

研究論文

Bridging the Gap Between CLT Theory and Practice in a Japanese Junior High School

中学校での英語コミュニケーション授業：理論を実践に結びつける

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英語が使える日本人の育成が叫ばれて久しい。こうした社会的要請に応えようと、学校現場では、新しい授業実践を試みているところが多い。しかし、より良いものを目指そうとする変化が逆に現場や生徒に戸惑いや混乱をもたらしているようにも思われる。よりコミュニケーション的な授業を展開できるように教員の資質と指導力を向上させるには、授業現場に入り、教員と協力しながら、教員が抱えるミクロな課題に具体的に伝えていかなければならない。本稿は、こうした試みの中で著者が観察した中学校英語授業における問題点とその解決案をまとめたものである。

キーワード

中学校、PPP、CLT、授業計画、ティーム・ティーチング

0. Introduction

In 2005 the English Language Instruction Network Center (e-LINC) was set up at Kansai University funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as part of the Ministry's program to promote teacher training. The role of the Center is to act as a hub to promote mutual learning between (1) teachers of English at junior and senior high schools in the Kansai region, (2) graduate students with teaching experience, (3) graduate students with no teaching experience and (4) teachers at the graduate school. As part of the Center's activities,

several projects involving these four groups were launched. This study was based on one such project. The project's goal was to improve the English teaching at a junior high school by making its English classes more communicative. The Center was initially approached by the junior high school (written as JHS hereafter to refer to this particular junior high school) to provide native speakers of English to assist their Japanese teachers in their classroom teaching. The Center, however, felt that simply providing native speakers would not contribute to the improvement of English language teaching. After some negotiation, it was agreed that two native speakers of English with expertise in teaching English as a foreign language to Japanese students would participate in the project to provide the JHS with the native speaker that they initially requested, and also to work with the Japanese teachers at the JHS to help them make their classes more communicative. The native speakers who participated in the project are two of the authors of this paper. These two native speakers were designated as EFL consultants of the project and they will be referred to as EFL, EFL1 or EFL2 or EFL consultant throughout this paper.

The other participants of the project were two Japanese teachers of English at the JHS, one graduate student of Kansai University Graduate School of Foreign Language Education and Research and one faculty member of the graduate school. The graduate student kept a record of the project by video-taping all the activities of the project while the faculty member acted as the supervisor and liaison between the members of the project.¹

The JHS that participated in this project is located in Osaka prefecture. It is a co-ed school with approximately 760 students. The project focused on the 8th grade English classes taught by two Japanese teachers of English (Teacher 1 and Teacher 2). The two teachers teach six English classes a week to three different groups of students respectively. The table below shows how Teacher 1 teaches classes A-C from Monday to Saturday, and Teacher 2 teaches classes D-F from Monday to Saturday.

Table 1: English Class Timetable

Teacher	1			2		
Monday	A	B	C	D	E	F
Tuesday	A	B	C	D	E	F
Wednesday	A	B	C	D	E	F
Thursday	A	B	C	D	E	F
Friday	A	B	C	D	E	F
Saturday	A	B	C	D	E	F

Out of the six classes taught during the week, the Monday to Friday classes are grammar-based. The sixth class is communication-based and is taught on Saturday mornings. There are 43 students in each class. Each class is 50 minutes long. In the grammar-based Monday to Friday classes, the teachers use a textbook called “Sunshine 2” and its workbook produced by Kairyudo. As supplementary material, “Shin-Chugaku Mondaishu: Hatten-hen” is used for grammar practice, and “Basic Reading Power” (Longman 2004) is used to improve reading skills. A copy of the textbook and the supplementary materials were provided to us by the JHS teachers at the beginning of the project to give us an idea of what was going on in the Monday to Friday classes. The focus of this project, however, was the Saturday class, which was designated as the “communication class”.

The way in which we decided to approach the goal of the project was twofold. As a way of increasing awareness about communicative teaching, a series of ten workshops were held at Kansai University. The workshops were led by the two EFL consultants. Below is a list of the titles of the workshops.

