

# 英語のグローバル化と英語教育の諸問題

## Fundamental Issues on the Globalization of English and English Language Teaching in Japan

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### ABSTRACT

20世紀後半より英語の使用が地球規模で拡大化し、いわゆるグローバル化が進む中で、日本を含めたアジアにおいても英語能力の獲得の重要性が増してきた。日本においては英語の国際化と英語教育の充実が一段と推し進められており、日本の将来計画に向けても英語は国策のカギとなっていると考えられる。このように、日本の英語教育の重要性が注目され、期待される中、グローバル化された社会での英語教育への英語教員の意識の変化、あるいは行動に向かう動機付けに関してはまだ足並みがそろっていないようである。英語教育に関して、日本がアジアの他の国々と全く同じ悩み、問題を抱えているとは言えないが、国境をこえて情報を共有し英知を合わせて、より良い方向に進むような営みができることがEIL（国際語としての英語）の役割ではないのだろうか。

The global spread of English as the medium of the international domain in the late twentieth century has intensified the need for its mastery. This trend has led to several important developments of the English language throughout East Asia, including Japan. The globalization of English coupled with the extension of English education, has accelerated the development of ELT business in Japan. Japanese policy makers believe English plays an integral role in shaping future plans for the nation. Increasingly, the importance of English education in the Japanese education system is receiving attention. Specifically, English education as it relates to globalization, and national competitiveness. Although English education is often praised, some groups are resisting. For example, while the vast majority of teachers have attempted to increase their

English fluency, some teachers remain less motivated to study. The issues associated with ELT throughout East Asian countries may be summed up as a series of dilemmas. First, the quantitative vs. qualitative dilemma that is characterized by the shortage of English teachers coupled with existing teachers need to improve teaching practices. The second issue relates to the traditional vs. modern pedagogical approaches. For example, some teachers may adhere to traditional text-centered approach of grammar translation, while others are more apt to teach through communicative approach of task based learning. The third dilemma is continuity vs. change. While some people include modern technology in the classroom, others are fearful of overreliance on technology. In order to help provide a framework for countries seeking to establish an English education structure in future, Japan could share their developmental processes across borders.

## 1. Introduction: Globalization of English and English Language Teaching in Asia

Lin (2014) suggests that the global spread of English as the medium of the international domain in the late twentieth century has intensified the need for its mastery. This trend has led to several important developments of the English language throughout East Asia, including Japan. To support this claim, Lin (2014) mentions the use of English as the Asian lingua franca at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (APEC). Additionally, Lin (2014) mentions how recent reforms have been shaped with an emphasis on English education. For instance, mandating English education earlier in the education of East Asian children, or the insistence of improving ELT curriculum and other initiatives. Thus, the globalization of English coupled with the extension of English education, has accelerated the development of ELT business in Japan (cf. Lin, 2014). In sum, both the situation in East Asia and the spread of English is being facilitated by language-in-education policies and measures, politico-economic needs, global communication, and public perceptions of English (Lin, 2014).

## 2. Meaning of Globalization in Japan

In addition to its historic, educational, and social influences, globalization has played a key role in

understanding present-day Japan (cf. Seargeant, 2011). While Japanese feelings toward globalization remain ambivalent, some advantages are recognized. For instance, Japanese view globalization as both an opportunity (e.g. increase access to Native English speakers) and as a threat (e.g., increased external cultural influence). In other words, globalization presents a complex conundrum where Japanese people want to benefit from the promotion of English learning, while also remain fearful about losing aspects of their established national culture and identity (Yamagami & Tollefson, 2011).

