of these concepts and their varied terminology, beyond the scope of the present study, can be found in Cohen *et al* (2000).

Attempts have been made throughout this study to minimize threats to validity and reliability (ibid:115–17) by addressing both concepts in regard to the research design, selection of instruments, and analysis and presentation of data. In order that findings presented accurately describe the phenomena under examination (ibid:107), validity and reliability are now discussed in relation to the instruments employed in this study.

4.6.1 Addressing validity and reliability

The main step taken to increase validity and reliability of findings was to include triangulation of research instruments in the design. Triangulation enables researchers to check interpretations of data 'by providing enhanced credibility through the incorporation of multiple points of view and/or various data sets' (Bailey 2001:118).

In this study, triangulation of data obtained from different sources and of multiple methods of data collection was employed so that convergence of findings could provide evidence of validity (Dörnyei 2007:61). By conducting all research under similar conditions in both schools, an attempt was made to control variables influencing the study, and thus to enhance internal validity. Both groups of participants were comparable in that F and Y learners had all experienced Japan's uniform education system in relation to national curriculum (Course of Study) and authorised textbooks, and teachers at both schools were working under very similar circumstances.

Furthermore, the same instruments were administered in both contexts within a similar time-frame. Steps taken to ensure validity and reliability in the quantitative methods employed are now discussed.

4.6.2 Tests

Reliability of the three testing instruments was addressed by allowing as little variation in input, conditions and marking as possible between the two groups. As EIKEN is a commercially produced proficiency test, it should have already been piloted and refined, and standardized across specific groups of test-takers in order to represent a wider population (Cohen *et al* 2000:319). It has to be assumed that statistical details for reliability and validity have been declared for test conductors (ibid), but it was not possible to trace this information in sources available to non-examiners. Clear, comparable results should be assured, since the testing process includes consistent instructions for administration and marking. This should ensure that scores produced are an accurate representation of test-takers' L2 knowledge or skills, since 'validity resides in the scores on a particular administration of a test rather than in the test *per se*' (Weir 2005:12).

Interview tests already have a high degree of face and content validity as a means of testing spoken skills (Weir 1990:75). Input and conditions for the oral interview were controlled so that the testing process was very similar in each school on both pre- and post-test occasions. Although assessment was made solely by the researcher, an intra-marker reliability check was conducted, since using the same marking method on both occasions 'is the one single measure which is quite clearly a true consistency, and one which is closest allied to the normal concept of test reliability' (Wiseman 1949:204 quoted in Weir 1990:65). Student L2 output was assessed according to the criterion of holistic fluency, specified in Chapter Seven, soon after the interview test. It was again evaluated after transcribing the recordings several months later, and a close comparison

in marks on a 1–5 scale was noted.

A similar process was undertaken in which marking essay data for holistic fluency immediately after data collection and approximately six months later again produced comparable scores. Reliability of the essay data was enhanced by conducting an inter-rater reliability check on a selection of scripts, as described in 6.3 below. Whereas agreement was reached by the two raters on aspects of incomprehensibility and lexical range (see Chapter Six), and scripts were identically ranked, Mr G consistently marked higher than the researcher. This mirrors Chalhoub-Deville and Wigglesworth's (2005:389) findings on spoken L2 data of a significant difference between 'lenient' Canadian and UK raters who are 'the harshest'.

Although due to unavoidable circumstances a different topic was set for each group (see 6.1), validity was addressed through careful construction of the essay test and the criteria for analysis so that the phenomenon of written communicative competence as defined in Chapter Six would be measured. Essay topic F had also previously been used as a test elsewhere on students of the same age group, through which an adequate assessment of written L2 competence was achieved, thus confirming the test's replicability.

4.6.3 Questionnaires

At the design stage, questions from previously published surveys for which assurance of reliability had already been established were incorporated into both student and teacher questionnaires (se 4.5.2). All surveys were piloted on similar populations before the present project was conducted, since piloting increases their reliability, validity and practicality (Oppenheim 1992).

Student questionnaires were initially piloted and refined for use in a previous study involving earlier cohorts of F and Y learners (see Fraser 2006a). After piloting again for

the present study, an item analysis was conducted on the results to check for problems of questions being apparently too vague or difficult to answer, repeatedly overlooked or overlapping. Additional questions to explore other factors were also trialled before inclusion in the final versions, and peer discussion over the wording and inclusion of items with a colleague prior to administration also addressed reliability (Dörnyei 2007:61). As surveys must be easily understandable for respondents, student questionnaires were written in L1 and L2.

Triangulation of data collection methods allowed for cross-checking of information gathered, which supported responses when duplicated by another instrument, or enabled omissions in response to one instrument to be completed by answers given elsewhere. To exemplify, although F4 left the questionnaire [2] item on extra-curricular activities blank, document analysis and teacher interviews clarified that she had taken part in the school English speech contest (see Chapter Five).

4.6.4 Qualitative data collection methods

In relation to the qualitative research aspects of this study of observation, interview, and document analysis, credibility can be achieved through careful recording, analysis and presentation of data in an unbiased way. Therefore, a thick description (Geertz 1973) clearly showing interconnections and how the researcher arrived at the conclusions (Holliday 2004:734) is required. Following suggestions to increase credibility by Lincoln and Guba (1985:301–4), prolonged engagement in the field over one year, persistent observation, and triangulation of various data sources were undertaken by the researcher. Providing a complete description of the research context also enables readers to determine the extent to which transferability is possible (ibid:316).

Furthermore, for findings to be reliable, they must accurately reflect a critical analysis of all data and avoid 'anecdotalism' (Silverman 2005:211). Although individual

responses are quoted within the thesis, their inclusion is to illustrate a point, not to claim that such cases are typical of the group, as the intention is to present a detailed and balanced description. Although aware of detrimental effects upon participants being observed, or reactivity (Cohen *et al* 2000:156), practice through piloting observation instruments increased the researcher's 'own observer reliability' (Sheal 1996:184) by improving accuracy in timing and recording events.

The above discussion aims to demonstrate that the issues of validity and reliability have been considered and addressed as far as possible within the overall research process, since an invalid study is worthless (Cohen *et al* 2000:105).

4.7 Data analysis

As extensive data were generated through multiple methods and sources in this study, the challenge of data analysis is to 'make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal' (Patton 1990:371–2).

As processes of analysis and interpretation for each type of data collected are explained in detail within the relevant chapters, only an outline of analysis methods in relation to the four research questions (see 4.1) is included at this point. References to sections in the thesis (e.g. 8.4.3) where these issues are discussed are given throughout.

Data gathered through qualitative methods were analysed by coding specific patterns of response and summarising opinions, with incidents of particular interest being described individually. Essential features were identified and inter-relationships systematically described in observed data and fieldnotes, data from interview notes, documents, and questionnaire responses. Quantifiable data from questionnaires were totalled and tabulated so that comparisons could be made between schools and individuals. Similarly, oral and essay test scores were totalled, and results expressed as percentages and as

mean scores per group, enabling statements to be made regarding changes over time and context.

It may therefore be possible to generalise findings to other similar situations, or to utilise the design and findings as the basis for a replication study in other schools offering specialist English courses.

4.7.1 Observed data

Classroom observation was undertaken to investigate what happens in EFL lessons on courses F and Y in order to gather data to address research question (ii). Observation schedule recording and fieldnotes were re-written straight after the observed lessons, and salient themes colour-coded. Notes were repeatedly re-examined in an inductive cyclical process to arrive at interpretations and conclusions which are grounded in the data.

A description of classroom behaviour identified within the notes relating to teaching methods (8.4.2) is used to illustrate differences in teaching and learning contexts at the two schools. Frequencies of repeated phenomena are presented in terms of totals of actual occurrences within the five observed lessons at each school for teacher talk (8.2.4) and classroom dynamics (8.4.3–4). Student L2 output was similarly analysed according to quantity (7.8.1), and length/quality/mode (7.8.2).

4.7.2 Interview data

Notes were written concurrently or as soon as practicable after interviews with teachers, with information relevant to specific themes of the study highlighted for potential inclusion in the narrative either alone, or combining with and clarifying data from other sources. Interview data were hence not quantified, but used to provide specific information on procedures or events in each context, to clarify the researcher's interpretations of certain phenomena, and to augment information gathered through

questionnaires.

In particular, information identified within discussions with teachers before and after classroom observation served to provide a richer description of these lessons (see Chapter Eight), and to further address research question (ii).

4.7.3 Document data

A repeated close reading of documents was undertaken, with relevant points highlighted or noted for reference in quotation, particularly in relation to research question (ii). Assistance was required for translation when sources were unavailable in English. Factual evidence to support the emerging arguments was incorporated into the discussion in summary and quotation (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

4.7.4 Questionnaire data

Data from questionnaires were categorized according to the purpose of the survey item. Frequencies of response or occurrence were noted, and results tabulated dependent upon the question format. Thus, data were compiled on the basis of nominal and interval scales, as well as thematic categories for open-ended answers. Open-ended question responses were transcribed, translated where necessary, and categorized according to recurring themes. Examples were selected to both characterize responses given and to present interesting and unique information to allow participant voices to clearly emerge in the discussion.

Quantifiable data were totalled, and in the case of student respondents where group size differed, results were converted into percentages and mean scores for ease of comparison. Responses from teachers were analysed according to categories of teachers (8.2), materials (8.3), and methodology (8.4) to address research question (ii).

To explore question (iii), student questionnaire data were analysed and discussed in relation to six factors of family; experience abroad; interaction in English locally; early

L2 education; *juku* attendance; and extra-curricular English activities. To augment the discussion of the learning contexts (question (ii)), student responses to items reflecting language learning motivation were analysed according to intensity and orientation (8.5.1), and then subjected to statistical procedures (8.5.2). To establish if there was a significant difference in motivational intensity and/or orientation between groups F and Y, *t*-tests were conducted. Correlation analysis using Pearson product-moment and Kendall's *tau* explored the relationship between L2 learning motivation and communicative competence as measured by essay and oral test criteria, and between motivation and L2 proficiency as measured by EIKEN pre-/post-tests.

4.7.5 Test data

Essay and oral interview test data provide evidence to address research question (i), and were subjected to performance analysis. Text analysis was conducted according to essay analysis criteria described in 6.2, based on the components specified in the working definition of communicative competence presented in 3.4. Data were analysed for fluency by total wordcount and holistic impression on a five-point interval scale, and for syntactic complexity by mean length of T-units (MLTU). Frequencies of occurrence of all other specified features of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences were tabulated. Statistical procedures of one-way ANOVAs and *t*-tests were conducted to establish if there was a significant difference in written communicative competence between groups F and Y.

Oral interview tests recordings were transcribed by employing certain aspects of discourse analysis transcription conventions. Pauses were timed in multiples of one second (e.g. //3//). Phonemic script was used to indicate phonological errors and intonation patterns were drawn. As the purpose of the test was evaluative, discourse and conversation analyses were only partly employed.

Spoken and written data were analysed in a similar way, with oral interview analysis criteria described in 7.1.4. The same measurements of fluency, with additional categories for length of turns and timed pauses, were used. All other specified features of communicative competence were expressed by frequency of occurrence, with complexity being analysed in analysis of speech units (A-S units). Non-parametric statistics of Mann-Whitney *U*-tests were used to establish whether there was a significant difference in oral performance between groups F and Y.

EIKEN proficiency pre-/post-test scores of one point per correct answer were totalled, and percentages and mean scores per group calculated. Correlation analysis using Pearson product-moment and Kendall's *tau* was used to explore the relationship between EIKEN scores (academic achievement) and communicative competence as measured by the essay (9.2.3) and oral (9.2.4) tests, in order to address research question (iv). A 2-way ANOVA was used to compare pre- and post-test scores between and within groups F and Y. To establish whether significant differences existed between the two groups' proficiency test scores, *t*-tests were then performed.

Although the above-outlined procedures include several quantitative methods of data analysis, even when statistically significant or generalisable claims can be made, a qualitative description and analysis can reveal interesting trends and individual experiences (Byram 1990:82), and thus is a worthwhile endeavour in itself. For this reason, participant opinions and quotations are woven into the description and interpretation of themes arising, in addition to statements of statistical significance and correlations between factors within the data.

It is hoped that the information provided in this chapter has generated a replicable formula, and the intention is that conclusions drawn from this research may be useful in understanding other similar learning contexts (Schofield 1989:96), as perhaps the aim of this study could be described as the achievement of 'comparability', or the degree to

which components including units of analysis, characteristics of populations, setting and generation of concepts 'are sufficiently well described and defined that other researchers can use the results of this study as a basis for comparison' (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:228 quoted in Hammersley 1993:97). Hence, a thick description is provided to make explicit as much detail about the context and findings as possible.

The following five chapters, therefore, explain in detail the process of collection, analysis and interpretation of the data in order to provide evidence to address each research question, before conclusions can be drawn.

Chapter Five

Non-classroom factors

As learning does not only take place in schools, it is interesting to explore other contexts in which learners may have opportunities to acquire the foreign language, and the influences of settings external to the taught EFL course upon their L2 development.

As noted above in Chapter Two, English is now far more prevalent in Japanese society, being evident in media, music, advertising and the like, as well as in the Japanese language itself, thus providing scope for peripheral learning of L2 in everyday life. Moreover, the chance of encountering non-Japanese people, even outside the main cities, is no longer unlikely, and thus learners may experience using English for real communication in their daily routines. Family circumstances may also provide opportunities for FL learners to utilize their language skills, for example, when travelling abroad or in their local communities. Hobbies and free-time activities involving or related to foreign language use may provide more practice of English skills for some learners, as may school-related club activities. The trend for taking *eikaiwa* classes or the more formalized *juku* lessons may also be an important influence on L2 skills, as might early FL learning experiences in elementary school.

The purpose of the following discussion is therefore to identify which external factors were experienced by the learners in this study, to establish whether groups F and Y are comparable in what they brought to the classroom at the start of their senior high school English course, in order to address the third research question:

(iii) What factors excluding the taught course affect learners' communicative ability?

After a brief inspection of studies into the effects of extra-curricular experiences on L2 learning, an analysis and discussion of factors external to classroom EFL for the two groups of participants in this study is presented.

5.1 Research on factors external to ELT

Six areas thought to have an effect on second language development were identified, and related studies were consulted. Three categories dependent upon circumstances of the home and local community are examined below, along with a further three related directly to educational opportunities. Due to constraints of space, only research pertaining to the Japanese context is mentioned, since, although a vast and interesting body of work is acknowledged on these areas, an in-depth analysis of such studies is beyond the scope of this thesis.

5.1.1 Bilingual families

With the increase in international marriages – some 5.3% of all marriages in Japan in 2008 (MOHLW website) – the potential for bilingual children is growing. Academic interest in this phenomenon is reflected in the number of personal accounts and individual or larger-scale studies on raising children to be bilingual in Japan (Reedy 2002; Kanno 2002), and in the establishment of a Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) special interest group on bilingualism. Experiences of attempts at raising one's children to be bilingual known personally to the present researcher have a higher rate of success in European contexts than in Japan, where pressure to conform within Japanese schools can lead to rejection of the foreign language and culture in an attempt to fit in with their peers. Nevertheless, the presence of speakers of other languages within the family context may have an effect on attitudes to L2 learning, may enhance the ability to learn FLs, and no doubt enriches the home experience both culturally and linguistically. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate whether any students within the sample have benefited from potential influences of bilingualism upon their study of English.

5.1.2 Returnees and experiences abroad

A further factor affecting L2 learning, and also reflecting the family context, is whether the learner has any overseas experience. This category includes lengthy sojourns in other countries on account of parental employment, experiences of studying abroad, and also simply visiting holiday destinations. The length of time spent in an overseas context and the age at which this occurred may be important factors in FL ability (see Dufon & Churchill 2006).

Studies into the phenomenon termed 'returnees' examine both the linguistic and social outcomes of having resided in other countries, attended schools there, and the subsequent problems of reintegration into the Japanese education system upon return to the home country (Goodman 1993; Maher & MacDonald 1995; Pang 2000; Matsuda 2000). Research into experiences of studying abroad, documenting mainly Japanese university students (e.g. Hadley 1999; Wood 2007), suggests benefits in fluency (Wood 2007), proficiency and confidence (Tanaka & Ellis 2003), and motivation (Tani-Fukuchi & Sakamoto 2005).

5.1.3 Multicultural societies

A final factor related to the home environment of the FL learners is whether opportunities can be found to interact with non-native-Japanese speakers within their local communities. Although Cornwell, Simon-Maeda and Churchill (2007:123) note research into bilingualism is growing 'due to the increase in immigrant populations' which is 'slowly eroding … the monocultural, monolingual stereotype of Japan' (see Chapter Two), few studies have been found into effects on language learning of opportunities to interact.

This, however, is an area worthy of future study, since the increasing number of non-Japanese residents (1.74% of the population of Japan in 2008) (MOJ website) have

potential to influence attitudes to speaking other languages.

5.1.4 Early L2 education

Much debated in FLT literature is whether there is a critical period for language learning, and whether early commencement of foreign language learning enhances later L2 competence, to what extent, and in what specific aspects of language development (Abello-Contesse 2009; Muñoz 2006). Unlike the UK, for example, where varied success has been reported on the introduction of modern European languages at different stages in primary school (age 7/10) over the years (see Johnstone 2002), Japan has so far not experimented with formal pre-junior high school English education on a wide scale. Although little has been published in the field, findings include indications of advantages for higher motivation and less anxiety (Watanabe 2007:231); for listening and speaking but not reading; limited influence; and no improvement in grammar knowledge (see Kajiro 2007). It thus seems 'the effectiveness of early English instruction has not been ascertained' (ibid:102).

Time has been allocated within *sogo gakushu-nojikan,* or 'integrated studies', in the elementary school curriculum to introduce foreign culture and language activities as an elective course and in a somewhat haphazard fashion, dependent on the teachers (Watanabe 2007:231), or on volunteer instructors (personal experience 2002–03), and little research has been conducted into its effectiveness (Kajiro 2007:101). Following discussions since 2004, however, MEXT is currently preparing to implement English as a mandatory subject for the final two years of elementary school (age 10–12), a policy which has received mixed reactions from educators and parents alike. Arguments abound, both professionally and in the Japanese media, that early FL instruction is detrimental to L1 development, that English should be introduced as early as possible, particularly citing benefits for pronunciation, and about appropriate teacher-training and materials, when faced with the reality that teachers may not be ready to start English

classes in April 2011.

It must be acknowledged, however, that for many Japanese students pre-junior high school English education is not entirely new. Due to thriving children's English conversation classes from very young ages, *juku*, and the above-mentioned integrated studies, it is claimed that approximately 93% of elementary school students have experienced some English (Butler 2007:11; Watanabe 2007:231). Establishing how much English education the participants in this study had received prior to their formal junior high school lessons was therefore deemed important for this research.

5.1.5 *Juku* attendance

As discussed in Chapter Two above, for many Japanese students going on to study core or specialist subjects at *juku* after a day at school or at weekends is a normal part of life. Indeed, in January 2009, 73.6% of elementary school students had extra-curricular lessons, of which 45.4% attended *juku* (MEXT website). It is thus surprising that little has been written on the effects of *juku* on English proficiency. Or, perhaps as it is assumed that most students include *juku* attendance in their academic education and attempts to succeed in the next level of selection examinations, it is unnecessary to write about its effect, because almost everyone has a similar experience.

5.1.6 Hobbies and club activities

In addition to *juku*, most students belong to sports or culture clubs throughout their school and university careers in Japan, and thus almost all schools have an English club. Furthermore, learning English is regarded as a lifelong hobby, fuelled by the vast number of conversation schools, public examinations, television programmes and publications. No studies have, however, been found relating to the progress of students who participate in English clubs at school, or who list English as their hobby.

5.2 Data collection

In order to investigate any potential influences that are external to the L2 classroom experience upon individuals within the two sample groups of learners in this study, relevant data were collected through items in student questionnaires administered in phases 1 and 3 of the research design (see 4.2). Questions aimed at eliciting information on factors such as private L2 education, family influences, travel abroad, and multicultural community involvement were posed.

5.2.1 Questionnaire construction

Seven questions relevant to these external factors were designed and included in the two questionnaires administered near the beginning and end of the students' first year at senior high school. They related to areas investigated through Ramage's (1990:195) variables 7 (encountering FLs in situations) and 10 (FLs spoken by parents), and Gardner's (1985) factors of 'desire to learn FL', i.e. 2 (take opportunities to use FL out of school); 4 (join FL club; interest in FLs), 9 (enjoy meeting and listening to FL speakers) (ibid:178), and 'integrative orientation' 4 (participate … in cultural activities of FL group) (ibid:179). Both closed and open question types were represented, and were designed to produce data which could be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Of the ten questions relevant to these external FL factors distributed between the two questionnaires, six included both 'yes/no' parts and cues to encourage students to describe their experiences. A further three questions aimed to elicit factual information, and one invited students to describe opportunities they had for interacting with FL speakers. In three cases where information may have changed over the course of the year, the same question was asked at the beginning and end of the data collection period, to ascertain whether recent experiences may have influenced current L2 performance.

As family circumstances were deemed unlikely to have changed, these questions were not repeated. Similarly, the above-mentioned question on opportunities to meet FL users was not repeated, as it was assumed that any such experiences would be detailed in response to the item in questionnaire [2] which encompassed various extra-curricular L2 activities.

As responses involved personal accounts, example answers are included to create an overall picture, as well as totals of occurrences. Responses to questionnaire items are now discussed, and comparisons are made between the circumstances and involvement of F and Y students. For the purpose of clarity, tables of raw data are presented for ease of comparison. No attempt, however, to prove a cause-effect relationship between external factors and L2 communicative ability can be made, as this would require a different research design.

The relevant questions taken from the two student questionnaires, [1] and [2], can be identified in the full questionnaires presented in Appendices 4g–j and are interspersed among the following discussion of responses.

5.3 Tabulation of responses

Responses to questionnaire items were categorised and are tabulated numerically in Appendix 5. Although many other informative answers were given, as the focus is on potential influences on L2 development, only responses relating to experiences involving English were counted. Thus, visits to countries where use of English is unlikely, family members who are speakers of foreign languages other than English, and subjects studied at *juku* other than English, must, for reasons of space, remain beyond the present analysis. Table 5.1 shows response totals for students according to questionnaire items relating to each of the six factors discussed in this chapter. The number of students experiencing multiple external factors is tabulated for groups F and Y in Table 5.2 (for reasons explained in 5.4.3 below, factor (iii) was discarded).

	Factors	F	Y
	Family members who are English speakers	4	1
	Family members who are teachers	5	6
	Visited English-speaking countries pre-SHS	14	13
	Visited English-speaking countries during 1st year at SHS	0	0
	Involvement in multicultural/multilingual society locally	31	24
	Early English education (pre-JHS)	24	15
	Studied English at *juku* at JHS	25	25
	Studied English at *juku* during 1st year at SHS	11	6
	English-related hobbies	1	0
	English-related extra-curricular activities	24	2

Table 5.1 External factors experienced – totals per group F and Y

No. of Factors	5	4	3	2	1	none
F	1	3	18	7	5	5
Y	0	1	5	14	9	12
Total	1	4	23	21	14	17

Table 5.2 Totals of students experiencing multiple external factors

5.4 Analysis and discussion

From among the answers to open questions, individual comments showing interesting and unique information were identified, and are quoted and discussed within the following sections, to create an expansive picture of student experiences and opinions.

5.4.1 Family influences

Growing up in a bilingual family influences a child's L2 ability, even without efforts being made to teach him/her the language not being used locally, as may be the case with three students in this study. F38 lived in China until the age of 10, and Y40's closer identification with her Chinese origins is emphasised in her questionnaire responses of '*My mother and I speak Chinese*' and '*Now I'm studying abroad*' (i.e. in Japan). It is also likely that Y31 is conversant in her mother's native language of Thai.

Although five students [F=4; Y=1] responded that a parent or sister spoke English, due to a weakness in questionnaire design (see Chapter Four), no information is given on the level or whether English is ever used within the family. It is therefore very difficult to detect any likely influence of this English ability on these five learners.

However, in the cases of F22, F35 and Y18, where a parent is listed as a teacher and an English speaker, it may be presumed that he or she is a teacher of English, although unfortunately the questionnaires did not specifically enquire as to the subject or level when asking if any family members were teachers. Having a parent who is an English teacher may have either a positive or a negative effect on the student's attitude and experience of learning English. The student may have become genuinely interested in the subject because of the parent's enthusiasm as well as any direct L2 input and other related experiences on account of the parent's job, even to the extent that the student may him/herself wish to become an English teacher. Conversely, the student may feel over-pressured to succeed in the parent's subject, and may rebel against the parental role and interest, and thus become demotivated towards learning the language. No positive effect is noted with these three cases, since none performed outstandingly when tested at the start of the research year (42–62%). Furthermore, there is no such influence on the only student in the sample who stated that she wants to be an English teacher (F28), since her parents are neither teachers nor English speakers.

5.4.2 Experience abroad

Being in a target-language-speaking environment is thought to enhance L2 acquisition, especially if the person has a particular need to communicate, and is of an age where FL learning is likely. As having the opportunity to spend time in countries where English is or can be used should have a beneficial effect on communicative competence (Meara 1994), F and Y students were asked:

> Q.3 Have you ever travelled abroad? Where? When? For how long? Why?
> (holiday/study …) [1]

A modified version of this question was also presented in questionnaire [2] to identify any potential influence of overseas experiences during the research period:

> Q.1 Have you travelled abroad this year? Where? When? For how long? Why?
> (holiday/study …) [2]

Interestingly, a similar number of students in both groups had travelled abroad, and although a few failed to provide an answer or were absent for one questionnaire, it is possible to establish their experiences through completed answers on the other questionnaire. Thus, overall 15Y and 16F students had travelled outside Japan prior to commencing senior high school, and only F23, Y29 and Y31 went abroad during the academic year currently under examination.

Four individual factors related to overseas experience were identified as potentially affecting whether the learner may have had opportunities for using English, and hence whether this may have affected their communicative competence. The questionnaire items elicited information on where students travelled, the reason for their visit, how long they stayed there, and when they had this opportunity. Unfortunately, information collected was sketchy at best, as many students did not answer fully. Follow-up interviews with those whose responses indicated some potential L2 influence such as spending an extended time abroad should ideally have been conducted, but due to constraints of time these were not viable. Nonetheless, a general impression of the

amount and nature of overseas experience can be gleaned from these data.

For the analysis of where students had travelled, destinations are divided according to Kachru's (1992) circles, to suggest the potential for L2 use experienced during the visit. Overall, students in the sample had visited a total of 14 countries or regions. Of these, USA, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand are considered to be 'inner circle' countries, Singapore, Hong Kong and Indonesia 'outer circle', and Thailand, Burma, Korea and China are categorised as 'expanding circle' countries.

Although the experience of travelling to another country may in itself increase intercultural awareness, a positive effect on English language communicative competence is not guaranteed, even if it is necessary or possible to use English in the country visited. Thus, of the 14 destinations reported, perhaps the expanding circle countries such as Korea and China do not have so much direct relevance to the issue under discussion here, since visitors would not be immersed in English, and may only use it when essential as a lingua franca in interactions. In addition, only those students visiting Korea or Thailand as a holiday may have used English in such a way, since F38 and F40 (China) and Y31 (Thailand and Burma) had another family L1 to draw upon during their visits. Learners spending time in the outer circle countries of Singapore (Y24), Hong Kong (F36) and Indonesia (F31) may have experienced more English around them, and thus may have been encouraged to attempt to communicate in L2. However, even though F31 reports in questionnaire [1] that he learned English for two years at school in Indonesia (aged 5–7 years), an inconsistency arises in that he subsequently says he lived there from the age of 5 to 11 or 12. One possible explanation is that he initially attended a local school, where the medium of instruction may have been English, and then transferred to a Japanese school there. This is frequently the case for expatriate families working abroad but intending to return to Japan, and hoping to fit their children back into the Japanese education system. The effect of his extended

sojourn may therefore not have been particularly influential on his English development if both his home and school environments were Japanese-speaking.

It is interesting from the perspective of English language studies to find that Japanese people frequently choose inner circle countries as travel destinations, and this may provide a real incentive and target for L2 learning. Of the 31 students who reported having travelled abroad, most visits were made to inner circle countries: UK (2); Canada (3); New Zealand (3); Australia (5); USA (16). One justification for the overwhelming choice of USA could be the relative proximity and ease of access to Guam (5) and Hawaii (5) as a holiday destination for Japanese tourists.

However, even when travelling to English-speaking countries, the purpose of the visit may influence the amount of exposure to L2. On typical trips organised for Japanese tourists, packages are arranged with Japanese guides and a full timetable of activities so that little time is available for exploring and absorbing the 'real' local culture, and encountering situations in which to use the FL. The 28 reasons given for students making these visits are, therefore, examined next. These responses can be categorised into three main groups of 'holiday', 'study', 'living'. Although the students who gave 'trip' or 'family trip' as their reason for travelling, may have had little opportunity to use English as an EIL on their holiday, several other students may have found themselves in positions where communicating in English was necessary. Five F students experienced homestaying (in Canada/UK/USA/NZ) and a further five reported going to USA (Y13, Y16, F15, F24) or Guam (F21) as exchange students or to study, which probably also involved home-staying with native-speaker families and attending, or visiting, local schools, under which circumstances communication to some degree through English would be essential. As such, an effect on the communicative competence of these students might be expected.

When length of visits abroad is examined, the only extended stay in countries where

English is used were reported by F31 (Indonesia) and Y29 (Australia), with F38, F40, F4 and Y31 making frequent and sometimes lengthy visits to Asian countries because of family ties. All visits, anywhere, were otherwise for one week or under (12 cases) or up to two weeks (6 cases), with Y33 making 5 repeated one-week trips to Hawaii or Guam over a ten-year span. A further 8 students did not specify a time scale for their visits.

A final observation is that even though 24 students [F=12; Y=12] have visited English-speaking countries or regions, the age at which these trips were made would have a major effect on the potential for L2 use. Of those students travelling pre-elementary school [F=2; Y=4], three reported their sojourn as being at or under the age of 2 years. A further 11 cases in elementary school [F=7; Y=4], including Y29 who lived in Australia from birth to age 2, were reported, which, compounded with the short length of stay of most of these visits, is unlikely to have greatly affected the L2 acquisition of these students.

5.4.3 Interacting in English locally

Finding frequent opportunities when the FL can actually be put into use makes studying more meaningful and can motivate learners to try to communicate through English. Meeting people from other cultures and backgrounds also enhances intercultural awareness, and this can go some way to attaining the MEXT (2003a:6) FL overall objectives of 'deepening the understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages'.

In order to explore opportunities open to F and Y learners for intercultural communication, students were asked:

> Q.7 What opportunities do you have to meet people from other
> cultures/countries? [1]

It is, however, difficult to decide whether responses were actual or hypothetical, which may be due to the less concrete meaning of the L1 translation of the question. The

intention was to elicit actual incidences where these students do or had engaged in interaction with non-Japanese people, and thus have had to communicate through English. However, from the nature of many responses, as this question was sometimes interpreted as any possibilities to see foreigners, and not necessarily communicate with them personally, the decision was made not to include a discussion of these data in this thesis.

5.4.4 Early L2 education

Although it seems logical that early exposure to FLs would benefit L2 competence, research is not conclusive on this matter (see Johnstone 2002; Abello-Contesse 2009). Nevertheless, since pre-junior high school experiences of learning English may have an effect on L2 ability, learners were asked to comment upon any formalised L2 education or input prior to obligatory English study at the age of twelve. In student questionnaire [1] the learners were asked:

> Q.11 Did you learn English before junior high school? Where? How long?

A substantial difference in responses is apparent, with 24 F students (61.5%) as opposed to 15 (40.5%) of Y students reporting some form of pre-JHS English education. The 24 on course F may appear a high proportion, but if compared to the quoted MEXT data where 92.1% of Elementary school students in 2004 received some English input (Watanabe 2007:231), the percentages for groups F and Y seem well below average.

The duration and nature of input must, however, be examined to ascertain the 'worthwhileness' of the experience, and whether it is likely to have had any lasting effect on the learners concerned. A wide spread of time spent learning English before starting compulsory FLT was reported, with the overall range being between two months and ten years, and most students who responded in the affirmative experienced at least one or two years.

Variations occur in where students have learned their pre-JHS English, with, apart from F31 who seems to have attended English-medium school in Indonesia aged 5–7 (see 5.4.2 above), *juku* and private language schools being the most common responses. Others report having had '*lessons from a tutor, 1½ or 2 years*' (Y41), and '*6 months studying for EIKEN at home*' (F10). Certain responses are ambiguous in their wording, such as '*2 years from 5th grade elementary school*' (F2) and '*since 6th year elementary school*' (F16). As English teaching at elementary school level is not yet compulsory in Japan, it is difficult to ascertain which schools are already including FL lessons in their curricula and which are awaiting the national implementation in 2011. Thus, it is unclear how to interpret the precise source of L2 input referred to in certain responses, as they could imply learners took private lessons while they were elementary school students, or that English classes were provided in their elementary school timetables. Only one student, F32, states explicitly that English was taught at her primary school, and remembers an ALT visiting twice a week.

In addition to the 12 F and 21 Y students who had not learned English prior to junior high school, 2 from F and 1 from Y did not respond to the question. Also, F9 wrote '*I forgot*', illustrating that the effect of any L2 input was inconsequential to that learner. In contrast, F17 appears to regret having missed the opportunity, and writes '*No I didn't. I should have done*'.

While 2.57 years is the combined average length of pre-JHS FL experience of both groups, some learners in each school had extensive exposure to English from an early age, at kindergarten. It must be added at this point that although not an overtly religious country, Christian, and in particular Catholic, kindergartens have been very popular since the 1960s, and attendance at such institutions sometimes includes instruction in English in activities such as songs, games and religious festivals [YT3 interview].

The assumption that early L2 educational experience enhances language proficiency

when formal FLT begins underlies the rationale for introducing FLs into the primary level curriculum, yet there is a lack of reliable evidence to substantiate this claim. Indeed, the present research can not fully support the benefits of pre-compulsory FL teaching for either achievement in English proficiency tests or for holistic impressions of communicative ability.

5.4.5 *Juku* attendance

As noted above in 5.1.5, engaging in 'shadow education' (Stevenson & Baker 1992:51) such as attending cram school or *juku* after spending all day at school is an accepted part of normal life for students in Japan. Within the two groups of learners examined here, it can be seen that many of them attended *juku* while still at elementary school, with 15 (7Y; 8F) explicitly stating that their pre-JHS English education took place at such establishments. Questionnaire [1] asked:

> Q.5 Do/Did you go to *juku* or have extra private classes? How often? Which subjects?

A wide range of responses were provided, giving an interesting insight into the students' everyday lives. Responses reveal that both F and Y students seem to dedicate many hours after school to a variety of lessons, and no doubt also manage to fit in homework for classes next day.

Overall, for any subject, 29 (74.3%) F and 28 (75.7%) Y students responded that they regularly attended *juku* or other private classes after school. When broken down into individual subjects, the most common areas to study at *juku* are Maths and English, with lessons on the other core subjects of Japanese, Science, and Social Studies (including History) also being frequently attended. Other skills such as Music, Art and Sport are also formally studied by some students, as opposed to, or in addition to, being learned from their peers and practised in after-school clubs, as is often the case for such subjects in Japan.

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Of those taking extra-curricular English lessons, it is not entirely clear how many attend cram schools as opposed to other English class options, as several students were somewhat vague in their answers. Nine (3F; 6Y) explicitly stated that they studied English at *juku*, and a further 8 (5F; 3Y) answered that they attended English language schools. Although details of what happens in these classes are not divulged, there are a couple of glimpses: '*A school where I'm learning communication and grammar/ English language school (one-to-one)*' (F4); '*English communication*' (F8), with several providing names of popular, and lesser-known, *eikaiwa* companies.

Whereas it had been hoped to obtain exact answers on what type of establishments, which subjects and how often and for how long they attended, a complete picture unfortunately does not emerge from the data. From the responses of those who did specify 'how often', an impression of the frequency of lessons can, however, be arrived at. Thus, for studying English, the majority of students attended once (pre-SHS: 12F; 10Y; 1st yr SHS: 9F; 5Y) or twice a week (pre-SHS: 3F; 7Y; 1st yr SHS: 0F; 1Y), with the overall range being from 'once a month' to 'three times a week'. Whereas teaching at *juku* is usually intensive and focused, some flexibility is reported: '*Any subject I like*' (F12); '*Go to juku. Not fixed on the subjects and times*' (F7).

A similar question was asked again in questionnaire [2]:

> Q.2 Did you go to *juku* or have extra private classes this year? How often? Which subjects?

The notable reduction in attendance at external classes during the first year of senior high school could be attributed to the fact that no imminent need was identified. After successfully passing entrance examinations for, or being accepted into, the SHS of their choice, students, or more likely parents, perhaps feel less pressure for studying so much. An increase in extra-curricular lessons might be anticipated later in their 2nd and 3rd year at SHS, when preparation for university entrance examinations is prioritised, but

perhaps in 1st-year SHS the pressure is temporarily eased. Overall, 15F and 7Y students had supplementary lessons in some subject, with 11F and 6Y studying English. Perhaps because of personal interest, however, rather than exam pressure, a few students stated explicitly that they continue to take English language school classes (F23; Y30; Y34). Taking extra classes, especially of the *juku* style, is expected to improve examination skills, yet it is uncertain whether such input increases communicative competence.