WS 1 : Overview of Curriculum

WS 2 : Methodology

WS 3 : CLT Paradigms and Tasks

WS 4 : Lesson Planning

WS 5 : Materials Development

WS 6 : Staging of Classroom Instruction

WS 7 : Towards Participation, Involvement, and Interaction in Pairs and Groups

WS 8 : Teacher and Learner Roles in Class Management

WS 9 : Teaching Discussion

WS10 : Integrating Native English Speakers into the Program

These workshops were held mainly for the two JHS teachers, but in order to share the knowledge and discussion content with other teachers in the region and other graduate students and faculty members of Kansai University Graduate School of Foreign Language Education and Research, it was advertised on the graduate school’s website and an announcement about the workshop was distributed to local junior and senior high schools. In reality, however, there were very few people who were able to attend the workshop which was held on a weekday from 4:30 to 6pm. The workshop was attended by two of the JHS teachers, members of this project and

two or three others who were not directly involved in this project.



Workshop

The other way in which we approached the goal was to participate in the English classes at the JHS. At the onset of the project, English classes taught by the two JHS teachers were observed. Subsequently, the two EFL consultants participated in the teaching of three classes a day on four visits to the school. On the four visits, each EFL consultant teamed up with one of the JHS teachers.

Table 2: Pairing of EFL Consultants with Japanese Teachers

Visit	Pairs	
Visit 1	EFL 1 & Teacher 1	EFL 2 & Teacher 2
Visit 2	EFL 1 & Teacher 1	EFL 2 & Teacher 2
Visit 3	EFL 1 & Teacher 2	EFL 2 & Teacher 1
Visit 4	EFL 1 & Teacher 2	EFL 2 & Teacher 1

These classes were observed by the supervisor of the project and were video-taped by the graduate student member of this project.² The visits to the JHS were distributed between the workshops so that the content of the workshops could be made relevant to the classroom and the ideas discussed in the workshop could be tried out in the classroom.



Team-teaching at the Junior High School

Attempting to introduce and implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in a JHS in which the teachers are mainly non-native English speakers has its own unique challenges. The present paper examines the issues which face teachers and trainers in attempting to bridge the gap between CLT theory and practice in such a context. In order to investigate the issues facing this effort, we start the paper by discussing some aspects of the school culture that the authors have found to be pervasive in Japanese schools. We then proceed to discuss the curriculum, methodology and lesson planning. Finally we discuss the particular case of the JHS in this project.

1. The Japanese School Culture

This project highlighted how some aspects of the traditional environment of a Japanese junior high school could become obstacles in implementing a more communicative approach to English teaching. The general culture of a Japanese school poses the following challenges.

1. Deeply ingrained idea that if the teacher is going to use English, it must be perfect
2. Deeply ingrained idea that a classroom is where the teacher imparts knowledge
3. Strong belief that instructions and explanations should be given in Japanese
4. Separation of communicative classes from grammar-centered classes
5. Longer class hours allocated to grammar-centered teaching conducted mainly in Japanese
6. General resistance by students (and teacher) to accept the use of English between Japanese people
7. Very little sharing of teaching materials done between teachers
8. Heavy workload of teachers that prevents them from devoting much time to class preparation and sharing of ideas with other teachers

In the classroom, the teachers face the following challenges due to the traditional set up of a Japanese classroom.

1. Difficulty in moving the desks to set up pair or group activities
2. Large number of bags and other items that students carry that block the passage and hinder the teachers from moving around the classroom to monitor student performance
3. Classroom environment with Japanese notices and messages written on the boards that is not conducive to English learning

Many of the constraints listed above cannot be removed without the cooperation of other teachers and the school administrators. There are, however, some things that the teacher can do to overcome the challenges. Here is a summary of the suggestions we make in this paper.

