

# First year students' English related educational background: Further investigation

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## Abstract

This paper reports the results of a questionnaire study completed in July, 1998 by 120 Yokkaichi University first year students of English. The purpose of the study was to get a better understanding of the types of English related experiences students have had prior to entering the university. The study also attempted to determine the extent to which the reform measures implemented by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1994 have been successful in helping students develop communicative ability and intercultural understanding.

The results indicate that the Ministry of Education's reform measures have been somewhat successful. For example, 83.2% of students reported having had at least one *Oral Communication* class during their high school years. However, in general, students were not particularly satisfied with the extent to which their English classes helped them develop communicative ability and intercultural understanding. Students instead reported that their English education mainly focused on the study of grammar and reading/translation, via traditional teaching methodology, i. e. *yakudoku* instruction, used to help students prepare for university entrance exams.

## Introduction

English language education in Japan is a field in which conflicting forces and interests have been at play for many years. Attempts have been made by Hino (1988), Koike and Tanaka (1995), Law (1995), and more

recently Gorsuch (1997), to describe what goes on in Japanese high school English language classrooms. When reviewing the available literature, four major influences on high school education can be identified: 1) traditional “yakudoku” teaching methodology, 2) the need to prepare students for university entrance exams, 3) the need to help students develop communicative competence in English, and 4) the need to help students develop intercultural understanding.

Clearly, one of the major forces functioning in Japanese education today is tradition, as many teachers teach English as they were taught, using “yakudoku” methodology which emphasizes the decoding of written English. In this process, the target language is first translated word for word into Japanese, then reordered according to the rules of Japanese syntax, and finally, fine-tuned by adding particles, etc.. This method is similar but not identical to the “Grammar Translation Method” first developed in Europe during the 1800s. The dominant influence of “yakudoku” methodology is highlighted by Hino (1988) who cites a questionnaire study completed in 1985 by Koike et al (1983,1985) in which 70–80 percent of high school and university teachers reported using “yakudoku” methodology in their classes.

Gorsuch (1997) observed two high school classes during the 1996 school year where “yakudoku” methodology was being used, and found that there was not only considerable time spent dealing with English grammar, but also with both the content of the reading selection as well as the Japanese language itself. It is not surprising that English instruction would deal with grammar and the content of a reading selection, but it is surprising that “yakudoku” methodology seemed to result in considerable emphasis on the Japanese language itself. This lends support to the argument presented by Law (1995) that “most of the productive energy of this method (yakukoku) is directed towards the recoded Japanese version...the effective educational content may be largely limited to *training in the student’s native language*”(italics mine). In other words, “yakudoku” English instruction may actually be functioning indirectly as a method of teaching Japanese rather than English.

The second major influence on high school education very much related to “yakudoku” instruction is the importance given to preparing students for university entrance exams. Although many universities now include items on their entrance exams that focus on communicative features of language via written conversations or listening passages, many test items require the decoding of longer difficult passages or focus on discrete elements of the language, i. e., vocabulary, idiomatic expressions or segmental

level phonological features which are relatively easy to write test items for. Generally speaking, the difficulty of entrance exam test items is high, and Law (1995) concludes that this is because “juken eigo (entrance exam English) is less about core generative structures of the language, than about idioms and irregularities”.

The high difficulty level of the exams has led to criticism that they are being used as a tool with which to sort and eliminate students. Also, many feel that the entrance exams have had a negative influence on the goals and teaching practices of high school English education (see Brown (1998) for an overview of the research on the backwash effects from the exams on Japanese public education). In defense of the exams, Stapleton (1996) suggests that entrance exams measure and reward effort and perseverance, and that these two qualities are more important in Japanese society than communicative ability in English.

Although “communicative” elements are increasing on entrance exams, many teachers still believe that “yakudoku” methodology is the best approach to helping students prepare for the tests. In fact, Rohlen (1983) and Templin (1997) report that many high school English teachers view Oral Communication classes as a possible hindrance to entrance exam preparation. Hence, the power of university entrance exams to influence high school curriculum should not be underestimated.