5.4.6 Hobbies and extra-curricular activities

A final factor external to the language course which may influence L2 ability, or at least indicate interest in L2 learning, is involvement in extra-curricular activities requiring the use of the target language. In order to ascertain how interested the sample students were in finding opportunities outside class for using their English, questionnaire [1] elicited FL-related hobbies, and questionnaire [2] aimed to establish the range of L2 activities students had participated in during their 1st year of SHS:

Q.6 What are your hobbies/club activities? [1]

Q.3 Did you take part in any club activities or activities outside class where you used English this year? (e.g. Debate Contest; Speech Contest …) [2]

All high school students are encouraged to be involved in at least one club activity, since co-operating and learning from one's *senpai* (senior students) through membership of sports and culture clubs is an integral part of the Japanese educational experience, as it is indeed of Japanese social structure.

As almost every high school in Japan has an 'English Club', it was assumed that several students would be a member of such a club, particularly those following course F. However, the data reveal that a high proportion of students at both schools are committed to sporting activities (27F; 20Y), with few participating in cultural pursuits such as tea ceremony, art and English. In fact, although only F26 reported that she had joined the English club, (F)ALT Annie informed me that several students did take part

in English club activities, especially before an English event was scheduled.

English clubs at SHSs typically have about 8–10 members [Teacher interviews; personal experience], but numbers can fluctuate. Although ten years ago school Y had a thriving English club of over 20 members, in the particular year under focus only about four students were involved [Mr Z (YT4) interview].

Japanese high schools have a tradition of holding English Speech Contests both locally and nationally, and since 1994 an annual prefectural Debate Contest in English has been held in this county [ibid]. English clubs are often the training ground for competitors in these events, with both Japanese English teachers (JTEs) and ALTs assisting students in their preparations. As school Y neither holds its own in-house speech contest nor usually enters anyone for the prefectural contest held annually since 2003, it is not surprising that no participation in this activity was reported. However, as school Y has often been very successful in the regional debate contest, and indeed as Mr Z was instrumental in establishing this event, it is disappointing to find that none of the sample Y students participated. In contrast, a whole debate team (four people) from class F, in addition to two further teams of senior F students, took part in the 2006 contest. Furthermore, of the overall 20 entrants in the F school speech contest, nine class F students performed in the 'recitation division', and three entered the more challenging 'speech division', usually the domain of 2nd- or 3rd-year students, which involves writing and delivering one's own speeches.

As well as English language contests organised for SHS students, several other events where English could be actively used were mentioned, but only by F students. Eight wrote that they had attended a local International Evening event held in November 2006, and F22 mentioned taking part in an 'English Day'. Although an English Camp is now held annually in December for all 1st-year International Understanding course students at school F, in 2006 this was still an optional regional activity arranged by local ALTs

and open to several schools in the area. Of the sample F students, 13 reported having attended it, and it is perhaps to this event that F22 above was also referring. F37 recalls an opportunity where local school students were able to meet visiting American university students, yet although it is very likely that several of class F attended this event, no one else mentioned it in their questionnaire responses. One further event cited by only F20 is a Christmas party, although it is not apparent whether this was organised by the International Exchange group in the city or whether she is referring to the Christmas lesson and activities planned by ALTs Annie and Rick [interview (F)ALTs] as part of their English course.

While the reasons for these events being recalled and reported may be unclear, the fact remains that such activities left a lasting impression on those students, and may have offered opportunities for cultural input and exchanges in English, thus providing a practical use for their L2 knowledge. In contrast to the variety of responses given by F students, the only two answers given to this question by Y students were '*extra private classes*' (Y16), already accounted for in 5.4.5 above, and the rather vague '*interview*' (Y17). This was perhaps a reference to the fact that ALT Harry interviewed all the 1st-year students in English as part of their course assessment, but it is not clear. It is equally possible that as she was the only student to mention this, it was part of an external event or examination.

Despite the extra time reported in 5.4.5 above spent on extra-curricular lessons, homework and sporting activities, only Y11 stated that '*I don't have any hobbies*'. It was interesting that several students reported having hobbies involving language use, albeit L1, with reading (13 [8F; 5Y]) being most frequently mentioned, along with emailing and using a PC (5 [2F; 3Y]). Three F students (F3, 9, 12) listed 'drama' as their hobby, with F25 explaining (in English) that '*I'm go to the theatrical company every Friday*'. Perhaps the confidence developed here for performing in L1 may

transfer in some way to L2 production for these students. A further note of creativity arose in Y40's answer: '*to write novel*'.

A great interest in music was expressed throughout, with 21 students in each group reporting playing or learning a musical instrument in clubs or private lessons, or enjoying listening to music. As school Y has a highly regarded guitar and mandolin club, it was not surprising to find that nine Y students were members, including also the somewhat negative Y11 quoted above. My reason for mentioning this is a tendency I have noted for people with music skills to have 'a good ear' for languages, and in particular phonological awareness and an ability to reproduce FL pronunciation with greater precision. Although little research has been identified to support this impression (see Mithen 2005), it is an area worthy of future exploration. Participation in extra-curricular activities involving the production of English, and hobbies related to language such as reading may be a further factor in the development of L2 competences.

5.5 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to establish whether one group of learners within the study were advantaged by experiences external to the education process received on courses F and Y (see Chapter Eight).

Firstly, an analysis of data on four factors relating to pre-senior high school circumstances of family, travel, early English education, and *juku* attendance, elicited through questionnaire [1], was conducted to examine the likelihood of these experiences having positively influenced the L2 ability of the students at the commencement of their senior high school courses. Within each group, almost equal numbers of students had visited English-speaking countries [F=14; Y=13] (section 5.4.2), 25 had attended *juku* to study English pre-senior high school (5.4.5), very few reported having English-speaking

family members [F=4; Y=1] (5.4.1), and many students had experience of early English education [F=24; Y=15] (5.4.4).

External factors occurring during their 1st year of senior high school, as elicited in questionnaire [2], were then examined, and it is here that a particular difference between the two groups was noted. No students travelled abroad to an English-speaking country during the research period, but participation in English-related extra-curricular activities varied greatly [F=24; Y=2] (5.4.6). It is suggested that this is an area where motivation for learning and using L2 may play a large role (see Chapter Eight). In addition, school circumstances are acknowledged to influence extra-curricular activities, where participation in such activities as speech and debate contests is almost an expected part of the International Understanding course at school F. Furthermore, this motivation may be a reason for continued English study at *juku* [F=11; Y=6] reported during the research year.

It is thus concluded that the two groups are comparable as to English-related experiences external to the L2 process at the start of the research, and that the resulting difference in communicative competence, as exemplified and demonstrated statistically in relation to the learners in this study in Chapters Six, Seven and Nine, and as noted by the researcher in previous cohorts of course F students (see Chapter One), may be based on factors related to the EFL courses themselves, as described in Chapter Eight below.

Chapter Six

Evidence of written communicative competence

Since the influence of external factors upon learner communicative competence has been accounted for in Chapter Five, in that there is little difference between the two groups in what they bring to the classroom context, we now turn to the evidence obtained and observed within the teaching and learning process that constitutes the 'different courses' of the thesis title.

Returning to the hypothesis stated in 1.4 and 4.1 above that following an International Understanding course results in greater communicative competence in English, the next two chapters present evidence to support the different levels of communicative competence demonstrated by the two groups of learners F and Y. However, before addressing this issue, it is firstly necessary to re-examine the working definition of communicative competence, detailed in 3.4, in order to construct a framework of communicative competence against which to examine and compare the evidence of learner output.

The essence of the working definition of communicative competence arrived at in 3.4 is the ability to employ available resources to convey information and ideas and make sense of messages received through texts and interactions. More precisely, this involves drawing on linguistic knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness of the situation, and pragmatic strategies in order to understand input, and to formulate output appropriate to the context, in both written and spoken forms. Extending from this definition, the following framework specifies the areas of communicative competence which form the basis for analysis of learner written L2 performance presented in this chapter:

Competence	Focus	Written Evidence
linguistic	grammar; lexis	accuracy; complexity; range
sociolinguistic	awareness of audience/context appropriateness of content/topic	comprehensibility
pragmatic	use of communication strategies	interaction with reader; clarification
fluency	quantity; flow; effectiveness of ideas	holistic impression; text length

Table 6.1 Framework for essay data analysis

The three measures of essay, oral interview test and classroom participation employed to assess the communicative competence of the sample learners in relation to this framework are now examined in detail in this and the subsequent chapter. Data for each are presented and discussed, followed by a statistical analysis of their significance.

6.1 Essay administration and problems

Whereas communicative competence is often considered synonymous with oral fluency only, a deliberate decision was taken in this study to investigate the ability of learners to demonstrate competence in written as well as oral communication contexts. Tests of writing 'test[] important skills which no other form of assessment can sample adequately' (Weir 1990:61), and free essay writing is frequently used to assess learner L2 proficiency, fluency, to identify problems, and as a 'more holistic assessment[] of learner competence' (Savignon 2002:4). However, it must be noted that extensive writing in L2, and even in L1, as a method of either teaching or evaluating learners is employed infrequently in Japanese education, due to logistics of large classes, as well as traditional teaching methodology. Thus, for many students writing at text level in L1, let alone in English, is an unfamiliar and possibly arduous task. Indeed, writing is not prioritized in FLT in Japan, with MEXT (2003b) Course of Study alluding to the skill in

somewhat vague terms. Despite references to writing in both the Course of Study for Junior High Schools (MEXT 2003b:2 (JHS)): 'To write correctly about one's thoughts and feelings to the reader', and in the objectives for the obligatory 1st-year senior high school 'English I' course: 'to convey information, ideas etc. by speaking or writing in English' (MEXT 2003b:10 (SHS)), very little indication is given of specific content, or of how 'writing activities' 'should be comprehensively integrated in instruction' (ibid:11). In addition, the whole course entitled 'Writing', usually undertaken in 2nd-year SHS with the specific objective of 'to further develop students' abilities to write down information, ideas etc. in English in accordance with the situation and the purpose' (ibid:13), fails to outline more than three ways of dictation, gap-fill exercises and cohesion awareness in its 'Treatment of Activities' (ibid:13,14), all of which indicate an emphasis on accuracy (see Kobayakawa 2008). Indeed, in spite of the admirable aims expressed in the 'Treatment of Contents', that

> the purpose for writing should be emphasized in instruction, not only learning language elements but also transmitting information and ideas etc. In so doing, emphasis should be placed on the process of writing to make students' writing richer in content and more appropriate in form …
>
> (MEXT 2003b:14)

little evidence of such writing instruction has been identified by the researcher. Most writing done in Japanese schools falls into the category of 'sentence level reinforcement exercises' (White 1980), explained by Hedge (1988:7) as 'an aid to learning … to consolidate the learning of new structures or vocabulary or help students remember new items of language', and not to 'help students to write whole pieces of communication, to link and develop information, ideas, or arguments' (ibid:8). Likewise, in heavily multiple-choice-biased public examinations, discussed in Chapter Nine below, essay-type questions are far from the norm, with the Center Test containing no productive item types. Whereas Kikuchi (2006) traced a decline in the percentage of short answer/essay type questions between 1994 (17.5%) and 2004 (6.82%) in 10

university entrance English examinations, an analysis of papers for 55 public universities in 2006 revealed 49.1% (Fraser 2006b), required candidates to write extensively, or even beyond sentence-level (see 9.1.1), indicating a need for learning to write in L2, which is not being met.

Essay writing was, nonetheless, used because it was deemed an efficient way of collecting information on students' ability to express their ideas, as well as a means of revealing aspects of their linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, other modes of sentence-level production not being adequate to this task. Although it might have been desirable to collect written texts at a number of stages throughout the year – and this was indeed considered seriously at the outset – because of time restrictions, the wish to importune as little as possible, and risk of alienating schools and staff, only one essay task was set, and undertaken at the very beginning of the learners' 2nd year at their schools. To avoid this essay task becoming either a test of knowledge or of creative imagination, or to advantage students with any particular experiences related to an essay title, and thus to focus on language use, a simple, open topic was selected: 'Write about a book or a film'. An English rubric clearly outlined the task, stating the emphasis was on content, not on spelling. Contrary to any written work set in textbooks and exams, a time limit (20 minutes) rather than a wordcount was specified (see Appendix 4f).

The justification for setting the 'film/book' task was that it was a topic open to personal interpretation, it required no specific background knowledge (Weir 1990:60), as any example of the medium was acceptable, needed a very short, simple rubric, and yet was a text type with two foci or language functions (description and opinion). In addition, the task assigned reflects suggested Language Activities for 'English I' (MEXT 2003b:10): 'To organize and write down information obtained by listening or reading, one's own ideas, etc.' and 'organizing and presenting one's own opinions about what has been listened to or read' (ibid:11).

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Group F undertook this task in class in June 2007, with two members absent. Although the book/film review task parallels those suggested in the 'Reading' course, which many senior high schools include in their 1st-year programme – 'To read stories etc. and talk or write about one's own impressions' (ibid:12) – at school Y, the head of English for that year (Mr H), deemed the topic too challenging for his students, who were, he assumed, not at all accustomed to writing in English. After discussion, it was decided that the whole year group would write an essay as part of their mid-term exam in late June 2007, but that the title needed to be 'simpler'. Thus, 'Write about your hometown', with a Japanese rubric, (see Appendix 4f), along with a time limit of 15 minutes was agreed upon. Hence, factors of topic, time and conditions under which the essays were written differed between schools, and had to be compensated for when the scripts were analysed (see 6.2). But, as this title still satisfied the conditions of 'known/familiar content' and 'no correct answer', it also served to elicit an adequate example of free written communication from group Y.

6.2 Essay analysis criteria

The initial intention had been to assess essay data according to publicly recognised scales and descriptors, and hence those of both CEF (2001) and international tests were examined. As IELTS and TOEFL are designed to assess a wide range of candidates' writing ability, these instruments did not seem sensitive enough to distinguish between the essay data collected under the circumstances of groups F and Y. According to IELTS scales, all the sample students' work would fall into the bands of 3 or 4, demonstrating an 'extremely limited' or 'limited' level of L2 written ability. Similarly, with the TOEFL scale, almost all students would be categorised as 2 – 'seriously flawed'. Even with a public test aimed at a narrower ability range, Cambridge FCE, again almost all F and Y students would fall into the same band of 2 – 'task attempted but not adequately achieved' (Weigle 2002:159,144,152).

As the working definition of communicative competence adopted in this thesis was based on CEF (2001), it was thought desirable to refer to other descriptors laid out in the Council of Europe Framework. However, when examining the essay data, all F and Y students fit into 'B1' or 'A2' at best, and thus the CEF scale was deemed to be not refined enough to identify differences between these writers at such a low level. It was, therefore, necessary to define more appropriate scales in order to identify differences in written communicative competence among these particular groups of learners of English.

All essays [F=37; Y=40] were initially analysed according to the criteria shown in Table 6.2 and itemised in Appendix 6a.

Due to the aforementioned differing amounts of time allocated to students for writing [F=20 mins; Y=15 mins], all quantified data for F essays were reduced by 25% to make the figures for both groups comparable, after which the total number of words written per student (criterion a) was counted. The calculation of a text complexity score (criterion e) was similarly adjusted.

Even though the essay rubric explicitly stated that 'spelling' was not important, since Y students wrote under test conditions, and therefore could not use dictionaries, the creative ways some learners employed to spell certain words (e.g.: *baterfries* [butterflies]; *nudell* [noodles]; *chalacutar* [character]) seemed of interest, to be used as a potential focus for further analysis of this sample of L2 writing, and thus was included as category (c).

As the essay instructions clearly asked students to write both a description and an opinion, the criterion of 'task fulfillment' was divided into 'describe/explain' (l) and 'give opinion/justify why' (m). Although on the whole students attempted, to some extent, to address both parts of the task [F=24; Y=38], this may have been easier to achieve for topic Y, since opinion and description of a place seem more logically

intertwined. With topic F, however, the opinion is an adjunct to explaining the storyline, and thus it is likely that after a detailed description of the plot, there was little time left to express an opinion. This is particularly evident in the points at which six F writers break off, indicating that they had obviously run out of time.

The remaining criteria were selected to classify and evaluate where appropriate aspects of communicative competence as demonstrated within the collected data (see Table 6.2). To assess the linguistic competence of the writers, elements reflecting knowledge and use of L2 grammar and vocabulary were identified. For the criterion of 'accuracy' (d), a score was calculated from the total number of errors per 100 words (excluding spelling mistakes) in each essay. Complexity of writing was examined by analysing both syntactic structures (e) and (g), and lexical range (h) employed by the students. As expectations of written fluency encompass quantity of output, clarity of content and overall flow and effectiveness, fluency was assessed by total wordcount (a) and holistic impression (k) of the writing samples. Categories of 'incomprehensible items' (i) and 'interactions with reader' (j) were also included in the analysis.

Although not always apparent or necessary in written texts, some form of interaction between writer and reader may be evident, and hence the category of 'interactions' (j) was included in the analysis of essay data. Instances of the student directly addressing and clearly involving the reader, as well as rhetorical questions, were totalled. As clarity of expression of ideas is very important in written text and indicates audience awareness, occurrences of words, phrases or longer chunks which rendered the meaning incomprehensible (criterion i) were added. This category included use of L1 terms unfamiliar to a non-Japanese specialist with no L2 paraphrase or explanation, expressions where no meaning or logic could be determined, and illegible handwriting. A category of 'lexical range' (criterion h) was also created, where examples of interesting, difficult or low-frequency vocabulary or expressions demonstrating good L2

use for 1st-year senior high school level learners were totalled. A holistic score of 1–5 (poor – very good) based on native-speaker and professional intuition reflected the final criterion of overall fluency (k), covering flow (i.e. not fragmentation), expression of meaning, 'getting the message across' and ease of understanding for the reader.

	Criteria	F	Y
a	Fluency – total wordcount	93.86	71.87
b	Total errors	11.22	7.65
c	Total spelling errors	1.37	2.00
d	Accuracy – errors per 100 words	12.20	11.94
e	Complexity – MLTU	7.61	8.30
f	Number of sentences	12.41	9.78
g	Complexity – words per sentence	7.61	7.4
h	Lexical range	4.51	2.87
i	Total incomprehensible items	0.51	1.77
j	Interactions with reader	0.45	1.60
k	Holistic fluency (/5)	3.83	2.95
l	Task fulfillment – describes	1.18	0.98
m	Task fulfillment – justifies	0.70	0.91

Table 6.2 Mean scores for criteria for essay analysis

6.3 Inter-rater reliability

As analyses by these criteria include a range of both factual and judgemental data, in an attempt to establish some reliability in the opinions of the assessor, an inter-rater reliability check was conducted (see 4.6.2). A selection of essays was given to a native-speaker university lecturer with over 15 years' experience of teaching EFL to Japanese learners of all age groups, whose impressions of the written data were compared with those of the researcher. Six papers from each of groups F and Y were thus ranked and double marked according to six of the criteria (h,i,j,k,l,m) in Table 6.2 above. The rater (Mr G) was then invited to justify his grading in an interview with the researcher, after which both raters' marks and comments were compared. It was found that although Mr G marked more generously throughout on the holistic fluency scale (k), the overall rankings were consistent between the raters. Agreement on what caused breakdown in communication (criterion i) for group Y essays was apparent in the identical marking of unexplained L1 use and certain incoherent statements, but interestingly initially differed on F data. Whereas the researcher found nothing to impede understanding in the work of these six students, Mr G identified six items, but upon later examination acknowledged that these were only minor grammatical errors. Also, although he noted five uses of L1, since all of these were names of characters in stories, and therefore not in need of translation or paraphrase, it was decided in the discussion to discount them. Despite the explicit instructions, a difference in approach was noticed in the marking of 'lexical range' (criterion h), with Mr G focusing on word-level examples, and the researcher concentrating more on complex expressions and structures for high school students. However, when marked-up scripts were compared, in many cases the phrases highlighted by the researcher contained the lexical items identified by Mr G, and thus agreement was reached. Very similar marking for the other criteria of 'interaction' (j) and 'task fulfillment' (l, m) were also noted. The

resulting overall parallel assessment assures reliability, even though Kudo and Negishi (2002) recommend using six raters for achieving reliability in free composition grading. The findings based on data in Table 6.2 in relation to each of the criteria are now discussed.

6.4 Linguistic competence

In order to be able to write, a certain level of linguistic competence is necessary so that the result is decodable by the reader. Writers should be able to manipulate the orthographic code, follow rules of the syntactic and morphological system, and abide by orthographic conventions, as well as employing a range of lexical items to express their meaning. The following sections illustrate how far the two groups of students are able to demonstrate linguistic competence in their written work, by analysing and discussing their accuracy and the syntactic and lexical complexity within the essay data.

6.4.1 Accuracy

Even though neither group of learners had extensive experience of writing at the text level in L2, it might be presumed that, because of their greater focus on accuracy and adherence to grammar-translation methodology in class (see Chapter Eight), group Y would create fewer errors in their essays. Although the accuracy score (d), calculated from the total number of errors per 100 words (excluding spelling mistakes), could be said to support this supposition, the mean score for Y students is only slightly lower [F=12.2; Y=11.94].

This surprising result seems to stem from the distribution of errors among learners [range: F=4.3–23.5; Y=2.5–36.8 errors per 100 words]. Even though 50% of group Y made fewer than 11 errors per 100 words, including four students who produced 5 or fewer, the very high error rate of Y38 (36.8 per 100w) distorts the mean. An interesting contradiction arises in that it is group Y that actually made more spelling mistakes

[mean: F=1.37; Y=2.0], although, as explained above in 6.2, data for this criterion (c) were not calculated within the accuracy score (d).

When the actual number of errors per essay is totalled (b), the difference between the accuracy of F and Y students becomes even more marked [total errors mean: F=11.22; Y=7.65]. There is, however, a positive explanation for this result. As well as consciously focusing on accuracy, group Y may have overall chosen to 'play safe', and to write a shorter essay in order to minimise the possibility of making errors. Group F, on the other hand, may have concentrated more on expressing their ideas, and subsequently produced on average longer texts [total wordcount (a) mean: F=93.86; Y=71.87]. If writers produce only a short, simple essay, the chance of making errors is likely to be lower than if they attempt to use more complex expressions in a longer text. These aspects of complexity, 'concerned with the extent to which learners produce elaborate language' (Chang 2008:159), are addressed in the following two sections.

6.4.2 Syntactic complexity

An initial analysis considered sentence length (g) as a marker of syntactic complexity, and thus the number of words per sentence in each essay was totalled. Problems immediately arose in ascertaining what constituted a sentence within the data, since many written statements carried meaning but did not conform to accepted definitions of a basic sentence (Richards & Schmidt 2002:480). Furthermore, as this measurement gives little information on the actual structure of the sentences, it cannot distinguish between the complexity of the groups' writings. Even when the range of words per sentence is examined [range: F=5.5–13.2; Y=4.7–15.3 words per sentence], it is not apparent whether these sentences are simple or complex. Sentence length does not necessarily determine complexity, since subordination can occur in short sentences, and strings of items linked only by conjunctions can produce lengthy, but simple, co-ordinated sentences, as seen in the data:

(F26) *She was so shocked that she became sick.*

(F10) *Finally she could speak standerd English and she loved him and he loved her.*

This reinforced the argument that use of the sentence as a syntactic unit of measurement 'is problematic for spoken (and written) data' (Foster, Tonkyn & Wigglesworth 2000:360). After much debate over the fragmentary nature of some essay content, a total number of sentence-like written utterances (f) was arrived at [mean number of sentences per essay: F=12.41; Y=9.78], with, unsurprisingly, group F producing many more, due to their higher wordcount noted above. However, when sentence length (g) (i.e. the number of words per sentence) was calculated, very little difference was shown between the mean scores for each group [(g) mean: F=7.61; Y=7.4].

The above method of analysis was clearly not sophisticated enough to identify differences in syntactic complexity in the written data from this study, so the more reliable measurement of T-unit was adopted instead. The widely used T-unit, or terminal unit, is defined as 'the shortest unit which a sentence can be reduced to, and consisting of one independent clause together with whatever dependent clauses are attached to it' (Richards & Schmidt 2002:566), or, more concisely, as 'one main clause and all its attendant subordinate clauses and non-clausal units' (Lennon 1990:406). This measurement is, however, not free from problems when it is applied to the writing of the students within this sample, in which there are many occurrences of writing short, disjointed utterances mimicking sentences by starting with a capitalised 'Because …', But …', or 'So …' but without appropriate commas, and unrelated to the previous statement:

(Y19) *But I like this city.*

(F12) *So she understood him.*

These items are technically dependent clauses, and as such cannot be counted as T-units.

Such sentence-like structures, or 'incomplete' sentences (Swan 1980:154), constitute a substantial percentage of the essays [F=22.2%; Y=15.1%]. A possible explanation for the high occurrence in the F data is the narrative format of the text type, and, as in oral storytelling, the urgency of relating what happened next:

(F6) *And he go to them to help her. And she becomes alone.*

However, production of this fragmentary writing style is reinforced by junior and even lower-level senior high school English textbooks, where modelling of dependent clauses as complete sentences is frequently found. Although well-meaning intentions of presenting simple English may be the justification for inclusion, exposure to such structures appears to have a lasting, and negative, effect on Japanese writing in English.

In addition, the participants have a tendency to write lists with no verb in sentence format:

(Y27) *For example mountain and river.*

Although the nature of the text may encourage the use, as with group Y's topic [total occurrences: F=1; Y=10], these structures are also problematic for analysis. If examples such as those above are discounted, the resulting number of T-units per essay becomes low, which, when compared with the overall wordcount, causes the textual structure to appear more complex than it really is. Nonetheless, since the T-unit, derived from Hunt's work (1965, 1966, 1970, cited in Foster *et al* 2000:360) to measure syntactic development in the writing of native-speaker schoolchildren (ibid:374) is considered 'the most popular unit for the analysis of both written and spoken data' (ibid:360; Mochizuki & Ortega 2008:23), this unit has been adopted for the purposes of the present study.

After dividing each text into T-units, the total number of words per essay was then divided by the number of T-units in that text to calculate the MLTU (mean length of

T-unit), which

> gauges general global complexity that may have been achieved by any means, for example, via increased use of modification such as adjectives and adverbs, increased use of subordination, or a mixture of both.

(ibid)

A higher mean score of MLTU (measure (e)) was found in the written work of group Y [F=7.61; Y=8.3], indicating that slightly more complex syntactic structures were employed by Y students, even though they produced marginally fewer words per sentence (measure (g)) [F=7.61; Y=7.4]. When the actual essays are examined, it becomes apparent again that the nature of the task may have influenced the structural outcome. Long sentences occurring in F data tend to narrate the storyline, and as such contain many co-ordinated dependent clauses:

(F10) *Finally she could speak standerd English / and she loved him / and he loved her.* [14 words; 3 T-units]

(F4) *A tried to kill Spiderman / and A injured B's girlfriend June / and also A injured people who live in that town.* [21 words; 3 T-units]

In contrast, many Y students produced persuasive statements containing more complex, and shorter, conditional structures:

(Y10) *If you came to 'Onsen', you will be happy like in heaven.* [12 words; 1 T-unit]

(Y27) *When you see it, you feel Japanese tradicional culture.* [9 words; 1 T-unit]

(Y15) *You'll be surprised when you see them.* [7 words; 1 T-unit]

This is, however, not always the case, and F students also created long and syntactically complex sentences:

(F10) *When I watched this movie, I thought that if I was dirty girl, I can beautiful women.* [17 words; 1 T-unit]

(F14) *First character, in so far as I can remember, is F[name]* [11 words; 1 T-unit]

(F40) *At the station he met a man's ghost who can touch things*. [12 words; 1 T-unit]

and occurrences of short, simple sentences are also found in the Y data:

(Y2) *I live in M[town]. They call 'Kura' there are wonderful.*

(Y17) *My hometown is very beautiful. It's fun. I like 'Oyaki' very much. It's very good. I love S[city].*

(Y20) *I live in W[town]. There are many nature. We are very excitied. W[Town] is very nice!*

6.4.3 Lexical range

MEXT specifies the approximately 900 lexical items to be memorised by completion of junior high school, but no list is given for the additional 900 words students are expected to acquire in senior high school (YT3 interview). Although students are exposed to a wide range of words and expressions in the authorised textbooks, it is interesting to examine whether learners retain and are able to actively use the more complex items encountered in class, and whether they can demonstrate ability to produce original, but appropriate, lexical items acquired beyond obligatory course materials. Examples of vocabulary and expressions deemed difficult, low-frequency, unexpected, or creative, demonstrating advanced lexical range for 1st-year senior high school students were identified within the essay data, and confirmed with a former English teacher at school Y, who was not directly involved in this research. The resulting totals per text are presented in category (h) on Table 6.2.

The range of occurrences of these complex lexical items per essay [overall range: 0–8] illustrates that many learners attempted to manipulate their linguistic resources to express their ideas beyond the expectations for 1st-year students. However, much more adventurous use of English lexis was found in the F data, where at least two items per

text were noted [F range = 2–8]. Although Y33 produced 7 examples of lexical sophistication in her essay, four Y students relied only on simple vocabulary [Y range = 0–7]. Furthermore, when the spread of scores tabulated within category (h) is examined, 48.6% of F students employed 5 or more complex vocabulary items or expressions in their essays, as opposed to only 10% of group Y. Apart from input differences related to coursebook selection and exposure to English speakers discussed in Chapter Eight, this disparity in knowledge, or use, of L2 lexis may be accounted for by extensive reading. As extensive reading is now widely acknowledged as beneficial for L2 vocabulary acquisition and overall L2 ability (see Day & Bamford 1998; Nation 2001), the fact that graded readers are incorporated into the 'English I' course for group F (see Chapter Eight), may have had a particular influence on the range of vocabulary produced in F essays. In addition, the choice of essay topic once again has a strong impact on the likely range of vocabulary, as several items related directly to the book the F students read and reviewed, and unlikely to have been learned elsewhere, emerged in their essays. It is, therefore, not surprising that the results show a wide discrepancy in the mean scores for measure (h) [F=4.51; Y=2.87], as illustrated by the following examples from group F: *optimistic*; *villain*; *emancipation*; *introverted*; *revive*.

6.5 Fluency

For the purposes of this study, fluency is defined in 3.4 as the ability to produce appropriate amounts of connected output to convey meaning under pressure of real time and without excessive hesitation phenomena, which in writing terms may be indicated by crossings out. Fluency was thus examined in relation to two measures identified in the framework in Table 6.2, of wordcount (a) and holistic fluency impression (k) within the essay data, and clear differences between the written work of the two groups were apparent.

6.5.1 Total wordcount

In accordance with this widely accepted measure of fluency (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim 1998:14; Way, Joiner & Seaman 2000:174), the wordcount (a) per essay was totalled, and the mean calculated, as shown on Table 6.2. Whereas in general F students clearly managed to write longer essays [mean wordcount (a): F=93.86; Y=71.87], it is the extremes of the spread that generate the most interesting data. Even though Y students represent both ends of the overall range [Y=19–239 words per essay], with the exception of the outlier Y15 (239 words), few Y students wrote extensively, with only 5 of the Y group (12.5%) producing over 100 words each. Although the total wordcount range for group F was not so great [F=41–172 words per essay], the written output ability seems more homogeneous, with 13 students (35.1%) within this group writing over 100 words each. At the lower end of the range, only two F students (5.4%) wrote 50 or fewer words, as opposed to 8 (20%) of group Y producing such short essays. This difference in written output ability may be due to task unfamiliarity of both writing extensively and giving opinions as suggested in 6.1, but may also result from overall motivation and willingness to communicate in English, a theme to be examined later in Chapter Eight.

Text length is thought to influence the overall judgement of how fluent a piece of writing is. The other fluency measure (k), general impression of text upon reader, is now discussed.

6.5.2 Holistic fluency

All 77 essays were initially read and graded on a 5-point scale for holistic fluency, with 12 randomly selected examples being subjected to an inter-rater reliability check, as detailed in 6.3. When assessing students' written work for this criterion (k), native-speaker and professional intuition as to what constitutes holistic fluency was

relied upon, encompassing overall impression, flow of ideas, effectiveness of expression of message, selection of appropriate linguistic items, and quality of content.

A clear difference in holistic fluency between groups F and Y was evident in both the evaluation of the researcher and the second marker (Mr G), as demonstrated in the mean scores for this category (k) [F=3.83; Y=2.95]. A large proportion of F students were rated highly or very highly (4/5 or 5/5) [F=64.9%; Y=37.5%], indicating that students following the International Understanding course seemed more able to convey their message effectively in the written mode. Indeed, 13 F students (35.1%) as opposed to only 5 Y students (12.5%) were awarded the highest mark of 5/5 for holistic fluency. In contrast, half the Y students (50%) were rated as poor (2/5) or weak (1/5) in written expression, but only 6 students (16.2%) of the F group received a low score of 2/5.

It is interesting to find that, although a subjective, qualitative measure, holistic fluency (k) corresponds to the more reliable quantitative measure of total wordcount (a). Parallel scores for text length and impressions of fluency co-occur within the data, confirming that wordcount (a) and holistic fluency (k) seem to be measuring a similar ability. All students, regardless of group, who wrote long texts (over 100 words) were rated highly for overall fluency (4/5 or 5/5), and, with the exception of F15 (47 words; 4/5 fluency), all students who wrote short texts (50 words or fewer) scored only 2/5 or 1/5 on measure (k).

In several essays, items which caused problems of understanding for the reader, and as a result may have contributed to the overall impression of fluency, were identified, as discussed next.

6.6 Incomprehensible items

Words and phrases within the essay data which caused the reader to be unable to grasp easily, if at all, the intended meaning of the writer were coded and totalled as category

(i), and the possible source of misunderstanding was then analysed.

Altogether, 90 examples of items causing a breakdown in communication were identified throughout the essay data [F=19; Y=71], creating a mean score of incomprehensible items per essay [F=0.51; Y=1.77]. An explanation for this great difference can be proposed when the source of the misunderstanding is examined. In total, 61 examples result from unexplained use of L1 within the essay, and the remaining 29 are linguistic problems caused by misuse of grammar, spelling or word choice which renders part of the text incomprehensible.

Comprehension problem examples arising from students' use of L1 occur almost exclusively within the Y data [F=2; Y=59], and may have been exacerbated by their essay topic. In describing one's hometown, place-names were bound to occur, and were in several cases signalled as such:

> (Y2) *I live in I[town], ...And I[town] has a lot of traditional houses.*

> (Y26) *And you should visit K[town]. There is many shop buildings. It is a little cool there.*

However, many examples lacked any clues as to the possible referent of the L1 items:

> (Y9) *Kawawnakajima no gassen is very popular among the Japanese people.*

> (Y28) *judan Ekiden is very exciting.*

Similarly, many local foods and pastimes were recommended or mentioned, in which some students paraphrased or contextualised these regional delicacies and experiences:

> (Y10) *'Onsen' is bath. It has many effect that makes you beautiful and reflesh. It makes you healthy.*

> (Y34) *N[city] popular food is 'Soba'. Soba is Japanese nudell.*

But, there were also many occurrences of L1 items being included or listed without any explanation:

(Y1) *There are many kawanina*; (Y17) *I like 'oyaki' very much. It's very good.*

(Y20) *W[town] is famous of Botan.* (Y29) *We often 'Ohanami' here.*

(Y22) *For example, soba, hachinoka, zazamushi.*

Thus, although several paraphrases and/or explanations were provided for using L1 words, many of which were highlighted by 'inverted commas', many Y students did not attempt to translate or contextualise items they presented in Japanese within their essays, which may indicate a lack of sociolinguistic competence of audience awareness. There seems to be a failure to recognise that the reader may not be familiar with Japanese names, places and items, and although terms for Japanese food and customs are increasingly being adopted into English usage and dictionaries, they are not universally recognised and understood. Thus, in this respect, group Y are not as sociolinguistically competent as group F.

In contrast, within the F data occurrences of L1 use are much less prevalent. Several items that are written in romanised script, but are clearly Japanese names of characters, authors or actors, or the title of the book or film, have not been counted within this category (i), since they neither interfere with the understanding of the text, nor can be translated. Only two cases were identified which could have caused a problem for the reader. After his opening sentence, F38 had written something in Japanese script, which may have puzzled the reader, but which in fact is the original title of the book, that he had already attempted to translate:

(F38) *My favorite book is 'twelve of angels' [Japanese script]. This story is ...*

The slightly less straightforward example by F33 is at first sight a non-English word, of a possible Japanese phonological combination, but only by pronouncing the item does its significance become clear:

(F33) *And this is a ziburi colection.*

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The problem results from an orthographical representation of a phonological error. By referring to the two previous sentences and applying a little background knowledge, it becomes apparent that F33 was attempting to write 'Ghibli' (Miyazaki Hayao's animation movie studio), did not know the actual spelling, and because of L1 interference with the production of two phonemes and a consonant cluster, produced the initially incomprehensible item *'ziburi'*.

