

Communicative Language Teaching: A Japanese Perspective

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***Abstract:** It has been four years since the Revisions of the Courses of Study for Elementary and Secondary Schools was announced in 2008 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and accordingly, the new English curriculum in high schools in Japan will be implemented this year, in 2013. The curriculum change emphasises the increase of communication through English in the English lessons and cultivating 'Japanese with English abilities' (MEXT 2003b). This change affects the current situation surrounding Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in many ways. The aim of this study is to report on the perception and practices of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs). In spite of theoretical developments in CLT, little is known about teachers' attitudes towards CLT and how they implement CLT in English language classrooms in the Japanese context. Using the data collected by surveys, this study explored the complex relationship between JTEs' beliefs and practice and indicated how JTEs actually dealt with CLT in their English teaching classrooms and to what extent JTEs were willing to change their current teaching to meet the new English curriculum in high schools.*

***Keywords:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), TEFL in Japan*

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In Japan, English is categorised as a foreign language. This study explores the perceptions of Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) with respect to their teaching of the English language and curriculum implementation. Since the new Courses of Study were announced in 2008, English teachers have been exposed to blame for Japanese lack of English ability. I decided to do the research on a three-way relationship between TEFL in Japan and CLT and the new English curriculum of Japanese high schools from teachers' perspectives.

1.2 Importance of this Research

Asking teachers' beliefs may help us find teachers' premises, in other words, 'an awareness of unwarranted assumptions' (Brookfield, 1995, p.28). It will be of great importance to examine what JTEs are thinking about currently in their teaching, particularly with regard to the CLT approach, and what JTEs think about the new curriculum. The result will be relevant to future TEFL approaches and to the curriculum design and to my future action research because the new curriculum has not started yet. The research aim is to investigate teachers' awareness of and attitudes to their current teaching styles and CLT in TEFL and the new English curriculum in Japanese high schools.

2 Literature Review

2.1. English as a Subject

English is one of the compulsory subjects in those junior and senior high schools.

Until recently, most students began learning English in junior high school at approximately twelve years old and they complete six years of English education. However, English education in elementary school has just begun this year, 2011. The great majority will learn English from around ten years old to eighteen years old and there will be a full eight years of English education in the future. In addition, almost all universities or colleges set English as a compulsory subject for the first two years.

In every university institution, whether national, private or prefectural in Japan, have English entrance examinations which currently focus on reading, writing, grammar and oral-aural skills but an English speaking test is not involved. To get better scores on the test and pass the entrance examination is the main goal for most senior high school students. The entrance examinations have been a mechanism used to determine which students would be admitted to which universities. Since there is a uniform standard that distinguishes students' proficiency levels and competence, students believe in working hard to obtain the highest possible scores on the tests. There are also high expectations to enter a better ranked university or college from their families, because entering a higher ranked university or college is considered to give a position of vantage in society. Students cram subject knowledge in order to pass the entrance examinations to a university not only for themselves but their families as well.

With this as background, we turn now to an account of approaches to CLT.

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The explanations of 'communicative' vary widely in literature. Communication in social interaction is part of the pragmatic aspect of language and the pragmatic domain refers to the practical use of language in social interaction (Prutting & Kirchner, 1987, pp.105-17). What is

meaningful communication? It means knowing what to say and how to say it in any given situation. Significantly, practicing or drilling in the class does offer a precise focus on specific target forms but it sometimes encourages students to produce language unthinkingly (Willis, 1996, p.44). There is no real communicative language use in that case. CLT is one of the approaches which encourage students to learn the practical use of language through interaction in classrooms.

In recent years, language learning has been viewed from a very different perspective and various sources in academy or government policy started defining CLT. Brown (1994, p.245) suggested four elements of CLT as follows: (a) classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence; (b) language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes; (c) fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques; and (d) students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively.

Harmer (1991, p.50) claimed that CLT has two main guiding principles. The first is that language is not just patterns of grammar with vocabulary items slotted in, but also involves language functions such as inviting, agreeing and disagreeing, suggesting etc., which students should learn how to perform using a variety of language exponents. The second principle of CLT is that if students get enough exposure to language, and opportunities for language use, then language learning will take care of itself. As a result, the focus of much CLT has been on students communicating real messages, and not just grammatically controlled language.

However, Okazaki and Okazaki (1993, p.7) have pointed out that CLT in Japanese language lessons entails potentially different interpretations depending on individual teachers as it is not a method but an approach. For instance, Thompson (1996, pp.9-15) proposed four misinterpretations that were common among his colleagues about CLT such as: (1) CLT is not teaching grammar; (2) CLT is teaching only speaking; (3) CLT is completing pair work (role-play and so on); and (4) CLT is expecting too much from teachers. His conclusion was that a large number of teachers showed erroneous reasoning. Would JTEs' misconceptions be the same as his theory?

A basic principle underlying all communicative approaches is that learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct, propositional statements about the experiential world, but must also develop the ability to use language to get things done (Nunan, 1988, p.25). The situation, the topic of conversation and the conversational purpose are all important. Probably the most important of all is the relationship between interlocutors in an interaction. Teachers must encourage learners to interact with each other with the aim of achieving certain objectives.

Nunan (1988, p.26) states that different versions exist within the CLT approach. There are strong and weak versions. For example, in the strong version, language is recognised as being learnt

through engagement in interaction or communication in the target language. In recent years, however, the weak version seems to have gained swing because it seems to be able to synthesise 'traditional' and 'communicative' principles. The importance of the weak CLT is providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and it attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching. In the weak version CLT knowledge-based and productive principles are married. Namely, that is what balances productive and receptive approaches well.

