Journal of the Ochanomizu University English Society
No. 12 (2022)

Eigo vs. *Eikaiwa*: Competing Ideologies that Shape English Education in Japan

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Synopsis

This paper explores why English education in Japan remains relatively unsuccessful. Billions of yen are annually spent on teaching and learning it in formal and informal contexts, but few people become proficient. I argue that one reason for this is because of two competing but separate ideologies toward English language: *Eigo* [English language] and *Eikaiwa* [English conversation]. The paper first presents a historical overview of language education in Japan from the 1600s to the Meiji Era. During that period, the purpose of learning English was for practical and communicative purposes. From the 1900s, English came to be seen as a school subject used for gatekeeping purposes. *Eigo*, a method of instruction that is generally *about* English carried out in Japanese, became the standard teaching practice. The goal of such instruction was to help students answer obscure questions on entrance exams. For those who wanted to learn practical English (*Eikaiwa*), different instructional methods were necessary and students sought supplementary instruction at private institutions. From the late 1980s onward, most secondary schools have both *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa* (for practical communication) classes. However, *Eigo* classes are accorded higher academic status while *Eikaiwa* classes are to be easy and fun. The paper concludes with a call to merge the ideologies of *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa* in order for English to be taught as the language used and spoken by millions of people throughout the world. *All* language, not just that used for speaking, exists for communicative purposes, and instructional methods should reflect that.

Keywords: *Eigo*, *Eikaiwa*, EFL, entrance exams, EFL instructional materials

First, I would like to say thank you to those who attended my final lecture at Ochanomizu University, either in person or by Zoom. It is hard to believe that it was my final talk after teaching there for 27 years. Those years sped by, and words cannot express how grateful I am to my colleagues and former students for making every single one of those years fulfilling and exciting. It took a long time for me to decide on the topic for my lecture because there were many things that I would have liked to have talked about. Finally, I decided to revisit a theme that has been threaded throughout my own research and one I think is important

to consider if we want to improve English education in Japan.

A tremendous amount of time and money is poured into the teaching and the studying of English here in Japan. In fact, the study of English and its related industries (such as materials development, preparatory schools, language schools, and testing) is a multi-billion-yen business (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2005; 2015). Everyone has had at least six years of formal English instruction, and younger people have even more now after English became a subject in elementary schools. Japanese people's communicative abilities in English have improved dramatically during the four decades I have taught in Japan. I do not think, however, the outcome reflects the amount of money and time spent on studying English. Why aren't Japanese people even *more* proficient at English?

That is the question that I would like to address here. In my opinion, one of the biggest obstacles that needs to be overcome is recognizing and dealing with the two competing ideologies of *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa.* These common terms are familiar for people in Japan: *Eigo* means "English language" and *Eikaiwa* means "English conversation". They seem quite similar, but because of the ideologies attached to them (see Law, 1995), they are not. *Eigo* not only means English language, but it is also the name assigned to classes in formal educational contexts. What is taught and learned in *Eigo* classes plays an important role in the student selection process in secondary and tertiary institutions since *Eigo* is one of the entrance examination subjects. Because students, teachers, and parents know that the secondary and tertiary institutions that young people can enter will have a profound outcome on their lives, including their career paths, their lifetime income, and even their marital status (e.g. Nagatomo, 2012; Okano, 2000), *Eigo* as a subject is prioritized. These exam-oriented classes are almost always taught by Japanese licensed teachers who explain the nitty-gritty grammatical details *about* English *in* Japanese, and they include, among other things, lessons on how to translate complicated English passages into Japanese and how to answer tricky examination questions. *Eikaiwa,* on the other hand, has traditionally taken place outside of formal educational institutions, and the ideal *Eikaiwa* teacher is generally considered to be a native speaker of English. It has long been understood that if a Japanese person wanted to learn "real" English, they needed to seek private instruction outside of the *Eigo* context.