All other incomprehensible items found in group F's essays fall within the second subcategory of linguistic problems, and outnumber those made by Y students [F=17; Y=12]. 'Linguistic problems' can be further sub-divided into those which can be explained by spelling, word choice, L1 transfer, confusing grammatical structure, and those the meaning of which even with background knowledge remains elusive, each of which are now exemplified below.

Whereas *coan* (F2), *siater* (F33) and *dericors* (Y24) seem to represent 'corn', 'theatre' and 'delicious' respectively when read aloud, it is not always so clear whether the misunderstanding is caused by misspelling or word choice:

(F28) *The boys are twist.* [twins? twits?]

(Y5) *In the mountens, we can sky.* [ski? see the sky?]

(Y17) *Because S[city] sorrowed to the mountains…* [is surrounded by? shadowed by?]

Since modern Japanese adopts and adapts so many foreign words into everyday usage (Stanlaw 2004), students are not always aware that certain items are not genuine English. Although Y15 previously describes *anzu* (apricot) well, she presumes that the reader will accept the Japanese coinage of *soft-cream* (soft ice-cream) without further explanation:

(Y15) *Anzu is a fruit whose taste is sweet. It is like an orenge … And you can eat*

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'Anzu-softcream'

Likewise, despite contextualisation, understanding of the Japanese abbreviated form *supa* (supermarket) is essential to make sense of Y34's recommendation:

(Y34) *If you come to N[city], you sould go to 'supa'. N[city] has many 'supa'. It is very good.*

Even though both Y13 and Y19 avoided using an L1 item by direct translation of the Japanese *hanabi* as 'fire flower', this is likely to be interpreted as the name of a summer flower from a western reader's viewpoint without the cultural knowledge that the Japanese frequently hold firework displays in summer:

(Y19) *In summer, we can see big fireflower at many place.*

The ambiguity of (F10) *And heroin is strong English speaker* [is she good at English, or does she speak heavily accented English?] is clarified if the reader recognises that *This book's Hero is Language inguist* (Henry Higgins) and knows the story of 'Pygmalion' (Shaw 1912). Similarly, the somewhat unlikely message grammatically encoded by (F30) *When Pharoah was Seti I, many Hebrew babies killed soldiers* is unravelled by the reader's Biblical background knowledge, but not so in the case of (F34): *Moses, was known in himself life episod*. However, without having actually read the books or seen the films, it is even more difficult to grasp the meaning of some statements:

(F37) *but he must finish a tuke to his family and son.*

(F7) *It is written their hearts grown.*

(F18) *The rainy season of one day, main character's wife rise.*

even when some are grammatically possible:

(F12) *When she saw many things, he (Seiji) entered it.*

(F9) *But they never give up to prison everything.*

(F1) *He is like temples.*

Finally, even if the reader knows that *Hotaru* are fireflies, it is hard to imagine what Y1 had in mind:

> (Y1) *My junior school[name] student are act for Hotaru. ... We cared after Hotaru's children to increase their lives.*

And, even with the knowledge that *kamoshika* translates as Japanese mountain goat, and *Onsen* is a hot spring, Y41's intended message remains a mystery:

> (Y41) *Sometimes we see many monkies, Kamoshika and wild bigs when sking. We will be able to in Onsen they together. it is very cute.*

6.7 Interaction

One further category explored within the essay data is that of interaction with reader (j), which includes instances of the writer directly addressing or involving the reader, and the use of rhetorical questions. Such examples are interpreted as evidence of pragmatic competence, in that writers 'speak' to the reader to check that the context/content is understood, as one would in face-to-face conversation. Again, text type influenced interactive strategies employed in the essays, with Y students generally interpreting the topic as a persuasive advertisement for their hometown, and F students tending to produce a narrative or description. Hence, the inclusion of 2nd-person pronoun and techniques of direct address are understandably fewer in the F data [mean score (j): F=0.45; Y=1.60]. Of the overall 81 examples of interaction (j) identified [F=17; Y=64], almost all (75) address the reader directly with 2nd- person pronoun.

The six exceptions, all from the F data, employ different techniques to involve the reader. The formulaic speech opening often found in high school textbooks is adopted by F14:

> (F14) *Today, I'm going to talk about the book called 'GO!!'*

and two writers make a recommendation in the form of a direct plea:

> (F21) *Please watch many movie and have a enjoy time!*

(F24) *Please see 'Touch' and high school baseball game.*

To involve the reader in the story, F26 poses thought-provoking rhetorical questions throughout her essay, which in a face-to-face encounter would have generated discussion:

(F26) *She was mad? Where the friends had gone? Was his action true?*

Whereas F26's examples provide the only use of question marks in the F data, this orthographic convention occurs 10 times in Y essays, for different purposes. Four rhetorical questions are posed, commencing with *Why don't you come to/join …?*, which function as recommendations. Two further questions may be seeking a real response, but may be interpreted as invitations to join the writer:

(Y25) *Shall we eat fish?*

(Y37) *Can you ski?*

and the remaining four could be genuine questions, or just devices to check the reader's understanding and continued involvement, in the way that 'you know?' in conversations keeps the channel of communication open: *Do you know [~ place]?*

The function of by far the largest group of interaction examples is categorised as making a recommendation, in particular for a place to visit, or an activity or food to try. Structures including 2nd-person pronoun and a modal verb occurred 14 times within the Y data, with differing degrees of insistence:

(Y35) *You can learn old Japanese history.*

(Y27) *I think you should visit C[city].*

(Y16) *In my opinion, you must visit our city.*

(Y18) *You must visit C[city]. You will be able be enjoy summer vacation.*

In addition, 13 conditional sentences were identified, the only example from group F

indicating awareness of potential readership:

(F6) *If this book is translated, I want you to read this very much.*

As well as recommending things to do and eat:

(Y3) *If you haven't play skiing, you'll love it.*

(Y26) *When you visit N[city], you should eat oyaki.*

advice is offered to the visitor:

(Y29) *If you visit my town, bring camera.*

In a stylistically adventurous example, Y40 changes the authorial voice by imagining and quoting the reader's thoughts:

(Y40) *If you think 'I want to see green tree' or 'I want to see beutiful flower', you should visit C[city].*

Although not tabulated separately for the essay data, it is interesting to examine the start and end of the texts. Whereas the majority of students plunged straight into descriptive mode, F37 opened in speech style, with *Good afternoon*, Y25 likewise attracted the audience's attention with a rhetorical question *Do you know M[city]?*, and 12 F students immediately stated their purpose by *I will explain about .... / I want to talk about ...* As several writers had clearly run out of time, not every essay signalled an ending. With the exceptions of misplaced *Thank you* adopted from public speaking mode (Y20; Y25; F6), and the abrupt *END* (F34), those who did signal a closing phase appropriately concluded with a recommendation [F=2; Y=19].

The above examples and discussion appear to demonstrate that although little difference was noted in syntactic complexity between the sample learners' work, group Y attempted to interact with the reader more, and their writing was overall more grammatically accurate, whereas the essays for group F were generally rated as more fluent and lexically complex. Without statistical proof, however, the significance of

these conclusions cannot be confirmed.

6.8 Statistical analysis of essay data

To establish whether there is any significant difference between the written competence of groups F and Y, statistical analyses were conducted (see Appendix 6b). Within the essay data, 13 variables were listed and examined, and descriptive statistics were produced. One-way ANOVAs were initially performed to investigate whether the two groups, F and Y, differed in each index. However, since the *t*-test is more robust for comparing two entities or populations, the decision to use *t*-tests for Equality of Means instead was taken. The amount of data in the present study [n = F:37; Y:40] satisfied the criterion of 15 subjects for a *t*-test to be valid, and hence, because of the large number of participants, skew and kurtosis abnormalities are not important. As there were 13 indices, the alpha level was adjusted to be stricter (.0038). Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed that variance between the two groups was below 5%, and therefore significant, requiring *t*-tests with adjustments, automatically conducted by SPSS program, to be used.

Significant differences were observed in five indices, where $p = .005$ or less:

   (b) Total errors ($p = .001$)

   (h) Lexical range ($p = .000$)

   (i) Incomprehensibility ($p = .000$)

   (j) Interactions ($p = .000$)

   (k) Holistic fluency ($p = .001$)

Although a statistically significant difference between the two groups has been established, the relevance of these results needs to be interpreted. Not all results are initially favourable toward group F, but explanations for the outcomes can be offered.

With result (b), it must be noted that group Y produced fewer errors, indicating a higher level of accuracy among Y students' writing. However, the evidence that group Y produced significantly less lexically challenging work, result (h), may suggest that they are conservative, 'playing safe' learners who are concentrating on accuracy at the expense of creativity. In contrast, the higher number of errors found in F essays may result from their employment of a significantly more advanced range of vocabulary and expressions.

A significantly larger number of interactions with the reader (j) is found in the Y data, which is likely to be a result of the type of task set for group Y, along with possible exposure to similar text types in course materials. The finding that Y students produced significantly more incomprehensible items (i) within their essays, the majority of which being caused by using unexplained L1 words, as demonstrated in 6.6 above, supports the proposition that F students are more aware of the need for clarification for their reader, but may also result from the difference in task type.

The final result (k) reinforces the impression that group F are more fluent writers, by demonstrating a significant difference in holistic fluency between the two populations.

It should be added that although significant differences were not found in all indices, each aspect discussed and exemplified above is to be treated as of interest, since they too contribute to the overall body of evidence presented in this study to test the hypothesis of the research.

6.9 Conclusions on written performance

From a close analysis of the essays produced by the participants in this study, it is apparent that, overall, group F demonstrates a higher level of written communicative competence. Among the 13 categories examined evidence of more extensive, adventurous and fluent writing is found in the data from group F. Students following

course F wrote, on the whole, longer texts, employing a wider range of complex vocabulary and expressions, and containing fewer incomprehensible items, although, not surprisingly, their accuracy rate was poorer, due to greater risk taking where 'a measure of accuracy may not reflect complexity' (Foster & Skehan 1996:304), although all markers of increased proficiency, fluency, complexity and accuracy do not necessarily all increase in tandem (Wolfe-Quintero *et al* 1998:4). Moreover, their essays made a stronger impression of holistic fluency on the reader, suggesting a greater ability to communicate their message through this medium among F students, with a focus on 'the primacy of meaning' (ibid).

In contrast, although the essays of group Y demonstrate slightly more syntactic complexity, their closer attention to accuracy 'may be the result of relatively simple, well-controlled forms being used to achieve a more target-like use of language' (ibid) and a desire for error avoidance. Nonetheless, the greater accuracy rate of this finding supports the hypothesis, to be explored in Chapter Nine, that learners following traditional grammar-focused EFL courses are more likely to have higher linguistic competence and thus to be more successful in L2 proficiency tests.

The observations made on mean scores and individual examples from the essays are reinforced by the statistical analyses on this collection of data, which confirm that, in particular, there is a significant difference between the accuracy, lexical range, incomprehensibility and holistic fluency in the written work of groups F and Y.

Having investigated the written ability of the participants, attention is turned in the following chapter to a second area of L2 production, that of spoken competence.

Chapter Seven

Evidence of spoken communicative competence

The following chapter continues the analysis of data in order to present evidence to demonstrate the communicative competence of the learners in this study, but, as explained in Chapter Six, this time the focus is on spoken contributions by the participants in two contexts of oral interview test and classroom participation. Referring again to the working definition of communicative competence outlined earlier in 3.4, oral data are now analysed according to a framework similar to that for written data in Table 6.1. Table 7.1 specifies components of communicative competence and foci of the following discussion:

Competence	Focus	Spoken Evidence
linguistic	grammar; phonology; lexis	accuracy; complexity; range
sociolinguistic	awareness of social relations and conventions	greetings; apologies; politeness expressions
pragmatic	use of communication strategies	interaction; turn-taking; clarification
fluency	quantity; flow; effectiveness of ideas	holistic fluency; length of turns; pause; hesitation phenomena

Table 7.1 Framework for interview test data analysis

7.1 The oral interview test

As neither of the widely acclaimed public examinations in Japan (TOEIC; EIKEN) includes a written component, an essay task specific to this study had to be created in order to collect data on written competence. When investigating spoken competence, however, as EIKEN does contain an oral component, it was possible to use this interview test format. This decision was made for reasons of consistency, in that the

listening, reading and grammar sections of EIKEN Pre-2nd test were used as the pre-/post-test to assess academic achievement, (see Chapter Nine), and to standardise the interactional procedure and topics, which would enable a more uniform analysis. As a very popular nationally recognised proficiency test, the reliability and validity of EIKEN should be assured, and ease of administration should be guaranteed, yet the content is potentially flexible enough to encourage the production of a wider range of oral data than expected in the actual interview test, as explained below in 7.1.4.

7.1.1 Format of EIKEN Pre-2nd oral test

The oral component of the EIKEN Pre-2nd test is intended to assess the spoken proficiency of candidates, and contains an informal exchange which is not graded, a reading aloud section, three questions directly based on this reading text and picture stimulus, and two further tenuously linked or unrelated questions. The test is conducted between one candidate and one examiner, who must follow the exam protocol precisely, with a duration of between six and eight minutes. The examiner is almost always Japanese, with native-speaker examiners utilised by The Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) only for the highest level of proficiency (1st grade) oral test. The proceedings are not recorded. Grading, therefore, takes place during the test, and adheres to criteria focusing narrowly on accuracy of grammar, pronunciation and content, as well as responding in complete sentences, as discussed in Chapter Nine. Topics cover a range of everyday activities, and do not seem designed to cognitively challenge the candidates, nor encourage them to think and express their own ideas. After examining several years' past papers, the theme for discussion selected for the present research was 'language learning and reading', considered to be both relevant to the students' own situation, and a little more demanding. The pictures and text input for candidates, and questions to be asked by the examiner, are presented in Appendices 4d & 4e.

7.1.2 Administering the oral test

As the purpose of utilising the test was to elicit a large enough sample of spoken data, a more flexible approach to administering the EIKEN oral test was adopted, in that the exchange, although tape-recorded, was not conducted under strict exam conditions, and the introductory questions and conversation were considered an important element. In order to reduce exam stress, and to create a more natural context for the interaction, it was decided that the native-speaker assistant language teachers (ALTs) at each school should undertake the role of interviewer, rather than the researcher. As well as familiarity, other reasons for using a native-speaker interviewer were to minimise learner reliance on reverting to L1 when in difficulty, and to encourage realistic interaction which could demonstrate the student's sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, rather than just focusing on linguistic accuracy. However, so that the student data produced could be comparable, exam conditions in terms of order of questions and number and nature of prompts given by interviewers were adhered to.

Ten students from each of groups F and Y were randomly selected by their class teacher at the start of the research project, thus, every fourth Y student on the class list (Y4, Y8, Y12, Y16, Y20, Y24, Y28, Y32, Y36, Y40), and a mix of boys and girls from group F (F6, F9, F13, F17, F21, F25, F28, F34, F39, F3) participated in the oral assessment process. As part of phase one of the data collection, Lena (Y) and Rick (F) conducted the EIKEN test in early June 2006, then the sample students underwent the same oral test near the end of their 1st-year course, but with Harry (Y) and Annie (F) as interviewers. Scores of EIKEN [1] test taken in May 2006 demonstrate that the two groups were comparable in terms of overall proficiency at the start of senior high school English.

As the focus of this study is on the outcome, i.e. how the learners performed in English after a year of following a specific L2 course, only the results of the analysis of the

second oral test data are detailed here. Due to current constraints of space, a comparison of oral development over the year of study will be conducted as a follow-up paper.

7.1.3 Problems encountered

Although having familiar interlocutors in their ALTs undoubtedly encouraged students to feel more relaxed, and thus to participate more actively, two unforeseen problems occurred that would have been avoided had the researcher played the role of examiner.

Firstly, while conducting her interviews with F students, Annie must have inadvertently pressed the wrong button on the voice recorder, as the oral tests of F34, F39 and F3 were not recorded. This problem only became apparent when the tape was retrieved some time after, at which point it was too late to conduct the test again on those three students. In addition, Y12 was again absent on the occasion of data collection, resulting in, instead of the planned 25% of each group undergoing a speaking test, only 18% of F and 22% of Y students produced oral data at the end of their 1st-year English course. Naturally, this may make any statistical claim less reliable (see 7.6), yet interesting results can still be seen when the data are examined individually.

The second problem was that, despite clear pre-test briefing, Harry (Y) failed to follow the agreed test format exactly. Whereas a STEP examiner is only permitted to give specific prompts, Harry, in his well-meaning attempt to elicit more information, asked several follow-up questions about the pictures (input for Q.2, Q.3). Although in reality this did not generate a lot more student talk, in the analysis any learner contributions after his extra prompts were deleted from the wordcount, to keep data from groups F and Y as comparable as possible.

7.1.4 Analysis of oral data

STEP criteria for assessing the EIKEN oral interview are form-focused, requiring candidates to answer in complete sentences; accuracy-focused, penalising any errors of both segmental and supra-segmental phonology, grammar and lexis; and expect only a narrow range of formulaic responses. On account of this, the STEP evaluation format was rejected for placing importance on linguistic competence, and criteria for analysing all aspects of communicative competence within the data were deemed necessary. As with the essay data, it was not appropriate to adopt assessment categories from other public tests of speaking skills, since TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge FCE and CEF bands were considered not sensitive enough to distinguish among the oral abilities of students in groups F and Y. For example, all participants in this study would be assessed as 'A2' according to CEF (2001) speaking categories. In order to examine multiple aspects of the L2 spoken ability of the participants, an evaluation format specific to this study was therefore created.

All interview recordings were transcribed, with pauses timed and marked in multiples of one second, and phonological inaccuracies noted using IPA phonemic script. As almost all of the criteria selected for analysis are objective and quantifiable, it was decided that an inter-rater reliability check would not be conducted on the spoken data.

Oral test transcripts were then analysed according to 23 factors which both reflect the Council of Europe five qualitative aspects of spoken language use of 'Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction and Coherence' (CEF 2001), and illustrate the four aspects of communicative competence identified in Table 7.1, of linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic competences and fluency. Thus, the oral analysis reflects several of the criteria examined in 6.2 in the essay data.

Fluency is assessed by total number of utterances, total wordcount, number of hesitations/false starts, and total wait-time in seconds (e.g. //8//), with a holistic,

impressionistic grade also being awarded. Accuracy is measured by the total number of errors produced, and is divided into grammatical and phonological errors. The number of A-S units and length of A-S units, explained and exemplified in section 7.3.3 below, along with the range of lexical items and expressions utilised, provide evidence of Range or Complexity. Interactional criteria cover openings and closings, politeness, apologising, initiating, asking for repetition, and general interaction with the interviewer. In addition, as the speech mode is interactional, the number of turns taken by each student is noted, and the nature of those turns analysed. Single-word turns, and those in which ten or more words are uttered are calculated, and an average length of these turns is given. For ease of comparison, all occurrences within the categories of Accuracy, Interaction, Turns, and Lexical Complexity are calculated as per 100 words, due to the differing lengths of the actual oral contributions. Criteria and data are presented in Table 7.2 and itemised Appendix 7a.

Fluency		F	Y
a	Total Utterances	154.57	125.88
b	Hesitations	13.85	12.22
c	False Starts	20.42	17.33
d	Total Wordcount	140.71	113.66
e	Wait time (seconds per 100w)	93.67	109.05
f	Holistic Fluency mark	3.85	2.61
Linguistic Competence			
g	Total of errors (per 100w)	17.43	22.16
h	Grammatical errors (per 100 w)	7.56	8.18
i	Phonological errors (per 100w)	9.97	13.97
j	[d – c] Word Count	120.42	96.22
k	Total A-S Units	24.85	23.77
l	Syntactic Complexity	4.84	3.52
m	Lexical Complexity	3.71	1.99
Sociolinguistic Competence			
n	Openings / closings (per 100w)	1.81	1.50
o	Politeness Expressions (per 100w)	1.87	1.25
p	Apologises (per 100w)	0.51	0.66
Pragmatic Competence			
q	Initiates (per 100w)	0.91	0.35
r	Interacts with examiner (per 100w)	1.70	0.70
s	Asks for Repetition (per 100w)	1.33	0.75
Turns			
t	Total Turns	16.14	17.44
u	Single Word Turns (per 100w)	2.49	5.23
v	Long Turns (per 100w)	3.10	3.03
w	Average Long Turn Length	22.58	18.71
x	Average Turn Length	9.57	7.21

Table 7.2 Mean scores for criteria for oral interview analysis

7.2 Fluency

If we first examine the category of 'Fluency', (columns (a)–(f) on Table 7. 2), a recurring factor in all definitions is that of quantity – fluent speakers tend to speak more, and use longer turns (Luoma 2004:89). Looking at Table 7.2 of mean scores of oral data, it is evident that F students produced a greater number of overall utterances (a) [F=154.57; Y=125.88]. When hesitations (b) such as 'er', 'um', and the frequent L1 *'eto'* are discounted, the total wordcount (d) means show a distinct difference [F=140.71; Y=113.66], indicating that F students may be more capable of understanding their interlocutor, and more willing to express themselves in English under such conversational conditions.

Although a feature of natural native-speaker speech, false starts, repetitions, and self-correcting (c) are considered as indicators of dysfluency (Foster *et al* 2000:368), and it is evident that F students make more of these [F=20.42; Y=17.33]. It could be argued, however, that self-correction and reformulation are positive features of L2 development, as they show language awareness, i.e. that the learners are conscious of their progression along the interlanguage cline, as demonstrated by the following examples:

(F28) *left woman, left side woman ...*

(F19) *the girl written, wrote the picture ...*

(F17) *and a man ah sorry a woman who ...*

(Annie): *Do you think ... ?* (F6): *Yes, I am, I do*.

Altogether 20 examples of self-correction or reformulation, demonstrating awareness of having made an error and attempts to rectify the problem, were noted in F transcriptions, as opposed to only nine in those of Y students.

As 'pause phenomena are key markers of fluency' (Wood 2007:211), time lapses in the

recordings were coded in multiples of one second. Response- and thinking-time are, however, recognised as longer in Japan (Hadley 2003:9) than the typically allocated 5 seconds (Richards & Lockhart 1994:188). Although mean wait-time (e) seconds per 100 words variation was not so great between the two groups [F=93.67; Y=109.05], it was overall fairly long. This suggests that both groups of learners need considerable time to think how to respond, which words to select, and to process their interlocutor's contributions, and emphasises the need for allowing longer wait-time in teacher-learner classroom interaction (Thornbury 1996:53). However, when wait-time before any attempt was made at answering a question was calculated, F students on average required less response time [F=29.85 secs; Y=46 secs] before reacting to the prompt, which could be taken as an indication that the F students comprehended the questions posed by the examiner with more ease than did the Y students.

When looking in more detail at the data on wait-time, it is noted that the student who amassed the longest wait time (e) [182 secs per 100 words] in his oral test, Y4, was the one who produced the smallest number of words [Y4: 50 words], and both F students who made long pauses [F9: 171.92; F25: 161.71 secs per 100 words] spoke less than the mean wordcount (d) for their group of 140.71 words [F9: 114; F25: 128 words]. However, those pausing for the shortest amount of time within their oral interviews [F28: 30.76; F6: 35.59 secs per 100w] created the greatest impression of being fluent speakers by receiving the highest overall holistic fluency score.

This holistic fluency mark, the only purely subjective score, was graded on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest, based on the researcher's native-speaker and professional intuition, recognised as a credible criterion since Chomsky's work, as to what seemed a more fluent performance. As this score reflects only one opinion, it cannot be considered reliable on its own, but when taken as one of the factors for statistical analysis (see 7.6 below), it can contribute to the evidence of a general trend in

the results. Moreover, recording an overall impression of the student contribution, as with the essay data, also has its value. Interestingly, those learners receiving the highest mark in the oral do not necessarily score highly on written fluency. Although F6 and F28 both attained 5/5 in the oral and written holistic assessment, F17 only scored 2/5 for her essay, despite being evaluated very highly (5/5) on oral ability. Conversely, whereas Y32 received the top score of 5/5 for written fluency, his overall spoken performance was estimated at the low score of 2, with no Y students being awarded a holistic fluency score of 5/5 in the oral test, due to reticence and a lack of flow in their interaction.

In summary, in regard to the three markers of fluency examined here – wordcount, hesitation and wait-time, and holistic fluency – the data analysed in these categories provide evidence of greater observable and quantifiable oral fluency in students in group F. Other aspects of oral competence will now be investigated.

7.3 Linguistic competence

Two main factors are examined under the category of linguistic competence, those of accuracy, both grammatical and phonological, and complexity, both syntactic and lexical, as detailed in the following sections.

7.3.1 Accuracy

It may be presumed that learners following an academic course with more focus on grammar and exam preparation would, as a result, be more precise in their grammatical production than those whose lessons emphasise fluency and expression of meaning, such as in specialist English courses. It is thus somewhat surprising to find that the overall accuracy mean score in the oral test, as measured by the total number of errors per 100 words (g) for the International Understanding course students (F) is lower than for the academic course group (Y) [F=17.43; Y=22.16] (see Table 7.2). When these

results are divided into grammatical (h) and phonological (i) categories, the sources of errors become apparent, rejecting the above presumption.

The ten common written-error types made by Japanese learners of English classified by Suenobu and Nagaoka (1999 cited in French 2005:372–3) are now referred to in relation to spoken data, where it is assumed they may also be produced. The three most common (article omission/misuse/unnecessary addition; plural problems; omission of 3rd-person singular '-s') are considered to be unacceptable by native speakers (French 2005). Although these categories are fairly equally exemplified in the transcripts of both F and Y students, the percentage of these types of errors in comparison to the total number of errors per group is not so high [F=42.46%; Y=34.48%]. Whereas a large proportion of this percentage constitutes article problems for Y students [Y=29.88%], the F data show a more even spread between the sources of errors [F= articles: 19.17%; plurals: 15.06%; '-s': 8.21%]. Two further categories, not identified in Suenobu and Nagaoka's (1999) list, but also comparable in F and Y data, are labelled as 'preposition problems' [F=15.06%; Y=14.94%], and 'general verb errors' [F=30.13%; Y=37.93%]. Although three further categories emerged in the data, of 'wrong word use', 'omission of a word', and 'possessive pronoun problems', with Y students producing slightly more word-related errors than the F group, it is evident that most errors produced by the participants fall into these five easily identifiable types, which account for 87% of the errors made by both groups. Thus, it can be concluded that F and Y students do, in fact, perform fairly similarly in grammatical accuracy (h) in an oral test situation.

If, however, their errors of pronunciation are examined, a different picture seems to emerge. Phonological errors were calculated by transcribing student utterances in IPA, as produced, then comparing these representations with the 'ideal native speaker' model, as generally presented and preferred in Japan (see 3.4). As native-speaker-like precision in supra-segmental features of sentence stress and intonation is less likely to

be attained at this stage in their L2 development, only deviations from this 'norm' of the more teachable and quantifiable articulation of vowels and consonants, as well as stress patterns at the word-level, were classified as errors. Totals of occurrences per group of each error are given in brackets (…) to illustrate each point.

It is suggested that phonological errors occur due to L1 interference, as variations typical of Japanese learners of English (Thompson 1987; Shimaoka & Yashiro 1990) are seen in the oral interview data. Vocalic problems with diphthongs and lenis, and /ə/ and /ʌ/ (F=4; Y=8) probably stem from there being only five pure vowels in Japanese. Likewise, the addition of word-final ghost -/ɒ/ (F=5; Y=2) may likely result from L1 phonological combinations in which, with the exception of -/n/, syllables, and therefore words, always end in a vowel sound. Whereas relatively few problems occurred with vowels, and word stress (F=1; Y=6), the overwhelming majority of phonological errors relate to consonants (F=61; Y=103).

Problems with the articulation of consonants may similarly be a result of overcompensating for or interchanging sounds not occurring [/θ/ð/ʤ/w/] or because of the lack of distinction between [/l/r/; /b/v/; /s/ʃ/; /f/h/] in Japanese. L1 interference may also account for problems in producing consonant clusters (F=9; Y=15), which do not occur in Japanese, and in nasalising word-final /-n/ (F=16; Y=12). Although the range of such errors was very similar between groups F and Y, the distribution was not, with the mean scores for phonological accuracy (i) for F and Y groups being 9.97 and 13.97 respectively, possibly suggesting that either group Y are not so aware of features of pronunciation, or do not regard articulation as so important.

Whereas the slight difference in grammatical accuracy [mean scores: F=7.56; Y=8.18] is perhaps unexpected, the greater phonological accuracy displayed by F students [mean scores: F=9.97; Y=13.97] may be explained by their having more opportunities to listen to and interact with native speakers, both within their course (see Chapter

Eight) and in extra-curricular situations (see Chapter Five).

As well as being linked to a higher level of fluency (see 7.2), this difference in phonological accuracy may also be accounted for by learner attitudes elicited in the student questionnaires used in this study. It could be suggested that those who hold native-speaker pronunciation in high regard are perhaps likely either to desire to achieve, or even actively attempt to emulate, these models of speech. Questionnaire responses reveal that overall a large majority of the 39 F and 41 Y students consider having native-speaker-like pronunciation as important [F=39; Y=35], substantiating previous research on similar high school populations (Matsuda 2003:488; Fraser 2006a:86). However, when asked which form of English pronunciation they preferred to listen to, opinions differed between the two groups. Whereas 24 F students selected native-speaker varieties as their preferred accent, only 16 Y students did, with a further 13 from school Y stating their preference for Japanese English pronunciation, and 6 providing no response. These results may account in part for the difference in phonological accuracy noted in the assessment of the oral tests. Since many F students appear to consider native-speaker-like pronunciation as desirable as recipients, classroom and extra-curricular circumstances aside, they may be consciously making a greater effort in their proactive articulation of English, and thus are producing fewer phonological errors. In contrast, perhaps the higher esteem for Japanese English pronunciation in group Y [Y=13; F=3] may be contributing, subconsciously or deliberately, to the lower level of phonological accuracy identified in the oral data of Y students.

7.3.2 Complexity

As discussed in relation to written data from student essays in sections 6.4.2 & 3 above, a second factor in addition to accuracy that contributes to overall linguistic competence is complexity. Syntactic and lexical complexity are now analysed within the oral data

generated in the interview test by groups F and Y.

7.3.3 Syntactic complexity

Since 'transcriptions of complex oral data ... tend not to lend themselves easily to a clear division into units' (Foster *et al* 2000:354), several ways of analysing student interview data for complexity were considered. Dividing output into 'utterances' as defined by Crookes and Rulon (1985, cited in Crookes 1990:187) was deemed problematic for Japanese speakers of English, who pause frequently and erratically and would be unlikely to provide segments which contain at least one of the characteristics proposed (ibid). Other syntactic units of clause or sentence are inappropriate, since, even though EIKEN oral test criteria require candidates to answer in complete sentences, this is not the norm in natural interaction.

Although the popular T-unit was adopted in the analysis of the essay data in 6.4.2 above, 'there are indications in the literature that the T-unit definition is inadequate to deal with full analysis of spoken discourse' (Foster *et al* 2000:360), particularly that of non-native speakers. Because of the 'fragmentary and elliptical' (ibid:357) nature of spoken language, Foster *et al* proposed the Analysis of Speech Unit (A-S unit), as a unit of analysis that is 'psychologically valid' and 'can be applied reliably to a wide range of oral data' (ibid:365). The A-S unit, defined as 'a single speaker's utterance consisting of *an independent clause, or sub-clause unit* , together with any *subordinate clause(s)* associated with either' (ibid), can therefore accommodate 'dysfunctional features' by having 'a principled way of excluding such phenomena from the total wordcount' (ibid:368). Thus, features coded in the interview data (see Table 7.2) natural to L2, and L1, users, of false starts and self-corrections (c), and hesitations involving repetition of items or syllables (b) were omitted from the overall number of utterances (a) when 'total wordcount', category (d), was calculated. Of the three suggested levels, level one for a full analysis of all data was followed, which included

'everything except untranscribable data, although single inaudible words of identifiable word class should be included' (ibid:370).

To examine syntactic complexity of oral competence, all 16 interview transcripts were analysed into A-S units, which are 'valid and sensitive to genuine differences in performance' (ibid:372). As the resulting differences in total A-S units (k) [mean (k): F=24.85; Y=23.77] reflect text length, the mean A-S unit length (l) per group was calculated by dividing total wordcount (d) by the number of A-S units (k): [mean (l): F=4.84; Y=3.52]. Although these results may have been affected by the test format, in which few questions demanded complex structure answers, the difference between the two groups may be accounted for in part by the length of turns.

The fact that group Y made slightly more turns [mean (t): F=16.14; Y=17.44] may be the result of Y students needing more prompts from the interviewer, and may have caused them on average to be shorter than the F group turns. If the average length of turns per 100 words is calculated, it is clear that group F produced more items per turn [mean: F=9.57; Y=7.21], and it could therefore be expected that their level of complexity would be higher. Although interview questions could sometimes elicit only one-word responses, the mean score of single-word turns (u) [mean (u): F=2.49; Y=5.23] indicates that fewer F students gave unelaborated answers, with F6 never, and F17 only once using a one-word reply. In contrast, the range of occurrences of one-word utterances (u) was much wider in the Y data [range (u): F=0–5.26; Y=1.72–12], partly accounted for by Y4, who produced by far the lowest wordcount (50 words), responding 12 times with a single word.

However, although complex structures cannot be created within very short turns, it must be emphasised that the number of words per turn does not necessarily correspond to the syntactic complexity of the utterance, a point made above in 6.4.2 in relation to the essay data. Thus, the A-S unit length is a more reliable measure for conclusions on

complexity. Furthermore, in addition to the difference found between groups F and Y in syntactic complexity of spoken output, more evidence of variation in L2 competence emerged when lexical range within the data was examined.

7.3.4 Lexical complexity

As with the essay data analysed in 6.4.3 above, examples of difficult, low-frequency, unexpected or creative lexical items and expressions were totalled in each transcript, and then, for ease of comparison, a score of occurrences per 100 words was recorded. Similarities with the written data were noted, with a wider lexical range (m) apparent in group F oral data [range (m): F=0.87–6.25; Y=0–3.28]. More elaborate language was found in the F sample, with four F students producing 3 or more occurrences per 100 words, as opposed to only Y16 doing so.

Unlike the written test, both groups received identical materials and interviewer input for the oral test. While potentially very similar output could have resulted, group F did attempt to be more creative in their endeavours to express their opinions. This wider active use of L2 knowledge could again be attributed in part to three factors: educational experiences in their course (see Chapter Eight); greater exposure to native-speaker interaction in school and extra-curricular contexts (see Chapter Five); language learning motivation (see Chapter Eight). Whatever the cause, the effect on the listener is that of a higher level of oral communicative competence among F students. Although, unsurprisingly, a similar pool of vocabulary items, collocations and syntactic structures were generated in relation to the picture and question input, the following examples from the transcripts are illustrative of spontaneous attempts to express ideas under the pressures of real time and semi-exam conditions:

(F6) *He is getting angry with her because she painted a picture on on the table.*

(F25) *… a woman is cleaning a window … and a woman is waiting a waiting a coming a elevator.*

(Y24) … *woman used a computer to to read books…*

(Y40) … *the man working in the bookstore arrange books in to bookshelf…*

(F17) *I like fashion but I don't have sense so I I read read fashion magazine and I study fashion.*

Even though group F did produce more examples [mean (m): F=3.71; Y=1.99 per 100 words], overall only a very low percentage of lexical complexity per transcript (0–6.25%) is noted, which may, to some extent, be attributable to the spontaneity of the task. Although the same learners had been interviewed in the pre-test phase almost one year before, they had no warning that the same test would be repeated, and had received no feedback on oral test [1] from which potentially to modify their subsequent performance. Thus, accepting that interview [2] data were unplanned, the infrequent employment of lexical or syntactic complexity by groups F and Y echoes the findings of Foster and Skehan (1996:313) where much less subordination was found in unplanned spoken output.

7.4 Sociolinguistic competence

The oral interview, being a dialogue between two people, does allow for real interaction to occur, however inauthentic the examination input may be. Thus, awareness of the target language society rules and appropriate behavioural patterns in this encounter may demonstrate learner sociolinguistic competence, and perhaps more so since the interlocutor is a native speaker of English. To ascertain how far the interview data can reflect sociolinguistic competence, three sociolinguistic aspects of greetings (n), politeness expressions (o), and apologies (p) are now examined, according to which the oral transcripts were analysed. For ease of comparison, throughout the sociolinguistic section (7.4), all results have been converted into total occurrences per 100 words.

7.4.1 Greetings: openings and closings

As greetings are universal in communication, and a linguistic function taught very early in FL education, it was not surprising to find a high number of greeting adjacency pairs (Coulthard 1985) in the interview data. The mean scores for greetings [F=1.81; Y=1.5] indicate that many students produced both an opening and closing move in their interviews. Three opening expressions ranging from formal to informal were noted: '*Good afternoon/morning*' [F=4; Y=7]; '*Hello*' [F=3]; '*Hi*' [Y=1]. Although all 15 opening expressions by students [F=7; Y=8] were reciprocating the teacher greeting, everyone repeated the interviewer's phrase, except Y28 who gave a novel, if inappropriate in register, response:

Harry: *OK. Good afternoon*

Y28: *Hi*

Whereas little difference is seen in the opening segments, F students employed a wider range of expressions to signal the end of the interview. All five Y students who provided a closing utterance waited for Harry to terminate the conversation, and simply repeated, or slightly varied, his words:

Harry: *Thank you very much.*   Y20: *Thank you.*

Harry: *Thank you.*   Y36: *Thank you very much.*

Interestingly, when Harry quite suddenly and explicitly concluded the dialogue with Y16:

Harry: *Thank you very much. We're finished.*

Y16: [–]

this otherwise chatty student (Y16: 152 words) made no response, perhaps being surprised that their discussion had ended so abruptly.