2.3 New Japanese 'Courses of Study'

The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) determines the Courses of Study as broad standards for all schools, from kindergarten through upper secondary schools, to organize their programs in order to ensure a fixed standard of education throughout the country. A new curriculum of English education in high school will start in 2013 and there is a new set of subjects. The new 'Course of Study' emphasises 'productive ability' and the 'content' of English lessons. The characteristics of the new 'Courses of Study' in 2013 are: (1) English language education at elementary schools from 2011 (thirty-five hours in the fifth and sixth grade, a single forty-five minute lesson per week); (2) Increase in lesson hours (three hours per week to four hours) at the junior high level; (3) Integration of the four language skills (Reading, Listening, Writing, Speaking); (4) Communication-oriented organization of subjects at the senior high level; and English should be used as a main means of instruction during English lessons at senior high schools (MEXT, 2008, pp.110-16). However, only the phrase: 'English should be used as a main means of instruction' was taken up by a lot of mass media, the following misunderstanding: 'English teachers should do their lessons solely through English' exists. This has got out of control.

2.3.1 Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs)

The law of Education in Japan describes a teacher's role as follows: The teacher at the school should deeply consider their own mission, always work hard at research and cultivation, and try to accomplish the responsibility (MEXT, 2006, Article 9th). As a teacher, cultivating teaching skills and a strong sense of responsibility for school education are required. Teaching in a Japanese senior high school involves providing a kind of lifestyle guidance for the students. A teacher concentrates not only on the cognitive development of children, but also on their social, and mental development as well. There are thirty to forty students in each class and it is like one family. Teachers shoulder students' parents' roles as well. Teachers let the children practise correct behaviour in school life and mandate more responsibility over the course of time (Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999, p.172). Some people blame deterioration of students' morals on teachers' lack of abilities to discipline them and others blame the decline of students' willingness toward learning on teachers' quality, which means professionalism. Therefore teachers' quality and

abilities are being more severely criticized by the public over the last decade. The relationship between teachers and students is characterized by mutual respect.

2.3.2 JTEs' Language Teaching Development in Tochigi in Japan

At present there are 64 public high schools and 17 private high schools in Tochigi. As for how JTEs learn new approaches or techniques for teaching English, there are in-service workshops organised by the government of Tochigi prefecture twice a year. The workshop is currently planned two parts: JTEs can observe some teachers' lessons in some schools in the morning; and learn methods or approaches in lectures presented by some university professors in the afternoon.

2.3.3 Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs and Behavior

The growth of research on teachers' beliefs has instigated new ways of thinking about teaching and about professional and educational development, from which various implications can be drawn in teacher education (Zheng, 2009, p.73). Teachers' beliefs have been considered important concepts in understanding teachers' thought processes, practices, and learning to teach. Pajares (1992, p.324) discussed sixteen 'fundamental assumptions that properly were made when initiating a study of teachers' educational beliefs'. I would like to focus on four of them among others. These are: (1) knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined; (2) individuals' beliefs strongly affect their behaviour; (3) beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; and (4) changes in beliefs during adulthood are rare (pp.324-26).

Freeman (2002, pp.1-13) clarified the importance of recognising the impact which teachers' experiences have on the formation of their professional knowledge, beliefs, and patterns of action. Teachers do not simply reproduce their own experience in the classroom but reflect on their experience (Schön, 1995). However, it is natural for teachers to wish to succeed rather than to fail. Some teachers derive their self-esteem from their knowledge of the subject and classroom ability, a few from the control and power they exercise (Lewis, 2002, p.64). Every individual's priority can differ from person to person.

What about the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices? Many studies about CLT also mentioned the complex connection between teachers' knowledge and beliefs and practices. Nunan (1987, pp.136-45) pointed out that even teachers whose goal of the lesson is communicative lessons actually carried their traditional patterns of lessons into action. Kember and Kwan (2001, p.403) argued that the way in which people teach is shaped by their conception of teaching. They mentioned that attempts to influence the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes, therefore, need to be at least cognizant of the teachers' conceptions of teaching. If teachers' beliefs are compatible with educational reform, it is highly likely that the new ideas will be accepted and adopted in the classroom (Levin & Wadmany, 2006, p.160). Are

JTEs' beliefs compatible with the new English curriculum of high schools in Japan? Little mention of that relationship can be seen in literature.

There are increasing theoretical developments and approval of CLT; nevertheless CLT is not widely practiced in Japan. Whitworth (1997, p.161) argues that curriculum reforms are most likely to change teachers' knowledge and belief systems mainly because knowledge and beliefs do not change until teachers confront difficulties in their classroom practice. The new curriculum will start soon and urges changes in the teachers' paradigm. As Kuhn (1996, pp.62-4) indicated, paradigms control the methods and standards of a community, as well as the constellation of peoples' cherished beliefs, values, and techniques. Is there a conflict between teachers' beliefs and the new government reform? If so, what are the barriers for JTEs to practise CLT? It is meaningful to investigate to what extent Japanese English teachers are aware of their current teaching styles and CLT and how they apply them in the new English curriculum in Japan.

2.4 Conclusion

I reviewed TEFL in Japan and CLT and examined the most imminently relevant Japanese policy documents. It is important to note that Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) are subject to great pressures from two different aspects: from students' and their parents' high expectations that students should acquire linguistic expertise or skills to pass the entrance examination; and from a government's new curriculum reform aimed at students' pragmatic communicative competence in English in Japan. What is more, CLT is one of the approaches which promote students' learning language in a realistic context and enhance their communicative competence and it accords with the purpose of the new courses of study. The necessity for pragmatic English skills is clear all doubt. However, JTEs' awareness of and attitudes towards CLT in TEFL in Japan and the new government curriculum are rarely found in literature reviews. Hence, this research project is relevant and original. The research question is: To what extent will JTEs in Tochigi high schools adapt their classroom practices to meet the new Courses of Study, with particular emphasis on CLT? Sub-questions are as follows:

- (1) What is JTEs' awareness of CLT?
- (2) What are JTEs' attitudes towards CLT?
- (3) Do JTEs implement a CLT approach in their classrooms, and if yes, how?
- (4) Do JTEs propose adapting their approach to meet the stipulations in the new curriculum, and if yes, how?