In order to see how these two ideologies compete with each other, it might be useful for me to briefly examine how the language education system developed in Japan. I have discussed this quite thoroughly elsewhere (Nagatomo, 2016), but what follows is a brief summary. *Eigo*, as an instructional method, is rooted in the tradition of *yakudoku*, which was devised to import Chinese culture and religion into Japan, and it was commonly used in Japanese schools (Hino, 1988) until several decades ago. Through this method, a foreign language is first translated into Japanese word by word, and then the resulting translation is reordered to match Japanese word order. *Yakudoku* was criticized by Confucianist Sorai Ogyu (1666-1728) five hundred years ago when he wrote, "The traditional method of reading Chinese is a misleading one, which should be avoided. You cannot truly understand Chinese in this way. Chinese should be read as Chinese" (cited by Kawasumi, 1975 in Hino, 1988). However, when the Europeans first came to Japan in 1543, languages came to be taught in a more natural manner. A college was established by the Portuguese priests (who had managed to convert 300,000 Japanese to Christianity) where, according to Minakawa (1955):

> The [Japanese] students made progress of studies more rapidly than the foreign teachers had expected. Even in the study of European languages which greatly differed in grammatical structure from their mother tongue, they were proficient enough to read and write in the course of several months. They studied Latin, the language which was regarded a difficult one by Europeans themselves (p. 26).

Four of these students were sent to Europe to meet the Pope and returned to Japan eight years later as celebrities, bringing with them a craze for Christian items and Western clothing. Seen as a threat to Japanese tradition and culture, Christianity was banned and most foreigners were expelled from Japan.

Ties with the outside world after 1639 were maintained only with the Dutch and the Chinese, and information was allowed to filter in and out of Japan solely through Nagasaki. A profession of Dutch interpreters was established, which was hereditary and handed down from father to son. The importance of English became recognized after the British warship HMS *Phaeton* sailed into Nagasaki Harbor in 1808 looking for food and water. Communication broke down, the British sailors rioted, and the Nagasaki governor committed suicide by way of taking responsibility for the situation. To prevent a reoccurrence, the Nagasaki interpreters were then ordered to study English. They sought the assistance of Jan Cook Blomhoff of the Dutch factory, who taught them from a Dutch translation of an English grammar book written in the 1700s. Together with the Nagasaki translators, two English textbooks were written that were used for the next 70 years: *Angeria kokugowage* [English Lessons for Beginners] and *Angeria gorintaisei* [English Vocabulary]. *Katakana,* the method for reading foreign words, was developed at this time, but due to Blomhoff's poor English ability, the pronunciations assigned to the words were generally wrong (Omura, 1978).

The first native English-speaking teacher in Japan was probably Ranald MacDonald, a 24-year-old Scots-Irish Indian from the North American Territory of the Hudson Bay Company who purposely shipwrecked himself off the cost of Japan in 1848. Like all foreign people who landed in Japan during that period, he was taken prisoner and sent to Nagasaki. There, he spent ten months teaching English to the interpreters where a typical lesson was as follows:

> Their [the students] habit was to read English to me: one at a time. My duty was to correct their pronunciation, and as best I could in Japanese explain meaning, construction etc…. [The students were] all very quick and receptive. They improved in English wonderfully for their heart was… in the work, and their receptiveness…was, to me, extraordinary; in some of them phenomenal (In Schodt, 2003, pp. 283-284)

After that, the Nagasaki interpreters published a dictionary (*Egeresu-Jisho-Wakai*) [Japanese Translation of a Dutch-English Dictionary], and when Commodore Perry arrived in Japan in 1853, one of MacDonald's star pupils, Moriyama Einosuke, had sufficient English skills to act as an interpreter.

The amount of Western knowledge that needed to be disseminated to Japan had become beyond the capabilities of the Nagasaki interpreters, so language schools (attended mainly by ambitious low-ranking samurai who hoped to improve their status) opened up throughout Japan. These *shijuku* first concentrated on *rangaku* (Dutch), but English quickly gained importance, and by 1850, there were 10,000 schools (Pomatti, 2007) training students in translation skills.

Between 1872 and 1885, more than 500 foreigners were employed by the Japanese government

in various fields, and Japanese people wanting to be a part of the new society needed to have proficiency in the languages of these specialists in order to learn from them. Elite Japanese were obtaining practical language instruction from foreigners, namely missionaries, who helped prepare their students for academic instruction in higher education institutions. One of these missionaries, Guido Fridolen Verbeck, helped establish the University of Tokyo. Another, James Curtis Hepburn, helped found Meiji Gakuin University. Nitobe Inazo (whose portrait is on the 5000-yen note) wrote that all his classes had been taught in English and he and his friends communicated with each other in English. In fact, educated Japanese were becoming more proficient in foreign languages than in Japanese, and the Minister of Education, Mori Arinori went so far as to suggest that English should become the official language in Japan (Okubo, 1972, cited in Ota, 1994).