In contrast, closing expressions by F students showed more variation in content, were mostly student-initiated, and involved more moves. In three cases in the F data, returning the 'reading aloud' card became an indicator of the end of the interview, and generated a pre-closing move, whereas there was no mention of this retrieval in the Y data. In each instance, the F students volunteered the set phrase '*Here you are*' as they handed back the card, within a lengthier closing exchange. No explicit valedictions were given by Y students, but the informal '*Bye*'/'*Bye bye*' and '*See you*' were all present in the F data. After concluding the interview in accordance with the STEP rubric (coded as *<end>*), Annie's abrupt announcement: '*<end>. OK. You can go*' was spontaneously and politely followed by: F6: '*Bye bye*'. Similarly, after Annie's ending of '*Thank you*', F28 initiates '*Bye*', to which, surprisingly, in neither case did Annie respond. A two-move valediction is initiated by F9, with this time the interviewer reciprocating exactly:

Annie: *<end>*

F9: *See you*

Annie: *See you*

F9: *Bye*

Annie: *Bye bye.*

Although '*Thank you*' and '*Thank you very much*' also occurred once each in the F data, they formed part of longer closing sequences, rather than standing alone as a final exchange, as with Y students:

Annie: *<end>*

F13: *Thank you.*

Annie: *May I have the card, please?*

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F13: *Here you are.*

Annie: *Thank you. OK. See you.*

F13: *See you.*

In this varied example, the student prompts a closing exchange, then volunteers the formulaic expression when giving back the card, and finally reciprocates to Annie's farewell. In a final example, student F17 clearly initiates the end of the interaction with her performative (Austin 1962) '*Finish*', mock apology and laughter (see 7.5.2), which possibly indicates embarrassment at cutting the interview short. She then reciprocates her thanks, and signals handing over the card orally, but fails to complete the final move:

F17: //15// *Finish! Sorry* (laugh)

Annie: *Thank you very much*

F17: *Thank you very much*

Annie: *The card*

F17: *Here you are.*

Annie: *See you*

F17: [–]

The fact that most F students are prepared to initiate may suggest that they are more socially aware of the expectations of this interactional context. They realise the task is finished and offer to end the dialogue, leave, return the card, offer thanks and farewells before the interviewer does, unlike the Y students. Perhaps the increased sociolinguistic competence in relation to openings and closings in group F is a result of being more accustomed to interacting with ALTs and other non-Japanese in English.

7.4.2 Politeness expressions

A second aspect of sociolinguistic competence is considered next, involving the use of expressions of politeness, in which both choice of linguistic items and frequency of employment are important. Again, the actual words for 'please' and 'thank you' are usually learned at the start of FL study, but knowing when to use them appropriately for interaction in L2 and with native speakers is somewhat more complex than simply memorising the words, as expectations differ between social and linguistic groups. As greater exposure to native-speaker interaction patterns is likely to increase learner use of politeness expressions, it could be assumed that because of such experiences (see Chapters Five and Eight), group F would utilise more of these items. Although the slightly higher mean [F=1.87; Y=1.25] does support this suggestion, when the transcripts are examined, the distribution of several politeness expressions is similar between the two groups. Six occurrences of '*please*', always within a clarification request (see 7.5.3), and three extensions to '*yes*' ('*Yes, I do*'; '*Yes, very much*') are found within each group's data.

Particular differences are noted, however, in the use of '*thank you*' and '*sorry*'. Whereas two F students employ the latter item as a politeness expression before asking for repetition (see 7.5.3), no such use is found in the Y data. Even though '*sorry*' is used four times by Y students, the function is always to apologise (see 7.4.3), not as a softener. Examples of the expressive speech act of thanks (Searle 1981) in the closing moves are found in both groups, as noted in 7.4.1, but more frequently by Y students [F=2; Y=4]. Variations in thanking are also seen in relation to receiving and returning the 'reading aloud' card to the teacher, in that, whereas Y24 and F21 say '*Thank you*' when given the card, only group F members offer a polite '*Here you are*' [F=3; Y=0] when handing it back. Although other examples of '*pardon?*' [F=2; Y=1], '*excuse me*' [F=1; Y=0] contrast with the lack of politeness shown in '*one more*' (Y8), and '*What,*

er?'; '*Yeah*' (x2) (Y16), in total more Y students made politeness moves [F=6; Y=8]. Despite the fact that variations in usage between the groups are not vast, this aspect of sociolinguistic competence may manifest itself in different ways. The apparent impoliteness in Y16's somewhat colloquial responses could in fact be attributed to her higher level of fluency (152 words; 4/5 fluency score), perhaps developed through her previous language learning experiences of commercial language school and homestaying abroad (see Chapter Five), and thus her greater ease in situations of social interaction in English. In contrast, rather than becoming more casual on account of increased L2 fluency, the opposite seems to occur in the data of F17 (199 words; 5/5), who produces a total of ten appropriate politeness expressions during her oral interview.

7.4.3 Apologising

A final area considered to reflect sociolinguistic competence explored throughout the oral data is that of expressing apology, only three cases of which per group were identified, being verbalised by '*sorry*', or by using an apologetic tone of voice when admitting inability to answer a question. Although the word '*sorry*' is used altogether nine times, the function differs. As discussed in 7.4.2 and 7.5.3, within group F, in the cases of F17 and F21, the purpose of '*sorry*' is to make the clarification request more polite. Two further examples of '*sorry*' in F17's data occur during a self-correction, where the purpose is again probably a polite filler:

(F17): *a man // ah, sorry // a woman is ...*

and in the closing phase initiated by the student herself, discussed in 7.4.1 above:

(F17): *...Finish! Sorry* (laugh)

In this case it is suggested that being followed by a laugh signifies an in-group joke of aiming to avoid the use of '*Finish*' at the end of a turn, rather than a real apology for

behaviour. In only one case does she really use '*sorry*' apologetically, when after a long pause, it precedes an admission of lack of knowledge:

(F 17): // 11 // *Sorry, I don't know*

Two such combinations of apologising for being unable to provide a satisfactory response, '*Sorry, I don't know*'; '*I don't know. Sorry*' also occur four times in the Y data, along with further examples without the item '*sorry*', where the tone of voice constitutes an apology [F=1; Y=2], including Y28's despondent '*I don't know anything*'. Feelings of embarrassment for not knowing or not being able to produce a suitable response, or abandonment of an attempted answer, are apparent beneath the apologetic language or tone, and may be indicative of a lack of confidence rather than knowledge. Apologising when appropriate is an indicator of sociolinguistic competence, but overuse of such expressions perhaps denotes linguistic insecurity, and subsequent unwillingness to interact. Although the mean scores for occurrences of linguistic items potentially indicating the function of apology are similar [F=0.51; Y=0.66], when the data are analysed, only two of the six examples from group F are really used to apologise. In contrast, the purpose of all six cases in the Y transcripts is to apologise for failing to respond appropriately, with Y28, who made four such apologies, exemplifying this trait of early abandonment.

From the above data and discussion it may be concluded that F students demonstrate more confidence in social interaction in English, and utilise expressions of greetings, politeness and apology more appropriately, and thus appear to be more sociolinguistically competent within the context of this oral interview.

7.5 Pragmatic competence

How learners utilise their L2 knowledge and resources to manage the interaction is now explored through analysis of the oral interview data. Three categories of initiating,

interacting naturally, and asking for repetition or clarification were identified in the transcripts, which serve to illustrate the pragmatic competence of the participants.

7.5.1 Initiating

Although interpretations here may overlap with the discussion in other sections of the oral analysis, 12 utterances were coded as instances of learner initiations within the conversations [F=8; Y=4]. The five cases of initiating occurring in the closing phase among group F data have already been discussed in section 7.4.1, but the clearest example of initiation is again provided by F17. Her pragmatic competence is apparent in the exchange with Annie following the reading of Q.4. F17 is clearly unsure of the meaning of a word and quickly decides to ask for clarification. She succeeds, despite an initial reformulation, in expressing herself effectively, receives the required information, repeats this answer with rising intonation to confirm, and after Annie remodels, she repeats it again with falling intonation to show her understanding. After achieving her goal, and meantime providing a good example of IRF interaction (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975), she is then ready to process the whole question efficiently, and asks politely to hear Q.4 again:

Annie: *<Question 4>*

F17: *// 3 // Ah. excuse me. I // 'necessary' what do you mean?*

Annie: *Um 'should'*

F17: *should* [rising intonation]

Annie: *should* [falling int]

F17: *should* [falling int] *eh. one more // 2 // please*

Annie: OK. *< repeats Q.4>*

As further evidence of F17's pragmatic competence early in the conversation, she takes

command in student-initiated IRF style by turning a question on the rather surprised interviewer, and then signalling by the falling intonation in her feedback ('*OK*') that the interview may proceed:

Annie: *OK How are you today?*

F17: *I'm very fine*

Annie: *Good, good, good* [falling intonation]

F17: *How about you?*

Annie: *I'm OK*

F17: *OK* [falling intonation]

With the exception of F17, perhaps the more interesting examples are found in the Y data, despite the overall higher distribution among group F [mean: F=0.91; Y=0.35]. Both Y students who made initiating moves attempted to draw the interviewer back into the conversation. When discussing favourite films in the pre-question phase, rather than just agreeing when Harry clarifies the movie title, Y24 tries to develop the topic by asking if Harry knows this film:

Y24: *I like /defnəʊt/ the best.*

Harry: *'Deathnote'?*

Y24: *Do you know?*

Harry: *I heard of it.*

He uses the same tactic when answering Q.5 about fashion magazines toward the end of the interview. When Harry responds in the negative, Y24 offers an explanation without having been asked to, thus producing two more initiation moves. Any chance of further development of the dialogue is, however, stopped by the interviewer's abrupt ending:

Y24: *I like 'Jump'. Do you know?*

Harry: *No* [falling int]

Y24 // 2 // *'Jump' is comic* // 2 // *comic magazine*

Harry: *Ah* [falling int] *Thank you very much* (= end of interview)

Similarly, after a misunderstanding over pronunciation in their discussion of films, Harry has already indicated his intention to change topic through his falling intonation and choice of words. However, Y40 clearly wishes to add more information, and initiates a different slant to the topic, which succeeds in prolonging the conversation for a further five turns:

Y40: /puːʼrætɒŋ/

Harry: *'Platoon'?* [rising int]

Y40: /puːʼrætɒŋ/ [falling int]

Harry: *Like a war movie?*

Y40: *war war movie*

Harry: *Oh good* [falling int]

Y40: // 2 // *some something old*

Harry: *You like old movies?*

Y40: // 4 // *er ar it's no* // *ye do no* // 3 // *academy, academy*

Harry: *like a history kind of movie?*

Y40: *yes*

Harry: *OK great um <Instructions for reading aloud>*

Despite the effective and sometimes sophisticated attempts at initiating and prolonging conversations exemplified above, the mean scores for initiation (q) are very low

[F=0.91; Y=0.35], suggesting that it is only a few students who are able to demonstrate such a pragmatic skill.

7.5.2 Interacting with the interviewer

Closely linked with initiating and sometimes overlapping with other categories is the ability to interact naturally with an interlocutor. Phatic communion, as well as use of specific linguistic items, is considered within this category of pragmatic competence, many of which have already been discussed in the preceding sections. Analysis for this criterion focused not only on specific answers to direct interview questions, but on natural responses and reactions within the conversations which demonstrated ease of communication with the interlocutor. The phatic use of '*Yes/OK*' to keep the channel open and signify that the students were listening occurred several times in both groups' data, but the preference for the more formal '*yes*' [F=0; Y=4] over the colloquial '*OK*' [F=9; Y=2] may illustrate the more relaxed relationship of F students with their ALT due to more frequent exposure to native-speaker interaction. Interestingly, within the fourth exchange, Y40 inadvertently uses L1 for this indication of readiness to answer:

Harry: *OK. So, Leo*

Y40: *Hai* [= 'yes' in Japanese]

Harry: *Do you like movies?*

The five cases of natural verbalisation while receiving (*Thank you*) or returning (*Here you are*) the 'reading aloud' card have already been discussed in relation to the criterion of politeness (o) in 7.4.2. Although laughter may signify various emotions in Japanese contexts (Greer 2000:190), the effect of examples found in the oral interview data is to demonstrate the comfortable relationship between teacher and student in which laughing at a shared joke is a positive sign. The confident L2 speaker, Y16, laughs at herself after the misunderstanding about the 'reading aloud' passage. She

starts to read immediately after Harry's instructions, not waiting for the 20 seconds'
preparation time (see Appendix 4e), and has to be halted:

Harry: '*No*', Y16: '*Ah*!' (laugh).

As well as in the context of a shared joke of laughing at oneself for using a banned
expression (F17: '*Finish. Sorry* (laugh)' detailed in 7.4.3), laughter occurs over the
irony of responses about studying hard:

Annie: *OK. Do you like studying?*

F28: *No*

Annie: *Why not?*

F28: *// 4 // er very hard* (laugh)

and in:

Annie: *Are you going to study hard tonight?*

F17: *er* (laugh) *so-so* (laughs)

The above examples are presented to demonstrate that, although in fairly limited ways,
group F tend to employ more communicative strategies in their interaction, and thus
can be considered more pragmatically competent than group Y in this respect.

7.5.3 Asking for repetition

One final category of pragmatic competence examined is the strategy of asking for
repetition or clarification when the listener is unclear of the message received. As this
is natural even in native-speaker interaction, it is essential that FL learners have the
appropriate linguistic tools to deal with situations where they have misheard, or
misunderstood their interlocutor, or when they need reassurance that they have
interpreted the message appropriately. This is particularly important in an interview
context, where failure to comprehend the question will adversely affect any answer

given.

Within the transcripts there is evidence of taught linguistic items to address this problem, albeit of a limited range. The very general '*pardon?*' is used by three students, alone by Y28 and F9, and preceded by a questioning filler '*Huh? Pardon?*' (F6), but the majority rely on a set phrase frequently heard among Japanese learners: '*one more*'. This request for repetition of the whole question, categorised as a grammatical error of 'wrong word' (on<u>c</u>e more) or 'word omission' (one more <u>time</u>), occurred 15 times, both with and without elaboration [F=8; Y=7]. '*Please*' was added either before or after the request by all but Y8, with F21 and F17 pre-empting the request with a polite '*sorry*' (see 7.4.2). Of the nine requests for repetition by Y students, the only person not using the '*one more*' format, or '*pardon?*' (Y28), was Y4 who, we must assume, resorted to non-verbal methods to ensure the question was repeated. His failure to understand may have been signalled in ways not captured in the audio-recording, by facial expressions of puzzlement, or head-shaking, or perhaps by looking down, a common way of signifying unwillingness or inability to answer when called upon in the Japanese classroom (see Tsui 1996; Doyon 2000). After giving the student adequate wait-time to answer, the interviewer rephrases his question, and then achieves an appropriate response:

Harry: *OK. and your number, student number?*

Y4: // 6 // [non-verbal response assumed]

Harry: *Your class room?*

Y4: *Four*

Harry: *Number four. OK …*

In addition to requesting repetition of the question, four examples of clarification of meaning are noted within the F data. Overall, Q.4 caused problems for nine

interviewees, since it required the spontaneous production of a possibly complex opinion, and because of the word 'necessary':

<Q.4>: *'Do you think it is necessary for foreigners in/living in Japan to learn Japanese? Why?'*

After hearing the question, F17 politely asks for clarification of the meaning of this item, and subsequently clarifies the teacher's paraphrase by repetition. Having processed this information, she then requests repetition of the whole question, starts to answer, comments on her own thought processes, then despite her obvious interactive and pragmatic skills, she eventually abandons the attempt:

Annie: *<Q.4>*

F17: *// 3 // Ah. excuse me I // 'necessary', what do you mean?*

Annie: *um 'should'*

F17: *should* [rising intonation]

Annie: *should* [falling int]

F17: *should* [falling int] *Eh one more // 2 // please*

Annie: *OK <Q.4 repeated>*

F17: *// 3 // er I think // 8 // we learn // 7 // erm // 5 // it is difficult for me // 2 // I think // 11 // sorry, I don't know*

Similarly, after having Q.4 repeated, F25 requests and acknowledges clarification of meaning before including the appropriate use of 'necessary' in his answer:

Annie: *<Q.4>*

F25: *// 4 // One more , please*

Annie: *<Q.4 repeated>*

F25: *// 13 // I don't know word 'necessary'*

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Annie: *mmm 'should'* [falling int]

F25: *should* [falling int] *Ah // 6 // Yes*

Annie: *Why?*

F25: *// 13 // If // I // 2 // go to the the the other country // 7 // er // 3 // it is necessary // 5 // to // 5 // to tell about own language*

In an early exchange about lunch, F25 uses intonation to question Annie's meaning. She realises that it was unlikely that the student could respond adequately since her question was somewhat bizarre, and hence changes rather than repeats her question:

Annie: *Do you sometimes dislike your lunch?*

F25: *ssss?* [rising intonation]

Annie: *OK What is your favourite food?*

The higher mean for requests for repetition [F=1.33; Y=0.75] appears to indicate a greater number of misunderstandings among group F than among Y students. However, this figure can be accounted for by the occurrences of clarification requests by four F students, which demonstrate both a willingness to interact and an ability to use strategies to ensure understanding, rather than to abandon.

7.6 Statistical analysis of oral data

The above discussion and examples create the impression that group F are markedly better at oral communication than Y students, but in order to verify this conclusion, statistical analyses were conducted on the Oral Interview [2] data (see Appendix 7b).

As the number of subjects was so small (n: F=7; Y=9), non-parametric statistics of Mann-Whitney *U*-tests, 2-tailed, were performed to assess the differences between the two groups F and Y. Standard Error of Skewness and Kurtosis were, therefore, not important, and Tests of Normality were not necessary. A total of 23 indices were listed

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and examined, requiring the α level to be adjusted accordingly to $\alpha = 5\%$.

Only holistic fluency markers showed significance at a 5% level ($p = .025$). Two further factors approaching the significance level of 5%, but which cannot quite be labelled as significant, were those of phonological errors ($p = .055$) and syntactic complexity ($p = .055$).

It is important to note that non-parametric statistics are much stricter, and therefore it is more difficult to obtain significance, that is, to detect difference. Had there been more participants, some difference may have been detected between the groups if parametric statistics had been used. Even though not proved significant, the observed differences in oral communicative ability detailed throughout 7.2–5 should still be treated as of interest. Nonetheless, these results prove that group F is significantly more fluent under the circumstances of this oral interview than the Y sample, in accordance with the impressionistic conclusion detailed above.

7.7 Conclusions on oral performance

Examination of the transcripts of the interviews provides evidence of a higher level of spoken communicative competence among students in group F. By comparing mean scores of quantifiable oral data for each factor analysed, it is seen that learners following course F produce fewer grammatical and phonological errors, and display a higher level of both syntactic and lexical complexity in their spoken contributions, thus signifying better linguistic competence. Group F also produced more occurrences of factors related to sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Moreover, the holistic assessment of their oral performance reflected a significantly higher level of overall fluency, which was supported by the results of the statistical procedures. It is therefore concluded that the students participating in the International Understanding course F were able to attain a higher level of oral communicative competence than those who

followed a more traditional EFL course at school Y.

7.8 Classroom participation

A further area of student output examined in this study is that of oral participation in English lessons. Although occurrences of spoken contributions are dependent upon the nature of the class in both content and methodology adopted, willingness to participate, be it to respond when called upon, to interact with other students during a task, or to volunteer comments, indicates the ability and desire to communicate in the target language.

During the course of the research year, five lessons with each sample group were observed (coded as Fob.1–5; Yob.1–5), aspects of which are mainly discussed in Chapter Eight below. It must be explained here that data in the following sections represent the actual number of occurrences of student oral contributions from group F, but as the two totals were not directly comparable, because lesson length differed between the two schools [F=45 minutes per lesson; Y=65, or 50 minutes, averaging at 59 mins per lesson] data for group Y have been adjusted accordingly (see Chapter Eight). In order to provide more information on student L2 production within the sample, spoken participation in class is now analysed and compared between groups F and Y.

7.8.1 Student output: quantity

When comparing the total number of student utterances, decidedly more student-talk was noted in the observed English lessons at school F, both in L2 and in L1. Appropriate use of L1 in the FL classroom, or 'optimal use of L2' (Meiring & Norman 2002:29), for purposes such as clarification and confidence-building, can be beneficial, as witnessed in group-work in two F lessons (Fob.3; Fob.4). In lesson (Yob.5) at school Y, however, the predominant use of L1 by students was found to be for two-way

translation of textbook items. In contrast to this deliberate or habitual use of Japanese in some lessons, both Rick (F ALT) and Lena (Y ALT) preferred a 'total exclusion' (ibid) policy in their team-taught classrooms, encouraging only target-language student output, as observed in lessons Fob.1 & 2, and Yob.1 & 2, respectively.

Even though considerably more L2 was produced in observed classes at school F [132 occurrences] than at school Y [56.4 cases], it is not necessarily amount but length and quality of L2 output that is important in demonstrating communicative competence.

	Total of Utterances	L1	L2
F	169	37	132
Y	76.3	19.8	56.4

Table 7.3 Totals of spoken occurrences in five observed lessons

7.8.2 Student output: length, quality and mode

While observing lessons, all occurrences of student speech were coded according to three length-dependent categories of word (W), phrase/sentence (S), and extended turns/multiple sentences (T).

When the field notes of these observed classes were analysed, a similar number of single-word student responses were noted throughout F and Y lessons, these being mainly direct replies to nominated questions. Utterances consisting of several words, whether a phrase or complete sentence, were recorded at sentence level, and it is here that F students excelled, by producing over three times as many longer contributions as Y students.

Production of text-level utterances was minimal in both groups [F=11; Y=3.8], with all being choral shadow reading to a CD or repeating at their own pace passages in a textbook, a technique referred to by Mr Z (YT4) as 'quiet reading', taking place in isolation or in pairs. Thus, output classified as very long utterances was not

student-generated, but merely a verbalisation of written texts.

When the nature of the content of these oral contributions is analysed, a contrast is noted in the frequency of original L2 utterances (items selected and combined by the students themselves rather than reiteration of rote-learned set phrases, or predictable formulaic answers from the text), with over twice as many F responses created by students, as opposed to reading or repeating from a book or handout [F=94; Y=33.6]. This willingness to use L2 to generate specific utterances to express their own ideas or answers by those following course F is indicated by the ratio of original to total L2 contributions [F=94:132], in contrast to group Y where proportionally fewer [Y=33.6:56.4] are student-generated utterances. A breakdown of student oral contributions witnessed in observed lessons, categorised by quality and length, is presented in the following table:

	Quality			Length		
	Total L2	Repeated / read aloud	Original	Word	Phrase / sentence	Longer / text-level
F	132	20	94	30	91	11
Y	56.4	10.7	33.6	24.4	28.2	3.8

Table 7.4 Student L2 utterances of quality and length

Willingness to formulate one's own ideas in a foreign language may be closely linked to having the confidence to initiate rather than to respond solely when nominated. Table 7.5 below identifies modes of utterance, being the response to a request or student-initiated, produced in plenary, small group mode, chorally, or in one's own time as a whole class. The data reveal over twice the number of student initiations at school F [F=20 in L2 + 3 in L1: Y=6.9 in L2], indicating both confidence for speaking English and evidence of a co-operative, supportive atmosphere and relationship within the class.

In addition, both the nature of the task and the organisation of the classroom affect the quantity and quality of student L2 contributions generated. Asking display questions requiring single word, specific grammar transformations and direct translation answers restricts possible learner output, as do narrow adherence to textbook content and choral or 'at your own pace' repetition. Open-ended questions (Chaudron 1988) which elicit a wide range of possible interpretations and answers allow students to express their ideas by using any linguistic knowledge and strategies they possess, rather than simply selecting from limited options provided, and thus are more likely to develop communicative competence. Although closed questions (ibid) and checking understanding of specific items in the materials occurred in lessons at both schools, more flexibility in answers was observed in lessons at school F (Fob.3, 4 & 5).

	Choral	Groups	Individuals	Respond	Initiate
F	11	21	99	59	20
Y	6.1	4.6	41.9	31.2	6.9

Table 7.5 Student L2 utterances – mode

7.8.3 Reasons for differing L2 output

When attempting to account for the differences in the quantity and nature of learner L2 participation, one factor which may have contributed to output in these lessons was the arrangement of desks. In observed lessons Fob.3 & 4, students worked in five groups, and could therefore easily discuss ideas before offering answers in plenary, or to a monitoring teacher. As activities involved personal responses to graded reader stories, students had the opportunity to negotiate meaning in a supportive environment before presenting their ideas to the whole class. Similarly, in lesson Fob.5, where seven incidences of pair-work were recorded, much more active participation and use of L2 were noted. In contrast, although desks were arranged in groups of three and

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discussion before answering was advocated by the teachers in lesson Yob.1, only one group actually interacted, and then mainly in L1, due most likely to unfamiliarity with such methods at school Y.

7.8.4 Conclusions on oral participation in observed lessons

Student involvement is documented more fully in the overall analysis of data collected during classroom observation in Chapter Eight below, but it is clear from the evidence presented above that while F students were communicating in L2 fairly frequently within each class, a considerable amount of Y lesson time must have been dedicated to activities not requiring, or inviting, oral participation from the learners. The impression gained by the researcher throughout the series of observed lessons that group F were taking the opportunities given to attempt to actively use their L2 knowledge to respond to and initiate interaction both among themselves and with their teachers in English is confirmed by the above results of field notes and observation schedule analysis. Similarly, the reluctance to respond even when nominated, evident in the almost inaudible replies to teacher questions and resistance to attempted interactive tasks, observed at school Y, is corroborated by the above data. Once again concrete evidence emerges to suggest that students following course F are more willing and better equipped to participate in contexts where production of the target language is expected of them, and where they are able to demonstrate a higher level of communicative competence.

7.9 Summary of evidence of communicative competence

Throughout this and the previous chapter evidence of communicative competence in both written and spoken contexts has been accumulated, exemplified and discussed, with the aim of addressing the initial research question:

(i): Do 'International Understanding' courses enable students to attain a higher

ability to communicate in English than general courses?

Chapter Six addressed the issue of whether there is a difference in the written ability of the two populations in this study, and established that in all categories examined the output of groups F and Y differed, according to evidence in the learner essays. Differences on all seven measures (a/b&d/e/h/i/j/k), as discussed in Chapter Six, were investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively. Group F showed greater ability in four areas assessed both subjectively and objectively, whereas group Y outperformed group F on three quantifiable measures, demonstrating a higher accuracy rate (6.4.1), slightly more syntactic complexity (6.4.2), and more occurrences of interacting with the reader (6.7) through direct address. Reasons for these outcomes may be error-avoidance strategies, methodology experienced in class, and the influence of essay task type.

Task type is unlikely to be a factor in the areas in which group F excelled, and as these students were on the whole more adventurous in their written expression, error-avoidance strategies are unlikely to have been employed. The learning experience, detailed in Chapter Eight below, may, however, account for the higher level of written L2 competence demonstrated in four areas analysed in the essay data. Group F overall included a wider range of higher-level lexical items and expressions (h: 6.4.3), demonstrating a larger active vocabulary, and wrote fewer items incomprehensible to the reader (i), suggesting a higher level of audience awareness in group F. Moreover, on both measures of fluency (6.5) – length (a) and holistic impression (k) – F students were found to demonstrate a higher level of written ability. Subjective evaluation of data for categories of incomprehensibility (i: 6.6) and fluency (k: 6.5) was undertaken by two independent raters to increase the reliability of the results.

Statistical evidence (6.8) further confirms the reliability of the findings, where differences in five measures were proved to be statistically significant. Whereas

students in group Y were shown to have a higher rate of accuracy and more occurrences of interaction with the reader, group F demonstrated a wider lexical range, produced fewer incomprehensible items, and gave an overall impression of being much more fluent L2 writers.

Chapter Seven then examined the spoken ability of groups F and Y in both one-to-one conversation in an interview test, and interaction in the EFL classroom context. Within this body of data, group F was found to demonstrate more spoken communicative competence. When interviewed in L2, the quantitative data for linguistic competence (7.3) show that F students made fewer grammatical and phonological errors, and employed more syntactic and lexical complexity. Further evidence of sociolinguistic competence (7.4) in the use of appropriate openings and closings in the encounter, politeness and apologising was found in the F transcripts, as was a higher rate of initiation, interaction and clarification checks, all considered illustrative of pragmatic competence (7.5). In particular, a higher level of fluency was demonstrated by group F in measures of amount spoken and subjective overall impression of fluency (7.2). Due to the small number of subjects for statistical analysis (7.6), only holistic fluency was found to be significantly different, with differences in phonological errors and syntactic complexity approaching the significance level.

Data recorded during observed lessons (7.8) illustrate how F students take the opportunities given to communicate in English within groups and when nominated, and both respond and initiate in interactions among themselves, rather than remaining taciturn in groupwork, and with their teachers. The much greater amount of student L2 talk in F lessons demonstrates that these students are more willing to participate, and appear more able to do so, than group Y, although no statistical analysis was conducted to verify this impression.

It is thus concluded that overall group F demonstrate greater ability to perform in

English than group Y, in both written and spoken contexts. Group F students successfully express their meaning in unplanned written essay mode, and also orally in both one-to-one interview situations and individual, plenary, group and pair interactions in EFL class. It is therefore suggested that the above findings provide an affirmative answer to research question (i) posed above. These results constitute evidence of communicative competence among the specified groups of learners, to be compared with their academic achievement in Chapter Nine below.

The issue of how students in this study attain their level of communicative competence in English is now addressed in Chapter Eight, by analysis of the input received in relation to and within their EFL lessons, to evaluate to what extent groups F and Y actually are following 'different courses'.

Chapter Eight

The teaching and learning process

It has so far been established in this study that students in group F on the whole

demonstrate more communicative competence in both written (Chapter Six) and spoken

(Chapter Seven) L2 production, and also that circumstances external to formal EFL

education were essentially similar between the two groups at the point of commencing

senior high school (Chapter Five). The issue of what might have caused, or contributed

to, the increased communicative ability evidenced above during the 1st year of their

International Understanding course is considered next, in order to address research

question (ii):

> (ii) 'What differences in course content may affect learners' ability to communicate
> in English?'

As any education context is highly complex, a thick description of each school setting is

given so that process factors potentially related to better communicative competence

outcomes can be explored. As explained in Chapter Four, an ethnographic approach is

taken here, where the intention is to describe the contexts, rather than evaluate or

demonstrate a cause-effect relationship, based on the data collected through classroom

observation, informal interviews, document analysis and questionnaires.

Throughout the academic year under investigation, five lessons with each group were

observed at schools F and Y. Although attempting to record events accurately and

precisely, since all coding and note-taking (see Chapter Four) was conducted by a single

researcher, a margin of error and interpretation is possible, as indeed it is even when

lessons are video-recorded. Communicative competence of students may be assessed on

the quantity and quality of learner output, as in Chapters Six and Seven above, but its

development is dependent upon classroom input of materials, activities and teachers, as

well as affective factors of classroom atmosphere, management and relationships, and

learner motivation. Hence, three areas – teachers, methodology, and materials – have been identified in the learning process which may illustrate how far courses F and Y really are the 'different courses' of the thesis title. One further factor so far unaccounted for which may play an important role in L2 learning, and is brought into the classroom context, learner motivation, is examined as part of the teaching and learning process. Firstly, however, practical differences between the two courses need to be clarified.

8.1 Course focus

Before examining the EFL experiences of students F and Y within the classroom, an outline of how different, or similar, their courses are is presented in terms of time, staffing, resources and entrance selection procedures. The International Understanding course at school F was established in April 2002, based on the model of two similar courses within the prefecture (see 2.4), partly in an attempt to compete with private schools (teacher interview). Of an 8-class intake, one is dedicated to International Understanding, one to Home Economics, and the remainder follow a general course. Although school Y is more typical of academic schools throughout Japan, it also includes a specialised Maths and Science course for one class per year group.

8.1.1 Time allocation

Criticism levelled at Japanese education policy highlights the unlikelihood of Japanese learners achieving communicative competence since so little time is allocated for FLT, compared with other countries (Hato 2005:40), as noted in Chapter Two. Neither school in this study, however, adheres exactly to MEXT (2003d) recommendations of a minimum of 5x50-minute class-hours per week for English in the 1st year at senior high schools. At school Y, where lessons last for 65 minutes, a total of five English classes are allocated for 1st-year students each week, but longer lessons invite waning concentration spans and reported difficulty in maintaining momentum in the final 10–15 minutes (T interviews YT3; YT4). In contrast, all lessons at school F are timetabled for

45 minutes, which, although considered a little short, enables more frequent English input. Moreover, because of its specialist course status, nine lessons devoted to English or international-related studies are scheduled per week on course F. Thus, 80 more minutes of classroom time is allotted to group F per week, although some of these nine lessons focus on international affairs and do not involve the use of English.

8.1.2 Resources

Due to the larger budget allocation for specialist courses, school F is able to provide several extra resources for enhancing English study. A designated Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) room is utilised regularly for both lessons and extra-curricular activities, and funding is available for workshops by visiting lecturers, including the researcher, several times a year. A 10-day study-abroad programme to Australia at the end of the 2nd year is also incorporated into the course, in which students homestay, attend a commercial language school and visit local schools. Each year an overseas student is accepted into 1st- and 2nd-year classes, which increases opportunities for cultural exchange and interaction in English. Students from Asian and European countries have participated in course F for between one and eight months, with a New Zealander joining the class examined in this study. No similar opportunities and resources designed to improve English education were available to students at school Y.

8.1.3 Staffing

One resource intended to develop communicative competence among Japanese high school students is the employment of ALTs, but a difference in their exploitation and involvement is evident between the two schools. Opportunities for team teaching are affected by timetabling, with the ALT at school Y attending each 1st-year class only once every two weeks. Owing to its specialist status, however, the Board of Education bases two ALTs at school F, resulting in team-taught lessons twice a week for the

1st-year International Understanding students. In addition, the class is divided so that with only 20 students, active participation can be encouraged.

Attitudes among teachers toward team teaching vary considerably, as reported in the literature (see Koike & Tanaka 1995:20; Hadley 1997:8; Crooks 2001:35; McConnell 2002:138; Samimy & Kobayashi 2004:253). Responses to questionnaire items relating to ALTs in this study show a difference between attitudes held by teachers at schools F and Y. Compared also with the responses of Browne & Wada's (1998:107) much-reported study, mean scores on a scale of 1–5 for ALTs' 'usefulness for students' [B & W: 3.92; F: 5; Y: 3.6] and 'usefulness for teachers' [B & W: 4.02; F: 5; Y: 3.6] clearly demonstrate a very positive reaction by F teachers to having native English speakers in their school. This enthusiasm may contribute to the willingness to speak in the target language and emphasis on communication reported in F student questionnaires and noted by native-speaker guest lecturers when visiting school F.

8.1.4 Entrance requirements for candidates

Transition to senior high school in most cases involves passing an entrance examination, but candidates are also accepted through a system of recommendation. For course F, students were initially recommended by their junior high school teachers, or by personal letters of application, but since 2005 an oral interview in English, based on EIKEN 3rd level (see Chapter Nine) and a listening test requiring written answers have been used along with self-recommendation. Approximately 80% of course F participants are selected by this test, with the remaining 20% being admitted to the course after passing the Board of Education senior high school entrance examination, which is administered throughout the county. The International Understanding course is usually over-subscribed, and about 20% of applicants are rejected.

In the case of school Y, although about 20% are accepted through a system of

self-recommendation letters and interviews in Japanese, the majority earn a place by attaining a high score on the above-mentioned high school entrance examination, in conjunction with reports on academic attainment in tests at junior high school and achievements in sport and music activities. Even though students are advised on which schools realistically to aim for, about 30% of applicants are not accepted.

In both cases, therefore, students have self-selected or made a conscious decision to attend a particular school, but reasons for applying stated in student questionnaires tend to differ. Whereas Y candidates' choice is often based on the school's potential for preparing students to proceed successfully to university [15], many applicants for course F indicate a particular interest in studying English [17]. However, for reasons of confidentiality, the cut-off point in either entrance examination could not be ascertained, so it was not possible to compare entrance-level ability in English, and hence the need for the pre-test described in Chapter Nine.

8.2 Teachers

Teachers' experiences of, and attitudes toward, learning and teaching English are factors affecting their choice of methodology and materials, which in turn can affect the resulting L2 learning of their students. Data discussed are drawn from teacher questionnaires from 12 teachers [F=6; Y=6] and informal interviews; for reasons of space, only a summary is presented here.