1. Teachers should not be afraid of making mistakes. Although what you write on the board and on the handout should be accurate, the English you use in the instructions need not be perfect
2. Think of the teacher's role as a facilitator to help the students use English
3. Establish an English-speaking culture in the classroom by using English all the time
4. Prepare thoroughly the procedure you want the students to follow. Make sure the instructions are short and clear
5. Avoid having to use Japanese by modeling the class activity, putting explanations in writing, giving examples
6. Stop and check at each step to make sure that the entire class is following the instructions correctly
7. Establish the use of different learning formations such as pairs, groups, partner rotations early on in the year
8. Remove all distractions by making the students clear their desks and put away their bags
9. Walk amongst the students to monitor progress and to instruct students who are not following instructions

2. The Curriculum

This section concerns the curriculum components outside the JHS English classroom that impact what goes on inside the classroom, namely: syllabus, methodology, teaching paradigms, lesson planning and materials development. These five very broad components comprised the

first half of the lecture series done at Kansai University and are useful starting points for a discussion on the barriers and opportunities that the project team encountered in attempting to enable the participants to conduct more communicative classes.

2.1 Syllabus

Brown (1995: 7) adopts McKay's (1978) definition of syllabus as that which provides 'a focus for what should be studied, along with a rationale for how that content should be selected and ordered'. He observes that if one looks at the table of contents of a textbook (which in many cases is the de-facto syllabus for a given class), the existence of mixed or layered syllabuses becomes apparent:

...sometimes two or more types of syllabuses may be mixed together into what appears to be a different type of syllabus, and other times there may be secondary or tertiary syllabuses operating in layers underneath the primary syllabus (Brown, 1995: 7).

Mixed or layered syllabuses are the norm in most schools and in that sense the JHS is no exception. It was noted earlier that of the six lessons that the 2nd year students take, five are taught from the textbook *Sunshine*, which has a primarily structural syllabus combined with some minor situational and topical elements. *Reading Power* is also used as a supplement and fits quite firmly with a skills-type syllabus. The sixth class on Saturday is designated as a communication class. Although it need not be, it can be argued from class observations, communicative class materials and discussions throughout the project, that the teachers base the 'communicative' lessons firmly on grammar.

It is self-evident that all syllabuses are a manifestation of the conscious or unconscious perspectives on the nature of language possessed by the decision-makers (i.e. teachers, directors of study, parents). The syllabus of the English classes suggest that the decision-makers of the JHS perceive English language as being mainly a series of grammar points. Of course, according to Nunan (2003: 7), 'research has demonstrated that a grammar focus in class **does** seem to be beneficial for most learners'. The point, however, is that while grammar content is necessary in a basic language course, it should not be placed at the center of a the syllabus to the exclusion of all else. This exclusive place of grammar in the JHS's syllabus is the first barrier to implementing more communicative classes in the JHS. This systemic problem is obviously far beyond the scope of this project. However, it is important to verbalize it in order to place the project in the picture

as one 'grass roots effort' to forge a new direction, rationalize the focus of the project and note some observations which will lead to recommendations.

Essentially, the result of this fixation on a primarily structural (i.e. grammar-based) syllabus is that:

- i) Communicative lessons become subordinate to grammar lessons, and at best have an 'add-on' status
- ii) As communicative lessons are based on grammar points, there is a lack of authentic communicative practice
- iii) Students are not being taught the wider range of skill and knowledge areas that comprise true communicative competence. This results in the ubiquitous English handicap that exists in Japan

2.2 Methodology

Most authors agree that currently language teaching is in a post-method phase. According to Nunan (2003: 7), several studies conducted to determine the best language teaching method (cf. Swaffar, Arens and Morgan (1982)) were inconclusive and 'it was studies such as these that gradually led people to abandon the search for the 'right method' (Nunan, 2003: 7). CLT, which qualifies as a general approach rather than a methodology, is still seen as the best solution to a difficult problem, and encompasses many techniques from a variety of methods. It is important to elucidate specifically what that means in order to discuss observations made during this project. According to Nunan (2003: 6), CLT:

- i) views language as a tool to express meaning rather than an interlocking set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules
- ii) emphasizes meaning over form
- iii) emphasizes fluency over accuracy
- iv) centers the classroom on the learner
- v) recognizes the need for differentiated courses that reflect the different communicative needs of learners

It is now widely accepted that 'the broad approach known as CLT has been realized methodologically by task-based language teaching (TBLT)' (Nunan, 2003: 7) and for this reason, it was decided that the latter half of the practice lessons at the JHS would be TBL lessons.