That, of course, did not happen. Toward the latter part of the Meiji Era, the government began to replace the expensive foreign experts[1] with the much cheaper and newly-qualified Japanese who were returning from overseas or who were graduating from Japanese universities. In 1883, Japanese became the official language at the University of Tokyo and classes came to be taught in Japanese. As a result, oral proficiency in foreign languages was no longer required, although reading comprehension was necessary because textbooks were published in foreign languages until 1911. After that, classes in preparatory schools came to be taught by Japanese teachers and proficiency in reading and writing was not prioritized as before. For example, Japan's most prestigious school, the Number One Higher School, had their students' study "about" English for nine hours a week, whereas before that, students took numerous academic subjects that were taught *in* English (Ota, 1994).

Eigo, as a school subject, gained a different kind of importance in the early 1900s when it came to be tested for entering higher education. For every university spot, there were twenty applicants (Ike, 1995; Ota, 1994), and dense and incomprehensible passages from obscure books were selected for test materials (Kinmouth, 1981, cited in Pomatti, 2007). The purpose of such tests was to eliminate applicants rather than to test actual ability. At the same time, there was some debate as to whether or not English should be retained as an academic subject, but the argument was put forth that English was an important tool from which to view the world and for scholars to understand themselves as Japanese (Ishikawa Rinshiro, cited in Ota, 1994). This philosophy, which resulted in a focus on the translation of literary works, remained for decades and was part of the discourse in the *Eigo Dai Ronso* [A Great Debate on the Teaching of English in Japan] in the 1970s where a university professor and a member of the House of Councilors conducted a public discussion in newspapers concerning whether or not English should be abolished from the curriculum (Koike et. al., 1978). Still, such attitudes persist even in the 2020s: teachers, students, and even the general public seem to think that one purpose of English is to help them understand themselves better as Japanese.

During the period of nationalism before and during World War II, the language of the enemy lost its importance. Many university English departments closed. English classes for boys, while greatly reduced, were taught strictly for entrance examination purposes, and English classes for girls were eliminated entirely (Ike, 1994; Imura, 1978). After World War II, education underwent a tremendous transformation.

[1] Foreigners' salaries, for example, at the University of Tokyo ate up one third of the entire budget (Ogata 1961, cited in Hara, 1977).

One big change was that English became a required subject for at least three years of compulsory education through junior high school, and it was an important subject in high school for those aiming to attend university. This increase in English classes created an immediate demand for English teachers, even though few people had studied English during the pre-war years. Torii (1978) said that some of these 85,000 teachers were expatriates from abroad who did have some first-hand knowledge of the language but many lacked proficiency and pedagogical knowledge. Because the majority of English teachers had little or no knowledge of English, there was a strong reliance on the *yakudoku* version of the grammar translation method. This rule-based method could be taught in a step-by-step manner and students could be evaluated in terms of "right" and "wrong" answers. These *Eigo* classes were firmly in the hands of the Japanese teachers, and this teaching style was reinforced through the types of questions on university entrance exams constructed by Japanese professors.

At the same time, *Eikaiwa* was gaining popularity due to radio (and later television) programs that were listened to and watched by hundreds of thousands of people. *Eikaiwa* differed from the dry rule-based focus of *Eigo*; it offered people a glimpse into an exotic (and unattainable for most people) Western world (Sugiyama, 2010). *Eikaiwa* clubs sprung up all over the country, creating imagined communities (Appadurai, 1996) of like-minded English aficionados. Those with financial resources and who were located in major urban areas could attend *Eikaiwa* lessons taught by an actual foreigner. As mentioned earlier, it was (and still is) commonly believed that if one wants to master English, one must seek instruction outside of formal education because *Eigo* study alone would not suffice. By the 1980s and 1990s, with Japan's growing economy, *Eikaiwa* schools sprang up all over Japan. The cost of enrolling in one was no longer beyond the means of most people, and anyone who wanted to join could. Advertising campaigns targeted those not only wanting to improve their language skills but also to capitalize on the notion that English could open up romantic doors (e.g. Bailey 2006, 2007; Takahashi, 2013) and provide an interesting and fulfilling hobby (Kubota 2011). I clearly remember how one Tokyo-based conversation school chain in the 1980s advertised heavily on the Tokyo subways, presenting young female models as teachers, giving the impression that attending a language school was something akin to visiting a hostess bar.