The use of “yakudoku” methodology as the method of choice for preparing students for university exams has been the dominant influence in Japanese high school English education for most of this century. During the 1970’s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology began to develop, mainly in the US, UK and Australia, and by the 1980’s, it had begun to strongly influence English language education in Japan. Briefly, the goal of CLT is for students to develop communicative competence in the second language. Communicative competence is defined by Savignon (1972) as “the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete point tests of grammatical knowledge”. Ellis (1985) citing Faerch and Kasper makes the distinction between “declarative knowledge”; knowledge of the language itself, and “procedural knowledge”; knowledge of how to use language in communication. The distinction is central to CLT as procedural knowledge may be best attained by actually using language to communicate. Hence, CLT methodology not only has communicative ability as its goal, but in its strong form, communication is itself seen as facilitating the process by which this ability is acquired.

The growing influence of CLT methodology can be seen reflected in the

Japanese Ministry of Education's policies as these are set in accordance with what it views as the future needs of the workplace and society in general. In earlier years Japan was more isolated, and sought to primarily receive information from abroad, via reading/translation. The increasing trend towards a global economy has made it necessary for many more Japanese to be able to communicate in English either face to face or via the written word, i.e. traditional or internet based correspondence. It is also the case that Japan's economic development has made it possible for many more people to visit foreign countries where English is often used as either a first or second language. In 1984 the Ad Hoc Committee for educational reform met and "encouraged a revision of the teaching philosophy towards a communicative centered approach in schools." (Koike and Tanaka, 1995). In 1989 the same committee met to revise the course of study for foreign languages, and these reform measures were implemented in 1994. Consequently, in April of 1997 universities began to receive students who had completed three years under the new guidelines. The Overall Objectives section of the guidelines for English education at the secondary level now reads :

*"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 heighten interest in language and culture, deepening international understanding."*

Not only does the overall objective for language instruction now have a stronger emphasis on communication, but the objectives for the individual courses such as English 1, Reading, etc. do also.

Another important change in the curriculum guidelines has been the addition of three Oral Communication classes to the course of study, of which students should take at least one. The first, *Oral Communication A* focuses on helping students develop informal speaking skills, the second, *Oral Communication B* focuses on developing listening skills, and the third, *Oral Communication C* focuses on formal speaking skills such as debate and speeches. (see Carter, Goold and Madeley, 1993, 1994 and Law, 1995 for an in-depth discussion of the guidelines).

In reading the overall objectives above, one can see that besides communication, other elements, "culture" and "international understanding" are mentioned. The view that language study can serve as a vehicle through which inter-cultural understanding is increased can be considered another major influence on language education policy. Indeed, the broadening of students' perspective towards the world outside of

Japan is seen by some educators as being more important to students than the development of language ability. This point of view was recently expressed by an English professor at Osaka University, Mamoru Morizimi, who is also the editor in chief of "The New Crown" textbook series used in Japanese public schools when he stated in an interview " I think English education should be regarded as language, intercultural understanding and growth as a human. These three have something to do with language attitude and awareness *rather than skills.*" (italics mine). To increase intercultural understanding and communicative ability the Japanese Ministry of Education began in 1985 to invite young people from abroad to work as assistant language teachers ( AET/ALT) in Japanese schools. This program has not been without difficulties, but as of 1996 has grown to include 4,574 foreign teachers. ( Mombusho, 1997 ). It would appear from this overview that the Ministry of Education's 1989 reform policy which is focused on helping students develop communicative abilities and and cultural understanding is in conflict with "yakudoku" methodology and the need to prepare students for entrance exams. However, it should be noted that the Ministry of Education's guidelines are only recommendations, and actually, high schools, particularly private high schools, have considerable freedom regarding the type of English instruction they provide. The result is that there is a great deal of variation in the types of experiences students have studying English, and if you talk with individual students from different high schools you are likely to hear that the numbers of class hours they had studied English in a week differed, or that some had native English instructors (ALT) or Oral Communication classes, whereas others didn't. Hence, although it is easy to attribute the great differences we notice in our first year university students' English abilities to motivation or language aptitude, it may be equally important to consider the role played by educational background.