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Question

The research question is: To what extent will JTEs in Tochigi high schools adapt their classroom practices to meet the new Courses of Study, with particular emphasis on CLT? The sub-questions are as follows:

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- (2) What are JTEs' attitudes towards CLT?
- (3) Do JTEs implement a CLT approach in their classrooms, and if yes, how?
- (4) Do JTEs propose adapting their approach to meet the stipulations in the new curriculum, and if yes, how?

3.2 Participants

There are 5,116 high schools in Japan (*cf.* 2.2.4). High schools in Japan deliver a three year education curriculum for sixteen- to eighteen-year-old students. The participants for this research were all Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) in six different high schools in the Tochigi prefecture in Japan, where I was working as a JTE for five years.

3.3 Data Collection

Questionnaires are one of the most widely used research techniques (Robson, 2002, p.232). I could have posted the questionnaires to all the JTEs in Tochigi but instead I chose to ask several of my former colleagues to call for volunteers to assist me in my research. Moreover, while 'Seniority' seems to no longer to matter in many companies in Japan, it is still ingrained in the education sector. It would be difficult for younger teachers to ask senior teachers to do something without personal connections; thus, I asked my former colleagues who were older and had more powerful connections with JTEs in Tochigi. This then limited the number of teachers whom my contacts could ask through their personal connections. But while the number was limited, the method secured an engaged response. The teachers were asked to finish answering questions within seven days and it took three weeks to collect the data totally.

3.4 Questionnaire Design

The survey questions should be designed to help achieve the goals of the research and, in particular, to answer the research question (Robson, 2002, p.241). For my research, the questionnaire has three aspects: factual questions; behavioural questions; and attitudinal questions. In order to ask those types of questions, there are two different question designs. Most questions are either 'open' or 'closed'. To find the answer to the research question from different aspects, I decided to use both open and closed-questions.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

The questionnaire is divided into four sections, which explore:

- (1) The participants' background information
- (2) The participants' goals as JTEs and their classroom practices
- (3) The JTEs' awareness of and attitude toward CLT
- (4) The JTEs' implementation of CLT in the classroom and their attitudes towards the new Japanese high school English curriculum

4.2 Section 1: The Participants

Sections 1 of the research questionnaire, which sought to gather factual profiling information of 47 Japanese teachers of English with respect to their current work qualifications, experiences in English speaking countries and frequency of English language usage in their daily lives.

Further details of the teachers' profiles can be seen in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1 Question 1.3 Work Experience

1~10 years	10
11~20 years	13
21~30 years	15
31~40 years	8
No answer	1
Total (Number of teachers)	47

Table 4.2 Question 1.4 Teachers' employment record

Schools	Number of teachers
General high school	47
Commercial high school	12
Agricultural high school	2
Technical high school	6
Special-needs (education) school	2
Junior high school	12
Elementary school	1
University or college	2
Private language school in Japan	3
Private language school in foreign country	0
Private tuition in Japan	7

4.2.1 Experience in English-Speaking Countries

According to the data, 45 teachers have been to English-speaking countries and 2 teachers have never been to such countries. The details of where the teachers have been can be seen in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

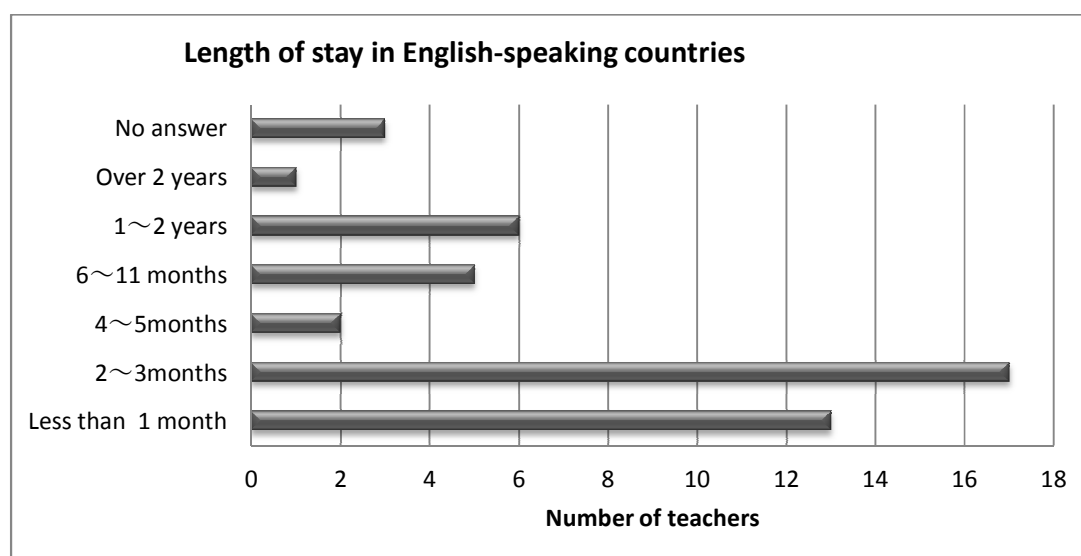
Table 4.3 Question 1.7 The experience of being in English-speaking countries

Yes	45
No	2
Total (Number of the teachers)	47

Table 4.4 Question 1.8 English-speaking countries which participants have visited