In the late 1980s, the Japan Teaching Exchange (JET) program was introduced and native-English speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) were dispatched to schools throughout Japan. This meant that for the first time, children (and in many cases, their teachers) could meet an English-speaking person regardless of their locale. While the program did not get off to a smooth start (see McConnell, 2000, for a thorough analysis of the JET program's early years), I believe that students enter university nowadays with a much higher level of English proficiency than they did when I first began teaching in Japan in the 1980s. This, I strongly feel, is in no small part due to the JET program. However, I also believe that this program solidified the division between the ideologies of *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa*.

First, an important fact to remember is that the JET program was proposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a means to reduce the $50 billion trade deficit and not by what was then called the Ministry of Education (MoE) (McConnell, 2000). In fact, the MoE resisted the bringing of foreigners into the classroom due to pressure from labor unions who were concerned that Japanese English teachers could lose their jobs if English classes were to be taught by native-speakers (McConnell, 2000; Hashimoto, 2013).

The program gained acceptance after assurance was given that the foreigners were to be *assistants* working under the Japanese teachers and not qualified teachers. In fact, the job title in English is "assistant language teacher", but when the Japanese title (*gaikokugo shido joshu*) is literally translated back into English, it becomes "foreign language teaching assistant". This, Hashimoto (2013) argues, solidifies the image that an ALT is not a *real* teacher but someone who helps the Japanese teacher. The JET program aimed to attract new college graduates (with degrees in any subject) who flew to Japan first class on Japan Airlines, who earned Japanese yen (hopefully to be spent in Japan), and who returned home at the end of their contract to promote Japan in a positive light.

As mentioned earlier, the first years of the JET program were full of turmoil. In addition to cultural differences and issues surrounding power/sexual harassment, the Japanese teachers often did not know how to employ the ALTs in the classroom other than having them act as human tape recorders reading aloud from the textbook. Despite its early problems, the JET program became one of the largest exchange programs in the world, and its impact on the following generations of students and teachers cannot be underestimated.

Nowadays, individual school boards can choose to employ JET participants, or they can take a more economical route and hire ALTs directly or through dispatch companies. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (which replaced the MoE) also revised the English Course of Study several times, placing emphasis on developing students' communicative skills. The number of communication-based courses in secondary schools increased, and in recent years, English has become an official course in elementary schools. I place communication-based classes under the *Eikaiwa* umbrella even though there are significant differences between classes taught in formal and informal institutions. These classes are often given a lower status than *Eigo* classes. This is generally because students, teachers, and parents believe developing communicative abilities in English are of far less immediate importance in gaining admission to university acquiring knowledge about English.

In our longitudinal study (Allen and Nagatomo, 2019; Nagatomo and Allen, 2019) that investigated academically-minded students' experiences with and beliefs toward taking the TEAP (Test of English Academic Proficiency) test, we found that students were fully aware of the two distinct methods of language instruction they were experiencing: a practical side that would give them proficiency to use English in their future studies and careers and an impractical side that would enable them to get their foot in the university of their choice. Interviews with students after they had finished their university entrance exams showed that they felt in-house entrance exams conducted by individual universities were not testing their *abilities to use English*, but instead testing their *knowledge of grammar*. The participants in the study felt confident answering examination questions that required them to demonstrate an understanding of a reading, but they were less confident when being asked to demonstrate knowledge about English. In fact, one of the participants, who had received 100% in three components of the TEAP test (speaking, listening, and reading) and 84% in writing, was unsuccessful at gaining entrance to any of the medical universities she had applied to and was planning to spend her next year studying academic vocabulary from the beginning using books focusing exclusively on entrance exams.[2]

[2] It is important to note that this student may not have passed the entrance exams because of her scores on the other subjects that were tested. Nonetheless, she felt she needed to start over with her English in a way that was more in alignment with *Eigo* practices.