Teacher perceptions are reinforced by evidence observed in EFL classrooms in schools F and Y, details of which are presented in Table 8.1.

Group F					
Lesson	Fob.1	Fob.2	Fob.3	Fob.4	Fob.5
Date	26/6	26/6	18/12	18/12	16/2
Time	45m	45m	45m	45m	45m
No. of students	20	20	18	19	39
Teacher	Ms H + Rick	Ms H + Rick	Mr S + Annie	Mr S + Annie	Mr S

Group Y					
Lesson	Yob.1	Yob.2	Yob.3	Yob.4	Yob.5
Date	6/6	18/7	13/11	28/11	2/2
Time	50m	65m	65m	65m	50m
No. of students	40	40	39	38	40
Teacher	Mr Z + Lena	Mr Z + Lena	Mr Z	Mr Z + Harry	Mr M

Table 8.1 Observed lesson contexts

8.2.1 Age, gender and experience

A difference in range of age, experience and gender was found between teachers surveyed. At school Y the average age was over 50 years, inclusive of two beyond official retirement age, but no recent graduates, thus resulting in a very experienced staff. The only female teacher had the least full-time experience. In contrast, the average school F experience was only 10 years, mainly due to the 50:50 ratio of male to female teachers whose careers have been delayed or interrupted on account of family responsibilities. In addition, school F had one new recruit, thus lowering the average age to 39 years.

Age and gender of teaching staff may influence both what happens in the classroom, and the expectations and role-model preferences of students, as may the educational backgrounds of teachers. Teachers at both schools had majored in English and/or American Literature [F=4; Y=6], or subjects unrelated to English [FT5: French; FT6:

Social Psychology], and most considered their university courses of little direct relevance for training them for the job of English teacher [F=4; Y=4]. The exceptions were the two who had undertaken post-graduate TESOL courses abroad. In particular, problems of confidence for speaking in English were identified.

8.2.2 Teachers' perceived L2 ability and preferences

One important factor related to what English teachers feel competent to do in class is their perception of their own L2 ability. When asked to describe ('honestly, not modestly!!') their level of English, despite achievements of TOEIC 905, EIKEN level 1 and three M.A. degrees, teachers at both schools reported weak communication skills, lack of confidence in speaking English in class, and the need to improve their English ability, as also noted in studies by Sato (2002:66) and Taguchi (2002:6).

Despite recognising their need for increased fluency and confidence in their own English, most teachers at school F preferred to work on the International Understanding course, finding it both more challenging and rewarding than the general English course offered at their school. It should be noted that only one teacher [FT2/Mr S] actively chose to teach in school F, while all others were placed in school F under the normal Board of Education procedure of reallocating staff every 8–10 years. Possibly due to a halo effect (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:114), all teachers surveyed perceived a difference between students in English classes on general and specialist courses, whether International Understanding [F] or Maths & Science [Y] courses, where learners seemed more focused on their studies, citing motivation and interest in English, active responses in class, and higher ability and fluency as the major reasons. However, it is not only student participation and English ability that cause concern for teachers, and affect their choice of classroom input.

8.2.3 Pressures on teaching

When asked about pressures felt on their teaching, school Y staff ranked 'finishing the textbook' as the most severe, with 'exam preparation' second, demonstrating no change since Browne and Wada's (1998) findings. School F teachers reversed this order, with significant emphasis being placed on the importance of preparing students to pass university entrance examinations. This, however, seems to contradict their perceived allocation of time within a typical lesson. On average, only 44% of class time is reported in questionnaires as dedicated to grammar and vocabulary explanation, whereas 80% of an English lesson at school Y focuses on such items, which have direct relevance for examinations.

Although over half the teachers [F=4; Y=4] had read MEXT (2003a,b) guidelines, fewer at school Y felt pressure to conform to them [F=4; Y=2], and differences in how they are implemented are apparent. One teacher at school Y (YT4/Mr Z) expressed his strong desire to follow the communicative aims of MEXT 'Action Plan' (2003a), but admitted to the impossibility in his context where preparing students for university entrance examinations is paramount.

8.2.4 Use of English in class

Mr Z's comment is reflected in responses that no time was dedicated to group- or pair-work in typical English classes at school Y. In contrast, at school F where communication is an important goal on the International Understanding course, group- and pair-work activities constitute 20% of average class time. Emphasising this difference in focus, English is spoken for an estimated 67% of a lesson at school F, yet only 15% at school Y. Teacher interpretation of this questionnaire item is, however, ambiguous, since it is not clear in their responses who is doing the speaking – whether students, teachers or other input of audio-recordings. To put these findings into perspective, Browne and Wada (1998:108) reported 41% of specific 'Oral

Communication' classes involving teacher talk in L2.

Teacher L2 use estimated in questionnaire responses is now compared with amount of teacher talk observed in class. Although theories emphasise the importance of comprehensible input for second language acquisition (Input Hypothesis: Krashen 1983; Interaction Hypothesis: Long 1983), language learners need opportunities for actively utilising their L2 knowledge, as well as being exposed to extensive listening input.

When comparing the total amount of teacher spoken input in the classes observed (see Table 8.2) more occurrences are noted at school Y [F=189; Y=208.22]. This could be accounted for by traditional teacher-fronted, lecture-mode teaching being the preferred methodology for most subjects in Japanese high schools (LoCastro 1996; Gorsuch 1998). If, however, teacher-talk is divided into L1 and L2 input, it is surprising that although more team-taught lessons were observed at school F, a similar number of occurrences of L2 teacher-talk were recorded. Moreover, in many cases at school F, L2 input is provided by Japanese teachers of English (JTEs), which, in contrast to self-reported lack of confidence in using English (see 8.2.2), demonstrates the high level of L2 competence among these practitioners.

In addition, although L1 input by teachers was minimal in many of the lessons, a greater use of mother-tongue instructions and explanations was observed at school Y [F=20; Y= 38.13], as opposed to a more communicative language teaching approach adopted on the specialist course offered at school F. Whereas a methodological preference may explain the closer ratio of L1 to L2 input [18:26] in Mr M's lesson (Yob.5), not all Y teachers demonstrate this pattern. Mr Z interacts frequently and spontaneously with his ALTs and students, and produces a wide range of L2 explanations and classroom language, in both short and long turns, thus providing a regular source of comprehensible input.

	L1	L2	Ts total
F	20	169	189
Y	38.13	170.08	208.22

Table 8.2 Totals of occurrences of teacher talk

8.3 Materials

As well as providing a model of target language use, English teachers have important decisions to make concerning both input and implementation. Thus, textbooks selected at each school, teacher perceptions of what supplementary materials they employ and how often, and examples used in observed classes are now discussed.

8.3.1 Textbooks

As it is stipulated in the School Education Law that all students from elementary to senior high school 'are required to use textbooks' (MEXT 2003c:7), each school selected a main 'English 1' coursebook, an 'Oral Communication' and supplementary textbooks from the range authorised or approved by Monbusho (see Chapter Two/Appendix 8a). *Provision I* (2006), based on a structural syllabus and considered by both teachers and publishers to be one of the most difficult coursebooks in terms of L2 knowledge level was chosen by Mr H, the head of English that year at school Y, and was used in lessons designated as both English 1 and Oral Communication (O.C.). For Mr M's Grammar course, observed in lesson Yob.5, *Maintop* (2000), focusing on sentence patterns, set phrases for memorisation, and L1/L2 two-way translation was selected, along with *Developing Essential Listening Skills* (2005), both of which are designed solely to prepare students for university entrance examinations. To adhere to regulations, an O.C. book was purchased by the students, but was never used.

Course F teachers decided upon *Exceed I* (2003), again structure-based but not so

difficult, and an approved grammar book *Best Avenue* (2004), but opted for *Let's Talk 1* (2002), aimed at the international EFL market, plus *Kids Almanac* (2005), a book of facts and trivia published for native-speaker American teenagers as O.C. textbooks. Four graded readers [Oxford/Penguin; levels 2–3] were chosen by group F and used in reading classes, as observed in Fob.3 & 4 and discussed in 8.4.2.

In response to a questionnaire item on textbooks, five YTs, but only one FT, said they used them in every lesson.

8.3.2 Other materials used in class

Information was sought through the questionnaire on supplementary materials and input employed in EFL lessons, if these were selected or adapted from published sources, or whether teachers created original materials to fulfill a particular learning goal or suit a specific context (Tomlinson 1998). Four F teachers answered that they use or make materials for most lessons, and only YT3 said he created materials every time for his elective course, since there was no textbook. Examples offered included *pictures, worksheets, cloze test* (YT5), *English news clips, language activities, lists of words and phrases* (YT4), *newspapers, Internet, DVD* (FT1); *quiz sheets, summary sheets* (FT3) and *lots of original worksheets on topics using NHK* [TV] *online, English language newspapers* (FT4).

When asked about other resources, use of computers or language laboratory [F=5; Y=1], media [F=6; Y=5] and readers [F=4; Y=6] was reported. As documented in 8.1.2, teachers regularly take advantage of their CALL facilities, and incorporate both newspapers and graded readers into their reading component on course F.

Informal interviews with YT3 and YT4, however, reveal different stories behind these figures. Like almost all high schools, school Y was equipped with a language laboratory in the pre-ALT-programme early 1980s, and recently screens for video and computer

use were fitted in all classrooms, but due to pressures of completing the coursebook and frequent tests, very little use is made of these facilities. Also, despite growing interest in extensive reading in ELT in Japan (e.g. Waring 2006; Schmidt 2007; Warren-Price 2007), school Y is actually making only limited use of simplified reading schemes. Referred to as 'side readers', rather than being exploited in class, they are given to 1st- and 2nd-year students to read at home within a specified time, and then incorporated into bi-termly tests, where questions focus on content or storyline *to check if students have really read them* (YT3).

8.3.3 Materials in observed lessons

Textbooks were used in three of the observed classes at each school. Lessons Fob.1 & 2 focused on the two books selected for Oral Communication course, and Fob.5 used English I textbook and its accompanying CD, plus a handout. Only parts of lessons Yob.1 & 3 used coursebook input, whereas Yob.5 was based entirely on supplementary grammar and listening textbook units, CD and photocopied answer-sheets.

Tests of varying lengths were scheduled at the start of lessons Yob.2, 3 & 4 and Fob.4, for which handouts had been specifically made. For team-teaching preparation, whereas Harry simply photocopied pages about Christmas from an American resource book, both Lena and Annie created original materials to suit the lesson focus. Drawings and posters on different countries were made for an activity to extend the coursebook unit, and used in conjunction with maps and information on a computer in Yob.1 & 2, and handouts for activities related to the graded reader *A Christmas Carol* were prepared for lessons Fob.3 & 4. Teacher-generated handouts used in observed lessons Fob.5 and Yob.3, however, were actually extracts from student textbooks, with only very minor changes. All teachers made frequent use of the blackboard.

How these materials were exploited leads into discussion of methodology, indicated

through interview and questionnaire responses, and adopted in the observed lessons.

8.4 Methodology

As methodological beliefs were not directly elicited by the questionnaire, teaching ideologies were gleaned through teacher reactions to questions about training, and their perceived emphasis given to activity types, and also identified in practice in the observed lessons.

8.4.1 Perceived teaching methods

Teachers surveyed admitted that their theoretical knowledge of ELT methodology was limited, since only two had TEFL training at university, and few had attended in-service training courses. Three reported exposure to different teaching theories and methods overseas, but although it is unclear how much YT2's short CLT course in 1986, or even FT2's enthusiastic response to his 2-year TESOL studies in the USA directly affect their teaching styles, YT3 questions the relevance of CLT methodology as taught abroad to the current Japanese context. Throughout the data, however, despite constraints of examinations and keeping classes in lockstep across the year-group, the goal of helping students to be able to use English for practical purposes, not just for passing tests, frequently emerged, which reflects aims of both the communicative approach and MEXT (2003a), as described in Chapter Three.

Furthermore, several teachers expressed a desire to learn more about teaching theory and methods which may enhance communication in the classroom. When asked if they would be interested in attending courses on various aspects of language teaching, responses were generally favourable for those with a focus relevant to communication:

Courses	F			Y		
	very much	yes	no	very much	yes	no
Communicative methods	5	1	0	4	2	0
Speaking & Pronunciation	5	1	0	2	3	1
Language & Culture	1	5	0	2	3	1
Team Teaching	4	0	0	2	4	0

Table 8.3 Reported interest in teacher-training courses

The higher number of very positive responses from F teachers may reflect greater openness to personal development and change [F=15; Y=10], and particularly in areas directly related to the classroom, where they indicate a need to improve their own skills in order to be a more fluent L2 model, and to utilise their ALTs more effectively.

Even when interest in communication has been expressed, however, it does not necessarily follow that teaching for communicative purposes will be conducted in class. Estimations of time allocated to various practices and lessons foci within a typical class hour were therefore elicited, and averages in minutes of responses from each group of teachers were calculated:

Practice	F	Y
Use of audio CD	4	4
Pair/Group work	15	4
Grammar/Vocab explanation	16.6	39
Choral reading/Drills	5.8	8.3
Reviewing previous lessons	7.5	6

Table 8.4 Average estimated time in minutes allocated to classroom practices

Overlooking the fact that the totals do not quite equate with actual class hours [here F=48.9 mins; Y=61.3 mins] no doubt on account of periphery activities, a pattern emerges of teacher perceptions of how they organise their lessons. A large proportion of Y lessons are dedicated to explanations of vocabulary and grammar points, likely to be conducted by the teacher in L1, with few opportunities for student L2 production. Explaining new language and reinforcing items previously learned remain an important focus in F lessons, and there are indications of active student participation, but the nature of the pair/groupwork cannot be determined through these data. Similar, if minimal, amounts of listening input are noted, and emphasis on repetition is apparent on both courses. Examples of observed classroom practice are now examined to see if a passive learning mode is indeed evident in Y lessons, and how the active learning indicated by F teachers is really taking place.

8.4.2 Observed teaching methods

Classroom practice observed in the ten lessons exemplifies a wide variety of techniques, activities, dynamics and foci, ranging from traditional teacher-fronted *yakudoku* style (Gorsuch 1998) to collaborative student-centred groupwork. There is, however, no straight division in methodology adopted and demonstrated between the two schools, since elements of grammar-translation and communicative approaches were noted in both F and Y lessons.

Lesson Yob.5 was a classic example of what is often criticised about Japanese ELT (LoCastro 1996; Gorsuch 1998; Sakui 2004; Taguchi 2005). While providing efficient examination training, the complex and often archaic vocabulary and expressions covered in the materials would be unlikely to assist students to actually communicate in English. Teacher-directed explanations of grammar points from the supplementary textbook, illustrated on the blackboard, with students nominated to answer in two-way translation, was followed by a practice listening test. Classroom instructions were

minimal, since a known formulaic style is adopted, in which students listen to a CD, tick multiple-choice options, exchange books with a neighbour and mark according to a distributed answer-sheet, all in silence. Each lesson follows the same pattern, with students expected to have prepared the grammar content beforehand (Mr M interview).

In contrast, although lessons Yob.3 and Fob.5 were also based closely around the textbooks, they differed from the traditional model, in that both Mr Z and Mr S attempted to make the content personalised and relevant to the learners, and to allow for target-language student production. Both included some translation and typical form-focused activities of choral repetition, shadowing, intensive reading and grammar explanations, and time was also allocated to information-gap pairwork and guided writing, requiring active learner participation.

Furthermore, a methodological difference is evident between the two schools in their attitude toward the role and use of ALTs. Whereas by allocating responsibility for preparing and leading the lessons, teachers at school F appreciate the potential of native-speaker input and interaction for their learners, Y teachers appear to recognise the ALT role as simply that of assistant. While several Y teachers admitted that Oral Communication classes detracted from their main purpose of examination preparation, others who firmly believed team teaching was beneficial in principle cited problems of ALT inexperience in teaching and preparation, as noted by Crooks (2001:35), for their reluctance to delegate.

For example, in Yob.2 an information-gap activity was orchestrated, where students working in pairs were to scan-read a variety of text sources around the room on posters, print-outs and a computer screen to complete the task. Lena's handout questions, however, required simple lower-order 'knowledge' and 'comprehension' cognitive domain skills (Bloom 1956), providing no information-gap and therefore no communicative need for learners to collaborate, and thus the majority worked alone in

silence. Even though Lena made detailed lesson plans and materials, her role was subordinate to that of Mr Z, being the 'human tape recorder' for choral reading (Yob.1) and cultural input (Yob.2), although her presence in class did provide scope for frequent teacher L2 interaction.

Moreover, in Yob.4, the materials produced by Harry for his allotted section of the lesson, which was envisioned by Mr Z as cultural input with a communication task, resulted again in the ALT taking the tape-recorder role while students listened for specific words and passively filled gaps on the handout, with no focus on the message of the text. Thus, an infrequent opportunity for the class to interact with a native speaker on a topic intended to generate authentic discussion reverted to a lower-order skill discrete-point language exercise.

When ALTs had overall responsibility for planning, the way in which those at school F conducted their classes differed, with Rick adopting a rigid teacher-controlled approach, even when more flexible non-authorised materials had been selected. The potential for communicative exploitation of the team-teaching and small class-size circumstances of Fob.1 & 2 was not realised, since textbook-based, teacher-fronted, form-focused lessons were observed, in which students were asked to do pronunciation drills, listen for specific information from the CD, and answer display questions (Chaudron 1988; Richards & Lockhart 1994) with complete sentences, rather than use L2 to formulate their own responses. In addition, no case of student interaction was noted.

In contrast, Annie facilitated much student interaction and encouraged exchange of ideas. Lessons Fob.3 & 4 included learner-centred task-based activities designed to encourage students to think about the content of the simplified novel read outside class, to express their own opinions, to collaborate and exercise a degree of autonomy within their groupwork, thus addressing higher-order cognitive as well as communicative skills (Fraser forthcoming). The roles of the JTEs in lessons Fob.1–4 were, however,

decidedly subordinate to the ALTs, involving mainly reading aloud (Ms H), monitoring and providing spontaneous demonstrations, and role-playing when asked (Mr S).

It must be remembered, however, that these observed lessons only provide snapshots of what happened throughout the year.

8.4.3 Classroom dynamics

One area which may affect learner communicative competence is that of classroom atmosphere and dynamics, such as on-task communication between students, teacher ↔ teacher interactions in team-teaching contexts, and personalised teacher ↔ student interactions of help, feedback, praise and general chat. Teacher-nominated questions and their responses are not included. Probably on account of the communicative teaching styles of both Mr S (F) and Mr Z (Y), similar patterns in teacher ↔ student interactions and cases of monitoring were observed at both schools. The amount of student ↔ student interaction varied however, because of the co-operative learning method employed in lessons with Annie and Mr S (Fob.3 & 4). Thus, the whole of lesson Fob.3 was counted as group-work/S↔S interaction, as was ⅔ of lesson Fob.4, after a 15-minute test was completed.

The most notable difference in classroom interaction occurred in lesson Yob.5, where there were no cases of S ↔ S interaction, attributable to Mr M's traditional teacher-fronted teaching style. T ↔ S interaction only occurred in teacher-nominated display questions and their, often inaudible, answers. Furthermore, no opening or closing moves were made, and no positive feedback was given for correct responses, which left a generally negative impression of a lack of rapport between all participants in that lesson.

	T ↔ T	T ↔ S	S ↔ S	T monitors
F	9	27	8+1⅔ lessons	17
Y	16.77	16.77	6.1	11.44

Table 8.5 Classroom-dynamics: interaction occurrences totalled

While an impressive amount of natural T ↔ T interaction occurred in the data [F=9; Y=16.77], in particular between Mr Z and Lena (15 cases), the exact effect of this on the learners is not clear. It is difficult to assess whether learners are actively listening and acquiring new language or whether they have 'switched off' during teacher-talk, unless they are, for example, doing a while-listening task or using the information to achieve a later task. This may also be the case in activities coded as 'silent plenary', which include choral shadow reading and listening to extended texts on CDs or read by teachers.

Finally, an overall difference was noted in how learners responded to classroom input, with F students appearing much more engaged in the activities, responding willingly, projecting their voices, and reacting to teacher talk. In contrast, Y students mostly adopted a receptive learning style, being much more reticent in responding, passively writing notes, and often showing no response to teacher talk, especially if in L2.

8.4.4 Off-task time

One further observable factor which may have a negative effect on the development of communicative competence is time spent off-task during English lessons, as tabulated below. In addition to chatting in L1 about non-related topics, examples of behaviour coded as 'off-task' include apparent or real sleeping, reading 'manga' comics under the desk, drawing, playing with mobile phones and general fidgeting. All are symptomatic of momentary lack of concentration and interest in the lesson, or of long-term demotivation.

	Group work	Pair work	Silent plenary	Off-task L1 chat	Off-task behaviour
F	1⅔ lessons	7	22	11	24
Y	1.52	4.57	20.59	48.81	49.57

Table 8.6 Classroom-dynamics: silent task/off-task occurrences totalled

In both sub-categories of off-task chat and behaviour, the numbers of incidences for group Y greatly outweigh those for group F. This cannot be excused as due to the length of Y lessons, since occurrences are equally distributed throughout a class, and not only in the later part. However, the sharp increase in off-task behaviour after the first observation in early June, culminating in lesson Yob.5 (actual occurrences = 15 chat; 22 behaviour), may mirror a decline in interest in English lessons in group Y and be indicative of overall levels of L2 motivation (see Fraser 2008).

8.5 Language learning motivation

Motivation has long been regarded as a major influence on the learning process, with the view widely held throughout the literature (see, for example: Paulston 1980 in 1992; Gardner 1985, 1988; Ramage 1990; Crookes & Schmidt 1991; Oxford & Shearin 1994; Dörnyei 1990, 1994a,b, 2001, 2003; Clément, Dörnyei & Noels 1994; Tremblay & Gardner 1995; Dörnyei & Kormos 2000; Schmidt & Watanabe 2001), that 'motivation is a very important, if not *the* most important, factor in language learning' (van Lier 1996:98). Within the Japanese context, studies have been conducted on the effect of motivation on L2 learning at university level (Kimura, Nakata & Okumura 2001; Brown, Robson & Rosenkjar 2001; Yashima 2002; O'Donnell 2003; Tani-Fukuchi & Sakamoto 2005), on demotivation (Falout & Maruyama 2004; Carriera 2006; Kikuchi & Sakai 2009), and apathy (McVeigh 2001; Burden 2002). Among the few studies directly related to the high school context, Matsukawa and Tachibana (1996) and Zhang and Zhang (2004) contrast Japanese and Chinese learners of English, and Fraser (2008)

reflects Maeda's (2004:57) findings that 'learners at higher achievement levels tend to show stronger motivation than those in lower levels'.

While studies on language learning motivation in the current global English context reconceptualise or reject the theoretical concept of integrative orientation, by exploring identity and investment (Norton 2000); willingness to communicate and international posture (Yashima 2002; 2009); the complexity of cultural identity and language use/learning from a World English perspective (Coetzee-Van Rooy 2006); and the 'possible selves' of *ideal* and *ought-to* self (Dörnyei 2005; 2009), MacIntyre, Mackinnon and Clément (2009) propose integrative motivation and possible selves as complementary frameworks.

However, acknowledging the above limitations to the traditional intergrative orientation model (Gardner & Lambert 1972), interesting trends in learner L2 motivation can still be identified in relation to it. It could be argued that in Japan this concept of integrative motivation is still relevant, as inner-circle-country speakers are the specific target reference groups for Japanese learners. Indeed, as discussed in 3.4, for the Japanese context the model, and therefore the image and associations, of English is generally the native-speaker variety and related cultures, as presented and reinforced in EFL materials (Fraser 2005), rather than a globalised form or regional World English varieties.

Moreover, the situation where most Japanese learners in this study were likely to employ English was with native speakers, since those of other nationalities with whom these students may have come into contact would probably have interacted by attempting Japanese as the host language rather than English as a lingua franca. In addition, due to motivation questionnaires (for example Ryan 2009) being typically too comprehensive and therefore lengthy for these research constraints, and since several of the present questionnaire items were developed from the survey instrument employed in previous research in schools F and Y (see Fraser 2006a), which themselves were based

on the earlier motivation literature (as indeed are the above-mentioned Japanese studies), it was decided that the traditional orientation distinctions (Gardner & Lambert 1972) would provide an adequate framework against which to describe the L2 motivation of the EFL learners in this study.

8.5.1 L2 motivation in groups F and Y

Since language learning motivation was found to differ between the two groups of students, and therefore they were not entirely comparable on this factor, this study cannot be treated as a full experimental design with experimental group and control group each with the same characteristics or characteristics which can be held constant while the effects of the 'experimental' International Understanding course are measured or otherwise analysed. This also relates to the question of self-selection explained earlier in this chapter: students made a positive choice to follow the International Understanding course, and this is very likely to be a consequence of their pre-existing motivation to learn English in the way they expected to be taught on this course. Other factors, however, such as parental pressure, cannot be ruled out.

The possible sources and levels of L2 motivation of these participants have already been documented in Fraser (2008), and hence for reasons of space, this evidence is tabulated below in order to describe the differences between groups F and Y.

Learner motivation in this study was elicited through questionnaires, as described in Chapter Four, and detailed in Fraser (2008), with data presented in Tables 8.7 and 8.8 below and itemised in Appendix 8b. Positive responses to questions relating to experiences and goals in language learning were found more frequently in group F data.

		Reasons	F		Y	
			Very much	No	Very much	No
Intensity	a	English: favourite subject at JHS	26	0	9	0
	b	English: favourite subject at SHS	26	0	8	
	c	Enjoyed English at JHS	20	1	11	9
	d	Enjoyed English at SHS	14	2	9	9
	e	Like speaking English at JHS	15	0	8	10
	f	Like speaking English at SHS	18	1	8	13
	g	English: best subject at SHS	18		1	
	h	Extra-curricular English at SHS	24		3	
Predominant Orientation	i	Communicate	31	0	23	2
	j	Learn cultures	18	1	9	14
	k	Study/ live abroad	19	1	8	13
	l	Get a good job	21	5	12	6
	m	Pass exams	14	8	21	4
	n	Prestige	2	20	9	18

Table 8.7 Students' perceptions about learning English (totals)

	F		Y	
	Like English	17	Get to University	15
	Job / future	13	Academic school	11
Why chose school:	Learn FLs / English	11	Study + clubs	9
	Cultures	8	Personal trivia	8
	University/college	25	University/college	30
	Study English / FLs	11	Study English / FLs	2
Future hopes:	Study / work abroad	8	Study / work abroad	0
	Job using FLs	8	Job using FLs	1
	Be a teacher	1	Be a teacher	9

Table 8.8 Students' choice of school and ambitions

8.5.2 Statistical analyses

When statistical procedures were conducted on the questionnaire data, it was established that group F were more highly motivated, and with an integrative orientation (Gardner 1985) (see Appendices 8c & 8d). An independent-samples t-test was firstly performed to evaluate whether groups F and Y differed in terms of motivational intensity. The results of comparing means of factors a–f responses showed statistically significant differences between the two groups: $t(68.543) = 5.381$ ($p = .000$) with reliability assured by Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .808$).

Orientation was then examined by combining three integrative factors (i,j,k), where t-tests demonstrated a significant difference between groups F and Y: $t(64.145) = 5.027$ ($p = .000$). When instrumental factors (l,m,n) were analysed, no significant difference was found: $t(78) = -0.730$ ($p = .467$). It is perhaps not surprising that both groups have similar degrees of instrumental motivation when both are pressured by the examination system and career expectations, as discussed in Chapter Two.

As motivation is thought to improve performance (Gardner 1985 etc), correlation analyses were conducted to establish whether there was a relationship between combined integrative and instrumental motivation and communicative performance on the measures of essay writing and oral interview used in this study (see Chapters Six and Seven). Strong positive correlations (**= at the 1% level) were found by Pearson product-moment between motivational intensity and holistic fluency [r = .617** (p = .000)] and wordcount [r = .606** (p = .000)] in written competence. Also, using Kendall's *tau*, a non-parametric statistic effective on small populations (Hatch & Lazaraton 1991:453), correlations (*at the 0.2% level of significance) were found between motivational intensity and holistic fluency [r = .683* (p = .001)] and wordcount [r = .626* (p = .001)] for spoken competence. Furthermore, when statistics were performed on combined data for groups F and Y for motivation and EIKEN proficiency scores, a significant relationship between motivation intensity and test performance is shown. Using Pearson product-moment, a moderate positive correlation was found between motivational intensity and EIKEN[1] (r = .408 (p = .000) and EIKEN[2] (r = .530 (p = .000) at the 1% level).

When results are analysed separately, however, the correlation between motivation and test performance at the end of their 1st year of high school English for group F was not significant [EIKEN[1]: r = .218 (p = .195); EIKEN[2]: r = .301 (p = .063)], suggesting that no conclusions can be drawn here about motivation and EIKEN scores. On the other hand, the significant correlations between motivation and EIKEN scores for group Y [[1]: r = .596 (p = .000); [2]: r = .511 (p = .001 at the 1% level)] suggest that motivated Y students may have improved more than those with less interest in L2 learning due to their motivation.

It is important to note that group F reported a much higher level of motivation on questionnaire items relating to pre-senior high school (a,c,e) than group Y, and that

although there was a trend to decline in motivation throughout the research year in both groups, F students commenced and remained much more motivated toward L2 learning than Y students.

The interesting factor, finally, is that there was a small, yet similar, decline in motivation in each group over the year. Although reasons for the decline are unclear, motivational intensity within group F nonetheless remained high. As F students were observed to communicate more actively in class, and to be much more actively involved in their learning, as the theories of communicative competence recommend, it is possible to surmise that this mode of learning was instrumental in the maintenance of motivation in group F, as well as in their high achievement on measures of written and spoken competence (Chapters Six and Seven), and in a test of English proficiency, as is seen in Chapter Nine. In future research it would be possible to investigate the relationship between teaching and learning style and the maintenance of motivation more directly.

8.6 Summary

Several aspects of classroom practice with direct relevance for the development of spoken communicative competence in L2 learners are highlighted above. Students on both courses are exposed to very good models of non-native-speaker English input, have opportunities to interact with native-speaker teachers, if less frequently at school Y, and are encouraged to answer questions when nominated. Major differences, however, arise in the nature and frequency of student oral L2 output, which may be dependent upon classroom atmosphere and activity types employed.

Moreover, differences in student motivation for learning and using English, both individually and in the overall ethos of the school or course, may have a significant effect on learner L2 communication. It is acknowledged that since many students made a conscious decision to follow course F, it could be expected that they would participate

enthusiastically in group and pair work, as well as in actively using their L2 knowledge to attempt to express their ideas in English. Observed evidence shows that F students are indeed taking advantage of the attention and activities offered in language classes.

On the other hand, despite attempts at CLT techniques by Mr Z and Lena, students at school Y were seen to be reluctant to participate actively in lessons. The examination-oriented, lecture-style teaching methodology predominant in Japanese high schools appears to hold a strong influence, so that even in classes where active participation is invited, learners prefer not to deviate from the expected norm, and remain passive recipients of knowledge.

It may similarly be proposed that teacher perceptions of International Understanding course students influence how they teach and react to those learners, and what topics and input they use in class. The amount of teacher involvement in course design and planning [Y: 'very little'; no answer; F: '100%'; 'a lot'; 'decided democratically'] may also have a strong effect on both the teaching and learning experience at each school. In addition, the narrower range of materials and single focus on exam-oriented study could account for the decline over the research period from an already low level of motivation for learning English noted in [Y] student questionnaires. Length of lessons, teachers' perceived goals for students (to pass exams), and characteristics of learners (shy, hesitant, lacking in enthusiasm) may also contribute to learner demotivation of general course students of English.

The analysis and discussion of issues relating to course practicalities, teachers, materials, ELT methodology, and language learning motivation dealt with in this chapter constitute circumstantial evidence that International Understanding course F is likely to contribute to better communicative ability in its students.

Chapter Nine

Academic achievement and communicative competence

Evidence has so far been presented in Chapters Six and Seven of how learners in group F following the International Understanding course demonstrate a higher level of communicative competence than those on general course Y, in both written and spoken English, according to the measurements employed in this research. An examination in Chapter Eight of the teaching and learning processes in each school then highlighted differences in approaches and content, which may have influenced the development of communicative competence. However, as examinations play a central role throughout Japanese society in both educational and employment systems, academic achievement must be taken into consideration when conducting a study into ELT in Japan. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to investigate if and to what extent within this specified context communicative competence and academic achievement are interrelated, by addressing the final research question:

> (iv) What is the relationship between communicative ability and academic
> achievement in English?

This chapter initially outlines the educational and societal effects of assessment in Japan, before turning its focus to ELT test design, methodology and problems specific to the Japanese context. One particular English proficiency test, EIKEN, is then described and critiqued before the results of its adoption as a research instrument for this study are analysed. Scores attained on this test are then compared with data presented in Chapters Six and Seven from measures of communicative competence of participants on courses F and Y, to explore the relationship between academic achievement and communicative competence. A more detailed investigation of the examination system and its influences is firstly given to contextualise the testing administered in the present study, before the relevance of those results, and the implications of those findings to Japanese ELT, can

be considered.

9.1 The role of testing in Japan

In many, if not all, societies examinations express academic values and 'implicit choices' of the educational system, while providing 'one of the most efficacious tools for the enterprise of inculcating the dominant culture and the value of that culture' (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977:142). This seems particularly true for Japan, where the social system is underpinned and maintained by examinations as 'the driving force that actualizes values and beliefs concerning intelligence and knowledge' (Zeng 1999:330). Rooted in the Confucian tradition of selection by competition (ibid:6), Japan's education system is considered to be a meritocracy, 'where education plays a pivotal role in the formation of the society, instead of merely functioning to maintain the status quo' (Kariya 1995 quoted in Yoneyama 1999:45).

However, although Japan professes success through academic achievement (ibid:48), the 'assumption of innate differences in ability' is rejected (Stevenson 1996:102), resulting in compulsory education being of uniform input administered in mixed-ability groups. Thus, equality of opportunity is assumed as given by the conditions of learning, and success is determined by effort and self-discipline (Hood 2001b:7), with examinations regarded as 'measures not only of achievement and intelligence, but also of character, determination, and the drive to succeed' (Zeng 1999:v). This view accounts for why students in Japan are prepared to endure longer hours of schooling and extra-curricular study than in many other countries (Stevenson 1996:103) in order to achieve their goal. Currently, over 90% of students undergo selection for senior high school, from which 50% of graduates pass entrance exams for tertiary education (DeCoker 2002:142), with extreme competition for places at élite universities. Survey data presented in Chapter Eight demonstrate that an even larger percentage of participants in this study expressed an intention to progress to university or college after

high school [F=25; Y=30].

The pressure of *shiken jigoku,* or 'exam hell', is well-documented, generating criticism of the 'undesirable effects on curriculum, on foreign language instruction, on family life, and on children's emotional, physical and intellectual development' (Tsukada 1991:178 in Brown & Yamashita 1995:86). Although some writers dismiss the phenomenon as exaggeration, the majority voice negative opinions of varying degree. Leestma & Walberg (1992:20), whilst conceding that exams are 'a common source of perpetual, but culturally expected anxiety for students, parents and teachers', highlight their 'positive effects' of encouraging 'high performance', and contributing to 'disciplined study habits' (ibid:21). Whereas Mulvey (2001:12) dismisses exam hell as irrelevant, claiming that nearly 80% of test takers are accepted by universities, Murphey (2004:707) contrastingly condemns the phenomenon as 'grossly unjust to Japanese youth, anti-educational, and damaging to Japanese society'.

Despite all learners theoretically being exposed to the same curriculum, the Confucian ideal of 'educational opportunity without class distinction' (Zeng 1999:20) is being eroded by both parental and monetary intervention. Social background clearly influences learning, with research into how parental levels of education affect a child's prospects, demonstrating – not surprisingly given the results of research in many other countries and Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction – 'an indisputable link between family background and attainment even in Japan where the meritocratic ideology prevails with such intensity' (Yoneyama 1999:51). In addition, financial support enables certain students to attend *juku* to practise and perfect exam-taking techniques, which 'runs contrary to a meritocratic education' (Hood 2001b:6).

The desire to attend academic high schools and prestigious universities sustains the lucrative *juku* business, and leads to a division in advantage among students, with 88% of university candidates found to experience 'shadow education', or *juku* (Stevenson &

Baker 1992:51). Indeed, as was discussed in Chapter Five, among students involved in this research, many had attended *juku* prior to senior high school for various subjects [F=29; Y=28], and for English in particular [F=25; Y=25]. Furthermore, it is suggested that learners are more likely to study harder there than at high school, regarding *juku* as the most effective method of exam preparation (Aspinall 2005:209).

The nature of the examinations themselves influences learning styles and the variety and range of skills necessary for success in them. Contrasting aspects of testing categorised in Table 9.1 illustrate how Japanese methods of assessment are located within the wider EFL spectrum of testing methodology.