Just as a school's syllabus is underpinned by conscious or unconscious perspectives on the nature of language on the part of the decision-makers, the methodology at work in the classroom is also underpinned by perspectives on the nature of language learning on the part of the teachers. Observations of lessons at the JHS suggest an approach to teaching that is not congruous with CLT:

- i) Classes are too teacher-centered
- ii) There is too much emphasis on drilling
- iii) Language is parroted rather than used
- iv) Accuracy is emphasized over fluency
- v) Form is preferred to meaning

Given the practical nature of the workshop, theoretical discussions of methodology were dispensed with and the focus directed to practical elements that comprise good teaching practice as suggested in studies by Blum (1984: 3-6). Blum's elements do not come strictly from methodology, but range from individual in-class techniques to larger out-class considerations:

- 1) Instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum
- 2) There are high expectations for student learning
- 3) Students are carefully oriented to lessons
- 4) Instruction is clear and focused
- 5) Learning progress is monitored closely
- 6) When students don't understand, they are re-taught
- 7) Class time is used for learning
- 8) There are smooth and efficient classroom routines
- 9) Instructional groups formed in the classroom fit instructional needs
- 10) Standards for classroom behavior are high
- 11) Personal interactions between teachers and students are positive
- 12) Incentives and rewards for students are used to promote excellence

These elements are useful with which to consider the observations made of the two Japanese teachers and the team lessons discussed in Section 3 (In-Class Observations).

2.3 Teaching Paradigms and Lesson Planning

As mentioned in the introduction, the EFL consultants and the Japanese teachers were

paired up for four teaching practice sessions so that they could work together doing lesson planning, making materials and teaching lessons together. The first two lessons together were based on a PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) paradigm while the last two lessons employed a TBL (task-based learning) approach. It was hoped that these experiences would lead to a more practical grasp of how to run a CLT class effectively. The JHS teachers were already familiar with the PPP approach, which allows teacher to present language (a grammar point), practice it in a controlled sense and then produce it in a free context. One of the teachers made use of this paradigm in his/her lessons, although it was noted that, due to the limitations JHS students have in their bank of language knowledge, the production stage was truncated or even left off. The PPP paradigm was viewed as a good first step in attempting to bring in a more communicative approach to the lessons at the school, precisely because it was familiar enough to the teacher and could be immediately applied to a grammar-based syllabus. The first two practice sessions were planned around a PPP-style lesson. Section 3 presents the detailed observations made of these lessons. Following the two PPP lessons, the EFL consultants and the teachers agreed that a shift away from the grammar base was required and so two TBL lessons were conceived and planned: the first by the EFL consultants and the second by the Japanese teachers. A number of observations of the TBL-based lessons are made as well in Section 3.

2.4 Materials Development

Materials development consumed much of the efforts of both teachers and EFL consultants prior to the team-taught lessons. What made the creation of materials difficult was that they had to satisfy varied, limiting and sometimes opposing criteria. Materials had to be:

- i) authentic enough in the sense that they enabled students to get real practice
- ii) interesting enough to keep students engaged
- iii) simple or familiar enough to students in format to be readily accepted and adapted by students
- iv) designed in a way to take students' cognitive capacities into account
- v) able to give students with limited language knowledge and skills enough structure and support that they were sufficiently directed during the free part of the activity
- vi) able to give students sufficient freedom to use the language to accomplish the task in a more open-ended way than usually is possible in teacher-centered lessons

It was recognized that when all the theory is considered and discussed, materials

development along with lesson planning will make or break a CLT class. It is incumbent on the teachers to build their bank of readily usable task-based lessons and to share these with other teachers in the future.

3. In-class Observations

It is at the level of classroom interaction that the gap between theory and practice becomes apparent. Following observation of the two JHS instructors before the April semester, some basic information was gleaned about the way the communication classes were normally conducted within the school. The weighting of the curriculum lay outside the scope of the observations, but suffice to say that of the six English classes that each instructor spent with the same students in any one week, only one of those periods was termed 'communication' while the remaining five were devoted to grammar instruction. For the sake of meaningful instruction in that sole class allocated to communication, it was necessary to establish what was taught in the grammar and communication classes.