Here is another example illustrating how the ideologies of *Eikaiwa* and *Eigo* seem to work against each other. In my study of foreign female English teachers in Japan (Nagatomo, 2016), a participant named Victoria was the only ALT in the tiny rural community she had settled in several decades earlier. She teaches private lessons, in kindergartens and daycare centers, and is the ALT at the elementary school and junior high school. Many of her students go on to compete in prefectural speech contests, surprising the judges with their polished British accents. It isn't a stretch to say that over the past twenty years, she has taught English to nearly everyone in that community.

After English became an official school subject in elementary schools, she needed to dramatically change her teaching methods. The Japanese teacher had become legally in charge of overseeing the English classes and was responsible for ensuring the official MEXT textbook was followed. Victoria complained because she suddenly had to teach the children under the assumption that they had had no prior knowledge of English. She felt "the new curriculum moved at a 'snail's pace'" (Nagatomo, 2016, p. 152) and taught far fewer language patterns and vocabulary words. The elementary school teachers were generally willing to let Victoria take charge as long as she covered the curriculum, so at the beginning of each school year, she sped through the textbook, reviewing things the children had previously learned. Then she started what she felt to be the real teaching.

However, when the children graduated from elementary school, they moved next door to the village's junior high school. At that point, they started once again from zero with a Japanese teacher in charge of their *Eigo* learning and with Victoria acting as the assistant. Public school teachers are transferred regularly between schools, and many of the new arrivals, often outsiders to the community, had preconceived notions that ALTs were cultural outsiders, non-speakers of Japanese, and not entirely qualified to teach English to Japanese students. None of that applied to Victoria. She said that new teachers' arrivals brought stress because it was not always easy to establish a productive working relationship with them. Some teachers were keen to work together with her during classes, but others were content to sit in the back of the room and watch. Occasionally, however, some teachers, particularly those at the junior high school, treated Victoria as a human tape recorder and tried to "put her in her place" (p. 153). The elementary school teachers were almost always quite willing to turn their classes over to Victoria; for them, teaching English is just an added burden. But junior high teachers are trained *English* teachers, and their professional identities are understandably tied to their area of expertise. One of the important roles these teachers have is to enable their students to reach the next rung in the academic ladder: high school. To do that, they teach *Eigo.* In sum, the educational experiences of these students in this rural village can be likened to a tennis ball bouncing back and forth between the *Eigo* and the *Eikaiwa* court.

To prepare for my final lecture at Ochanomizu University, I asked friends and acquaintances in various social media groups about their opinions of the required English textbooks and lessons in elementary school. I hadn't heard good things about them, and I was curious to know the opinions of foreign teachers and foreign parents. As a result, my mailbox flooded with complaints and screenshots of lessons, textbooks, and even teachers' manuals. One sent a screenshot of a lesson focusing on numbers, along with the confusing stated goal of the lesson written in English in the teacher's manual, which was "to notice there are various difference [sic] in the countries through the counting numbers, and to be familiarized with how to count 1 to

20 and how to ask the number, to ask and reply about the number, to ask and reply about the number while devising to convey [sic].” One number-teaching activity that is hard to connect to any real-world usage of English involved counting the strokes of various Chinese characters. Then children were asked to select which Chinese character was their favorite.

One mother complained that her son had been bored to tears during the weeks the English lessons focused on numbers. This is not to say that numbers are not important for children to learn, but elementary school children are already familiar with the concepts of numbers in their own language. They do not need to be drilled on this over and over; numbers can be naturally incorporated into just about any language activity. But the elementary school curriculum developers seem to think that language learning is a linear process and learners must fully master one point before moving up the difficulty ladder. No wonder, Victoria, who was mentioned above, was keen to speed through the textbook in order to actually teach English.