Methods of assessment		
formative		summative
criterion-referenced		norm-referenced
subjective		objective
Aspects of language and language learning		
integrative		discrete-point
direct		indirect
performance		knowledge
Modes of response		
productive		receptive
Test item type techniques		
interview	paraphrase	true / false
essay	transformation	gap-fill
cloze		multiple-choice
dictation		

Table 9.1 Categories and techniques in EFL testing

Norm-referenced testing ranks candidates in relation to each other, often based on percentages of 'correct' answers (Alderson, Clapham & Wall 1995:157, 159). The results of objective testing, in which students do not need to produce language, but only recognise it in a given context (Morrow 1979:146), facilitate calculation of quantifiable scores, directly applicable for a selection procedure, but strongly affect test item-type

choice. Subjective testing techniques, such as essays and oral interviews, can provide holistic assessment which is 'preferred when the primary concern is with evaluating the communicative effectiveness of candidates' writing' (Weir 2005:67), but criticised for impressionistic marks solely dependent upon the opinion of the marker.

A further division occurs between direct and indirect testing. Direct, integrative testing requires the candidate to employ realistic language in tasks to measure only the desired skills, whilst indirect testing measures abilities underlying skills (Hughes 2003:17), through discrete-point methods, such as multiple-choice, gap-filling and re-ordering, which test isolated grammar or vocabulary items. Essays and interviews generate productive responses, where candidates can creatively use L2, whereas multiple-choice and transformation-type formats requiring only recognition and selection of items are considered receptive (Madsen 1983:8–9).

Within the Japanese context, the majority of English language tests can be defined by the terminology in the right-hand column of Table 9.1, because of large numbers of candidates and the subsequent need to ensure a practical and reliable system 'to achieve grading efficiency and impartiality' (Zeng 1999:133). This is particularly true for high-stakes university entrance examinations.

9.1.1 Problems of university entrance examinations

If the fundamental reason for foreign language learning in the modern internationalized world is to enable communication with speakers of other languages through a shared medium, learners should be taught, and hence assessed, in a way that can demonstrate knowledge of appropriate use of language forms in meaningful communicative situations (Weir 1990:9). In the 'action plan to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities"' (MEXT 2003a:1–4) as well as strongly advocating the development of communication skills, it is emphasized that 'selection methods that appropriately

evaluate communication abilities will be promoted' (ibid:9).

Although communicative competence is the goal of ELT (see Chapter Three), Japanese university entrance exams cannot be classed as communicative since they lack the fundamental requirement of testing productive skills. Indeed, these examinations have long been criticized for their 'concern for grammatical correctness over communicative competence, reading ability over speaking skills' (Stanlaw 2004:287), and failing to measure wide-ranging language abilities 'including knowledge of cohesion, functions, and sociolinguistic appropriateness' (Bachman 1991:678).

Illustrative of this, in their analysis of 21 Japanese university examinations (10 state-run; 10 private; Center Test), Brown and Yamashita (1995:95) found little requirement for written language, and 'absolutely no spoken language'. Moreover, Kikuchi's (2006) replication study still found mostly receptive or translation skills being tested. No university offers an oral test, with both a decrease in overall productive items (1994: 30.19%; 2004: 22.31%), and a decline in the percentage of essays or short-answer written questions (1994: 17.5%; 2004: 6.82%) being traced. In addition, listening, an integral part of communicative ability, is marginalized or omitted from many university examinations. In 1994, 7.82% of public universities included listening items, rising slightly to 12.07% in 2004 (Kikuchi 2006), yet, despite MEXT emphasis and the introduction of a listening component in the 2006 Center Test, only 32.7% of 55 public university exams for 2006 contained listening questions (Fraser 2006b).

Communicative tests must present a representative sample of language and contexts as well as authenticity of tasks and texts, as 'language cannot be meaningful if it is devoid of context' (Weir 1990:11). Although high percentages of questions in 1994/2004 analyses relate to texts (i.e. passage-dependent), the contexts are varied in extent and authenticity. Furthermore, as many questions continue to be indirect, discrete-point rather than holistic items, they fail to assess the performance capacity of candidates.

9.1.2. Backwash effect

A major problem of assessment, and one widely documented in relation to Japanese education, is 'backwash effect', defined as 'the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning' (Messick 1996:241), causing teaching to focus only on test practice when high-stakes nationwide exams are used (Bachman & Palmer 1996:31). Backwash is the impact of a test on learners, teachers, educational systems and society (Hughes 2003:53), recognized as a serious detriment to students' English ability (e.g. Aspinall 2005:207; Norris-Holt 2002:5). Indeed, what is expected in examinations is not English ability (Yoneyama 1999:144), leading students to perceive two Englishes, and to strongly prioritize English for exams over English for communication (Kobayashi 2001:69). MEXT (2003a,b) guidelines have a limited effect in class, because competition for university places perpetuates backwash, which in turn causes teachers to feel more restricted in how they teach (Taguchi 2002:5), resulting in even more reliance on teacher-fronted grammar explanations and choral reading (Sakui 2004:157), as observed particularly in school Y, and documented in 8.4.2 above.

In contrast, Mulvey (1999:128) denies the connection between examinations, textbook content and high school pedagogy, concluding that backwash has been 'exaggerated' (ibid:133). There nonetheless seems to be clear evidence of backwash both in the literature (e.g. Brown & Yamashita 1995:98; Norris-Holt 2002:5; Sato 2002:57; Sakui 2004:157; Samimy & Kobayashi 2004:251), and from personal observation in academic high schools, where lesson content and choice of materials closely mirror exam content, and increases pressure on teachers, as reported in Chapter Eight.

As a measure for academic achievement in English for the two groups of learners was required for the purposes of this research, a publicly recognised examination was sought to avoid issues of validity and reliability which would arise if a purpose-made test had

been designed. Selecting one in which the problems identified in university entrance examinations were minimised was crucial, and so other nationally acclaimed tests were inspected. The extremely popular TOEIC – with 789,433 takers in Japan in 2008 (TOEIC website) – was immediately rejected for its business focus and for having neither spoken nor written components, leaving EIKEN, discussed in detail below, as the best option for an assessment instrument in the present study.

9.2 EIKEN English proficiency test

Of the range of English proficiency tests available worldwide, one of the most popular examinations in Japan is 'EIKEN'. Established in 1963, the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP), produces English tests for education and business. STEP claims on its website that the EIKEN test in Practical English Proficiency is 'Japan's leading language assessment', which is 'backed by' MEXT. The test is also promoted as being recognised by universities and colleges throughout the English-speaking world for 'international admissions'.

There are seven levels, or 'grades', which are 'designed to provide well-defined steps that can act as both motivational goals and concrete measures of English ability as learners move through the spectrum of commonly recognized ability levels'. The tests are administered in two parts, three times a year, with a first-stage test of vocabulary, reading and listening comprehension, and, in the two highest grades, written composition, being followed by a 'compulsory speaking test'. This oral test, 'a direct speaking component, designed to discriminate between examinees with interactive speaking skills and those who merely perform well on multiple-choice tests', is, however, only available to those candidates who pass the initial paper-based test.

A reported 2.3 million examinees are tested annually at 18,000 designated sites worldwide, amounting to 80 million test-takers since its foundation in 1963 (STEP

website). The most recent data (for 2008) on EIKEN applicants show a pass rate of 58% across all grades for the initial paper test; some 13% of those who proceeded to the spoken test were failed on their oral performance, giving an overall pass rate of 52%. This perhaps illustrates the pressure exerted on Japanese society to seek qualifications in English, even when they are not ready to be tested (ibid).

The figures for the Pre-2nd grade test are even less encouraging: from nearly half a million applicants, only 44% were permitted to proceed to the oral stage, when a further almost 16% failed. Thus the overall pass rate at Pre-2nd grade was just 37%.

Despite this low rate of success, testimonials such as the following are posted on the STEP website in praise of the test:

> EIKEN is without a doubt the most robust, valid, and reliable test for
> assessing the English language proficiency of Japanese students
> (Dr Louis A. Arena, Professor Emeritus. University of Delaware Linguistics
> and Cognitive Science Department.; quoted on STEP website)

One particular advantage of EIKEN is that it is an 'open' test, where 'materials are used only once and then disclosed to the public', and where candidates are able to retain their test booklet for future study. This permits the use of actual past test materials for teaching and research purposes, a factor in the selection of EIKEN Pre-2nd grade Proficiency test as an assessment tool for the present study.

9.2.1 EIKEN Pre-2nd grade Proficiency test

When looking for material to be employed as a pre-/post-test for this longitudinal study, it was important to select a test whose contents were appropriate to the L2 level of learning experiences of the populations, and for which reliability and validity could be assured. EIKEN Pre-2nd test, promoted as being 'designated by Japan's education ministry as a benchmark for high school graduates', and both 'familiar and proven' and 'linked with Japanese school curriculum', therefore seemed suitable for the present

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purpose.

The ability level description compares EIKEN Pre-2nd test with TOEFL 400 points (paper-based test) or 32 points (internet test), and targets learners who 'can understand and use language at a level sufficient to allow [them] to take part in general aspects of daily life'. Furthermore, the assertion that EIKEN Pre-2nd or 2nd grade is the 'recommended level to be achieved upon graduation from high school' reinforced the suitability of both level and content to the two groups of learners under investigation here.

The initial paper-based test, for which 90 minutes are allocated, comprises 30 listening comprehension questions, 7 questions on two extended reading comprehension texts, and 38 questions testing knowledge of grammar and vocabulary by selecting items to complete gaps in sentences and longer texts; all 75 answers have four multiple-choice options. A one-to-one interview test, which is conducted a month later, lasts 6–8 minutes. Authentic EIKEN materials used for this study are found in Appendices 4c, 4d & 4e.

9.2.2 Critique of EIKEN

Although nationally regarded by MEXT, and Japanese society as a whole, due to its status, popularity and large numbers of takers each year (see 9.2), as a test of overall English proficiency, it is questionable as to whether it really does test all aspects of language ability. Even though clearly testing linguistic competence, other crucial components of communicative competence, namely sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, are not accommodated within this examination. Since it is a multiple-choice test, its closed-question format does not allow for creative or original answers, or for recall of previously learned vocabulary. Also, strategies for explaining or expressing ideas in a roundabout way, so frequent and useful in real communication,

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cannot be assessed through a method where precise items of language with only one correct option are presented. Furthermore, it cannot evaluate written production of the target language, since there is no extended writing component. EIKEN thus can only examine a narrow form of L2 ability.

Even in the oral component, where scope for formulation of original L2 production is expected, the restrictive marking criteria encourage only formulaic responses and absolute grammatical accuracy, with the only natural interaction, the introductory questions, in which there is potential for the candidate's sociolinguistic competence to be demonstrated, not being assessed (see 7.1.1). It is therefore suggested that EIKEN proficiency test can assess only aspects of linguistic competence, not overall communicative competence as defined and discussed above in Chapter Three. In order to examine this hypothesis, the scores of EIKEN were correlated with scores attained on the essay test and oral interview (see Appendix 9a), the instruments used to assess communicative competence in this study, to investigate whether similar or different aspects of language ability were being measured. Combined scores for groups F and Y were used in these calculations, since content of tests, not differences between the two populations, was the focus.

9.2.3 EIKEN test and essay writing

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure the degree of association between the two sets of interval data of writing ability as demonstrated through the essay instrument, and EIKEN scores. As 13 combinations for writing were used, the α level of significance was adjusted to .0038 (.3%). Correlation coefficients were found to be significant at the 0.0 level (2-tailed) between:

EIKEN [2] and Essay lexical range: $r = .422^{**}$ ($p = .000$)

EIKEN [2] and Essay total wordcount: $r = .385^{**}$ ($p = .001$)

EIKEN [2] and Essay overall fluency: $r = .507^{**}$ ($p = .000$)

As these correlations are statistically significant, a relationship between EIKEN scores and these three aspects of written L2 production is demonstrated, but the strength of these relationships must be considered. Weak (.2 → .4) and moderate (.4 → .6) (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris 1987:82) positive correlations are found, indicating that although there are links between what is being tested by each instrument or aspect thereof, these relationships are not very strong. However, it is perhaps not surprising that a relationship is found between written lexical range and EIKEN [2] scores, as it is logically to be expected that a test of overall proficiency would also be testing lexical knowledge. Hence, demonstrating a more extensive active vocabulary in writing would imply having a larger passive vocabulary which is drawn upon to recognise L2 items in the test and to answer multiple-choice questions successfully. Similarly, a relationship between fluency in essay writing and EIKEN scores may be justified, since 'total wordcount' and 'overall fluency' were both categorised as criteria for assessing written fluency (see 6.5). In order to write effectively, one must have a substantial knowledge of the L2 system, including grammatical or linguistic competence and extensive vocabulary. As it is widely accepted that better writers are also better readers, students producing more fluent L2 writing are likely to also be more fluent in L2 reading, and therefore be better equipped to tackle reading comprehension questions in tests such as EIKEN.

It may thus be concluded that students who score highly on the essay instrument are likely to be more successful when taking the EIKEN [2] test. We can logically see the link between L2 knowledge and production, but cannot conclude that one score directly influences the other, i.e. that better writing ability necessarily results in higher test scores, or vice versa, since 'correlation is not causation' (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris 1987:8).

9.2.4 EIKEN test and oral interview

As only a small number of students were given the oral interview, and their holistic fluency was measured on a 1–5 scale (see 7.2) which results in parallel scores, a non-parametric test, Kendall's *tau*, was selected for its ability to treat tied scores and small populations (in total n = 16). As 21 combinations of speaking indices were examined (7.1.4: a–v, excluding j), the α level of significance was adjusted to .0023 (.2%). No significant correlations were found between EIKEN [2] and any of the 21 marking criteria used to evaluate L2 spoken ability as specified in 7.1.4 above. This result is not unexpected, as these two tests may measure different aspects of L2 ability. Furthermore, as stated in 9.2.2, due to the nature of the EIKEN [2] test, it cannot directly assess sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences by its multiple-choice format. In addition, it could be argued that testing discrete grammar points is not necessarily helpful for overall successful communication. Even if students can choose the correct linguistic item in a multiple-choice question, this may not indicate that they can articulate their intentions effectively. Furthermore, if learners are able to 'get their message across' and appear to be communicating successfully, they are not necessarily grammatically accurate or good at reading comprehension questions. Thus, when the oral criteria used in Chapter Seven to assess overall communicative competence are correlated with EIKEN [2] scores, it is not surprising that no significant relationship is found. However, if spoken scores generated by criteria of grammatical and phonological accuracy, and answering in complete sentences specified by STEP for the EIKEN oral interview (see MacGregor 1998) were to be correlated with EIKEN [2] test results, a different picture may emerge. One could speculate that a significant relationship would be found between oral scores from this rigid accuracy-focused marking scheme and those of the main part of the EIKEN test, suggesting that the interview as envisioned by STEP is thus not a communicative test. Although beyond the scope of the present study,

whether and to what extent EIKEN oral marking criteria are testing communicative competence is, nonetheless, an area worthy of further consideration, and this assumed correlation may be investigated in future research.

It is thus concluded that although the EIKEN proficiency test is shown to correlate with certain aspects of measures for productive L2 use in essay writing, this exam is mainly testing linguistic competence, not overall communicative competence. In particular, it is not assessing spontaneous oral production of L2, since the version of the EIKEN examined here cannot claim to test spoken communication and interaction, and did not, therefore, include the interview component. The EIKEN scores for the two groups F and Y in this study are, therefore, only representative of the students' linguistic competence (see Chapter Three). This, however, in Japanese educational terms equates with L2 ability, since 'English-language abilities for [senior high school] graduates should be the second level or the pre-second level of the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) on average' (MEXT 2003a:1). As success in EIKEN proficiency tests is thus regarded as a marker of academic achievement by both MEXT and Japanese society as a whole, this measure is used for comparison with overall communicative competence, established through written and oral tests in Chapters Six and Seven above, in order to compare results of academic ability and communicative ability in English of the two groups of students in this study.

9.3 Selection and administration of EIKEN test

The selection of EIKEN Pre-2nd test as a research instrument resulted from both MEXT's (2003a:1) above-quoted recommendation that senior high school graduates should achieve EIKEN 2nd or Pre-2nd level, and from discussion with Mr S (FT2), the class teacher of group F. As a condition of agreeing to his class participating in the research he wanted to ensure that all intervention would be beneficial for the students' L2 learning, and that despite MEXT's above goal (ibid), he was encouraging his class to

aim to pass this exam during their 1st or 2nd year at senior high school. At the point of starting the research, however, no student in either group F or Y had attempted EIKEN Pre-2nd level examination.

As well as taking into account the views of the teaching staff so as to maintain the goodwill of both schools, practicalities also needed to be considered when conducting the research. With lessons only lasting 45 minutes at school F, it was therefore necessary to provide an assessment tool that could be comfortably administered within that time-frame. Hence, as a complete 90-minute EIKEN Pre-2nd test could not be used, a shortened version was prepared. As detailed in 9.2.1 above, the real exam contains 30 listening questions and 5 sections for evaluating grammar, vocabulary and reading skills, with a total possible score of 75 marks. To ensure completion within 45 minutes, the adapted test comprised 15 listening questions, 19 language questions and one reading text, 38 items in total, with materials being selected at random from a range of past papers (2003–05). The resulting assessment instrument (see Appendix 4c) was administered under test conditions, but within normal class time, by the main English teacher for each group, being Mr S for F and Mr Z for Y. As a pre- and post-test procedure was adopted, students took this exam near the start of their senior high school course (May 2006) and again at the end of their first year of study (February 2007), as detailed in Chapter Four.

9.3.1 EIKEN results as academic achievement

To establish entry-level English language knowledge of the two groups of participants in this study, pre-test results from the testing instrument EIKEN [1] are firstly examined. Although scored out of 38 points, for ease of comparison with other data, percentages and overall mean scores were calculated, with the listening section also reported separately. The range of scores is shown in Table 9.2 below:

Test [1]	Group F (n = 37)	Group Y (n = 40)
Range %	29% – 83%	16% – 84%
Mean	53.97%	53.2%
Listening (/15)		
Range	5 – 15	4 – 13
Mean	10	9

Table 9.2 Comparison of Pre-test EIKEN [1] scores

From this table it can be seen that although a wider range of scores is produced by Y students, mean scores for both groups are very similar [F=53.97%; Y=53.2%]. It is noted that the distribution of marks for the listening section differs slightly, with F students gaining higher marks for this component. This consequently demonstrates that higher marks were achieved in the grammar and reading sections by Y students, since the overall total scores are comparable.

Assuming so far that the two groups have a similar level of L2 proficiency as measured on the EIKEN [1] pre-test, development of linguistic competence will now be traced through examination of the results of the post-test EIKEN [2].

It had been hypothesised before the study that because school Y is a reputedly academic institution which concentrates on preparation for high-stakes examinations (see 8.1), group Y would achieve higher scores on EIKEN-type tests both upon entry and after one year of study, due to similarities in the focus on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension in lesson content and test items. It was also assumed that because school F is not ranked so highly by reputation academically, and thus its entrance examination for candidates from junior high schools may be less difficult, and because of the different focus of its International Understanding course (see 8.1), that F students would be less successful in such exam contexts. Contrary to these expectations, results showed a fairly similar range of scores, and the mean scores for Test [1] were very close. However, what is more surprising is that after one year's input, the difference in mean scores for Test [2] has widened considerably, and it is group F that have achieved the

higher scores. Data of pre- and post-tests are presented in full in Appendix 9b, and are now compared in Table 9.3:

	GROUP F		GROUP Y	
	(n = 37)	(n = 39)	(n = 40)	(n = 39)
TESTS	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Range %	29% – 83%	42% – 97%	16% – 84%	24% – 83%
Mean	53.97%	70.38%	53.2%	61.74%
Listening				
Range /15	5 – 15	5 – 15	4 – 13	4 – 14
Mean	10	11.5	9	9.7

Table 9.3 Comparison of EIKEN pre- and post-test scores

Again, F students perform better in the listening section where, although the range (5–15) remains constant, the mean has increased much more than for group Y [F=10 → 11.5; Y = 9 → 9.7]. However, the overall high results for F students in Test [2] cannot only be attributed to their improvement in the listening component. A large gain is apparent at both ends of the F range, with fewer F students scoring under 50% [F=1; Y=8], and more achieving 80% or over [F=10; Y=7], including two scoring over 90% (F23; F26).

If individual fluctuations are considered, an overall trend of improvement is seen, with a similar number of students both increasing [F=32; Y=29] and reducing [F=5; Y=7] their marks between tests [1] and [2]. A closer examination, however, reveals that both the the differential and its distribution among students differs between the groups. Although seven students from group Y gained more than 20 points from tests [1] to [2], a considerably larger number of F students, 14 in all, increased their scores by over 20 marks, a figure which includes five students achieving a 30+ point increase. In contrast, whereas the largest decrease in group F was 8 points (F3; F9), three students from group Y dropped between 19 and 21 points (Y1; Y15; Y31).

Looking at the highest and lowest scorers in each group illustrates the difference in

individual performance. In Test [1], in group Y, high-scoring Y16 was actually less successful in the post-test (84 → 80 points), whereas in group F, there was a steady climb for F26 (83 → 92 points). The lowest scorer in Test [1], Y22, retained that position, with only a minimal improvement (16 → 24 points), whereas surprising progress is noted in the performance of the weakest F student in the pre-test, F39, from 29 to 63 points. Overall, there were more dramatic increases in scores between tests [1] and [2] among students in group F. It thus appears from examination of the raw scores that F students have made a marked improvement in their L2 proficiency over the research period, as assessed by this particular test.

It is also interesting to consider that under STEP criteria, with a pass-mark of 65%, whereas few students [F=8; Y=10] would have been successful in the pre-test, by Test [2], a higher proportion of participants, particularly among group F, would have achieved a pass [F=25; Y=17]. In addition, these results (64.1% of group F; 43.6% of group Y being equivalent to a 'pass') are clearly well above the overall average pass-mark for test-takers of EIKEN Pre-2nd in 2008 (see 9.2), where only 37% of candidates were successful.

Yet, however promising these results may seem, without statistical analysis of the data, claims cannot be made as to any significance of the findings. Therefore, in order to be able to state that a significant improvement has been demonstrated by F students, statistical tests were conducted on the above data.

9.4 Statistical analysis of EIKEN pre- and post-test scores

Before analysing test scores, missing data for six students who were absent for either test ([1]: F14, F19, Y38; [2]: Y12; Y40), or who had already abandoned the course (F29) had to be excluded, and total numbers of participants (n) adjusted accordingly, so that for the purposes of the statistical analysis, for group F n=37, and for group Y n=38.

The statistical procedures outlined below were then undertaken to compare test results between and within groups F and Y:

Test [1] F ⟷ Y

Test [2] F ⟷ Y
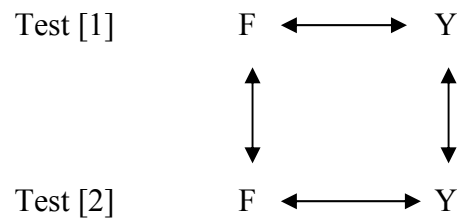
A 2-way ANOVA was performed with groups F and Y being a between-subjects factor and with tests (pre-test [1] and post-test [2]) being a within-subjects factor, to test whether the improvement from pre- to post-test was different between the two groups. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality showed non-significance, indicating that the distributions of the two tests ([1] and [2]) did not deviate from the normal distribution.

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity found no significance, therefore sphericity was assured. The 2-way ANOVA showed the main effect of tests (F (1,73) = 80.295, p = .000 (partial eta squared = .524)), and the interaction effect of tests and groups (F (1,73) = 9.088, p = .004 (partial eta squared = .111)) were significant, whereas the main effect of group was not significant (F (1,73) = 3.186, p = 0.78 (partial eta squared = .042)).

Because the interaction effect was significant, four pairwise comparisons were made by performing two independent t-tests to evaluate differences between the two groups on each of the two tests, and two paired-samples t-tests to evaluate differences between the two tests for each of the two groups, (as shown in Table 9.4). Results of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for Independent Samples showed no significance [Test [1]: p = .697; Test [2]: p = .237], ensuring the condition of Equal Variances Assumed.

The t-test results show that the difference between the two groups on pre-test [1] was not significant (t (73) = 0.182, p = .856), whereas the difference between the two tests

was significant for both groups (t (36) = -8.079, p = .000 for group F; t (37) = 4.418, p = .000 for group Y).

Thus, it is demonstrated statistically that there is no significant difference between Test [1] results for groups F and Y, which strengthens the results of the post-test (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris 1987:41), since their scores are similar. However, the L2 proficiency scores of both groups improved significantly from test [1] to test [2], with students in group F improving significantly more over the research year than those in group Y. As statistical significance suggests that results are unlikely to have occurred simply by chance, it can be assumed that the above results indicate that group F demonstrate higher L2 proficiency as measured by this EIKEN test. It can therefore be concluded that since both MEXT and the Japanese public at large regard public examinations such as EIKEN as indicators of success in FL learning, the EIKEN results documented here provide concrete evidence of academic achievement by these two populations of L2 learners, and should lay to rest any fears that the International Understanding course might be detrimental to the educational options of pupils. Indeed, the higher rate of improvement of this group suggests that they have increased their educational opportunities, with higher EIKEN grades than they might otherwise have achieved.

9.5. Academic achievement and communicative competence compared

It has now been established statistically (see 9.4) that group F achieved significantly higher scores than group Y when tested on the nationally recognised and respected EIKEN proficiency examination. In addition, it has been demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven that group F performed better in tests of essay writing and oral interviews, both of which were intended to measure communicative competence. Circumstantial evidence of a greater willingness to communicate in class in group F is also presented in Chapter Eight to further support the case for course F enabling learners to attain higher

levels of communicative competence in English than the more traditional course Y. Hence, there is now evidence to address the fourth research question posed above, within the contexts of groups F and Y in Japanese senior high schools:

(iv): What is the relationship between communicative ability and academic achievement in English?

What has been established here is that learners who are more communicatively competent, as shown in Chapters Six and Seven, achieve higher scores in tests regarded as markers of L2 success by parents, policy makers and the general public, even when the tests are not sufficiently communicative but are only assessing linguistic sub-competence, as proved in sections 9.2.2–4. More precisely, group F outperform in areas of language production, in the oral interview and essay, as well as language knowledge, as measured by the EIKEN proficiency test.

9.5.1 Conclusions

Through this study the higher levels of attainment of group F in both communicative competence and ability to pass tests which are taken to indicate academic achievement has been described, demonstrating that the students who are following course F are better L2 communicators and better test takers. Their success has been measured according to both EIKEN marking criteria and what are justified as being appropriate indicators of communicative competence, i.e. tests of written and oral expression (see Chapters Six and Seven), in addition to willingness to communicate in observed class participation. Thus, students following course F seem to satisfy both MEXT and Japanese societal goals of being able to communicate in English and achieving high scores on a nationally acclaimed proficiency test which has particular status and carries weight for educational and employment prospects.

A correlation was found between EIKEN [2] scores and aspects of writing ability as measured by the essay test used in this research, as documented in 9.2.3. This does not

confirm that the EIKEN examination tests writing ability adequately, but indicates that if students are able to write fluently at length, showing a range of lexis and expressions, they may also be able to score higher marks on EIKEN tests. Hence, learners who are more communicatively competent are likely to become higher achievers in nationally recognised tests of English proficiency, and are therefore satisfying the aims of Japanese society as discussed in 9.1 and 2.2 above. In addition, by the above data generated through this research, it is demonstrated in 9.3.1 that although the mean score of both groups increased over the year between tests [1] and [2], students in group F have improved more than those in group Y, and it is suggested that reasons for this favourable result may be found in the input and experiences of the International Understanding course.

A summary of research findings is now presented in the final chapter, and conclusions are drawn from the outcomes of this investigation. Implications for foreign language education in Japan resulting from this study are then presented, and further research into these issues is suggested.

Chapter Ten

Conclusions

The present study was undertaken with the purpose of investigating the frequently criticised lack of communicative ability of Japanese learners of English, described in Chapter One. Based on the researcher's personal experiences of teaching English to Japanese students, and on observations noted in educational circumstances which both exemplified and contradicted the above criticisms, two groups of learners were identified upon which to conduct a longitudinal mixed-methods study, as explained in Chapter Four. Two schools with many commonalities were selected, since 'instructive analysis can be made when the units for comparison have sufficient in common to make analysis of their differences meaningful' (Fairbrother 2007:88).

The specific objective was to examine the development of communicative competence in learners following an 'International Understanding' course, which is previously undocumented in the literature. After defining communicative competence appropriately for the Japanese high school context, evidence was collected to attempt to demonstrate the communicative ability of learners, which is the goal of MEXT. This was effected through employment of written and spoken tests specifically designed to measure aspects of communicative competence, along with classroom observation, and the 'internationally recognised' (STEP website) EIKEN English proficiency test.

10.1 Summary of findings

Findings are summarised in relation to research questions (i) – (iv) of the study.

(i) Do 'International Understanding' courses enable students to attain a higher ability to communicate in English than general courses?

Evidence of differences in communicative competence between groups F and Y was gathered through assessment of written and spoken L2 performance, according to criteria based on specified components of the working definition of communicative competence presented in 3.4.

Group F generally demonstrated higher levels of written fluency in both wordcount and holistic impression on the reader, as well as greater lexical sophistication. They also produced fewer incomprehensible items, indicative of greater sociolinguistic competence.

In contrast, group Y demonstrated higher levels of linguistic competence in accuracy and, marginally so, in syntactic complexity (see Chapter Six), which may be attributable to school Y's grammar-oriented methodology which is more typical of ELT in Japan (see Chapters Two and Eight).

Similarly, differences in spoken performance were found in one-to-one conversational encounters with native-speaker ALTs. A greater ability in all four specified components of communicative competence was demonstrated by F students. Linguistic competence was evidenced through production of fewer grammatical and phonological errors, and greater syntactic and lexical complexity. Appropriate use of opening/closing moves, and expressions of apology and politeness occurred more frequently in the F data, as did a higher rate of initiations and interactions, which are indicative of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences respectively. This was substantiated by overall greater production of English, and specifically of learner-generated utterances of multi-word turns and initiations in pair, group and plenary contexts in observed classroom participation (see 7.8).

Results were confirmed through statistical analyses, which established a significant difference between the written and spoken performance of groups F and Y on six factors.

(ii) What differences in course content may affect learners' ability to communicate in English?

Findings suggest that although variation is noted on practicalities of timetabling, staffing, and resources (see 8.1), it is mainly in attitudinal aspects that the teaching and learning process for each group differs. Designated as a specialist course with an emphasis on communication and intercultural awareness, it affords greater autonomy over curriculum design and content for F teachers. Thus, there is more scope for innovative EFL classroom methodology than on course Y where pressure to succeed in university entrance examinations restricts classroom content (Teacher questionnaires/interviews).

Because teachers perceive course F learners as more motivated than general course students, they feel able to adopt a more communicative approach and to broaden their repertoire of activities in the belief that the learners will co-operate enthusiastically and take advantage of what is offered (Teacher data). Similarly, because more opportunities for meaningful communication in English are provided through course F, learners activate their existing motivation and L2 knowledge to participate fully in class.

Language learning motivation was found to differ between groups F and Y before commencement of senior high school, and was probably a major contributory factor in course selection (see 4.3.2). Statistically significant differences were found between F and Y students' motivation in intensity and integrative orientation (8.5.2). Although a slight decline was noted in both groups over the research year, a third questionnaire administered prior to graduation (see Appendix 4j) demonstrated sustained L2 motivation among F students. From a high return rate (38/39), 19 F students specified their intention to pursue English (9), international (6) or other foreign language (4) studies at university, as opposed to only two (English) among the 24/41 Y students who returned the survey.

(iii) What factors excluding the taught course affect learners' ability to communicate in English?

It was established that neither group was more advantaged by factors external to their school EFL courses. Both groups were found top have had similar experiences in regard to family circumstances, time spent in countries where English is the predominant medium, early English education, and extra-curricular English lessons (*juku*) and activities prior to attending senior high school (see Chapter Five).

(iv) What is the relationship between communicative ability and academic achievement in English?

As examination success is central to Japanese education and employment systems (see Chapter Two), academic achievement of the participants was assessed through EIKEN Pre-2nd proficiency test. On entry to senior high school equivalent mean scores were achieved [F=53.97%; Y=53.2%], establishing the two groups as comparable in terms of L2 ability in listening, grammar and reading for the purposes of the research. When re-tested after one academic year, a statistically significant improvement was found in both groups, but, contrary to what might be expected given the focus on academic achievement in school Y, group F made the greater increase [F=70.38% ;Y=61.74%].

Having addressed each research question, it is concluded that the relationship between communicative competence and academic achievement has been demonstrated in that students following specialist course F were assessed more highly on written and spoken communicative competence, and also achieved higher scores on EIKEN English proficiency test than the more traditionally taught group Y.

10.2 Concluding reflections

Through the findings of this study, the overall question that following an International Understanding course results in greater communicative competence has been answered positively. It was, however, also anticipated that group F's improvement would only be in productive L2 use, and in particular speaking skills. The assumption was that students following general course Y, where greater focus is placed on memorisation of linguistic knowledge for exam preparation, would excel in proficiency tests, in both the pre- and post-test phases. A further slant is therefore added to the 'different outcomes' of the thesis title, in that not only did the two groups produce different results, their results also differed from the expectations of the researcher.

One would expect learners to improve over a year of study, and in both cases the majority did, with only 14 students becoming worse [F=5; Y=7] or making no progress [Y=2]. What is surprising is that as well as demonstrating higher levels of overall communicative competence, group F also improved more in a traditional-format proficiency test than those learners who were specifically trained for exam success at academic school Y. It could therefore be concluded that course F fulfills the goals of exam-oriented Japanese society and MEXT 2003 aims of communication ability.

Caution must be used, however, when interpreting research findings. The different outcomes may be on account of the different course examined in this study, which has provided more varied input in terms of range of materials, methodological choices and classroom dynamics, in addition to more class-time and exposure to native-speaker teachers. Opportunities for course-related extra-curricular activities such as speech contests, and for more frequent interaction locally with speakers of English, including ALTs and exchange students, may also have contributed to the results documented in this thesis. Furthermore, the influence of factors relating to the distribution of age and gender, and the inherent or associated effects thereof, among teachers on courses F and Y, as well as the implications of a much higher female:male ratio among F learners, may also be responsible for this outcome. While these issues have thus far not been addressed, they clearly warrant future investigation in such a study.

On the other hand, the difference may in part be dependent upon diverse elements of the course and the personalities and circumstances of the individuals constituting this particular

F group of learners who increased in communicative competence and academic achievement, and, as is suggested below, further research is needed to clarify these points.

10.3 Implications

These findings demonstrate that, at least within the specified contexts of this study, communicative language teaching approaches are not detrimental to examination success, an argument that may appear surprising to those among the Japanese education establishment for whom teaching to the test is paramount. It would, however, not surprise most theorists who argue that focus on form alone is inadequate and that meaningful use of language is the key to success – for example, embodied in the recent flourishing of CLIL courses in Europe.

Evidence from within Japan, however, even from small-scale studies such as the present one, is needed to make an argument for change within ELT if the Japanese population is to achieve effective skills for global communication through English. Whereas policy-makers tend to approach reform in terms of increased school hours, textbook content, or funding, improvements can be effected through relatively small but important changes in classroom content, as witnessed on course F, even under current conditions, provided that teachers and others are committed to the overall approach. Even with limited time and large classes, it is possible to incorporate activities which motivate learners to actively participate in L2 communication, while at the same time developing the language knowledge required for attaining achievement levels imposed by the universities.

Although MEXT has repeatedly proposed goals of communicative ability and outlined changes to *yakudoku* methodology, adoption of innovation is limited or overlooked because of backwash effects from high-stakes examinations (see Chapter Two). Radical change is unlikely to succeed while the present selection procedures between stages of education remain in place. However, small alterations to ELT should be considered, and note should be taken of successful language teaching circumstances such as this International Understanding course, particularly in light of policy changes to take effect within the next three years.

This study indicates that motivated learners are more willing to participate actively in class, and through their involvement are more likely to be successful in both communication and examinations. This has implications for the 2011 policy of introducing obligatory English

lessons into elementary schools. Although 'the younger the better' argument appeals to laymen and educators alike, it is 'under certain circumstances' (Johnstone 2002:9) that the chances of nurturing L2 competence are fostered. Through examination of circumstances where effective practice has been identified, such as course F, it is hoped that recommendations can be made to maximise the potential of primary-level education to provide a solid yet motivating foundation for foreign language study.

There may also be implications for the 2013 implementation of teaching 'English through English', in that insights may be offered into appropriate methodology and content for achieving MEXT aims and sustaining language learning motivation, while still satisfying university examination requirements. In both cases, appropriate teacher training is an issue that needs to be addressed urgently.

It may seem that the obvious recommendation is to introduce more International Understanding-type courses throughout Japan, since this study has shown that course F achieves both political and social aims for English language education. While of potential interest to both practitioners and policy-makers, this small-scale study can only provide one story. To present a case for such change in ELT in Japan, much more evidence of successful innovation is needed.