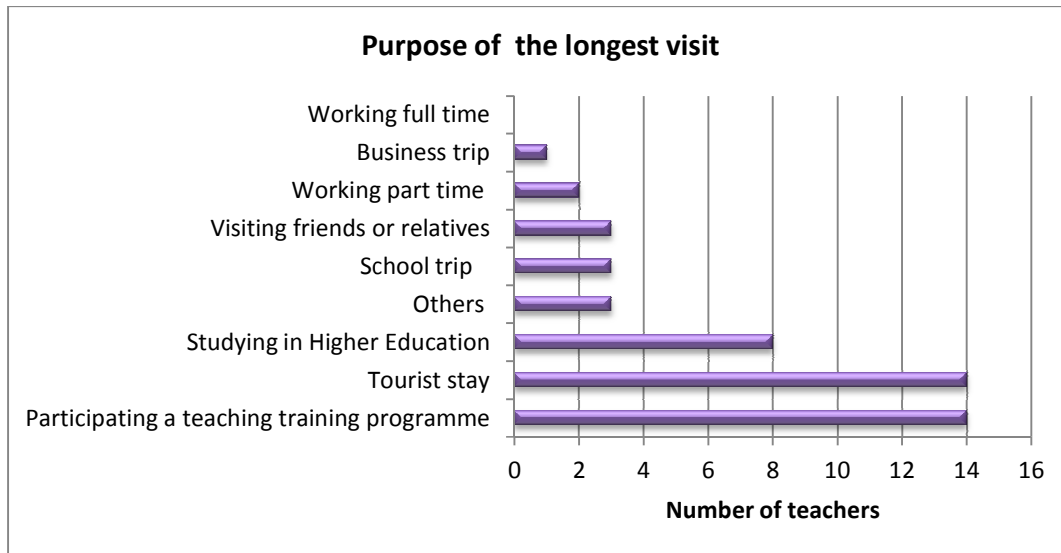
English-speaking countries	Number of teachers
The United States	33
The United Kingdom	27
Australia	19
Canada	15
New Zealand	5
Ireland	4
Malta	0
No answer (2 of them answered No in 1.7)	4(2)

Table 4.5 Question 1.9 Periods of time spent in English-speaking countries



The results for the question regarding travel purposes can be seen in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Question 1.10 Purpose of the longest visit



When asked about their use of English, teachers said that they use English the most in their English lessons, especially with foreign ALTs. Full findings are tabulated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Question 1.11 Opportunities when participants use English nowadays

When teachers use English nowadays	Number of teachers
When I do my English lessons	45
When I talk to ALT teachers	43
When I access information on the Internet	26
When I watch English TV programs (DVDs)	25
When I read English newspapers	16
When I talk to friends or relatives living in foreign countries	11
Other	4

4.3 Section 2: Teachers' Goals and Practice in the Classroom

4.3.1 Teachers' Goals

The teachers were asked 3 questions to find out the 'importance' of teachers' attitudes towards their goals as a teacher on a seven-point numerical scale.

The results of Table 4.8 show teachers' priorities as a teacher. 'To help students get into universities or colleges' had the highest average score. On the other hand, 'To do peer-observations and practice methodologies' and 'To work well with colleagues' had the lowest average scores. These are very important findings.

Table 4.8 Question 2.1 Goals as a teacher in a school

Categories	Average rating (Max.7)
To help my students get into universities or colleges	6.5
To fulfil the current requirements of my school duties	6.1
To improve my English proficiency	5.9
To guide my students in their choices of career	5.8
To pass on expert knowledge of my subject	5.7
To support my students when they have problems in their private lives	5.7
To do peer-observations and practice methodologies	4.9
To work well with colleagues	3.6
Others: to stimulate students intellectually and to help students develop their abilities	0.14

In response to the second question on goals, 'to coach students for better scores in the English examinations' was the second highest scoring option. In addition, 'to do well on entrance examination of English to universities or colleges' was the highest priority which teachers

wanted students to achieve through their high school education in response to the third question on a goals. These data are relevant to teachers' classroom practices.

Table 4.9 Question 2.2 Goals as a Japanese teacher of English

Categories	Average rating (Max.7)
To motivate my students to learn the English language	6.5
To coach my students for better scores in the English examinations	6.2
To support my students in having an open mind towards the culture of the English-speaking world	6.0
To motivate students to become independent, lifelong learners	5.8
To assist my students in understanding of their own identity through English lessons	5.4
To prepare my students work through English in Japan	4.9
Others: to help students express their opinions and talk about some social issues	1.14

Table 4.10 Question 2.3 What do teachers hope students will achieve

Categories	Average rating (Max.7)
To do well on entrance examination of English to universities or colleges	6.3
To speak and communicate with people in English for pleasure	5.7

To develop a love of the English language	5.4
To read literary works in English	5.19
To speak and communicate with people in English for work	5.14
To write academic reports in English	5.0
To be able to work abroad through English	4.6
Others:	0.4
to let students get to like English	0.14
to be able to express their opinions	0.14

4.3.2 JTEs' Learning about Teaching

6 teachers answered that they were not interested in learning new approaches or techniques for teaching English. Surprisingly, it is 12 % in percentage terms and that is quite high. The most common answer was 'Through trial and error in teaching English in the class' and 'Through observing other teachers' lessons' was second. It might be considered that teachers rely more on learning from their experiences than learning theories from literature or in the workshops.