Regarding educational background it is also important to consider not only differences in the programs that high schools offer, but also differences in individual teachers' approaches to teaching English. In the previously cited survey done by the Research Group for College English teaching in Japan, teachers' opinions about how English could best be taught fell into three main areas: 1) through literature (48.9%), 2) through studying the language itself (37.2%) and 3) through TEFL methodology (20.8%) (cited in Gorsuch, 1998). This survey, though somewhat dated, shows that teachers' opinions about language teaching differ, and one can assume that these opinions influence their approach to teaching, and hence, are probably a contributing factor in any

variation students report in their learning experiences during their high school years.

To conclude, the purpose of this introductory section has been to give an overview of the influences and forces at play within the field of high school English education in Japan. The major influences identified are: 1) the tradition of “yakudoku” methodology; 2) the need to prepare students for university entrance exams; 3) the growing influence of CLT goals and methodology promoted by Mombusho, and 4) the growing awareness of the need for broadening students’ perspective related to foreign cultures and international affairs. Since the Ministry of Education’s new guidelines only went into effect four years ago in 1994, students’ experiences with English high school education have only recently changed, and hence, the often cited survey of 1,023 high school and university teachers done by Koike et al in 1983–85 may be outdated.

Up-to-date information about our students’ background is important to have when making decisions about materials and methodology to use in our classes, and hence, the main purpose of this study is to get a clearer picture of the types of experiences our students have had both in their formal English education and extra-curricular English related experiences prior to entering the university, and particularly, to see to what extent the reform measures implemented by the Ministry of Education in 1994 have been successful in terms of their ability to help students develop communicative ability and cultural understanding. Regarding formal English education, students also typically have three years of English study in junior high school, but for practical reasons it was decided not to investigate this area.

Specifically, the following research questions will be explored:

## **Research Questions**

### **Quantitative Data**

- 1) How many students: a) have had an Oral Communication class?  
b) have been taught by an AET/ALT?
- 2) How many hours did students: a) study English in high school?  
b) study in Oral Communication classes?  
c) have an AET/ALT?

*(Regarding extracurricular experiences before entering university)*

- 3) How many students: a) have traveled abroad?  
b) have done a homestay abroad?  
c) have studied in a conversation school?  
d) have studied at home with tapes or a computer?

### **Qualitative Data (Likert data)**

- 4) Which of the three general areas of emphasis; a) communication, b) culture, and c) entrance exam preparation do students report their high school English classes helped them improve in most/least?
- 5) Which of the three general areas of emphasis; a) communication, b) culture, and c) entrance exam preparation do students report that they wanted to study most/least?
- 6) Which language skill areas ( e.g. listening, reading, etc.) do students report having more/fewer opportunities to work on during high school?
- 7) In general, how enjoyable were students' English classes?
- 8) How much do responses on the questions related to English classes in general differ from responses on questions related to Oral Communication classes related to: a) enjoyment, b) communication, and c) skill area emphasis (i.e. listening, speaking and pronunciation)

## **Methods**

### ***Participants:***

The participants in this study were all the students (120) from four classes who attended class during the last week of June in 1998. All were 1st year students in Yokkaichi University's Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences who elected to study English in *English Communication - Basic* in order to fulfill a foreign language requirement. As students are assigned to classes according to class number, this sample can be considered a random sample of first year English students in this faculty.

This study will also be used to make some general comments about Japanese high school education in general, but it will be important to keep in mind that this sample is primarily from Mie prefecture and the surrounding prefectures, and can not be considered a representative sample of all Japanese high school students.