Prior to spending time in the classroom teaching together with the Japanese teachers (T1 and T2), detailed video observation took place of their new classes in the academic year commencing April 2006. The team teaching days were spread out in May and June, allowing T1 and T2 and the ELTs to work together in the series of workshops (which continued throughout the period), plan new lessons, review previous lessons, and integrate new learning and shared experiences in the project in a structured fashion.

Team teaching was conducted over four Saturday sessions, with two teams (each being one ELT assigned to one Japanese teacher). After two sessions, the teams switched over, giving each ELT and each Japanese teacher experience in working in two different teams. The kinds of challenges that were addressed can be summarized as tendencies towards one extreme or the other:

Rapport with the class:	Free, lacking control	Rigid, too much control
Use of class space:	Lots of movement, chaos	Students kept seated in rows
Physical constraints:	Open space	Cluttered desks, books, bags,
English-only class culture:	L2 use	Reliance on L1 use
Groupings:	Groups, pairs interacting	Teacher & individual

Communication:	Authentic tasks	Exercises, form focus, drills
Approach:	Task-based	Presentation, practice, no production
Method:	Communicative	Grammatical, functional, notional
Focus:	Learner-centred	Teacher-centred
Teacher/learner roles:	One role	Various roles
Role of ELTs:	Tape recorder	Facilitator, resource, etc.

Observations of the classes are classified below and then described in detail. The first set of observations are based on classes conducted by Teacher 1 (T1) and the second set of observations are based on classes conducted by Teacher 2 (T2).

T1 English A (grammar class) prior to the Workshop series

T1 English B (communicative class) prior to the Workshop series

T1 English B (communicative class) post-Workshop 1

T1 English B (communicative class) team teaching with ELT

T2 English A (grammar class) prior to the Workshop series

T2 English B (communicative class) prior to the Workshop series

T2 English B (communicative class) post-Workshop 1

T2 English B (communicative class) team teaching with ELT

3.1 Teacher 1

The observations we made from watching the video recordings of the two JHS teachers and from team-teaching with the teachers are discussed below. We start with Teacher 1 who had good rapport with the students but had difficulty in controlling the students.

3.1.1 T1 English A (Grammar Class) Prior to the Workshop Series

This class was typified by an almost exclusive dependence on L1 by T1. There was some potentially interesting L2 input in the form of an English pop song, but no task for the students to perform besides listening and looking at the lyrics. In fact, in the absence of any board usage, it was hard to know what the general aims of the class or the specific aims of the listening exercise were. Following the song, there was a presentation stage where new language was introduced, but the students were simply expected to observe the instructor demonstrate ‘Where are you going?’ and ‘Do you speak Japanese?’ using a doll. In fact, any English-speaking observer would

be unable to comprehend that this was in fact an English class. There was a complete lack of student-to-student interaction, and no movement out of desks or pair work during the entire class. With nothing to do, it was hard to ascertain what the students were supposed to be learning, or why indeed they were in the class at all.

3.1.2 T1 English B (Communicative Class) Prior to the Workshop Series

The same teacher's communicative class tended to be characterized by the same lack of focus. There was a friendly rapport with the students, but it was not clear what the direction of the class was, given the (apparent) lack of a lesson plan. The same song that had been introduced in the grammar class was now played again in the communicative class, but again there was no task, not even an exercise. With the subsequent addition of three handouts, there was some textual input but no spoken language input or opportunity for student speaking time or practice. At one point in the class, there was a short period when students could turn to the nearest partner and read a dialogue, but still this was not monitored and there was no feedback. The teacher continued to rely on L1 for all interaction and instructions, and even told the class not to use Japanese during their controlled practice of the dialogues - but uttered this admonishment in Japanese only. The class came to a close with the use of a puppet, but it was not certain to the students or observers what had taken place in the class at all. In other words, despite (or because of) the total dependence on L1 within the ostensible aim of a communicative L2 class, the students and observers were perplexed about the purpose of the class being taught. With virtually no spoken language input, and extremely limited opportunities for output, the class was not engaging the students.