In a different example, a mother of a junior high school student sent a screenshot of her child’s correct answer on a *listening* test. That teacher had taken points off because the child had failed to form the “r” in one of the answers in the way the teacher wanted, despite there being a variety in writing styles in English. If this had been a penmanship test, the lost point would have been understandable, but it was a *listening* test. This teacher’s judgement reinforces a misconceived notion that there is one *correct* way of “doing” English, which seems to be the heart of *Eigo* teaching. As the years of English study increase, minute grammar points are zeroed in on. Let’s take a look at this example sentence another person sent me from a supplementary grammar book for secondary school students: “My mother eats one-third as much as my brother.” At first glance, I thought it was simply strange. No native-speaker would ever utter such a sentence, and likewise, I doubt if any reputable publisher would even print it. I had to think about this sentence though, to figure out why it is not only weird, but instinctively *wrong*. A little research told me that the term “as much as” is generally used to refer to *more* of something, not less. For example, you could say something like “My brother eats twice as much as our mother” or “She sleeps three times as much as me.” But the example in that textbook is referring to a food consumption amount of a lesser quantity. Therefore, the sentence should be “My mother eats one-third of what my brother eats.” In reality, it wouldn’t really matter all that much if someone wrote the original sentence because the meaning would be clear, even if somewhat odd.

Native speakers could write sentences that are equally awkward. Yet, I shudder to think of how much time and energy is spent on teaching this sort of grammatical point to high school students when some first-year university students seem to struggle with the basics, such as be-verb tenses and pronoun agreement. Developing an understanding of obscure grammatical points may be important for advanced learners, particularly those who go on to study linguistics or those who strive to become professional translators. However, Japanese high school students need to focus on practical language that will enable them to read, write, speak, and understand the type of English used by English speakers all over the world. Focusing on the sort of language mentioned above will not lead to that aim.

So where does that bring us? In my talk (and in this paper), I’ve taken you on a brief tour of language education in Japan from a historical perspective to consider how *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa* shaped the way that Japanese people have approached language learning and language education. My purpose in

doing so is to consider ways that language education could be approached in the future. Issues that hinder language learning are constantly being discussed by teachers, scholars, and even the general public, and they include the impact of entrance exams, the training of secondary school teachers, and an over-attention to picky linguistic details. But this is nothing new; these were also problems that were identified by Japanese language educators forty years ago (see Koike et al., 1978) and they are the subject of hundreds of research papers these days.

So, why haven't there been any significant changes?

Problems are easy to identify, but it is not so easy to find solutions—especially when these problems are deep and related to many different things. Nonetheless, there are three areas that I think need to be addressed in order to improve English language skills in Japan. First, the ideologies *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa* need to be merged. In other words, people need to think of language learning as *language learning*—and not as two separate entities that operate in a parallel manner. To learn a language, one must be able to communicate in it fully. The common discourse that Japanese are good at reading and writing (due to the intense focus on *Eigo* in school) but poor at speaking and listening has been an enduring myth. Imamura (1978, p. 19), a professor and director of the English Language Center in Michigan in the 1970s said, "My conviction is that the Japanese can read and write English no better than they can understand and speak it" (p. 19). I feel that this is partly still the case. Many *jukensei* [entrance examinees] cram every possible grammar point and memorize long lists of vocabulary words, only to forget them once the test is over.

I do admit that during my 40-year career as an English teacher in Japan, I have witnessed a huge improvement in all four areas of language skills in my own students at Ochanomizu University. However, these students, who are generally quite proficient, do not represent the norm; many of my colleagues in other universities complain that incoming freshmen are sorely lacking in even the most basic language skills. I believe that if students study English as a language used by millions of people throughout the world, their skills upon completion of secondary school would be much higher. For example, I support teaching elementary school children English, but it seems to me that time is wasted in trying to instill a love of English in children simply by enabling them to "touch" and "enjoy" English. Such an attitude, in my opinion, it is treating English like an exotic pet.

In *my* ideal English education world, students would learn English as a subject in elementary school—which would include a focus on all four skills, and the lessons would continue on through junior high school. The language would be communicative, but the children would also learn how express themselves in written English and understand level-appropriate and age-appropriate reading materials. What would make this even better would be to have specialist English teachers employed by the schools who would handle these classes rather than asking the classroom teacher to teach a complicated subject they may be unqualified for. And to ensure that English doesn't turn into a test subject for those entering private junior high schools, I would suggest the government prohibits schools from testing it. If students have five years under their belts before being tested on it to enter senior high school, teachers, parents, and learners might come to treat English as a real language. All of the basic grammar—the tools for doing things with English—would have been taught by the time students enter high school. Most students should be able to "get by" with just these skills. Then, high schools could help students develop higher-level English

skills, namely through extensive reading and academic projects. Such a curriculum already exists in various private schools and some public high schools with international programs, so it really isn't a radically new approach. Then ideally, exams at the tertiary level should be turned over to experts who understand issues surrounding language tests, such as reliability and validity.