### ***Materials:***

A 51 item questionnaire with 9 descriptive data questions and 42, 5 point likert scale items was used. The 42 Likert type items are comprised of 21 pairs of positively and negatively worded questions. The

decision to include positive and negative forms of the same question was made in order “avoid the response bias of participants tending to answer positively or to agree with what appears to be the point of view of the author of the questionnaire” (Hills, 1998, personal communication). The questionnaire was first written in English (see Appendix A), and then translated into Japanese (see Appendix B) for use with students. The Japanese translation was checked for accuracy by two bilingual Japanese English teachers. Two earlier versions of this questionnaire were piloted with 1st year students during December 1997, and several questions were either changed or omitted based on the results of the pilot study.

***Procedure:***

The questionnaire was given to students by their regular English instructor as the first activity of class during the last week in June, 1998.

***Analysis:***

The data was tabulated and analyzed using JMP and Statview statistical packages for the Macintosh computer. The descriptive data from questions 1- 8 and 41 that was from yes/no type data was treated as nominal data and displayed as percentages of each response. The data related to number of hours of class is displayed as mean number of hours. The likert data from items 9-40 and 42-51 was treated as interval data in this analysis, so that the more powerful parametric procedures such as mean scores and analysis of variance (ANOVA) could be used. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to see if there were statistically significant differences between the individual question means within each question group. When there were only 2 means to compare, a t-test of statistical significance was performed. The alpha for statistical significance for the ANOVA and the t-tests was also set at .05, standard for studies of this type.

***Reliability:***

A reliability analysis was done on the 21 positive/negative question pairs by inverting the negative scores and checking the correlation coefficient of each pair. The result was that 4 pairs had correlation coefficients above .80, 9 pairs were above .70, 6 pairs were above .60 and 2 pairs were above .50. The two lowest pairs were skill opportunity questions related to translation, i.e. translation e-j and translation j-e. These results indicate that this construct was unclear to students,



so data related to translation was omitted from the analysis. Omitting these two question pairs resulted in an average correlation coefficient of .729 for the remaining 19 pairs.

## *Results*

### *Quantitative data*

The quantitative data from items 1-8 and 41 was collected in order to better understand the types and amount of experience students have had related to English study. The first three questions were included to gather some general background information, as well as to orient the students to the topic of the questionnaire.

**Table 1A – Public/Private % Table 1B – Location of Schools**

Area	# schools	# student	% students
Mie	20	45	37.50%
Other	60	75	62.50%
Total	80	120	100.00%

type of school	yes
<i>private</i>	34.00%
<i>public</i>	66.00%

The results in Table 1A indicate that approximately 2/3 ( 66% ) of Yokkaichi University English students studied in public schools during their high school years. Table 1B shows that the 120 students in the sample come from 80 different high schools. In closer examination of this data it was found that one school, Akatsuki High School provided 12 students, or 10% of this sample. Sixty-six schools provided one student apiece and 13 schools provided between 3 -5 students. Table 2 gives the average hours per week (5.09) that students studied in English classes during their high school years. It can be noted that the hours of English study per week tended to increase as students moved through their high school years.

Table 2 - Hours of English Study Table 3 - Hours with an ALT

year	hours/ week
<i>1st year</i>	4.65
<i>2nd year</i>	4.98
<i>3rd year</i>	5.64
<i>avg hr/week</i>	5.09

  

year	% yes	% no	yes-avg hours
<i>1st year</i>	51.3	48.7	1.02
<i>2nd year</i>	38.7	61.3	1.03
<i>3rd year</i>	29.4	61.3	1.03
<i>ALT Total</i>	60.5	39.5	1.75

In Table 3 one can see that 60.5% of students reported having been taught by a native English speaker (ALT) as a teacher during their high school years. Students were more likely to have done so during their earlier years of high school. It can also be seen in Table 3 that those students who did report having had an ALT were likely to have studied with an ALT for one hour a week.