Matsuda (2011) recognizes a more profound discrepancy in the globalization contradiction by emphasizing the mutually influencing roles of English as an international lingua franca. For example, Matsuda (2011) highlights the varying expectations which exist between high school teachers, who stress the importance of linguistic knowledge rather than skills, and students who wish to learn communicative skills. Seargeant (2011) furthers this argument with the assertion that there is a wide range of contexts that show the diverse and complex positioning of English language and identities in social and educational domains throughout Japan. For this reason, more exploration and substantial information is needed. Yamada (2015) shows that globalization has produced conflicting circumstances through the global spread of English. She claims that the desire for authentic English is prominent in Japan, and the

idea of authenticity is widely used in language-related social practices such as hiring teachers and developing language teaching methods (Yamada, 2015).

Yamada (2015) also suggests that although Japanese EFL students are encouraged to be global citizens by learning English and communicative skills, they are not given opportunities to discuss either the diversity of English uses, or its users. More specifically, Japanese students are not provided with a variety of social contexts where either English is used, nor are they introduced to diverse groups of people with English fluency (Yamada, 2015).

Lin (2014) stresses the importance of English for students in Japan. As the global spread of English as the major medium of international domains has strengthened the need for its mastery, English has become a key component in furthering Japanese internationalization. English, as it has been established as the global lingua franca, has increasingly become a useful tool in understanding the world. For example, getting information from the internet may require some recognition of, or familiarity with the English language. In other words English has positioned itself as an essential element in knowledge gathering.

Lin (2014) further describes the issue of English and employment. Rakuten, the country's largest online marketplace, and clothing retailer UNIQLO have decided to adopt English as a workplace language in order to increase global competitiveness; this development introduced a major disruption in the Japanese business world. In recent times, English has become a hiring criterion for more companies. Further, as individuals, English has become an indispensable skill for students in the competitive domestic workforce. English ability, a requisite skill in employment, is increasingly being used as a gatekeeper for both better jobs and promotion.

Most importantly, for stakeholders such as the government, the ELT industry, and parents, the main focus is still clearly on the benefits English can provide and on the effectiveness of English education. That is, English is regarded positively as the language of advantage; as a gatekeeper to better employment opportunities; and as a means to enhance competitiveness (Lin, 2014).

### 3. English as a Global Language and English Language Policy Makers in Japan

Japanese policy makers believe English plays an integral role in shaping future plans for the nation (Lin, 2014). For example, the Japanese government foresees both economic development and information technology being influenced by an increased need for English fluency. This thinking is exemplified by the marketing of English in Japanese company's growing reliance on fluency, which increases the need for students to focus on language acquisition, which directly impacts both the number, and ability of English language teachers throughout Japan (Lin, 2014).

In an effort to address this growing need, the Japanese government launched the Global 30 program, which sponsored English courses learned by international students at selected universities in Japan (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2015). Further, Global 30 sought to establish a global university network and to internationalize Japanese education. A secondary aim of the Global 30 program was to diminish the inward, or introverted attitude of Japanese students and have them realize the importance of English in the globalized world. The most distinctive features of the program are two types of advanced schools: Super Global Universities (SGU) and Super Global High Schools, which nurture global leaders. It should be noted that these

proposals and ideas have mainly been initiated by the business world (Haida, 2014; Ishida, Koizumi, & Furuya, 2013; Lin, 2014; MEXT, 2015).

#### 4. Globalization Force of English and English Teachers in Japan

Increasingly, the importance of English education in the Japanese education system is receiving attention. Specifically, English education as it relates to globalization, and national competitiveness. Although English education is often praised, some groups are resisting. For example, while the vast majority of teachers have attempted to increase their English fluency, some teachers remain less motivated to study (cf. Ishida et al, 2013; MEXT, 2015).