Table 4.11 Question 3.1. How do teachers learn about new approaches or techniques

How do teachers learn approaches or methods	Number of teachers
Through trial and error in teaching English in the class.	30
Through observing other teachers' lessons	27
Through attending various workshops in private	25
Through reading journals	25
Through attending in-service workshops organised by the government	11
Through attending modules in Higher Education	5
Others : Debate practice or conversation circle	1

However, given the opportunity to name any other approaches to English language teaching, only 18 teachers expressed their ideas. More than half of the participants did not or could not answer this question. This is one of the key data to find out teachers' awareness of their teaching practices and CLT.

Table 4.12 Question 3.5 Names of approaches or methods participants identified

Names of approaches or methods they answered	The number of teachers
Grammar-Translation Method	13
Audio-Lingual Method	7
The natural approach	3
Graded direct method (GDM)	2
Silent way	2
Suggestopaedia	2
Total Physical Response (TPR)	2
Pattern-practice	2
Task-Based Learning (TBL)	2
Focus on Form	1
Critical thinking	1
Multiple intelligence	1
Cooperative learning	1
Situational approach	1

From the data in Table 4.12 above, we can see teachers seem to identify approaches or methods that are not always directly related to language teaching. Comparing this data with the findings in Table 4.14, they know what they do but they seem not to be able to tell the name of approaches or methods.

4.3.3 Classroom Practices

46 teachers answered that they are teaching reading and writing in English for academic purposes and 44 teachers answered that they usually translate English sentences into Japanese (or Japanese into English) and explain grammar rules in their English lessons. Moreover, question 4.1 was an open-ended question which asked respondents to describe their current teaching style, but the results were the same as above.

Some JTEs' answers were that:

'Reading skill is the most important among 4 skills (Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking) and we need explain the effective reading skills through translation and teaching grammar rules'.

It seems that many teachers admit they do 'Grammar-Translation'-based lessons and they often use a workbook for drills or pattern practices. That is because their goal is to get students to have better scores on the English examination to enter universities or colleges as seen earlier in Table 4.9.

In contrast, 6 teachers answered 'Teaching conversational English', and 'Teaching cultural awareness' was the least common answer. Similarly, 'Create real-life scenarios in the classroom to replicate a real-life situation' was the least popular classroom activity and this stands for the current infrequency of implementation of CLT in the classroom. This finding is relevant to answering the research question.

Table 4.13 Question 1.6 What teachers teach

What do teacher think they are teaching	Number of teachers
Teaching reading and writing English for academic purposes	46
Teaching conversational English	9
Teaching cultural awareness	5
Others: Teaching children illustrated story books in private Teaching English through the authorized textbook	2

Table 4.14 Question 3.2 Most popular classroom activities

Activities in the English lessons	Number of teachers
Translating English sentences into Japanese (or Japanese into English) and explaining grammar rules	44
Focussing on vocabulary, collocation and chunks and explaining how people actually use these lexical items	37
Working through a set text book and explaining units or doing exercises	35
Using workbooks so that students can practice	33

and test the vocabulary or grammar points which they are learning	
Using pair or group work so that students can develop the topic with others through interaction in Japanese	12
Using pair or group work so that students can discuss the topic with others through interaction in English.	11
Students presentations followed by question and answer sessions in English	8
Create real-life scenarios (For example, buying something through English, complaining in a hotel, answering the phone in English etc) in the classroom to replicate a real-life situation	6

As I mentioned above, many teachers considered that reading skill was very important but having students read English sentences in text books aloud was also another popular answer. 10 teachers wrote similar answers:

‘Reading English sentences in the textbooks aloud helps students get accustomed to pronunciation in English and helps students’ input of vocabulary or understand the differences of sentence structures between Japanese and English’.

This result leads us to one of the most common teachers’ misconceptions of CLT.

4.4 Section 3: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

4.4.1 Teachers’ Awareness of CLT

Firstly, we see from Table 4.15 that 45 teachers have definitely heard about CLT. If we look at which skill teachers think is important for CLT in Table 4.16, the result shows that the speaking skill is the most important in CLT and writing is the least. Also, since the previous results indicate that more teachers considered the reading skill important, we can get a sense of the result that the reading skill is the second. What is more, teachers seem to agree that CLT needs a lot of teacher preparation and CLT promotes English lessons through English as seen in Table 4.16.

In contrast, the lowest result was CLT will help students to pass the entrance examinations for universities or college. Teachers seem to think that teaching grammar is needed even in CLT but CLT is not suitable approach for students to pass the examination. Compared to the results in Table 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10, a certain consistency can be seen. Teachers’ goals are to coach their

students for better scores in the English examinations, therefore, CLT is not an effective approach for their goals.

Table 4.15 Question 3.3 Teacher awareness of CLT

Very familiar	4
Familiar	29
Unfamiliar	12
Completely new	0
No answer	2
Total (Number of teachers)	47

Table 4.16 Question 3.4 Teachers' perceptions of CLT

Categories	The average rating (Max.5) to Strongly agree
Teaching speaking is an important element in communicative language teaching	4.3
Teaching reading is an important element in communicative language teaching	4.2
Using listening materials (textbooks and CDs etc) is an important element in communicative language teaching	4.17
Communicative language teaching encourages students to use English in a real world context	4.12
Teaching lexical competence (vocabulary, idioms etc) is an important element in communicative language teaching	4.10
Teaching writing is an important element in communicative language teaching	4.02
Communicative language teaching needs a lot of teacher preparation (materials, time etc)	4.0
Communicative language teaching promotes English lessons through English	3.89

Teaching grammar is an important element	3.83
Communicative language teaching develops attitudes of tolerance toward other countries, people and customs	3.7
Using the communicative language teaching approach will help my students to get jobs in their future	3.6
Communicative activities (role-play, real-play, discussion etc) are more time consuming than other approaches	3.4
Fluency of English language is an important element in communicative language teaching	3.3
Accuracy of English language is an important element in communicative language teaching	3.08
Using the communicative language teaching approach will help my students to pass the entrance examinations for Universities or Colleges	3.0