Table 4 - Hours of Oral Communication

Year	yes	no	yes-avg hours
<i>1st year</i>	70.6	29.4	1.34
<i>2nd year</i>	42.9	57.1	1.34
<i>3rd year</i>	23.6	76.4	1.72
<i>Oral Com Total</i>	83.2	16.8	2.45

Besides the use of native speakers in the high school classroom, the other major change recommended by Mombusho has been the addition of Oral Communication classes to the high school curriculum. Looking at Table 4

it can be seen that 83.2% of students reported having had an Oral Communication class during their high school years. It is most likely that students have had either one or two hours of Oral Communication class per week, and that this type of class is more likely to be taken during their earlier years of high school (i.e. 70.7% during the 1st year).

**Table 5 – Extra Curricular English Related Activities**

Extra Curr Type	yes	no
<i>travel</i>	17.50%	82.50%
<i>homestay</i>	6.70%	93.00%
<i>conv. school</i>	10.00%	90.00%
<i>self study</i>	10.00%	90.00%

Regarding extra-curricular experiences related to English instruction, Table 5 shows the percentage of students who reported: 1) traveling abroad (17.5%), 2) doing a homestay (6.7%), 3) studying in an English conversation school (10%), and 4) doing English self study with tapes or a computer (10%).

***Likert data -general***

The likert data in items 9-40 and 42- 51 was collected in order to better understand the nature of students’ experiences in their high school English classes as a whole. Table 6a and 6b look at students’ opinions about how much their high school English classes helped them improve in three general areas, 1) communicative ability, 2) cultural understanding and 3) learning English useful for passing entrance exams.

**Table 6a – “Helped” Mean scores Table 6b – Anova: Help by Likert**

area of emphasis	mean likert
<i>yushi</i>	2.83
<i>communication</i>	2.45

<i>culture</i>	2.46
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The mean scores (average of positive and negative question forms) indicate that students felt that their high school education helped them most to prepare for taking entrance exams (mean 2.83). followed by learning how to communicate in English (2.46) and learning about foreign cultures (2.45). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if the differences in these mean scores was significant, and the results (F ratio - 11.46) show that a significant difference does exist. ( $p > .05$ ). All three of these mean likert scores were less than 3.0 indicating generally a somewhat negative view of the ability of their high school education to help them improve.

**Table 7a - “Wanted” Mean Scores Table 7b - Anova: Wanted by Likert**

Area of Emphasis	mean likert
<i>yushi</i>	3.05
<i>communication</i>	2.87
<i>culture</i>	2.79

Table 7a and 7b look at the same three general areas as Table 6, but in terms of how much students themselves wanted to work to improve in each area during their high school years. Similar to Table 6, the results

indicate that students' strongest desire was to study English useful for entrance exams (3.05) . This was followed by learning how to communicate in English (2.87) and learning about foreign cultures (2.79). The ANOVA results (F Ratio - 4.11) indicate that there was a significant difference between these means ( $p > .05$ ). It should also be noted that all three of the likert means were near to or somewhat lower than 3.00 indicating that students felt a lack of strong motivation and/or clear goals related to English study during their high school years.

In Table 8 the mean scores for the 6 general skill areas can be seen. In this group of questions students were asked to report if they had a lot of opportunities to work with each of the 6 skills. It can be seen that students reported working most with grammar (4.10), reading (3.85), and writing (3.43), and least with pronunciation (3.00), listening (2.64) and speaking (2.32). An ANOVA was performed ( $F = 128.78$ ) and there was a significant difference between the means for the 6 skills ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 8a - Mean Skills Table 8b - Anova: Skills by Likert**

skills	mean likert
<i>grammar</i>	4.1
<i>reading</i>	3.85
<i>writing</i>	3.43
<i>pronunciation</i>	3
<i>listening</i>	2.64
<i>speaking</i>	2.32

Finally, two items were included to get an idea of students' satisfaction with their high school English classes. Table 9 shows that Item 9, " I enjoyed my English classes" has a mean likert score of (2.52) and Item 21, "I would have studied English even if it were not required" has a mean of (3.28). The difference between the responses on these two items indicates students were motivated to study English, but for reasons other than intrinsic enjoyment.