3.1.3 T1 English B (Communicative Class) Post-Workshop 1

It was possible to discern adjustments to the class, however slight, after Workshop 1 (Overview of Curriculum). There was certainly an awareness exhibited of the need for the students to have a direction to follow, and the teacher's responsibility in providing direction to the study that goes on in the classroom. On this occasion, however, the set-up of the cassette player was so slow that the preparation to listen took up time that students needed for practice. It seemed that the teacher was unfamiliar with the equipment, and possibly had not used it in class before. Students did a 'grammar rap' where they listened, clapped out the beat, and repeated, but they did not seem enthusiastic about the exercise. There were no opportunities to listen about content relevant to their own lives as teenagers, for example, and none either to communicate their ideas to a partner. The board was used to write out a schedule, but the use of

the board was incoherent, suggesting that the exercise had not been thought through in terms of realistic assumptions and instructions to the class. There was some English used for presentation of the exercise, such as 'Where was Yasuki on Wednesday?', but the students seated in rows were confused about what they were expected to do. One boy engaged in conversation with the teacher at the front of the class, while the rest turned their desks to make pairs for a kind of controlled grammar exercise. Again, it appeared that the class was dominated by a grammatical syllabus.

3.1.4 T1 English B (Communicative Class) Team Teaching with ELT

Especially in the case of T1, there was a marked transition through the four Saturday classes away from a classroom culture of L1 usage towards a culture of L2 usage. Certain impediments to L2 use as perceived by the Japanese teachers were their own confidence in conducting a class entirely in English, and the time taken up with preparing L2 classroom instructions. In fact, there was a need for greater preparation, since a reliance on L1 for classroom instructions had masked a lack of clarity in those instructions: students often did not know what to do, or what the purpose of the class was, even when it was explained to them in Japanese. One way of working around this difficulty was to reassess the relationship between the five weekly grammar classes and the once-a-week communicative class.

Hitherto, the language focus as defined in the grammar classes had determined what was taught in the communicative classes. It was decided after considering the ramifications of Workshop 1 (Overview of Curriculum) to use the last grammar class taught each week prior to the communicative class, to set up the communicative class. In other words, the Saturday class could be more effectively conducted using a variation of CLT (as defined in Workshop 3, CLT Paradigms and Tasks) with the presentation or language focus cleared away in the grammar class. The Saturday classes would benefit from no longer being used for finishing off language points taught during the rest of the week's classes.

A problem faced by T1 was of the students not knowing why they were there, what they were studying and what they had accomplished in each class, so the decision was made to spend much more workshop time on lesson planning than had previously been envisaged. This meant that both the ELTs and Japanese teachers became more deeply involved in the planning and execution of the classes.

A further issue (with commonality for T1 and T2) was that of individual, pair and group work. There was a tendency to ‘give up’ on pair work or group activities in response to students’ use of the mother tongue, but students had become accustomed to L1 use by being routinely exposed to it by their Japanese teachers. There were additional implications for teacher and student roles as the patterns of interaction began to vary in the classroom. T1 was forced into monitoring groups as opposed to just leading the class from the front: with a class of 43 students, it was necessary to check that they understood the task and that they worked through it systematically to its conclusion.

In the third round of classes, the ELT and T1 attempted a Total Physical Response class with the students moving around the class to carry out instructions, later forming pairs to find out information using Wh-question prompts. In fact, T1 was understandably overwhelmed at first by the implications of having to account for actions and organize the class into concrete stages, having adopted a *laissez-faire*, teacher-centred class style in which ‘anything goes’ and student energy was not harnessed towards achievable outcomes. Yet T1 was able to reap the rewards of having desks moved, students put into pairs and then groups of four, bags placed at the back of the class, and books removed from desks. The resultant classroom space was, possibly for the first time, conducive to interaction and meaningful communication. The layout similarly helped to reinforce the idea that the classroom was a unique culture of English and that both instructors were teaming up to keep it in English. This paved the way for the fourth and final round of classes, in which T1 planned the entire class involving elements of task-based learning, and led the class with support from the ELT - entirely in English. What was remarkable was how rapidly T1 and the class accepted the new status quo, and the use of L2 in the class became part of a natural process of learning, and less of an exotic appendage to “real” (grammar-based) study.