4.4.2 Teachers' Attitudes toward CLT

41 teachers expressed their opinions. Through their opinions, there can be seen 4 common ideas as advantages of CLT. These are: (1) CLT encourages students' motivation or desire to keep studying English; (2) students can improve their speaking and listening skills through simulated real-life situations; (3) CLT helps students express their ideas in the classroom; and (4) students learn communication skills such as how to interact with others. These are some sample quotations and these sentences in English were all written by the participants and there was no interpretation by the researcher:

- *'Students are able to gain their desire to communicate using English or heighten their motivation to learn'*
- *'Students can listen to English or speak English more in 'real-life' world in CLT lessons'*
- *'It is useful for students to express themselves through English in the class'*
- *'CLT may promote students' abilities of communication and interaction'*

On the other hand, 4 common disadvantages of CLT were identified by teachers. These are: (1) CLT is time-consuming and it is difficult to finish the textbook; (2) CLT depends on a teacher's

English proficiency; (3) teachers cannot make sure whether students understand the main point of the lesson; and (4) students cannot improve ‘academic English’ through CLT. Many teachers also mentioned that CLT was not useful in improving students’ reading skills. Further, we can see that teachers consider reading skills important. Sample extracts from responses:

- *‘CLT is time consuming and I cannot follow the syllabus’*
- *‘CLT is up to teachers’ English proficiency and it is not appropriate for exams’*
- *‘It is difficult to see how much the students understand what they’re doing’*
- *‘Students cannot learn ‘Academic’ English sentences through CLT’*
-

4.4.3 How Teachers Implement CLT

First, 13 teachers answered that it is impossible to do CLT in their lessons or that they rarely use CLT. Secondly, 8 teachers answered that they sometimes do CLT with foreign ALT teachers or use pair-work, role-play and so on. Lastly, 21 teachers explained how they use CLT in their lessons.

Table 4.17 Question 4.2 To what extent teachers use CLT

I sometimes use CLT	Appear to use CLT	Impossible / Never
8 teachers	21 teachers	13 teachers

The main reasons for 13 teachers’ negative responses regarding CLT are evident from the following extracts:

- *Because I do not know how to do it*
- *It is difficult to explain grammar rules in English*
- *It is difficult for students to understand it*
- *There is no interaction between students in my class*
- *Because of the size of the class and teaching plans*

However, 21 respondents do use CLT and explain how as follows:

- *I use CLT as oral introduction in the lesson (5 teachers)*
- *When I have students paraphrase sentences in English (3 teachers)*
- *When I use classroom English (14 teachers)*
- *Questions and Answers in English (6 teachers)*

It should be stressed that these above uses are not CLT. The primary issue here is that teachers’ descriptions of CLT may not be articulated fully.

4.5 Section 4: How Teachers Adapt To Meet the New Curriculum

4.5.1 English as a Main Means of Instruction in English Lessons

One of the main changes in the new curriculum is the plan that English lessons will be held through English. 40 teachers answered this question. 3 teachers strongly disagreed and none of them supported the proposal that English lessons be all in English. 37 teachers' answers shared commonalities. Their answers were that using English as much as possible is important but it is not helpful when students need to understand the usage of vocabulary or grammar rules in the class.

- *English lessons through English are not good for the students at elementary level. We cannot make sure students' accuracy of English, some students may get wrong information so it is necessary to use their mother tongue in foreign language education.*
- *To use only English is not practical. To use as much as English as possible is very important but logical understanding of the language is also important in second language learning. So teachers have to use some Japanese in English lessons.*
- *It is better to use English as much as possible in the lesson but teachers also have to improve their English proficiency.*

4.5.2 Changes in JTEs' Current Teaching Techniques

Other changes in the new curriculum are the integration of four language skills (Reading, Listening, Writing, Speaking) in English lessons and the communication-oriented organization of subjects. The final question reveals to what extent teachers will expand their current teaching techniques in order to meet the new curriculum. This is the most relevant to answering the research question of this dissertation. 38 teachers answered and 5 teachers responded that they did not know.

Table 4.18 Question 4.5 How to meet the new curriculum

I will make any effort	I do not know	I will not change my teaching style
30	5	3

- *I think it will be necessary to make an effort individually to enhance the quality of my work.*
- *Role-playing and other conversational activities will be required in my classes. Grammatical drills might be unnecessary but I won't cut it all the way because I believe it's essential when we need to support the students to be able to use communicative English when they get a job.*
- *Unless the entrance examination is changed, the teaching techniques may not be changed.*

School is not conversational language school. Educating students as a human through learning English. Focusing on English competence too much is worse in school education so we need flexible approach about that.

- *Even if the new English curriculum starts, what we have to do for the students is the same. All the students who study here hope to enter a good university. It may be true that communicative language teaching method is important, but the fact is that we are facing the difficulties for the entrance exams.*

Whereas teachers recognise the importance of the practical usage of English in the class, teachers seem to think that it may take time to change their teaching styles. Ultimately, the Entrance examination to university appears to be a serious deterrent for them.

5 Conclusion

5.1 JTEs' Awareness of CLT

5.1.1 Teachers' Misconceptions about CLT

As predicted by the literature, the findings showed that teachers hold several misconceptions about CLT. Although only 12 teachers answered that CLT was unfamiliar to them, 33 teachers answered that they knew CLT. Comparing the findings to Thompson's four teachers' misinterpretations about CLT, interestingly, there was one similarity and three differences between JTEs' awareness about CLT and Thompson's theory.