**Table 9 – Enjoyment Mean Scores**

attitude	mean likert
<i>enjoyed</i>	2.52
<i>non-elective OK</i>	3.28

***Likert – Oral Communication***

The likert data in items 42–51 was collected to better understand the nature of students experiences in their Oral Communication classes. Table 10 is a summary of this data. Regarding factors related to intrinsic motivation, it can be seen that students' enjoyment of their Oral Communication classes (3.04), was not particularly strong, but greater than the enjoyment reported in the earlier item about high school English classes in general (2.52) . A t-test ( see Table 11) was used to determine if this difference was statistically significant, and it was. (p>.05).

**Table 10 – Oral Comm Mean Scores Table 11 – Anova: Enjoy Gen/OCom**

attitude toward	mean likert
<i>enjoyed</i>	3.04
<i>communication</i>	2.87
<i>listening</i>	3.3
<i>speaking (conv)</i>	3.17
<i>speaking (pron)</i>	3.08

Also included in Table 10 is data from items related to student's perceptions of the usefulness of Oral Communication classes. The general question of whether Oral Communication classes were useful in helping students learn how to communicate in English has a likert mean of 2.87. This is rather low, but higher than the mean for the same question (2.45) reported earlier about high school English classes in general. A t-test (see Table 12) was performed on these two mean scores and the difference was found to be statistically significant. ( $p > .05$ )

Table 12 T-test - Communication Table 13 T-test - Listening

Finally, students were asked to report the degree to which they had opportunities to work in the three skill areas most closely related to Oral Communication, e.g., listening, speaking and pronunciation. The mean likert scores in Table 10 show that students reported that they had a good deal of opportunities to work in these areas; listening (3.30) followed by speaking (conversation) (3.17), and speaking (pronunciation) (3.08). These means were higher than the means from the same questions reported earlier about high school English classes in general. T-tests (Tables 13,14 and 15) were performed to determine whether the differences in these mean pairs were statistically significant and the results were positive. ( $p > .05$ ) for listening and speaking (conversation), but negative for speaking (pronunciation).

**Table 14 T-test – Speaking (conv.) Table 15 T-test – Speaking (pron.)**

### *Discussion*

The overall purpose of this study was to get a clearer picture of the types of experiences Yokkaichi students have had related to English study prior to entering university, both quantitatively in terms of hours spent in classes and qualitatively in terms of the type of instruction they received. Secondly, although the sample was limited to students at Yokkaichi University, it was hoped that the results might indicate the extent to which the Ministry of Education's reform measures focused on communication and cultural understanding have had an impact on English education at the high school level.

When examining the quantitative data, it can be seen that the reform measures have been successful to some extent. Most students (83.2%) reported having taken an Oral Communication class. Of the students that



had these classes, the average was somewhat less than an hour per week averaged over the three years. However, only 23.6% of students reported having Oral Communication classes during their third year versus 70.6% in the first year. This lends support to the premise that as the entrance exams draw nearer Oral Communication classes may be seen as of lesser importance to students. Many students (60.5%) reported having been taught by a native English speaker (ALT) sometime during their high school years. It is important, particularly for native English speaking teachers, to be aware that more than 1/3 of their 1st year students (39.5%) reported not having been taught by a native speaking teacher, and may be initially apprehensive about relating to foreign instructors. When examining the qualitative likert data, on the other hand, a somewhat less encouraging picture emerges of the ability of high school English education to help students develop communicative skills and inter-cultural understanding. Looking first at the skills that students reported having opportunities to improve with, students reported that much more emphasis was given to teaching traditional language skills like grammar, reading and writing (4.1, 3.85, 3.43) than to teaching skills prominent in oral communication: ie. speaking, pronunciation and listening (3.0, 2.64, 2.32). Of course, this is not to discount the importance of grammar and vocabulary in communication, but the results of this section do seem to point to an emphasis on the declarative knowledge side of the declarative/procedural knowledge dichotomy discussed earlier.