3.2 Teacher 2

Teacher 2 had spent quite a lot of time in an English speaking country and was the more confident of the two teachers. Teacher 2 had also attended a number of teacher training workshops and had considerable knowledge about task-oriented teaching.

3.2.1 T2 English A (Grammar Class) Prior to the Workshop Series

T2’s style of teaching exhibited a much greater degree of control, with the teacher high on confidence in his/her ability, and with a firmer sense of direction in the flow of the class. However, there was a corresponding lack of spontaneity in language use, with the learners seemingly

unable to take the initiative for their own role in the language acquisition process. The use of L1 and L2 to speed up grammatical explanations was expected, though the teacher-centred presentation style did not appear to confirm whether the students understood the explanations. The use of the textbook continued with a mixture of Japanese explanations with English phrases occasionally embedded, which rendered the class hard to follow for a native-speaking observer of an “English” class. The textual material itself appeared to be a hindrance, since it encouraged code-switching by continually mixing Japanese instructions with short English phrases. After some drilling of sentence patterns, students were given the chance to practice their dialogues with a partner in their seated rows, though there was no movement around the class. However, the student attitude to simply reading dialogues aloud was, in the circumstances of not being engaged in the subject matter, understandably unenthusiastic: they used no inflection, no stress timing, no catenation, and mouthed words parrot-fashion. There was no correction or modeling, just a focus on the form without an emphasis on a living language as a tool of conveying meanings. There was a further stage of grammar translation, with the English sentences transformed into Japanese, but no attempt at grammar games or activities that might have stimulated production and manipulation or personalization in regard to the language forms.

3.2.2 T2 English B (Communicative Class) Prior to the Workshop Series

Unlike the class observed in February, which had some opportunities for student-student practice, this class was a little rigid and appeared to shackle the ability of the students to produce language of their own making. There were certain parallels with the class conducted by T1, in that the same pop song was introduced, but as before there was no reason for listening, no background information stimulated, and only a language point addressed. It meant that the students were lost at the beginning of the class and did not know what they were supposed to be studying. The next stage of the class worked on useful classroom phrases, such as ‘What does ... mean?’, and ‘How do you spell ...’, but with lots of Japanese translation and in a decontextualized environment. It was not clear in which direction the class was headed, and in many respects it was a carbon copy of the grammar class despite being termed a communicative class. There was then a visual recognition exercise where students guessed the identities of eight people displayed on the board, which was a listening task. Yet it lacked modeling or demonstration with students, was totally teacher-led and -controlled, and gave the students no chance for production. There was then a brief student-to-student opportunity for checking with a partner, but this was in Japanese. The teacher immediately stopped the checking though, in order to issue more L1 instructions. The students were subsequently told to talk about the pictures without using

Japanese, but they did not know what to say, or how to say it. Being primarily an exercise in cognition, they could find the answers without being pushed into using their English language faculties, hence there were minimal L2 benefits to be gained.

3.2.3 T2 English B (Communicative Class) Post-Workshop 1

This class returned to the pop song, with drilling off the lyrics. It was thematically linked to the form practice of ‘What time did you get up?’ and the reply ‘I got up at...’. In common with the communicative class before the first Workshop, there was the use of pictures to assist and stimulate comprehension. The presentation/drilling stage was carried out effectively, albeit tightly controlled. One improvement was the use of an information-gap activity which encouraged students to produce language more freely, though it became rather self-limiting in that the students kept returning to the taught form using ‘I got up’ when in fact they could have used equally good language of their own choosing. There was a slightly raised awareness of the students’ need to interact amongst themselves, but still lots of Japanese teacher talk and no movement around the class.

3.2.4 T2 English B (Communicative Class) Team Teaching with ELT

In general terms, the ELTs took more responsibility in the first round of Saturday classes (which followed Workshop 2 on Methodology), introducing a task that had students moving round the classroom in a lockstep manner and interacting fully in a variety of pairs to find out information about their partners. The class could still be described in broad terms as grammar-driven, however, as T2 in particular had asked for (and seemed at ease with) a class based around discrete language items. It manifested itself in a rather halfway class, with elements of Presentation (led by T1 and rather too long-winded), Practice (that again was rote-learning and could easily have been dealt with in a grammar class), and the finding out task that students were evidently unaccustomed to. Students had to be physically marched into position to speak to their partners, and were ill at ease in conversing in English even though they displayed a remarkable grasp of passive English knowledge.