First of all, the similarity was that CLT expects too much from teachers. Almost all the teachers claimed that preparing such communicative activities was time intensive (*cf.* Table 4.16). In addition, the common answer concerned textbooks. Some teachers complained because the current textbooks did not include many communicative activities and they had to prepare additional materials by themselves. Teachers are bothered about what materials or which 'real-life' situations they should use for CLT without textbooks. This means that most teachers focus on the importance of following and completing textbooks and still rely on traditional methods such as teacher-fronted and teachers' lecture with textbooks. As Richards mentioned, teachers' roles in CLT are varied: facilitator; organiser; group process manager; and needs analyst. CLT is not teachers' perfect presentation about what is written in the textbook. This finding means that JTEs hardly do their lessons beyond the textbooks and their willingness to create 'real-life' scenarios in their classrooms is quite low (*cf.* Table 4.14).

Secondly, Thompson's other theories were that CLT is not teaching grammar rules and CLT is teaching only speaking. However, the JTEs answers were different. JTEs admitted teaching speaking is the most important element of CLT, but teaching reading is as important as teaching speaking in CLT and teaching grammar rules was indispensable even in CLT. Regarding

Nunan's weak versions of CLT, CLT can be applied to teaching four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) rather than teaching only speaking skills. Of note is the fact that teaching reading skills and grammar rules tend to be 'receptive approaches' and do not achieve the main elements of CLT: to let students get enough exposure to use English. No one mentioned reading activities which encourage students to use English as much as possible: such activities which would constitute CLT.

These findings strongly indicate that JTEs' concepts of CLT do not include techniques to encourage learners in the pragmatic authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes (Brown *cf.* 2.2). Although JTEs know that CLT improves students' speaking and listening skills at a theoretical level, JTEs' practical knowledge about CLT is very flawed.

5.1.2 Little Implementation of CLT in Japanese Classrooms

Thompson's last theory was that CLT is completing pair work (role-play and so on). However, the data yielded interesting results. Unexpectedly, the answers for the question which asked how JTEs used CLT, even occasionally, in their lessons showed that there were few of them who answered that CLT needed pair work. Moreover, the numeric result of question 3.4 (*cf.* Table 4.16) showed that more than half of the teachers did not think that communicative activities in the lesson were time-consuming. This may be because they did not consider real communicative activities like pair work and group work. Using pair work or group work is not the only goal of CLT but they are necessary in order for students to interact with others. Sometimes, it is difficult to stop students' sharing their ideas or to facilitate the time in the lesson to do this effectively.

Of particular interest was that JTEs thought that oral and grammar practice activities and teachers' oral introduction in English and class room English were communicative activities. JTEs think if students or teachers say something in English (*cf.* 4.4.3: repeating English sentences after the teacher or reading the textbook aloud in English), that is the communicative activity rather than focusing on the relationship between interlocutors in an interaction. It is obvious that practicing and drilling are not communicative at all. There is no conversation or interaction with others and acquiring sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence which is communicative competence cannot be achieved. It is important to note that teachers' speech in English and reading aloud practice are not communicative activities and that teachers control the lesson most of the time, so students' interactions with others are limited.

My findings showed that teachers hold misinterpretations about CLT and those were different from Thompson's theory. Though only eight teachers seemed to use CLT partly, on the whole, traditional teacher-centred style continues to dominate and encouraging students' learning through interaction with others is little practised.

As for JTEs' awareness of CLT, their knowledge of CLT is still developing.

5.2 JTEs' Attitudes towards CLT

5.2.1 JTEs' Resistance to CLT

JTEs put up a resistance to CLT. That is what we can see from the findings. Then, what are barriers to CLT? There are two facts to discuss. Firstly, through the survey, I found that teachers' first priority or goal as a JTE was to motivate their students to learn the English language (*cf.* Table 4.9). As mentioned in the literature review, most senior high school students' goals are to enter university or college and entrance examinations currently focus on reading, writing, grammar and oral-aural skills but an English speaking test is not involved. Hence, the data highlights the fact that CLT was not useful in reality for students to get better scores on the entrance examination to universities or colleges. Why is CLT ineffective for the entrance examinations? It should be noted that JTEs have a strong bias: students cannot learn 'Academic English' through CLT.

There are distinct types of English taught in Japan: *Eigo* is learning linguistic knowledge of English for the purposes of passing exams in school education; and *Eikaiwa* whose purpose is to learn the language for communication in private conversational schools by individuals. Some teachers said that high school is not a conversational language school and students should learn more academic English. Teachers seem to consider CLT as *Eikaiwa* and that it should be learned individually in students' private time. Conversational English is likely to be disdained and acquiring practical language skills are totally reliant on individual efforts. That is why the majority of Japanese are those who learned English as 'knowledge' but cannot use English as a 'communication tool'. This bias seems to be one of the barriers to CLT.

Secondly, the answers to question 4.2 (*cf.* 4.4.2) showed the other main reason for resistance to CLT. That is JTEs' English proficiency. Four teachers did not have confidence in terms of practical English. Two of them wrote the reason that they did not really know real English itself was because of their limited experience in English-speaking countries. Teachers' own experiences may have effects on the formation of their professional knowledge, beliefs, and patterns of action (Freeman, *cf.* 2.3). Their lack of self-confidence in their experiences in English-speaking countries or their English proficiency is the other barrier to CLT.

As mentioned in the previous section, most JTEs misinterpreted CLT as teachers' lecture with textbooks. Consistently, JTEs suggest that good teaching involves explaining things well in lessons. This has implications for the implementation of the new curriculum and more detailed discussion is in the following section.