These findings were reinforced by the results of the questions about general areas of emphasis, in which students reported that their high school English education helped them more to prepare for entrance exams than to learn how to communicate or to develop inter-cultural understanding. One might think that students would be unhappy with the strong focus on entrance exam preparation, however, when asked about their desires related to these three general areas of study, students reported that they most wanted to study English useful to pass entrance exams.

These results highlight the practical importance students place on university education as a way to further goals related to career, marriage, etc. It also points to the power that the writers of university entrance exams have to influence high school English curriculum. Textbook writers also play a role in exam creation as entrance exam writers refer to textbooks when making decisions about the content of these exams. The results of the study indicate that high school English curriculum is still strongly influenced by traditional

teaching practices like yakudoku instruction, which is considered the method of choice for preparing students for multiple choice university entrance exams.

The Oral Communication classes, on the other hand, appear to offer some balance to the English curriculum. Generally, students reported that their Oral Communications classes helped them learn how to communicate in English better than their English classes in general (2.87 vs. 2.45). Students who were able to take these courses reported enjoying these classes more and getting more opportunities to practice conversation skills such as speaking (3.08), pronunciation (3.17) and listening (3.30) than in their normal English classes. The listening scores are considerably higher than the scores for speaking, and this may be due to the presence of ALTs in the classroom or to the large quantity of listening materials created for the high school market.

Overall, however, students indicated a slightly negative opinion about the ability of their Oral Communication classes to help them improve with oral/aural areas of English communication (2.87). This was supported by the skill scores for listening, speaking and pronunciation which although were above 3.0 (3.3, 3.17, 3.06), were still rather low relative to the high mean scores for opportunities to learn about grammar, reading and writing (4.1, 3.85, 3.43) given to English classes in general. These findings could indicate that many high school English teachers lack the motivation or training necessary to teach the skills most important for Oral Communication.

Regarding motivation, it was pointed out earlier that many high school teachers may view Oral Communication classes as a hindrance to their main goal of preparing students for university entrance exams, or just may not feel personally inspired by the goal of developing communicative competence. Regarding teacher training, both teaching communicative language skills and teaching to increase inter-cultural understanding will require specific teaching methodology. Yakudoku methodology, perhaps well suited to the goals of exam preparation and reading/translation, may not be appropriate for teaching these new skills, and might in fact be hindering teachers' efforts in these areas. Of course, one reason yakudoku methodology is so prevalent is that it is relatively easy to control and focus large groups of students with this teacher-centered approach. Hence, reducing class size continues to be an important feature of language education reform.

To conclude, the results of this study lend support to the idea that change in the goals and methodology of English education in Japanese schools may be proceeding slowly. It is common when an institution

attempts reform that the forces of tradition may impede progress. For real change to occur more than course guidelines will need to change. Entrance exams, textbooks, teaching methodology, class size and the attitudes of all the participants in the educational process will also need to change. It seems particularly important that teachers be given an adequate rationale for the changes promoted by Monbusho, as well as substantial support and training in how to teach towards these new goals.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire Concerning High School English Study

1. What is the name of the high school you went to ?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Was your high school private or public? (circle) private public

3. How many hours per week of English classes did you have in high school?

1st year \_\_\_\_\_

2nd year \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd year \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you have a native English speaking teacher (AET/ALT) yes no during your high school years?