Interestingly, as the load of introducing new language items in a presentation stage was shifted in part to the preceding grammar class, there were a number of benefits derived. It was noticed in the second round of classes onward that T2 seemed liberated from the constraints of having to present language items in the communicative class (while T1 gained from structured lesson planning and a firm focus on timekeeping and execution). Shifting the grammar points to

the grammar classes and freeing up time for practice meant that the production stage could be utilized to the full, and time was left for realizable tasks instead of practice exercises of limited usefulness. Students were stretched into applying what they had learnt for communicative purposes.

In the second round of team teaching classes (which followed Workshop 5 on Materials Development), there was a much greater variety of exercise types introduced than before. T2 put together a tighter lesson plan and was responsible for leading the class and seeing it through. Though the introduction of language items was still strongly emphasized - with form-focused instruction (FFI) and an emphasis on accuracy shackling opportunities for the students to work on production and fluency – it was evidence of a marked transition from earlier observations. Indeed, by the third round of classes, T2 took on a greater role in a whole class task, which was a “Show and Tell” in pairs culminating in a group conversation.

Outstanding issues concerned the clarity of instructions and the proportion of class time allocated to particular stages, especially the focus on language as opposed to the realisation of a task in which students would use all the linguistic and paralinguistic tools at their disposal. These were addressed in the fourth round, in which T2 conceived of and conducted a sophisticated group activity with the ELT in a supporting role. Instead of learners being talked to throughout the class and occasionally drilled, T2 had relinquished the rigid control that had characterized the class, and students were at the core of the class, exchanging messages in pairs and groups with a much higher degree of L2 usage than had been witnessed before.

4. Conclusion

Detailed in-class and video observation had revealed lessons in which efforts at CLT were controlled and stifled by the demands of a language-focused curriculum and subordinated to the demands of FFI. Accuracy appeared to be the intended outcome, at the cost of fluency. This meant input limited by exercises and drilling, and teacher-centred direction from the front of the class, and a dearth of task-based output activities which might have contributed to learners producing language for purposes of meaningful interaction. Interestingly, there seemed to have been no institutional reason why the communicative classes had to follow the dictates of the grammar class curriculum; and the team teaching sessions took advantage of this anomaly to encourage the Japanese teachers to put a communicative purpose at the heart of their classes. Clearly, students in the school now had the motivation to become more engaged in a process of

learning, with themselves at the core.

Finally, we would like to touch upon the question of whether the junior high school should indeed hire an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) to improve their English classes. An English teacher who is a native speaker of English with no Japanese ability would have no choice but to try and make himself/herself understood by giving short clear instructions and modeling the activity he/she wants the students to do. He/she would have to eliminate all distractions to get the students to listen to him/her or focus on the activity. If a Japanese teacher follows the same procedure and does everything he/she can to conduct the class in English, why then, would there be the necessity to have a native speaker of English as an assistant teacher? One answer may be that the students should be exposed to a native speaker's English. This, however, can be done by using a native speaker's recording or by a video. Another answer may be that a native speaker may impart cultural knowledge. This, however, can also be taught by watching news clips or videos. The insistence by many Japanese teachers that a native speaker of English as an ALT is necessary may stem from the traditional culture of the Japanese school that we mentioned earlier. That is, many teachers think that the English used in the classroom must be perfect (like that of a native speaker), and they also think that their roles as English teachers are mainly in the grammar-centered classes (which is separate from the communication classes). We believe that as long as the Japanese teachers continue to think that English is best taught with the assistance of native speakers, the ownership of the knowledge of English would continue to lie with native speakers, not with the students of English. English is now an international language. The ownership of English should be with all those who can use it freely. It is hoped that with more Japanese teachers confidently using English in the classroom, the students will have more opportunities to use English and will eventually feel that English is theirs to use.

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Notes

- 1 All video-taping in this project was done with the consent of those involved.
- 2 Parents of the students were informed by the JHS about the project and consent was obtained to set up the video camera at the back of the classroom.