10.4 Further research

The first identifiable area for further research is to explore the validity and reliability of the current findings by replicating the study on subsequent similar cohorts in schools F and Y, and in the other two schools offering International Understanding courses within the prefecture. This should be undertaken very soon, in order to ensure the circumstances are as close as possible to those of the present study, since changes in MEXT policy from 2011 can be expected to affect outcomes. If learners have studied English from age 9/10, the length and nature of exposure to L2 may influence both their level of communicative competence and academic achievement, as may the implementation of MEXT (2008) recommendations of teaching 'English through English'. Studies should, of course, also be undertaken concurrently with the introduction of the new policies, to investigate the implementation and effect of the innovations proposed. Similar inquiry into circumstances and outcomes of the MEXT 2003 innovation of SELHis and other specialist English

courses across the nation would also contribute to the body of evidence to support change in ELT in Japan.

Within the local context, however, two further areas invite investigation. Although evidence is presented for greater achievement in L2 skills and knowledge through course F, criticism of innovations in English curricula is apparent from other teachers (Teacher interviews). It is thus important to explore the extent to which improvement in English is achieved at the expense of results in other subjects. Since the importance of attitudes to language learning is highlighted by this research, its results may also inform further studies into motivational aspects, and particularly why junior high school students select specialist English courses.

Once MEXT 2011 and 2013 policies have been implemented, research should be undertaken to allow for comparisons with the present English language education situation. To evaluate the extent and success of these innovations, the present study may provide both a replicable format and valuable data for comparison upon which to reflect whether MEXT reforms are proving effective. The present data could also be re-examined in light of other EFL contexts in Asia where similar pressures are reported.

While concluding that this study was in itself successful, in that rich data were obtained and thorough analysis was possible, research can only be considered worthwhile when its findings are published, substantiated, and shown to be instrumental in effecting necessary change within the identified field. It is thus recommended that further research along the lines indicated above be conducted promptly, to assess both the residual effects of MEXT 2003 guidelines and the introduction of new policies from next year. Through further related research and the implementation of curriculum approaches as identified on this International Understanding course, it is hoped that different outcomes may be achieved. Through these slightly different courses, it may then be possible to demonstrate how to satisfy the demands of Japanese society, by enabling learners to succeed in examinations while at the same time facilitating the achievement of communicative abilities 'commensurate with average world standards' (MEXT 2003a:1) in English as a mode of international communication.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 4a : Model of Research Design

Phase 1 *   **Phase 2***   **Phase 3***   **Analysis & Interpretation**

interviews + questionnaires

classroom observation

F students: 'International Understanding' course

previous info: JHS reports; public exam results

pre – test + q'aire

F & Y

Teachers of English

+

ALTS

ONE YEAR OF ELT

Internal Factors e.g. course content, materials, methodology, contact hours

post – test + q'aire

F students

Y students: general academic course

Y students

document analysis

External Factors e.g. motivation, family, travel, juku…

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

??

KEY

* phases of data collection

◯ *methods of data collection*

◄–·–► dimensions of data comparison

Appendix 4b Ethics documents

Participant Information Sheet. For Students (adapted for Teachers.)
Project Title :

> "Different Courses, Different Outcomes? A comparative study of communicative
> competence in English language learners following Academic and International
> Understanding courses at high schools in Japan".

My name is Susan Fraser and I am writing a thesis for my Doctorate in Education degree at the University
of Durham, U.K. The purpose of my project is to describe and analyse how English is taught in Japan.
In order to achieve this, I would like to visit your school on some occasions during this academic year.
I want to understand what you do in your English classes and what you think about learning English.
I would like to collect information in three ways:

(i) by giving questionnaires on your opinions about speaking and studying English;
(ii) by observing some of your English classes;
(iii) by interviewing some of you.

I will also ask you to do a test and some other activities.

All information will remain strictly confidential. Interviews and observations are for content and opinions
only, and are not an assessment of your English ability. Test scores are for the purpose of the thesis only,
and will not have any impact on your school record.
Anonymity will be maintained for all individuals involved in the project. No names of schools, students or
teachers will be written in the thesis, with all participants referred to in code. Quotations will be masked to
avoid any identification. At the end of the study you will receive a written summary of the project.

With your help, I hope to be able to write a clear description of how English is taught and learned in Japan,
in order to inform foreign language teachers in the U.K. and internationally.
Thank you very much for your assistance in this project.

[*On the version adapted for parents to read:*]

Thank you for reading this information about my research.
If you have objections to your child taking part in this project, please sign and return the slip below : -

----

I have read the information sheet, and I do NOT wish my son / daughter to be a participant in this research
project.

Signature:

Name: Date:

TITLE OF PROJECT:

 'Different Courses, Different Outcomes? A comparative study of communicative
 competence in English language learners following 'Academic' and 'International
 Understanding'courses at High Schools in Japan.'

(The participant should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself)

*Please cross out
 as necessary*

Have you read the Participant Information Sheet? YES / NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and to
discuss the study? YES / NO

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions? YES / NO

Have you received enough information about the study? YES / NO

Do you consent to interviews and oral tests/tasks being tape-recorded
during this study?

 YES / NO

Do you consent to these recordings being kept by the researcher for
possible further analysis?

YES / NO

Do you consent to participate in the study? YES / NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

 * at any time and
 * without having to give a reason for withdrawing ?
 YES / NO

Signed ....……….................. **Date** ....

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) ....………........................

Listening No. _____ Name _____

第1部
6. (1) (2) (3)
7. (1) (2) (3)
8. (1) (2) (3)
9. (1) (2) (3)
10. (1) (2) (3)

第2部

No. 16
1 Call a restaurant to reserve a table.
2 Ask the waiter to bring the menu.
3 Order spaghetti and a salad.
4 Tell the waiter the spaghetti was good.

No. 17
1 Mike was eating at Burger Land.
2 Mike got a new job.
3 Mike's sister works at Burger Land.
4 Mike knew where she was working.

No. 18
1 Selling jam.
2 Looking for jam.
3 Eating jam.
4 Making jam.

No. 19
1 She is from Hong Kong.
2 She is on vacation in Canada.
3 She used to teach in Hong Kong.
4 She knows a lot about Canada.

No. 20
1 Call Dr. Hill again.
2 Go to the hospital.
3 See another doctor.
4 Meet with Dr. Hill.

第3部

No. 21
1 Making pizza.
2 Going to the store.
3 Eating at a pizza restaurant.
4 Talking with her Italian friends.

No. 22
1 Play soccer near school buildings.
2 Use the sports field at lunch break.
3 Look out of the window.
4 Have lunch in the classroom.

No. 23
1 Helping Peggy with her homework.
2 Winning against Peggy at table tennis.
3 Taking a table-tennis lesson.
4 Playing table tennis against his brother.

No. 24
1 The United States.
2 Islands in the South Pacific.
3 All over Asia.
4 Japan and China.

No. 25
1 Working in China.
2 Studying Chinese.
3 Walking to school to save money.
4 Taking the bus to school to save time.

---

1 次の(1)から(10)までの( )に入れるのに最も適切なものを1, 2, 3, 4の中から一つ選び、その番号を解答用紙の所定欄にマークしなさい。

(1) A: I ( ) if Jim is OK. I haven't heard from him since he moved to New York.
B: He's fine. I just got a postcard from him last week.
1 imagine   2 suggest   3 wonder   4 consider

(2) A: Do you want any help cutting up the vegetables, Mom?
B: Sure. But be careful. The knife is really ( ).
1 sharp   2 ill   3 bright   4 plain

(3) College students have more ( ) than high school students. They can study subjects they are interested in, and they don't have to wear uniforms.
1 nature   2 freedom   3 cost   4 wealth

(4) A: Greg, do you know what the ( ) of the history essay is this week?
B: Yes. We have to write about ancient Egypt and its kings.
1 arrival   2 theme   3 belief   4 matter

(5) A: Jeremy, I'm going to Tokyo this summer! I just bought my plane ticket for $500!
B: Wow, I paid ( ) that amount last winter. I got my ticket for $1,000.
1 within   2 around   3 double   4 nearly

(6) Ten years ( ) since Mrs. Thompson retired from her job as an elementary school teacher, but she still often visits the school.
1 passed   2 were passed   3 have passed   4 will pass

(7) I don't want you to ( ) any noise at all because your mother is resting. She has a headache.
1 make   2 hit   3 put   4 say

(8) A: I think we should ( ) the car with gas tonight since we're leaving so early tomorrow.
B: OK. I'll do it on the way to the supermarket.
1 turn on   2 fill up   3 give in   4 put off

(9) A: Charlotte, why were you late for the dance class today?
B: Well, my boyfriend called me when I was just ( ) to leave the house.
1 about   2 close   3 next   4 over

(10) Chris thought the train would be ( ) schedule, but when he got to the station, he found out it was 30 minutes late.
1 in   2 on   3 as   4 by

[A]

A Warm Welcome

Satoshi was born in Japan, but when he was six, his whole family moved to England. Satoshi enjoyed life there, but his mother worried that it would be difficult for him to get used to school back in Japan. When they returned after five years, however, everything went (11). Satoshi got good grades at his new school and made lots of friends. The only thing he could not get used to in Japan was the hot, humid summer weather.

Last August, Satoshi's family went back to England for two weeks for a vacation. To Satoshi's surprise, it was actually hotter in England than in Japan. According to the news, England was having its hottest summer ever. Satoshi enjoyed seeing his old friends again, but he was (12) about the weather.

(11) 1 away   2 wrong   3 fast   4 well
(12) 1 unkind   2 unhappy   3 unsafe   4 unclear

(13) *A:* My dad's going to take me to a pet store this weekend to get a puppy.
B: That's great, Grace! (**13**)
A: We haven't decided yet. Maybe a German shepherd.
B: My grandmother has a German shepherd. They're great dogs.

 1 Which pet store are you going to?
 2 What kind are you going to get?
 3 How much will it cost?
 4 Who decided to get a puppy?

A: Hi. I heard that this restaurant has a party room that can be reserved.
B: Yes, we do. (**14**) ma'am?
A: On the night of November 12, for my son's birthday party.
B: Do you know how many guests will be attending?
A: Yes, (**15**)
B: All right. May I have your name and phone number, please?
A: It's Christina Gray, and the number is 555-4359.
B: OK, Ms. Gray. We'll contact you in early November about the other details.

(14) 1 What's the date today,
 2 When would you like the room,
 3 Who are you celebrating with,
 4 Why do you need the room in November,

(15) 1 we reserved three tables yesterday.
 2 everyone will come at seven o'clock.
 3 some of them will arrive by train.
 4 there'll be 14 of us.

(16) *A:* Are you going to the school festival this weekend?
B: Of course. How about you? Are you going?
A: (**16**) I have to prepare for a test on Monday.
B: Oh, I was hoping we could go together. It's going to be a lot of fun this year.

 1 I'm afraid I can't.
 2 That's a very good idea.
 3 Yes, I go every year.
 4 I won't be late for the festival.

---

(17) Many people say that reading a book in a foreign language (　　　) the language. They say that reading is much easier.
 1 is　　　　　2 very　　　　　3 from
 4 speaking　　5 different

(18) *A:* Nancy, can I ask you something? (　　　)?
B: Oh, it means "information technology."
 1 stand　　2 "IT"　　3 does
 4 what　　　5 for

(19) *A:* What are you going to do after graduation, Mark?
B: (　　　) and live with a Spanish family for a year. I want to learn the language and culture there.
 1 to Spain　　2 my plan　　3 to
 4 go　　　　　5 is

[B] *Green Hotels*

Many companies these days are aware of the importance of being friendly to the environment. Since the early 1990s, Scandic, Scandinavia's largest hotel chain, has aimed to become one of the world's most environmentally friendly companies. One way they have tried to do this is by introducing eco-rooms—rooms that are as gentle on the environment as possible.

In order to satisfy guests, all hotels need to redecorate rooms and replace furniture regularly. Scandic decided to do this in a way that would not harm the environment. Instead of using plastics and metals, for example, they used materials such as wool, cotton, and wood, which can be replaced naturally. All of the wood used in the eco-rooms, for instance, comes from areas where new trees are planted to replace the ones that are cut down. This wood is used for flooring, bed frames, coat hangers, and even picture hooks.

The rooms are environmentally friendly in other ways, too. Scandic has designed a special system for the shampoo and soap in their bathrooms. Instead of giving new bars of soap and bottles of shampoo to each guest, containers are used because they can be filled again. When the containers become old, they can be recycled. In addition, only water-based paint is used in the rooms because this does not give off any harmful gas and so protects the quality of the air. Light is provided by low-energy light bulbs, and the rooms are not heated until a guest checks in.

Although the cost of making eco-rooms is 10 percent higher than traditional hotel rooms, the company thinks that over time it will save money. This is because they are cheaper to maintain. By clearly showing the advantages of environmentally friendly rooms, it seems likely that these hotels will not only influence other hotel chains, but also the owners of ordinary homes.

(20) What has Scandic been trying to do?

 1 Train hotel staff to be more polite.
 2 Make their rooms cheaper for guests.
 3 Become the largest hotel chain in the world.
 4 Create more environmentally friendly hotels.

(21) The hotel rooms introduced by Scandic

 1 use furniture made out of plastic.
 2 use materials that can be replaced naturally.
 3 are made with long-lasting materials such as metals.
 4 are designed not to need redecorating.

(22) The shampoo and soap used by Scandic

 1 are not provided for guests until they check in.
 2 are given only to guests who ask for them.
 3 are put in containers that can be refilled and recycled.
 4 are designed to protect the quality of the air in the hotel rooms.

(23) According to Scandic,

 1 using eco-rooms will save them money over time.
 2 it costs very little to build environmentally friendly rooms.
 3 environmentally friendly homes are too expensive to make.
 4 traditional hotel rooms are cheaper to maintain than eco-rooms.

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2005年度　第2回　二次試験

問題カード B

この問題カードは切り取って，本番の面接の練習用にしてください。
質問はP71にありますので，参考にしてください。

Learning about Japanese

Today, more and more Japanese are reading books about the Japanese language. These books are written for people of all ages, and many Japanese buy them to learn more about their own language. There are even TV programs about using Japanese. Lots of people are discovering something new about the language they use.

切り取り線

A

B
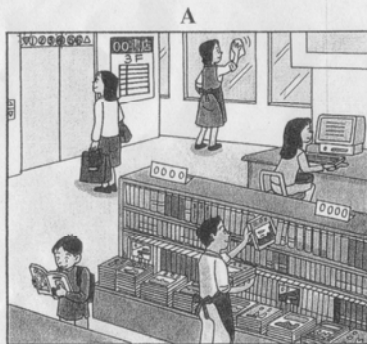
Questions

No. 1　According to the passage, why do many Japanese buy books about the Japanese language?

No. 2　Now, please look at the people in Picture A. They are doing different things. Tell me as much as you can about what they are doing.

No. 3　Now, look at the man and his daughter in Picture B. Please describe the situation.

Now, Mr. / Ms. ____, please turn over the card and put it down.

No. 4　Do you think it is necessary for foreigners living in Japan to learn Japanese?
　　　　Yes.→ Why?
　　　　No.→ Why not?

No. 5　There are many kinds of fashion magazines. Do you often read fashion magazines?
　　　　Yes.→ Please tell me more.
　　　　No.→ Why not?

Appendix 4e
Oral Interview Test

This test lasts 6 – 8 minutes.

Procedure and Instructions: (I) = Interviewer;   (S) = Student.

1. (S) enters room and sits. (I) gives microphone to (S), and switches on tape recorder.
2. (I) greets (S),and asks for (S)'s name and student number.
3. (I) asks (S) 2 or 3 warm-up questions.
4. (I) gives (S) the card. (S) has 20 seconds to read and look at it.
5. (S) reads aloud the passage on the card.
6. (I) asks the questions on his/her sheet EXACTLY as they are written.
    (S) answers as fully as possible.
7. (I) ends the interview, thanks (S) and gets back the card. (S) leaves the room. (I) turns off tape recorder. Next (S)!

N.B.
*It is important that the Interviewer follows exactly the same format with all 10 students.
* Please write the date and time of interviews, and list the students' names in the order they were interviewed.

Many thanks for your assistance!

Appendix 4f

Essay test topic for group F

Topic: "A book I've read" or "A movie I've seen"   6/7/07

*Explain the story AND give your opinions of it.
*20 minutes
*Try not to use a dictionary much. (Ideas are more important than spellings!)

Essay test topic for group Y

070726 Y 高校英語科

B Writing

Theme: My Hometown
            Describe your hometown and write why it is a good place to visit.
Time: 15 minutes
あなたの町についてでも市、県でも良いです。なぜ訪れるべきかを必ず書いてください。
これは「正確に書けるか」よりも「どれくらい書けるか」を試す試験です。スペルや文法の正確さよりも、英語を使って自分の考えを表現できる力を評価します。30点満点

Questionnaire for Teachers of English

Teaching Experience

1. Which schools have you taught at? For how many years?

2. How many years have you been teaching at this school?
   Which courses do you usually teach on?

Present Teaching Context

3. This year, which classes and courses are you teaching?
   (e.g: English 1; Oral Communication; Writing; elective courses….)

-   General Course:（普通科）

-   'International Studies' Course (国際教養科):

4. Please list the textbooks you are using for each course.

5. How often do you use textbooks on the International Studies course:
   Every lesson ( ); most lessons ( ); sometimes ( ); hardly ever ( ).

6. How often do you use or make other teaching materials:
   Every lesson ( ); most lessons ( ); sometimes ( ); hardly ever ( ).
   Please give examples:

7. How often do you do team teaching with an ALT?
   (1. Every week 2. Once in 2 weeks   3. Once a month   4. Occasionally   5.Never)

   1st years (   )   2nd years (   ) 3rd years (   )

   How useful is this for you as a teacher?
      very useful ( ); useful ( ); not very useful ( ); a waste of time ( )

   How useful do you think it is for the students?
      very useful ( ); useful ( ); not very useful ( ); a waste of time ( ).

8. In a typical 45-minute lesson, how much time do you spend on:
      Use of audio CD (   ); pair or group work (   ); vocabulary/grammar explanation (   );
      Choral reading/drills (   ); reviewing previous material (   )?

9. In a typical 45-minute lesson, about what percentage of the time is English spoken?
   - General course: %
   - 'International Studies' Course: %

10. How much pressure do the following cause on your teaching?
    (2 = a lot; 1 = some; 0 = none):
    finish the textbook (   ); make parents happy (   ); prepare for exams (   );
    follow MEXT guidelines (   ); Other:_____ (   ).

11. How much do you use the following resources ? (2 = a lot; 1 = sometimes; 0 = never)
    With 'International Studies' Course:
    Language Lab. ( ); Computers ( ); English Language newspapers ( ); movies ( );
    English Language radio ( ); television ( ); Graded Readers ( ).

    With General course classes:
    Language Lab. ( ); Computers ( ); English Language newspapers ( ); movies ( );
    English Language radio ( ); television ( ); Graded Readers ( ).

12. Did you choose or ask to teach on the 'International Studies' Course? Yes ( ) No ( ).
    If so, why?_____

13. As a 'International Studies' Course teacher, how does your job differ from being a
    regular English teacher?

14. Do you prefer teaching 'International Studies' Course or general classes?
    Why?

15. How much involvement do you have in designing or revising the 'International
    Studies' Course ?

16. Do you feel there is a difference between 'International Studies' Course students and
    general course students in English classes? If so, what?

Teacher Training

17. What degree(s) do you hold?

18. What subjects did you major in at College/University?

19. Do you think your college/university course prepared you well to be an English
    teacher?
    How / Why not?

20. Have you attended the Nagano Prefectural high school English teachers' training
    course （英語教員研修）yet?   If so, in which year? (   ).
    Was it interesting and useful for your teaching situation:
    Very interesting ( ); quite interesting ( ); not interesting ( )
    Very useful for my job ( ); quite useful ( ); not useful ( ).

21. Have you taken any other training courses in Japan for English teachers?
    Obligatory/ voluntary? Please give details (when; how long; content; usefulness…):

22. Have you attended any teacher-training or language courses abroad? (e.g: Monbusho courses; post-graduate degree courses; English Language courses….) Where? When? How long? Focus of the courses? Your opinion of the courses?

23. Would you like to attend courses on the following: (2= very much; 1= yes; 0= no) Test preparation (   ); Speaking & Pronunciation (   ); Team Teaching (   ); Communicative methods & techniques (   ); Reading skills (   ) Language and Culture(   ); Other_____

24. If you had a chance to study abroad, where would you choose? Why?

25. Which would you prefer to do there?
    Study English Language Teaching methodology (   );
    Improve your own English skills (   );   Both (   ).

Background Information

Name (optional!):
26. Male / Female: (   ); Age (approximate or exact!!): (   ).
27. Have you read MEXT Guidelines (学習指導要領) and Action Plan 2003? Yes (   ); No (   ).
28. Which countries have you visited? (When? For how long?)
29. Was English useful for you there? How?
30. Please describe (honestly, not modestly!!) your own level of English:
    (Strong and weaker points);

If you would like to add any other comments about your teaching situation, or your views on English education in Japan, please write them here:

Thank you very much for sparing the time to fill in this questionnaire, as I know how busy you all are! I am very grateful for your help with my research. All information will be treated confidentially, with all references to schools, teachers and students in my thesis presented in code, to avoid identification.

Appendix 4h

Please answer these questions as fully as you can in English or / and Japanese.
(次の質問にできるだけ答えてください。回答は英語、日本語どちらでも、また両方を使っても構いません)

1. Why did you choose to do this 'international studies course' at F High School?
    F高校、国際教養科を選んだ理由は何ですか？

2. What do you hope to do after graduating from F High School?
Go to university / college? (Which?) to study which subject? Why? What type of job do you want to have?
F高校卒業後はどうするつもりですか？行きたい、または決まった学校と、専攻を答えてください。またそこを選んだ理由は何ですか？（高校や大学等卒業後）どんな仕事をしたいですか？

3. Have you ever travelled abroad? Where? When? For how long? Why? (holiday / study …..)
外国へ行ったことがありますか？それはどこですか？いつですか？どのくらいの期間ですか？理由は？（旅行・勉強？）

4. Which countries would you like to visit?

5. Do / Did you go to 'juku' or have extra private classes? How often? Which subjects?
塾や習い事の教室へ行っていますか？又は行ったことがありますか？それは何の科目ですか？又、週、月何回くらいですか？

6. What are your hobbies / club activities? 趣味は何ですか？やクラブ活動は何でしたか？

7. What opportunities do you have to meet people from other cultures / countries?
どのような機会に他の文化や国の人たちに会うことができますか？

8. Do you like speaking English? ☐ (3 = very much   2 = yes   1 = No)

9. Did you enjoy learning English at Junior High School?
☐ (3 = very much   2 = yes   1 = No)

10. What did you particularly enjoy in Junior High School English classes?
中学校の英語の授業で面白かったことを挙げてください。

11. Did you learn English before junior high school? Where? How long?

12. Please self-evaluate your ability in English in these areas: (be honest, not modest!)
あなたの英語力を自己診断してください。（正直に！遠慮しないで！）
3= good   2= average   1= poor
  speaking (   )   reading (   )   grammar (   )
  listening (   )   writing (   )   vocabulary (   )

13. Which do you prefer? American / British / Australian / Asian / Japanese
 English pronunciation. （複数回答可能）

14. Do you prefer (male / female) teachers?

15. Do you prefer a (Japanese / native-speaker / both) as your English teacher?

16. Do you think having native-speaker-like pronunciation is important?
  (ネイティブスピーカーのような発音を身につけることは大切だと思う)
  ☐ (3 = very much   2 = yes   1 = No)

17. Do you think learning about culture is important when learning a foreign language?   ☐   (3
= very much   2 = yes   1 = No)

About yourself   **(   )に記入してください。**

Age: (   )   boy or girl: (   ) （boy かgirlと記入してください）

How many brothers / sisters do you have?   兄弟、姉妹は何人いますか？(   )

Is anyone in your family a teacher? Who?   家族の中に先生をしている人はいますか？(Yes
/ No) それは誰ですか？(   )

Does anyone in your family speak other languages?
家族の中に外国語を話す人はいますか？それは誰ですか？(   ) 何語ですか？(   )

What is your favourite subject at school?
    (   )

Thank you very much.

Appendix 4i

Questionnaire [2]　　　　　**student number:** ☐.
Please answer these questions as fully as you can in English or / and Japanese.
(次の質問にできるだけ答えてください。回答は英語、日本語どちらでも、また両方を
使っても構いません**)**

Since starting at F high school in April 2006:

   1. Have you travelled abroad this year? Where? When? For how long? Why? (holiday
/ study …..)
外国へ行ったことがありますか？それはどこですか？いつですか？どのくらいの期間ですか？理
由は？（旅行・勉強？....)

```
☐
```

2. Did you go to 'juku' or have extra private classes this year? How often? Which
   subjects?
   この一年間で塾や習い事の教室へ行きましたか？それは何の科目ですか？又、週、または月何
   回くらいですか？

```
☐
```

3. Did you take part in any club activities or activities outside class where you used
English this year? (e.g.: Debate Contest; Speech Contest….)
あなたがこの一年間に参加したクラブや、教室外での活動のなかで英語を使ったものはありまし
たか？ 例：ディベートコンテスト、スピーチコンテスト........)

```
☐
```

4. Do you like speaking English? ☐ (3 = very much　2 = yes　1 = No)

5. Did you enjoy learning English this year? ☐ (3 = very much　2 = yes　1 = No)

6. Do you like working in groups or pairs in English classes? ☐ .
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(3 = very much　2 = yes　1 = No)

7. What did you particularly enjoy in English classes this year?

```
☐
```

8. Which classes or courses have you enjoyed most this
 year?（他の科目の授業も含めて今年度とても楽しかった授業は何でしたか）

```
☐
```

9. Please self-evaluate your ability in English in these areas: (be honest, not modest!)
   あなたの英語力を自己診断してください。（正直に！遠慮しないで！）
   3= good　　2= average　　1= poor
   speaking (　) 　　　reading (　) 　　　grammar (　)
   listening (　) 　　　writing (　) 　　　vocabulary (　)

10. What is your favourite subject at school?　あなたの好きな科目は何ですか？

___

11. Which other foreign language(s) would you like to learn next year? Why?

___

12. Are you happy that you chose to do this 'international studies course' at F High
    School? Why? F高校国際教養科を選んでよかったと思いますか。またその理由は何ですか。

___

13. Why do you want to learn English? Please circle:
該当する番号に丸をつけてください。
3 = I agree strongly 2= I agree 1= No, I don't agree.

I want to learn English…..
(a) to communicate with foreign people   [3 – 2 – 1]
(b) to be an English teacher [3 – 2 – 1]
(c) to get a good job [3 – 2 – 1]
(d) because English is an international language   [3 – 2 – 1]
(e) to travel abroad [3 – 2 – 1]
(f) to pass exams [3 – 2 – 1]
(g) to learn about other cultures [3 – 2 – 1]
(h) because speaking English has
   prestige（英語を話せることは、人が尊敬しうらやむことであるから）[3 – 2 – 1]
(i) because we have to study English at high school [3 – 2 – 1]
(j) because I'm interested in world events/politics [3 – 2 – 1]
(k) because my parents want me to learn English. [3 – 2 – 1]
(l) because I like English more than other lessons at school [3 – 2 – 1]
(m) to study / work / live abroad [3 – 2 – 1]
(n) so I can read newspapers / books and watch movies in English [3 – 2 – 1]

Which is the most important reason for you?
あなたにとって最も重要な理由を、上の中から一つだけ選んでください。 ___ .
or do you have another reason? 理由が上の中になければ、以下に書いてください。

___

Age: (   )   boy or girl: (   )（boy か girl と記入してください）

　　Thank you very much.

Appendix 4j
Questionnaire

Dear Class 3.1,

Thank you very much for agreeing to help me with my research. Of course, you don't need to write your name, or to answer everything, but your comments will be very useful, so please tell me as much as you can!

このアンケートに名前を記入する必要はありません。また、すべてに答える必要はありません。ですが、皆さんからいただく答えは大変役に立ちます。できる範囲で答えてください。

Please tick:（✓をつけてください） Male [ ] or Female [ ]

1. What are you planning to do after graduating from Y high school?
(i) If you are going to college or university:
Which college or university? (Name or type)

```
```

What course will you take?

```
```

What subject(s) will you major in?

```
```

(ii) If you are not going to college or university:
Will you get a job immediately? If 'yes', what is your job?
If 'no', what will you do instead?

YES / NO

```
```

2. What do you want to do as a career? (now, or after college)
高校を出た後、または将来就きたい職業は何ですか。

```
```

3. Do you think you will use English in your job? How?
あなたは仕事の上で英語を使用することになると思いますか。
もしそうなら、どのような場合に使うと思いますか。

```
```

4. Please tell me some things you enjoyed in English classes at Y School.

5. If you have time, please tell me anything else you think about learning English.

Many thanks for your help. I send all of you my best wishes for success and happiness in your future careers.
　Sue!

この研究に関しましては、所属大学院の倫理規定に法り、すべての個人情報
に関しその匿名性が厳守されます。学校名、生徒名、教師名は一切触れられません。
また研究が終了した後、研究成果を冊子にして皆さんの所属校にご報告させて
いただきます。

Research Instruments for Classroom Observation

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Observation Scheme

COLT PART A

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme

School .... Grade(s) .... Observer ....

Teacher .... Lesson (min.) .... Visit No ....

Subject .... Date .... Page ....

TIME	ACTIVITIES & EPISODES	PARTICIPANT ORGANISATION							CONTENT									CONTENT CONTROL			STUDENT MODALITY						MATERIALS							
		Class			Group		Indiv.		Manag.		Language				Other topics											Type		Source					
																										Text							
		T→S/C	S→S/C	Choral	Same task	Different tasks	Same task	Different tasks	Procedure	Discipline	Form	Function	Discourse	Socioling.	Narrow	Broad	Teacher/Text	Teacher/Text/Stud.	Student	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Minimal	Extended	Audio	Visual	L2-NNS	L2-NS	L2-NSA	Student-made
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33

Appendix 5

External Factors

Group F

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
F1	×	✓	×	✓	1	1	1	R	3
F2	×	×	×	✓	2	3	1	M	×
F3	×	×	✓	✓	1	1	×	RDM	1
F4	×	×	✓	✓	5	0.25	1	×	1
F5	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	R	2
F6	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	R	×
F7	×	×	×	×	×	✓	4	M	×
F8	×	×	×	×	×	1	1	M	1
F9	E	×	✓		?	3	×	D	
F10	×	×	Kor	×	0.5	2	×	M	×
F11	E	×	×	✓			×	×	×
F12	×	×	✓	×	×	2	1.2	DM	1
F13	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	×
F14	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	×	2
F15	×	×	✓	✓	2	1	1	M	×
F16	×	×	×		1	×	×	M	1
F17	×	×	✓	✓	×	3	×	×	×
F18	×	×	×	✓	2	2	×	M	1
F19	×	×	✓		✓			×	1
F20	×	×	×	✓	1	✓	×	×	2
F21	×	×	✓	✓	×		×	RM	
F22	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	1	M	3
F23	×	×	✓	✓	3	1	1	M	1
F24	×	×	✓		0.5	1		×	
F25	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	M	×
F26	×	×	×	×	1	1	1	EM	2
F27	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	×	M	×
F28	×	×	×	✓	0.2	1	×	MPC	2
F29	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
F30	×	×	×	✓	2	×	×	M	1
F31	×	×	✓	✓	2	✓	×	×	×
F32	×	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	1
F33	×	×	×	✓	6	1	×	M	1
F34	×	✓	✓✓	×	✓		×	×	×
F35	E,G	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	R	1
F36	×	×	✓		4	1	×	M	3
F37	×	×	×	✓	5	1	1	RPC	3
F38	Ch	×	Ch	✓	✓	✓	×	×	2
F39	×	×	×	✓	3	3	×	M	2
F40	Ch	×	Ch	✓	1	1	×	R	1

Group Y

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
Y1	×	×	Kor	✓	×	×	×	M	×
Y2	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	M	×
Y3	a	a	×	a	a	a	×	a	×
Y4	×	×	×	✓	1	2	×	×	×
Y5	×	×	×			2	×	M	×
Y6	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Y7	×	×	×	✓	8	1	×	×	×
Y8	×	×	×			×	×	×	×
Y9	×	✓	✓✓		1	1	1	M	
Y10	a	a	×	a	a	a	×	a	×
Y11	×	×	×		×	3	×	M	×
Y12	×	×	×	✓	×	1	a	RM	a
Y13	×	×	✓	✓	1	3	×	M	×
Y14	×	×	✓	✓	×	2	×	M	×
Y15	×	✓	✓✓	×	×	2	×	×	×
Y16	×	×	✓	✓	10	1	1	RMPC	1
Y17	×	×	×	✓	1	×	×	M	1
Y18	E	✓	✓		×	×	×	M	×
Y19	a	a	×	a	a	a	×	a	×
Y20	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	MPC	×
Y21	a	a	×	a	a	a	×	a	×
Y22	×	×	×	✓	2	1	×	×	×
Y23	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Y24	×	×	✓	✓	×	1	×	×	×
Y25	×	×	✓	✓	×	✓	×	M	×
Y26	×	×	✓	✓	3	2	×	M	×
Y27	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	M	×
Y28	×	×	✓	✓	×	1	1	×	×
Y29	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	M	×
Y30	×	✓	✓✓	✓	2	1	1	M	×
Y31	Th	×	Th	✓	×	×	×	M	
Y32	×	×	×	×	×	1	×	×	
Y33	×	×	✓	✓	10	2	×	M	×
Y34	×	×	×	×	1	3	1	×	×
Y35	×	×	×	✓	1	✓	×	RM	×
Y36	×	×	Kor		×	1	×	×	×
Y37	×	✓	✓✓	✓	×	2	1	×	×
Y38	×	×	×	×	×	1	×	×	
Y39	×	×	×	✓	×	2	2	×	×
Y40	×	✓	✓	✓	×	1	a	R	a
Y41	×	×	✓	✓	2	2		MRPC	

a	Family FL speakers (English, Chinese, Thai, German)
b	Family: Teachers
c	Travelled abroad (✓=English-speaking countries)
d	Meeting foreigners
e	English: Pre-JHS (in years)
f	English at Juku: Pre-SHS (times per week)
g	English at Juku: SHS (times per week)
h	English-related hobbies (Reading, Drama, PC, Music)
i	English Extracurricular Activities at SHS (number of events)

Appendix 6a

| Essay – SchoolF | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Student	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
F1	74	12	1	16.3	5.8	13	5.7	4	−1	0	3	1	0
F2	149	23	3	15.7	6.4	19	7.7	5	−1	0	5	2	0.5
F3	95	19	2	19.9	7.8	12	7.6	4	0	1	4	2	0.5
F4	172	14	2	7.9	6.37	22	7.8	5	0	0	4	2	0
F5	115	18	1	15.7	9.58	12	9.2	5	0	1	5	2	0
F6	157	11	1	7.1	7.47	21	7.6	8	0	2	5	2	2
F7	64	8	0	11.8	5.33	11	5.6	3	−1	0	2	0.5	1
F8	63	8	0	13.1	7	10	6.2	4	0	0	2	1	1
F9	71	14	0	20	6.31	11	6.3	3	−1	0	2	1	0
F10	108	15	6	13.9	8	11	9.6	4	−2	0	5	1	1
F11	80	11	1	14.2	5.92	14	5.5	2	−1	1	3	1	0.5
F12	82	10	1	11.9	6.43	14	6	2	−2	0	3	1	0
F13	68	5	0	6.7	12.95	5	12.8	5	0	1	4	2	0
F14	81	8	0	10.2	7.71	9	9	5	0	0	5	2	0.5
F15	47	5	1	11.1	6.26	8	6.3	4	0	0	4	1	1
F16	107	15	1	14.1	6.2	16	6.7	3	0	0	4	1	0
F17	56	10	0	17.6	8.29	9	6.1	3	0	2	2	1	0.5
F18	71	10	0	13.7	9.46	8	8.6	5	−1	1	3	1	1
F19	94	13	2	13.6	7.83	14	6.5	3	0	0	3	1	0
F20	146	11	1	7.7	9.26	17	8.4	6	0	0	5	1	1
F21	78	11	3	13.5	8	9	8.6	4	0	2	5	0	2
F22	58	5	1	7.8	7.73	8	7.7	2	0	0	4	0.5	1
F23	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
F24	80	5	2	5.6	7.61	11	7.1	5	0	0	5	1	2
F25	41	2	1	5.5	6.83	6	6.8	2	0	0	2	1	0.5
F26	141	6	0	4.3	6.96	18	7.8	8	0	2	5	1	1
F27	72	11	2	15.6	9.6	9	8.3	6	0	0	4	1	0
F28	130	17	2	13.3	6.66	19	6.9	5	−2	2	5	1	2
F29													
F30	62	8	0	12.2	6.88	9	6.8	4	−1	0	2	1	0
F31	53	11	2	21.4	5.88	8	6.3	4	0	0	3	1	1
F32	60	7	1	11.3	6.66	10	5.9	5	0	0	3	1	1
F33	73	6	2	8.2	8.84	9	8	2	−2	0	4	1	1
F34	89	9	2	10.1	10.78	7	13.2	8	−1	0	5	1	1
F35	155	12	6	7.8	7.65	21	7.3	8	0	0	5	2	1
F36	89	6	2	6.8	7.41	12	7.3	6	0	0	4	1	1
F37	101	14	0	13.3	8.41	12	8.1	6	−1	2	4	1	0
F38	128	30	0	23.5	7.42	18	7	4	−1	0	4	1	0
F39	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
F40	163	15	2	9.2	8.04	17	9.4	5	−1	0	5	2	1