5.3 JTE Practice and the New Curriculum

5.3.1 Teachers' Misconceptions about the New Curriculum

One of the characteristics of the new 'Courses of Study' in 2013 is that English should be used as a main means of instruction during English lessons at senior high schools. Since this phrase was published, the following misunderstanding exists: 'English teachers should do their lessons solely through English'. This has got out of control because a lot of mass media took up only this phrase. In particular, that misconception was seen in JTEs' responses. 'Explaining grammar rules all in English is not effective for students' or 'no confidence in their English proficiency for doing their lessons all in English' were seen (*cf.* 4.4.3). Given the findings, it would be reasonable to say that JTEs have misinterpreted the new curriculum to mean teaching reading, writing and grammar rules all in English; in other words, applying their current teaching styles all in English. Therefore, this is relevant to the misconception of CLT and led to JTEs considering CLT as doing their current teaching styles all in English.

JTEs' current teaching styles are: translating English sentences into Japanese and explaining grammar rules with textbooks or workbooks. Their goals are teaching 'Academic English' for students to enter the university or college (*cf.* Table 4.14).

English lessons in which both teachers and students use English as much as possible are still unfamiliar and the main concept of CLT is little known among JTEs.

What is important in this discussion is one of the characteristics of the new English curriculum (communication-oriented English lessons) focuses on a CLT approach and not on using JTEs' current teaching styles all in English. Then, how do teachers develop their knowledge about the new curriculum and teaching skills? We will discuss this in the next section.

5.3.2 JTEs' Language Teaching Development

We found that the conceptions of CLT which JTEs in this research had were different from theoretical conceptions because they have little knowledge about CLT. The findings also showed that JTEs could hardly name approaches to English language teaching (*cf.* Table 4.12). How could they learn the nature of CLT? The data highlighted that thirty teachers answered they learned through trial and error in teaching English in their lessons (*cf.* Table 4.11). However, in fact, the activities that they are thinking of as CLT are not CLT. The second most common answer was through observing other teachers' lessons, but there was little opportunity to see other teachers' lessons among English teachers in Tochigi. What is more, only eleven JTEs stated in-service workshops as their answers. The environment for JTEs' professional development needs to be developed. If there were more effective workshops and greater opportunities to observe others' lessons, it would better encourage teachers more to consider their current language teaching or prompt them to cultivate their knowledge of teaching.

5.4 Limitations of the Results

Teachers' awareness of and attitudes toward CLT relate to their practice in their classrooms. However, it is very important to note that the data which was used was from small-scale research and the result was based on the answers of 47 JETs in Tochigi in Japan. As the data might be affected by the educational policy in Tochigi, teachers' working environment or any other elements, it would not be the same, if the research was done in different prefectures in Japan.

5.5 Conclusions

This study has shed light on some of the macro- and micro-relationships among key stakeholders in terms of educational policy; teaching methods and approaches in EFL; as well as teachers' beliefs and practices. Jordan et al (2008, p.151) mentioned that education is never value-free. The government's plan to cultivate Japanese English abilities is part of the national effort to survive in an era of Globalization. The view of English as a tool is not questionable in itself, however, the goals of English education differ between teachers, students in high schools and the government, and it is often invisible from outside of Japan. Consequently, both individual teachers and students are forced to engage in practices that are far from effective in teaching and learning English in 'communicative' ways.

In order to answer the research question, I set four sub-questions. The first question was what JTEs' awareness of CLT is. Teachers' concepts of CLT were very flawed and the development of their knowledge about CLT is necessary. The second question was what JTEs' attitudes towards CLT are and the answer was that teachers had a strong resistance to CLT. The third question was whether they implemented a CLT approach in their classrooms and if so, how. Though a few of the participants' answers included students' activities, little real communicative language teaching was conducted in the current English classroom in Japan. The last question was whether they proposed adapting their approach to meet the stipulations in the new curriculum and if so, how. The answer is that most teachers will not change their current teaching styles. There is a big gap between teachers' and government goals and little knowledge of and confidence in CLT result in little implementation of CLT. This result is a quite relevant to the implementation of the new English curriculum in 2013. By way of conclusion, it is reiterated that the prospect of adapting teaching practices to integrate CLT to meet the new Courses of Study in JTEs in Tochigi high schools is considerably dim.

The resource of this research was only JTEs' perceptions in Tochigi, however, I could see their current concepts of their lessons, awareness of and attitudes to CLT, and their perceptions of the new English curriculum by their honest and cooperative responses. In terms of the qualitative research, the result was meaningful and worthwhile.

6 Suggestions and Recommendations

The relationship between knowledge, beliefs and practice is complex. I attempted to examine teachers' perspectives on CLT and their willingness to meet the new English curriculum in Japanese high schools through questionnaires. As further research, using a combination of three sources (a survey, interviews with teachers and observation of their lessons) is suggested. This will allow researchers to see what teachers say and what actually happens in the classroom. The multiple data sources will allow them to conduct more meaningful explanations.

What is more, there are some further questions for future study with regard to my research question. How can teachers better develop their pedagogical knowledge? What is the link between teachers' personal experiences and professional development? How can teachers better deal with the new developments in their professional lives? How can teachers improve their willingness to adapt to new methods or approaches? These questions could provide further useful information to complement the results of this research.

Last of all, Richards (2001, p.171) claimed that 'traditional procedures are not rejected but are reinterpreted and extended'. There are also two phrases in Japanese: 'Wa kon kan sai'- the Japanese spirit imbued with Chinese learning and 'Wa kon yo u sai'- the Japanese spirit combined with western learning. In history, Japan has accepted both ancient Asian and Western elements. It is easy to resist different values, however, to take a balance between retaining tradition and challenging new things has been stressed in our history. It may be interesting to keep inquiring how 'Communicative Language Teaching' copes with the traditional language teaching in the future. I hope that this research can serve as a point of departure to facilitate further research on the implementation of the new Courses of Study and Communicative Language Teaching in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Japan.

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