For junior high school (JH) English education the following points are stressed:

- 1) Making a smooth transition between primary school education (where English is primarily extracurricular) and JH (where letters and grammar are taught) so that students will not dislike English
- 2) Reviewing primary school English teaching
- 3) Meeting the goals of English language education, which requires skill integration intentional training

For high school (HS) English Education the following points are stressed:

- 1) Integrated skills teaching and integrated communication ability
- 2) Teaching English through exposure
- 3) Subject introduction: “Communication English Basic”, which was introduced to provide a bridge between JH and HS

For College English Education the following points are stressed:

Nagamoto (2012) suggests introducing alternative pedagogical approaches to prospective language teachers as a way to increase student fluency. For example, alternative programs may prove beneficial for students with nontraditional learning styles (e.g., discussion versus rote memorization). Increasing the

availability of approaches may prove beneficial as some individual may find discomfort with traditional modes of instruction. Further, these programs could also provide prospective teachers with practical and useful information that would enable them to develop practical assessments.

#### 5. Discrepancy Between the Government English Language Policy and the Actual English Teachers’ Practices in the Classroom

According to organization theory (Weiner, 2009), there is a difference between an individuals’ readiness to change and an organizations’ readiness to change. In other words, how much organizational members value change deviates from how much the organization values change. Something new is felt as needed (put to full use), important (put to partial use), beneficial (partially disregarded), or worthwhile (not to put to use). For example, when government policymakers alter laws without fully appreciating how the proposed change to existing policy will impact teachers (e.g., teachers’ English proficiency, appropriate materials, availability of technology, usability of technology, teacher education or teacher training program (pre-service or in-service teacher training). Teachers think (in theory “yes” but in practice “no”) about the change in language education methodology.

A discrepancy can also be seen between motivated teachers and non-motivated teachers, between teachers training and budget problems, between the readiness of the implementation and the number of well-qualified teachers, and between the language proficiency of teachers and the lack of appropriate teacher education (cf. Weiner, 2009; Reinelt, 2010). For example, for communication-oriented class, the skills are not practiced in isolation by a well-motivated good teacher, while one skill may be taught independently by a poor teacher, and eventually the

text centered grammar translation class seems to die hard. Another example is, since limited sources have to be distributed between recruiting and training more teachers in English, and providing in-service training for those already teaching English schools, none of these is sufficiently implemented (cf. Ho and Wong, 2004).

Ho and Wong (2004) suggest that language education policies in most of the so-called EFL countries have made English language learning compulsory. Although the policy in these countries has advocated the teaching of English from the early grades in primary school, this policy has not been fully implemented largely because of an inadequate supply of primary English teachers both in quantity and ability. The conditions for learning English in some of these countries are less than ideal owing to under-funding, overcrowding of classrooms, and shortages of textbooks.

Japanese national reports are beginning to highlight the “dualism” in the teaching and learning of English—that is, the growing chasm between rural areas and their respective allocation of qualified teaching staff and instructional materials (Ho & Wong, 2004). This imbalance is creating a dilemma for countries attempting to maintain pace with other EFL countries throughout East Asia.

In the last few years, ELT curriculum in East Asian countries appears to be driven at least in intent, by the two concept of communicative language teaching (CLT) and skills integration or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). CLT has become a dominant theoretical model since the 1980s in East Asian countries. The approach is taken to mean providing the teachers with communicative activities with their teaching skills and giving learners the opportunities to practice their language skills (Ho and Wong, 2004). In the meantime, a whole new field of higher education pedagogy has emerged, known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Its basic principle is to use a target language as the medium of instruction in order to have an effective pathway to both advanced language proficiency and educational achievement. (Read, 2015).

The issues associated with ELT throughout East Asian countries may be summed up as a series of compounding dilemmas. First, the quantitative vs. qualitative dilemma that is characterized by the shortage of English teachers coupled with existing teachers need to improve teaching practices. The second issue relates to the traditional vs. modern pedagogical approaches. For example, some teachers may adhere to traditional text-centered approach of grammar translation, while others are more apt to teach through communicative approach of task based learning. The third dilemma is continuity vs. change. While some people include modern technology in the classroom, others are fearful of overreliance on technology. In order to address these very real concerns, concrete measures that aim to solve these dilemmas of dualism should be developed. Further, in order to help provide a framework for countries seeking to establish an English education structure in future, Japan could share their developmental processes across borders.

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