Key

a	Fluency = Total word count	g	Complexity = words per sentence
b	Total Errors	h	Lexical Range (examples per text)
c	Total spelling errors	i	incomprehensible L2 items (total per text)
d	Accuracy = Errors per 100 words	j	Interactions with reader (total per text)
e	Complexity = MLTU	k	Overall Fluency Mark
f	Total # of sentences (per text)	l	Task fulfilment – describes
		m	Task fulfilment – justifies

Appendix 6a *(cont)*

Students	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
Essay – SchoolY													
Y1	71	6	5	8.5	7.88	9	7.8	2	−5	0	2	1	0
Y2	61	7	2	11.5	6.77	8	7.6	2	−1	0	2	1	0
Y3	49	6	1	12.2	7	7	7	2	0	2	2	1	1
Y4	56	10	0	17.9	9.33	8	7	3	−3	1	2	1	1
Y5	29	7	6	24.1	4.83	6	4.8	0	−1	0	2	1	0.5
Y6	92	8	1	8.7	9.2	11	8.3	4	0	2	3	1	1
Y7	96	9	5	9.4	8	13	7.3	3	−1	2	4	1	1
Y8	64	9	1	14.1	7.11	9	7	3	−1	1	2	1	0.5
Y9	43	2	1	4.7	6.14	7	6	3	−3	0	1	0.5	1
Y10	68	9	1	13.2	8.5	8	8.5	3	−1	4	3	1	1
Y11	52	11	0	21.1	7.42	7	7.4	0	−1	0	2	1	1
Y12	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
Y13	91	7	0	7.7	7	15	6	3	−3	2	5	1	1
Y14	69	10	5	14.5	11.5	7	9.8	2	0	0	4	1	1
Y15	239	6	2	2.5	8.24	29	8.2	6	−2	6	5	1	1
Y16	92	14	2	15.2	18.4	6	15.3	3	−3	3	4	1	1
Y17	60	5	0	8.3	7.5	11	5.4	2	−3	0	2	1	1
Y18	55	6	2	10.9	7.85	8	6.8	4	−1	5	4	1	1
Y19	87	10	0	11.5	12.42	9	9.6	4	−1	1	4	1	1
Y20	73	5	3	6.8	6.08	13	5.6	2	−1	1	2	1	1
Y21	60	3	0	5	7.5	8	7.5	4	0	1	4	1	1
Y22	52	7	5	13.5	13	7	7.4	4	−6	0	2	1	1
Y23	35	6	2	17.1	11.66	5	7	1	−2	1	2	1	1
Y24	72	8	6	11.1	9	10	7.2	0	−4	2	2	1	1
Y25	115	12	1	10.4	7.66	17	6.7	4	−2	5	5	1	1
Y26	51	3	0	5.9	7.28	7	7.2	2	−3	3	2	1	1
Y27	75	6	2	8	8.33	9	8.3	4	−1	3	4	1	1
Y28	104	9	3	8.7	8	15	6.9	4	−2	0	4	1	1
Y29	43	4	2	9.3	8.6	6	7	2	−1	2	2	1	1
Y30	77	6	3	7.8	7	13	5.9	5	−2	1	3	1	1
Y31	59	9	1	15.3	6.55	8	7.3	2	0	3	3	1	1
Y32	75	8	0	10.7	9.37	8	9.3	5	0	3	5	1	1
Y33	148	18	0	12.2	8.22	20	7.4	7	−4	0	5	1	1
Y34	53	2	3	3.8	5.3	10	5.3	4	−1	3	2	1	1
Y35	57	8	2	14	6.33	10	5.7	4	−4	2	2	1	1
Y36	42	5	0	11.9	8.4	5	8.4	2	0	1	2	1	1
Y37	102	11	2	10.8	6.8	15	6.8	2	−2	2	4	1	1
Y38	19	7	0	36.8	6.3	4	4.7	0	0	0	1	1	0.5
Y39	50	8	2	16	7.14	7	7.1	4	0	0	2	1	1
Y40	66	5	2	7.6	9.42	7	9.4	1	−1	2	4	1	1
Y41	73	14	7	19.2	9.12	9	8.1	3	−5	0	3	1	1

Key			
a	Fluency = Total word count	g	Complexity = words per sentence
b	Total Errors	h	Lexical Range (examples per text)
c	Total spelling errors	i	incomprehensible L2 items (total per text)
d	Accuracy = Errors per 100 words	j	Interactions with reader (total per text)
e	Complexity = MLTU	k	Overall Fluency Mark
f	Total # of sentences (per text)	l	Task fulfilment – describes
		m	Task fulfilment – justifies

Appendix 6b

Writing
- ➢ **Descriptive Stats**

School F

	n	M	SD	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
TotalWord	37	93.865	36.259	0.724	0.388	-0.613	0.759
TotalErrors	37	11.216	5.508	1.244	0.388	2.710	0.759
TotalSpellingErrors	37	1.378	1.441	1.760	0.388	4.110	0.759
ErrorPer100	37	12.205	4.665	0.444	0.388	-0.191	0.759
MLTU	37	7.614	1.526	1.394	0.388	3.018	0.759
Sentences	37	12.405	4.549	0.588	0.388	-0.650	0.759
WordsPerSentence	37	7.614	1.709	1.683	0.388	3.749	0.759
LexicalRange	37	4.514	1.710	0.504	0.388	-0.051	0.759
Incomp	37	-0.514	0.692	-1.012	0.388	-0.166	0.759
Interact	37	0.459	0.767	1.314	0.388	0.084	0.759
OverallFluence	37	3.838	1.093	-0.470	0.388	-1.070	0.759
Describes	37	1.189	0.505	0.523	0.388	-0.048	0.759
Justifies	37	0.703	0.629	0.581	0.388	-0.246	0.759

School Y

	n	M	SD	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
TotalWord	40	71.875	36.565	2.686	0.374	10.752	0.733
TotalErrors	40	7.650	3.302	0.834	0.374	1.499	0.733
TotalSpellingErrors	40	2.000	1.948	0.986	0.374	0.177	0.733
ErrorPer100	40	11.948	6.156	1.836	0.374	5.857	0.733
MLTU	40	8.304	2.409	2.215	0.374	7.188	0.733
Sentences	40	9.775	4.671	2.198	0.374	6.563	0.733
WordsPerSentence	40	7.400	1.776	2.225	0.374	9.238	0.733
LexicalRange	40	2.875	1.588	0.135	0.374	0.270	0.733
Incomp	40	-1.775	1.593	-0.870	0.374	0.080	0.733
Interact	40	1.600	1.582	0.952	0.374	0.502	0.733
OverallFluence	40	2.950	1.197	0.384	0.374	-1.148	0.733
Describes	40	0.988	0.079	-6.325	0.374	40.000	0.733
Justifies	40	0.913	0.250	-2.937	0.374	7.995	0.733

- ● **Results of ANOVA**
  - ➢ One-way ANOVAs were performed to examine whether the two schools differed in each index.
  - ➢ Significant differences were observed in the following indices: TotalWord ($F(1, 75) = 7.008$, $p = .01$), TotalErrors ($F(1, 75) = 12.082$, $p = .001$), Sentence ($F(1, 75) = 6.250$, $p = .015$), LexicalRange ($F(1, 75) = 19.007$, $p = .000$), Incomp ($F(1, 75) = 19.739$, $p = .000$), Interact ($F(1, 75) = 15.786$, $p = .000$), OverallFluency ($F(1, 75) = 11.486$, $p = .001$), and Describes ($F(1, 75) = 6.225$, $p = .015$).

Appendix 6b *(cont)*

ANOVA の結果

	F(1, 75)	*p*		こちらの方が better
TotalWord	7.008	0.010	*	t (75) = 2.647, p = .010
TotalErrors	12.082	0.001	**	t (57.990) = 3.412, p = .001
TotalSpellingErrors	2.501	0.118		t (75) = -1.582, p = .118
ErrorPer100	0.042	0.837		t (75) = 0.206, p = .837
MLTU	2.210	0.141		t (75) = -1.487, p = .141
Sentences	6.250	0.015	*	t (75) = 2.500, p = .015
WordsPerSentence	0.288	0.593		t (75) = 0.537, p = .593
LexicalRange	19.007	0.000	**	t (75) = 4.360, p = .000
Incomp	19.739	0.000	**	t (54.099) = 4.564, p = .000
Interact	15.786	0.000	**	t (57.388) = -4.071, p = .000
OverallFluency	11.486	0.001	**	t (75) = 3.389, p = .001
Describes	6.225	0.015	*	t (37.634) = 2.403, p = .021
Justifies	3.805	0.055		t (46.411) = -1.896, p = .064

Appendix 6b *(cont)*

- Motivation
  - ➢ Intensity = Total of a to h (8 items)
    - ✧ a to f = 1, 2, 3
    - ✧ g, h = 0, 1
      - ● Cronbach alpha = .649
    - ✧ Intensity 2 = Total of a to f (6 items)
      - ● Cronbach alpha = .807
  - ➢ IntegrativeMot = Total of i to k (3 items)
    - ● Cronbach Alpha = .600
  - ➢ InstrumentMot = Total of l to m (3 items)
    - ● Cronbach Alpha = .532

School F

	n	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
Intensity	39	16.103	2.186	0.021	0.378	-0.176	0.741
Intensity 2	39	14.949	1.716	-0.246	0.378	-0.675	0.741
IntegrativeMot	39	7.692	0.893	-0.736	0.378	-0.094	0.741
InstruMot	39	6.103	1.501	-0.578	0.378	0.037	0.741

School Y

	n	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
Intensity	41	12.390	2.810	0.780	0.369	0.275	0.724
Intensity 2	41	12.293	2.667	0.575	0.369	-0.329	0.724
IntegrativeMot	41	6.268	1.566	-0.060	0.369	-0.358	0.724
InstruMot	41	6.341	1.425	0.392	0.369	0.014	0.724

> ➤ ANOVA

	$F\,(1, 78)$	p	こっちの方がbetter
Intensity	43.200	0.000	$t(78) = 6.573, p = .000$
Intensity2	27.746	0.000	$t(68.699) = 5.323, p = .000$
IntegrativeMot	24.630	0.000	$t(64.145) = 5.027, p = .000$
InstruMot	0.533	0.467	$t(78) = -0.730, p = .467$

Appendix 7a

Oral factors per 100 words

		Key		Students - F							Students - Y							
			F6	F9	F13	F17	F21	F25	F28	Y4	Y8	Y16	Y20	Y24	Y28	Y32	Y36	Y40
Fluency	a	Total Utterances	132	124	186	221	151	140	128	50	98	173	120	126	121	130	127	188
	b	Hesitations	14	10	20	22	8	12	11	0	5	21	16	9	18	11	11	19
	c	False Starts	14	19	35	24	24	13	14	2	13	17	11	21	13	16	14	49
	d	Total Wordcount	118	114	166	199	143	128	117	50	93	152	104	117	103	119	116	169
	e	Wait time (seconds per 100W)	35.59	171.92	74.09	78.89	102.79	161.71	30.76	182	62.36	65.13	112.62	106.83	137.25	113.44	75.86	126.03
	f	Holistic Fluency mark	5	2.5	3.5	5	3	3	5	1.5	2.5	4	2.5	3	2	2	3	3
Linguistic Competence	g	Total of errors (per 100W)	12.71	17.54	15.66	14.07	21.67	15.62	24.78	12	25.8	13.81	21.15	23.07	27.18	23.52	19.82	33.13
	h	Grammatical errors (per 100 words)	3.38	9.64	3.61	8.04	8.39	6.25	13.67	6	7.52	4.6	6.73	8.54	9.7	10.08	6.89	13.6
	i	Phonological errors (per 100W)	9.32	7.89	12.04	6.03	13.28	10.15	11.11	6	18.27	9.21	14.42	14.52	17.47	13.44	12.93	19.52
	j	[d - c] Word Count	104	95	131	175	119	116	103	48	80	135	93	96	89	103	102	120
	k	Total AS-Units	21	24	23	35	26	23	22	15	22	29	19	25	31	23	20	30
	l	Syntactic Complexity	4.95	3.95	5.69	5	4.57	5.04	4.68	3.2	3.63	4.65	4.89	3.84	2.87	4.47	5.1	4
	m	Lexical Complexity	5.08	0.87	4.21	2.51	2.79	6.25	4.27	0	2.15	3.28	0.96	2.56	0.97	2.52	2.58	2.95
Socio-linguistic Competence	n	openings / closings (per 100W)	1.69	2.63	2.4	2.01	0.69	1.56	1.7	0	2.15	0.65	1.92	0.85	1.94	0.84	1.72	1.18
	o	Politeness Expressions (per 100W)	1.69	0.87	1.8	5.02	1.39	2.34	0	0	2.15	0.65	1.92	1.7	1.94	0.84	2.58	1.77
	p	Apologises (per 100W)	0	0.87	0	2.01	0.69	0	0	0	0	0.65	0	0	3.88	0.84	0	0.59
Pragmatic Competence	q	Initiates (per 100W)	0.84	2.63	0.6	1.5	0	0	0.85	0	0	0	0	2.56	0	0	0	0.59
	r	Interacts with examiner (per 100W)	0.84	0.87	0.6	5.02	1.39	2.34	0.85	0	0	1.31	1.92	2.56	0.97	0	0	0.59
	s	Asks for Repetition (per 100W)	0.84	0.87	0.6	2.51	1.39	3.12	0	0	1.07	0	1.92	0.85	0.97	0.84	0	1.18
Turns	t	Total Turns	14	16	17	19	16	17	14	13	20	17	18	19	21	17	12	20
	u	Single Word Turns (per 100W)	0	5.26	2.4	1	1.39	3.12	4.27	12	7.52	2.63	4.8	3.41	6.79	5.88	1.72	2.36
	v	Long Turns (per 100W)	3.38	3.5	3.01	2.51	2.79	3.12	3.41	4	3.22	2.63	2.88	2.56	2.91	4.2	2.58	2.36
	w	Average Long Turn Length	21.25	19.5	24.6	29	22.25	21	20.5	11	14.66	27.5	17	16	17.33	16.6	22.33	26

Appendix 7b

Oral
- Descriptive Stats

	Range	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Total Utterances	97.000	124.000	221.000	154.571	35.999	1.311	0.748
Hesitations	14.000	8.000	22.000	13.857	5.242	0.784	-0.889
False Starts	22.000	13.000	35.000	20.429	7.934	1.047	0.708
Total Wordcount	85.000	114.000	199.000	140.714	31.611	1.241	0.708
Wait time	141.160	30.760	171.920	93.679	55.929	0.452	-1.291
Holistic Fluency mark	2.500	2.500	5.000	3.857	1.107	0.116	-2.418
Total of errors	12.070	12.710	24.780	17.436	4.320	0.917	-0.204
Grammatical errors	10.290	3.380	13.670	7.569	3.591	0.498	0.104
Phonological errors	7.250	6.030	13.280	9.974	2.478	-0.372	-0.445
Word Count	80.000	95.000	175.000	120.429	26.869	1.653	3.074
AS	14.000	21.000	35.000	24.857	4.741	2.082	4.667
Syntactic Complexity	1.740	3.950	5.690	4.840	0.531	-0.158	1.404
Lexical Complexity	5.380	0.870	6.250	3.711	1.791	-0.253	-0.265
Openings_Closings	1.940	0.690	2.630	1.811	0.633	-0.616	0.869
Politeness	5.020	0.000	5.020	1.873	1.576	1.405	3.030
Apologises	2.010	0.000	2.010	0.510	0.759	1.549	2.142
Initiates	2.630	0.000	2.630	0.917	0.919	1.097	1.241
Interact	4.420	0.600	5.020	1.701	1.575	2.006	4.034
Ask for Repetition	3.120	0.000	3.120	1.333	1.107	0.750	-0.532
Total Turns	5.000	14.000	19.000	16.143	1.773	0.205	-0.208
Single Words	5.260	0.000	5.260	2.491	1.865	0.251	-1.011
Long Turns	0.990	2.510	3.500	3.103	0.362	-0.623	-0.713
Average Long Turn Length	9.500	19.500	29.000	22.586	3.253	1.540	2.221

Note. SES = 0.794; SEK = 1.587; n = 7.

Appendix 7b *(cont)*

	Range	*Min*	Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Total Utterances	138.000	50.000	188.000	125.889	39.829	-0.292	1.132
Hesitations	21.000	0.000	21.000	12.222	6.942	-0.483	-0.591
False Starts	47.000	2.000	49.000	17.333	12.952	2.052	5.551
Total Wordcount	119.000	50.000	169.000	113.667	34.029	-0.176	1.055
Wait time	119.640	62.360	182.000	109.058	38.165	0.556	0.317
Holistic Fluency mark	2.500	1.500	4.000	2.611	0.741	0.405	0.406
Total of errors	21.130	12.000	33.130	22.164	6.528	-0.087	-0.021
Grammatical errors	9.000	4.600	13.600	8.184	2.674	0.901	1.055
Phonological errors	13.520	6.000	19.520	13.976	4.324	-0.645	0.023
Word Count	87.000	48.000	135.000	96.222	24.494	-0.487	1.429
AS	16.000	15.000	31.000	23.778	5.449	-0.083	-1.036
Syntactic Complexity	2.230	2.870	5.100	4.072	0.765	-0.220	-1.118
Lexical Complexity	3.280	0.000	3.280	1.997	1.097	-0.810	-0.503
Openings_Closings	2.150	0.000	2.150	1.250	0.726	-0.354	-0.939
Politeness	2.580	0.000	2.580	1.506	0.828	-0.750	-0.320
Apologises	3.880	0.000	3.880	0.662	1.254	2.596	7.139
Initiates	2.560	0.000	2.560	0.350	0.851	2.736	7.643
Interact	2.560	0.000	2.560	0.817	0.951	0.854	-0.467
Ask for Repetition	1.920	0.000	1.920	0.759	0.653	0.214	-0.360
Total Turns	9.000	12.000	21.000	17.444	3.127	-0.878	-0.313
Single Words	10.280	1.720	12.000	5.234	3.255	1.094	1.172
Long Turns	1.840	2.360	4.200	3.038	0.653	1.082	-0.133
Average Long Turn Length	16.500	11.000	27.500	18.713	5.431	0.552	-0.617

Note. SES = 0.717; SEK = 1.400; n = 9.

Appendix 7b *(cont)*

- Non-parametric statistics (the Mann-Whitney *U* tests, 2 tailed) were performed to assess the differences between the two schools. Only holistic fluency markers showed significance at a 5% level.

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	p	
Total Utterances	15	60	-1.747	0.091	
Hesitations	27	72	-0.478	0.681	
False Starts	20	65	-1.225	0.252	
Total Wordcount	16.5	61.5	-1.589	0.114	
Wait time	24	52	-0.794	0.470	
Holistic Fluency mark	11	56	-2.218	0.031	*
Total of errors	19	47	-1.323	0.210	
Grammatical errors	27	55	-0.476	0.681	
Phonological errors	13	41	-1.958	0.055	
Word Count	14.5	59.5	-1.801	0.071	
AS	27.5	72.5	-0.425	0.681	
Syntactic Complexity	13	58	-1.958	0.055	
Lexical Complexity	15	60	-1.747	0.091	
Openings_Closings	20	65	-1.217	0.252	
Politeness	31.5	76.5	0.000	1.000	
Apologises	30	75	-0.175	0.918	
Initiates	15	60	-1.925	0.091	
Interact	19	64	-1.333	0.210	
Ask for Repetition	24	69	-0.800	0.470	
Total Turns	19.5	47.5	-1.283	0.210	
Single Words	14	42	-1.852	0.071	
Long Turns	25	70	-0.688	0.536	
Average Long Turn Length	17	62	-1.535	0.142	

Appendix 8a

Textbooks for course F

Let's Talk Ⅰ : L Jones (2002) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Time for Kids. Almanac 2006 with Fact Monsters: B. Bowen and C. Slepian (eds.) (2005) New York: Time Inc.

Exceed I : M. Morisue *et al* (2003) Tokyo: Sanseido [Authorised English textbook]

Exceed II: M. Morisue *et al* (2004) Tokyo: Sanseido [Authorised English textbook]

Best Avenue: S. Kamachi *et al* (2004) Kyoto: Esuto Shuppan [high school grammar textbook]

Textbooks for course Y

Maintop: N. Noro (2000) Kyoto:Yamaguchi Shoten [high school grammar textbook]

Developing Essential Listening Skills: Listening Test Access Step 2 (2005) Tokyo: Sundai

Provision I: S. Haraguchi *et al* (2006) Tokyo: Kirihara Shoten [Authorised English textbook]

Appendix 8b

Motivation - SchoolF

Students	Eng:F	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p
				Motivation – Intensity							Predominant Orientation				
F1 f	3	3	3			3	✓	✓	3	3	3		1		✓	✗
F2 f	3	3					✗	✗							✓	✗
F3 f	3					3	✓	✓	3		3	3		1	✓	✗
F4 f	3	3	3	3	3	3	✓	✓	3		3	1	1	1	✓	✗
F5 f	3	3			3	3	✗	✓	3	3	3	3		1	✓	✓
F6 f	3	3	3				✓	✗				3		1	✓	✓
F7 m							✗	✗	3	3				1	✓	✗
F8 f		3					✓	✓	3	3		3			✗	✓
F9 m							✗	✗							✓	✗
F10 f	3		3	3			✗	✗	3		3	3	3	3	✓	✗
F11 f	3	3	3	3		3	✗	✗	3	3		3	3		✓	✗
F12 f							✗	✓						1	✓	✗
F13 m		3		3	3	3	✓	✗	3		3		3		✓	✗
F14 m			3		3	3	✗	✓	3	3	3	3		1	✓	✗
F15 f	3		3	3			✗	✗	3		1				✓	✗
F16 f				3			✓	✓	3	3		1	1	1	✗	✓
F17 m	3	3	3				✗	✗	3	1				1	✓	✓
F18 m	3	3	3				✓	✓	3		3	3	3	1	✓	✓
F19 f	3	3				3	✗	✓		3		3	3		✗	✗
F20 f	3	3	3	3	3	3	✓	✓	3	3	3	3	3	1	✗	✓
F21 f	3	3	3	3		1	✓	✗		3	3	1		1	✓	✗
F22 f				1	3		✓	✓	3		3	3	1		✓	✓
F23 f	3	3	3	3	3		✓	✓	3	3	3	3	1	1	✓	✓
F24 f	3	3		3			✓	✗	3			3	3	1	✓	✗
F25 m			1		3		✗	✗	3		3	3		1	✗	✓
F26 f			3			3	✗	✓	3		3	3		1	✓	✗
F27 f		3					✓	✗		3		1	1	1	✗	✓
F28 f	3	3	3		3	3	✓	✓	3				3		✓	✓
F29 m	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
F30 f	3	3	3				✗	✓	3	3					✓	✗
F31 m			3				✗	✗	3	3				1	✗	✗
F32 f	3	3		3		3	✗	✓	3		3	1	1	1	✗	✓
F33 f	3	3			3		✗	✓	3	3			3		✓	✗
F34 m	3	3	3	3		3	✗	✗	3	3		3			✓	✗
F35 f	3	3	3	3			✓	✓		3	3	3	3	1	✓	✗
F36 f	3	3		3	3	3	✓	✓	3		3	3			✓	✓
F37 f	3	3				3	✗	✓	3			3	1		✓	✗
F38 m (Ch)	3	3	3		3	3	✓	✓	3	3		3	3		✗	✓
F39 m			3		3	3	✗	✓	3		3	3	3		✓	✓
F40 f (Ch)	3	3	3	1	3	3	✗	✓	3		3		3	3	✗	✓

		Intensity					Predominant Orientation	
	a	Eng:Favourite subject at JHS				i	to communicate	
	b	Eng:Favourite subject at SHS				j	to learn culture	
	c	Enjoyed English at JHS				k	to study / live abroad	
	d	Enjoyed English at SHS				l	to get a good job	
	e	Like speaking English at JHS				m	to pass exams	
	f	Like speaking English at SHS				n	for prestige	
	g	English:Best subject at SHS				o	why chose this school	
	h	participated in Eng. Extracurricular SHS				p	future hopes	

Motivation - SchoolY																
	Motivation - Intensity								Predominant Orientation							
Students	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p
Y1 f	3		3	3	3	3	✗	✗	3	1	1	3	1	1	✗	✗
Y2 f			3	3		3	✗	✗	3			3	3	3	✗	✗
Y3 m				1			✗	✗	3		3		3		✗	✗
Y4 m			1		1	1	✗	✗		1	1		3	1	✗	✗
Y5 f			1		1		✗	✗				3	3	3	✗	✗
Y6 m							✗	✗	1	1	1	1	3	1	✗	✗
Y7 f	3		3	1	3	3	✗	✗	3	1	1	1	3	1	✗	✗
Y8 m		3		1			✗	✗	3	1					✗	✗
Y9 f	3	3	1	3		1	✗	✗	3		1		3	1	✗	✗
Y10 m							✗	✗		1			3	1	✗	✗
Y11 f			1		1	1	✗	✗	3	1	3	3	1		✗	✗
Y12 f							✗	✗							✗	✗
Y13 f	3	3	3			3	✗	✗	3			3		1	✗	✓
Y14 f	3	3	3	3	3	1	✗	✗			3	3		3	✗	✓
Y15 f	3	3	3	3	3	3	✗	✗	3	3	3	3	3		✗	✗
Y16 f	3		3	3		3	✗	✓	3		3		1	1	✗	✗
Y17 f			1	1			✗	✓						3	✗	✗
Y18 f				3			✗	✗	3	1				1	✗	✗
Y19 m				1		1	✗	✗		1	1	3		1	✗	✗
Y20 f				1			✗	✗	3	3	3		3	3	✗	✗
Y21 m							✗	✗			1	3			✗	✗
Y22 m			1	1	1	1	✗	✗	3		1	3	3	3	✗	✗
Y23 m			1	1	1	1	✗	✗	3	1		3		1	✗	✗
Y24 m			3				✗	✗	3	3		3	3	3	✗	✗
Y25 f				3			✗	✗	3	3				1	✗	✗
Y26 m			1	1	1		✗	✗	1	1	1	1	3	1	✗	✗
Y27 m	3	3		3	3	3	✗	✗	3	3	3			1	✗	✓
Y28 m							✗	✗		1	1		3	1	✗	✗
Y29 f						1	✗	✗	3	3					✗	✗
Y30 f			1				✗	✗		3					✗	✗
Y31 f				1			✗	✗	3						✗	✗
Y32 m		3					✗	✗				1			✗	✗
Y33 f	3	3	3	3	3	3	✓	✓	3	3	3	3		3	✗	✗
Y34 m							✗	✗		1		3	1		✗	✗
Y35 f				1	1		✗	✗		3					✗	✗
Y36 m			3			1	✗	✗	3		1		3		✗	✗
Y37 f							✗	✗				1	3		✗	✗
Y38 m			1		1	1	✗	✗	3	1	1	1	1	1	✗	✗
Y39 f						1	✗	✗	3			3	3	3	✗	✗
Y40 m			3		3		✗	✗							✗	✗
Y41 f				1			✗	✗			1		3	1	✗	✗

Intensity	a	Eng: Favourite subject at JHS
	b	Eng: Favourite subject at SHS
	c	Enjoyed English at JHS
	d	Enjoyed English at SHS
	e	Like speaking English at JHS
	f	Like speaking English at SHS
	g	English: Best subject at SHS
	h	participated in Eng. Extracurricular SHS

Predominant Orientation	i	to communicate
	j	to learn culture
	k	to study / live abroad
	l	to get a good job
	m	to pass exams
	n	for prestige
	o	why chose this school
	p	future hopes

Appendix 8c

- Orientation
  - Integrative = Average Scores of 3 Items – 2
    - ✧ the midpoint is zero.
      - Cronbach alpha = .600
  - Instrument = Average Scores of 3 items -2
    - ✧ the midpoint is zero.
      - Cronbach alpha = .444

School F

	n	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
Com	39	0.795	0.409	-1.520	0.378	0.323	0.741
LearnCulture	39	0.436	0.552	-0.228	0.378	-1.001	0.741
StudyAbroad	39	0.462	0.555	-0.329	0.378	-0.966	0.741
GetGoodJob	39	0.410	0.715	-0.805	0.378	-0.580	0.741
PassExam	39	0.154	0.745	-0.260	0.378	-1.112	0.741
ForPrestige	39	-0.462	0.600	0.615	0.378	-0.504	0.741
Integrative	39	0.564	0.298	-0.736	0.378	-0.094	0.741
Instrument	39	2.034	0.500	-0.578	0.378	0.037	0.741

School Y

	n	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
Com	41	0.512	0.597	-0.791	0.369	-0.292	0.724
LearnCulture	41	-0.122	0.748	0.205	0.369	-1.145	0.724
StudyAbroad	41	-0.122	0.714	0.183	0.369	-0.958	0.724
GetGoodJob	41	0.146	0.654	-0.154	0.369	-0.584	0.724
PassExam	41	0.415	0.670	-0.721	0.369	-0.505	0.724
ForPrestige	41	-0.220	0.791	0.420	0.369	-1.263	0.724
Integrative	41	0.089	0.522	-0.060	0.369	-0.358	0.724
Instrument	41	2.114	0.475	0.392	0.369	0.014	0.724

- The tests of normality showed significance.

Appendix 8c *(cont)*

com	t (71.035) = 2.482, p = .015	U = 604.500, p = .024
Culture	t (78) = 3.779, p = .000	U = 475.000, p = .001
Abroad	t (78) = 4.067, p = .000	U = 452.500, p = .000
Job	t (78) = 1.723, p = .089	U = 621.500, p = .067
Exam	t (78) = -1.648, p = .103	U = 647.000, p = .123
Prestige	t (78) = -1.536, p = .129	U = 678,000, p = .213
Integrative	t (64.145) = 5.027, p = .000	U = 362.500, p = .000
Instrument	t (78) = -0.730, p = .467	U = 787.000, p = .90
com	t (71.035) = 2.482, p = .015	U = 604.500, p = .024
Culture	t (78) = 3.779, p = .000	U = 475.000, p = .001

Appendix 8d

- Motivation
  - ➤ Intensity = Average Scores of Items a to f (6 items) – 2
    - ✧ the midpoint is zero.
      - Cronbach alpha = .808

School F

	n	M	SD	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
Intensity	39	.496	0.285	-0.292	0.378	-0.617	0.741

School Y

	n	M	SD	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
Intensity	41	0.049	0.444	0.575	0.369	-0.329	0.724

- The tests of normality were significant.

- An independent-samples t test was performed to evaluate whether the two schools differed in terms of motivational intensity. The results showed statistically significant differences between the two schools: $t(68.543) = 5.381$, $p = .000$.

Appendix 9a

Eiken

- A two-way ANOVA was performed with schools (School F/School Y) being a between-subjects factor and with tests (pre-test/post-test) being a within-subjects factor to test whether the improvement from the pre-test to the post-test was different between the two schools.

- Table 1 shows descriptive statistics. The values of z-skewness and z-kurtosis (obtained by dividing skewness or kurtosis by its standard error) did not exceed 1.96. The results indicate that the distributions did not deviate from the normal distribution in terms of skewness and kurtosis. No outliers were found (z scores did not exceed 3.29 at 0.1%).

Table 1.

	M	*SD*	Skewness	SES	Kurtosis	SEK
School F						
Pre-test	53.97	14.37	0.34	0.39	-0.68	0.76
Post-test	71.62	11.86	0.01	0.39	-0.60	0.76
School Y						
Pre-test	53.37	14.35	0.10	0.38	0.16	0.75
Post-test	62.13	14.44	-0.29	0.38	-0.23	0.75

Note. SES = standard error of skewness; SEK = standard error of kurtosis.
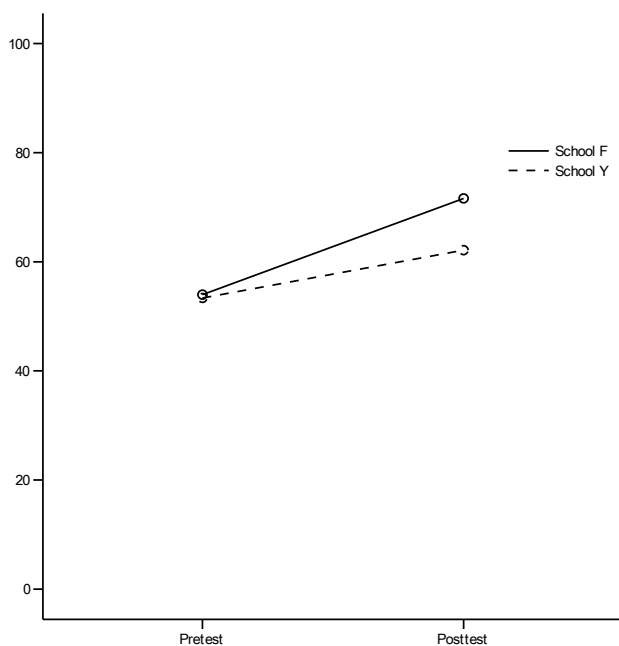
Appendix 9a *(cont)*

- The tests of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test) showed non-significance. The results indicate that the distributions of the two tests for each school did not deviate from the normal distribution.

- A two-way ANOVA showed the main effect of tests ($F(1, 73) = 80.295$, $p = .000$, partial eta squared = .524) and the interaction effect of tests and schools ($F(1, 73) = 9.088$, $p = .004$, partial eta squared = .111) were significant, whereas the main effect of school was not significant ($F(1, 73) = 3.186$, $p = .078$, partial eta squared = .042).

- Because the interaction effect was significant, four pairwise comparisons were made by performing two independent *t*-tests to evaluate differences between the two schools on each of the two tests and two paired-samples *t*-tests to evaluate differences between the two tests for each of the two schools. The results show that the difference between the two schools on the pre-test was not significant ($t(73) = 0.182$, $p = .856$), whereas the difference between the two schools on the post-test was significant ($t(73) = 3.105$, $p = .003$). In addition, the difference between the two tests was significant for both schools ($t(36) = -8.079$, $p = .000$, for School F; $t(37) = -4.418$, $p = .000$), for school Y.

Appendix 9b
Overall scores: F

Student	Eiken [1]: %	Eiken [2]: %	Essay: /5	Oral: /5	Oral (Eiken): %	External Factors: /5
F1	55	79	3			3
F2	74	89	5			2
F3	63	55	4			3
F4	63	82	4			4
F5	58	78	5			1
F6	80	82	5	5	79	0
F7	34	54	2			1
F8	50	71	2			2
F9	50	42	2	2.5	56	3
F10	47	71	5			2
F11	34	50	3			1
F12	37	53	3			3
F13	46	79	4	3.5	80	0
F14	a	84	5			1
F15	59	79	4			3
F16	42	72	4			2
F17	45	67	2	5	69	2
F18	50	63	3			3
F19	a	61	3			3
F20	49	80	5			3
F21	66	61	5	3	55	1
F22	62	61	4			5
F23	82	97	a			4
F24	53	80	5			3
F25	45	66	2	3	60	0
F26	83	92	5			3
F27	47	71	4			0
F28	63	74	5	5	73	3
F29	/	/	/			/
F30	66	80	2			2
F31	34	51	3			3
F32	42	67	3			2
F33	63	71	4			3
F34	58	64	5			0
F35	42	70	5			3
F36	39	74	4			4
F37	71	64	4			3
F38	42	59	4			3
F39	29	63	a			3
F40	74	89	5			3

Appendix 9b *(cont)*
Overall scores: Y

Student	Eiken [1]: %	Eiken [2]: %	Essay: /5	Oral: /5	Oral (Eiken): %	External Factors: /5
Y1	57	38	2			0
Y2	71	82	2			0
Y3	51	50	2			0
Y4	50	74	2	0.5	39	2
Y5	42	47	2			1
Y6	53	79	3			0
Y7	47	59	4			2
Y8	57	67	2	2.5	49	0
Y9	37	58	1			3
Y10	49	47	3			0
Y11	34	50	2			1
Y12	32	a	a	a	a	1
Y13	71	83	5			3
Y14	75	83	4			2
Y15	79	59	5			1
Y16	84	80	4	4	64	4
Y17	34	51	2			2
Y18	54	82	4			2
Y19	43	49	4			0
Y20	45	63	2	2.5	49	0
Y21	43	66	4			0
Y22	16	24	2			2
Y23	57	47	2			0
Y24	47	55	2	3	56	2
Y25	42	63	5			2
Y26	46	53	2			2
Y27	72	80	4			0
Y28	50	67	4	2	39	2
Y29	43	62	2			1
Y30	64	68	3			2
Y31	74	53	3			0
Y32	53	74	5	2	34	1
Y33	70	79	5			3
Y34	42	42	2			2
Y35	46	58	2			2
Y36	50	66	2	3	51	1
Y37	50	55	4			3
Y38	a	47	1			1
Y39	66	66	2			1
Y40	68	a	4	3	59	2
Y41	64	82	3			3