If yes, how many hours per week in the..... 1st year \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd year \_\_\_\_\_  
3rd year \_\_\_\_\_

5. Before entering the university did do a homestay or live abroad? yes no

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_ for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Before entering the university did you travel abroad ? yes no

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_ for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Before entering the university did you study English in a Conversation School? yes no

If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Before entering university did you study English with tapes or computer software at home?

yes no  
If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

What materials? \_\_\_\_\_

What year are you now in university?

1st year \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd year \_\_\_\_\_  
3rd year \_\_\_\_\_  
4th year \_\_\_\_\_

***Agree/ Disagree***

9. I enjoyed my English classes in high school.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

10. In high school, my English classes helped me a lot to study for university entrance exams.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

11. I had a lot of opportunities to learn about grammar in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

12. In high school, my English classes did not help me learn about foreign cultures very much.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

13. In high school I really wanted to study English useful for communication.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

14. I did not have many opportunities to practice speaking (conversation) in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

15. I had a lot of opportunities to practice pronunciation in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

16. If English classes had been elective classes in my high school, I would not have taken English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

17. In high school I really wanted to learn about English speaking cultures.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

18. I had a lot of opportunities to do translation (Japanese to English) in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

19. In high school, my English classes did not help me learn how to communicate in English very much.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

20. I had a lot of opportunities to practice reading in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

21. In highschool I was glad I had the opportunity to take English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

22. In highschool I really wanted to study English to help me pass university entrance exams

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

23. I did not have many opportunities to do translation (English to Japanese) in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

24. I did not enjoy my English classes in high school.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

25. I had a lot of opportunities to practice listening in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

26. In highschool I didn't want to study English useful for communication in English that much.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

27. I did not have many opportunities to learn about grammar in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

28. In highschool I didn't want to learn about English speaking cultures that much.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

29. I did not have many opportunities to learn about writing in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

30. I did not have many opportunities to practice reading in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

31. In high school, my English classes helped me a lot to learn how to communicate in English.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

32. I did not have many opportunities to do translation (Japanese to English) in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

33. In high school I didn't want to study English to help me pass university entrance exams that much.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

34. I did not have many opportunities to practice pronunciation in my high school

English classes (disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

35. I had a lot of opportunities to practice speaking (conversation) in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

36. I did not have many opportunities to practice listening in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

37. In high school, my English classes helped me a lot to learn about foreign cultures.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

38. I had a lot of opportunities to do translation (English to Japanese) in my high school English classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

| \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

1 2 3 4 5

39. In high school, my English classes did not help me study for university entrance



exams very much. (disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

40. I had a lot of opportunities to learn about writing in my high school English classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

### “Oral Communication” Classes

41. Did you take any Oral Communication classes (listening, speaking, debate/speech) in high school?

yes no

hours students

If yes, how many hours per week in the..... 1st year \_\_\_\_ student# \_\_\_\_

How many students in the class? 2nd year \_\_\_\_ student# \_\_\_\_

3rd year \_\_\_\_ student# \_\_\_\_

**If you answered “yes” to question 41 above, please continue and answer questions 42–51**

42. I enjoyed my Oral Communication classes in high school.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

43. I had a lot of opportunities to practice listening in my Oral Communication classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

44. I did not have many opportunities to practice speaking (conversation) in my Oral Communication classes

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_| |\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

45. My Oral communication classes helped me a lot to learn about how to communicate in English.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

46. I had a lot of opportunities to practice pronunciation in my Oral Communication classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

47. I did not have many opportunities to practice listening in my Oral Communication classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

48. I did not enjoy my Oral Communication classes in high school.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

49. I had a lot of opportunities to practice speaking (conversation) in my Oral Communication classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

50. My Oral communication classes did not help me learn about how to communicate in English very much.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

51. I did not have many opportunities to practice pronunciation in my Oral Communication classes.

(disagree (disagree) ( not (agree) (agree  
very much) sure) very much)

|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|\_\_\_\_\_|

1 2 3 4 5

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

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