Constructing valid language proficiency exams is a difficult and time-consuming process, and there are researchers who specialize in this area. However, most universities develop their own in-house exams, and the people making these tests are often English professors specializing in areas such as literature, linguistics, or culture. Such exams are generally modeled on previous exams, and prospective students use those exams to study from. Unfortunately, much of what is tested is not representative of what one is required to do with English in college or in the real world. One of our participants reported that her reason for attending cram school was due to worries about her lack of knowledge about English grammar. She said she didn't "know the difference between adjectives and adverbs" but loved reading and could "read English books as [she reads] Japanese books" (Nagatomo and Allen, 2019, p. 4). Wouldn't it be better for a student like this to strive to read and understand more complex materials than to zoom in on obscure points, such as the "My mother eats one third as much as my brother" example given above?

Second, beliefs toward learning and teaching English need to be examined. According to a survey conducted by the Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan (2021), 46.6% of the 597 private universities surveyed fell below the admission capacity rate (Nippon.com, 2021). If universities accept all applicants in order to fill available slots, holding entrance examinations as a means of separating suitable and unsuitable candidates means little. Wouldn't it be better if secondary schools were turning out students who had working knowledge of English that could enrich their lives? English is spoken by millions of people in the world, ranging from taxi drivers to hotel clerks to scientists in research labs. But it is a disservice to Japanese society if English is treated merely as an entrance examination subject. One doesn't need *juken Eigo* [entrance examination English] to become a proficient user of English in the capacity that most people want. What is necessary is sufficient practice in and exposure to English—not only spoken language but also with reading and writing. Most people will not need to write academic papers or business reports in English, but many might need the ability to write an email, a personal letter, or a response on social media. Not everyone will read 19th century English novels or scientific journal articles. But most people will benefit from being able to understand simpler texts found in websites and materials of particular interest to individuals. Not everyone will debate complex issues or participate in tricky corporate negotiations in English, but most people would want to be able to hold a general conversation if the need arises. The current situation benefits students attending elite universities. They will be able to merge what they've learned from both *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa and* put their language knowledge to good use at university and in their future careers. These students excel at English despite the drawbacks of having two separate ideologies directing their studies. But this is not true for thousands of other students who fall through the cracks and who have given up on English entirely.

The third point is all those involved in shaping English language education in Japan need to know what is going on in schools, in curriculum and materials development, and in testing. Teaching directives presented by authorities who design the official course of study mean little if the beliefs held by the teachers

who are teaching those courses run counter to those directives. One example of this is the recent requirement for English classes to be conducted *in* English. This makes sense if the teachers are having students "do" things in English. But if the focus is talking *about* English, it makes little difference if the class is conducted in English or in Japanese. Students are not being given the opportunity to use language in a way that would enable them to produce it or understand it outside of class. Additionally, secondary textbooks that are approved by MEXT need to be reconsidered. It only takes a perfunctory glance to see that there are huge differences between those materials and what appears on entrance exams. I don't mean to suggest that the entrance exam materials should be simplified. Secondary school students need *more* exposure to various reading materials and they need to be able to deal with texts they have not seen before. Intensive reading of a text to understand the details of that particular text has merit, but without additional extensive reading practice, students may be unable to transfer their knowledge outside of the textbook. Imura (1978), who I mentioned earlier, said more than four decades ago that entrance exams are a scapegoat and that if students were being taught properly in the first place, they would automatically do well on them. To a certain extent, I agree with him. If students learn to read for global understanding, they will be able to handle unknown words and unknown phrases. If they learn that grammar is a tool that gives them communicative ability and not something that they should be enslaved to, they will be able to develop confidence in developing their skills.

To conclude my talk (and this paper), I would like to say that it is important to remember that *all* language exists for communicative purposes. Writers write things because they have something they want to communicate. It doesn't matter if a writer died hundreds of years ago―the words still can speak to us. When we write something down, it is because we have something we want to communicate. English needs to be taught as more than words and phrases on paper that need to be turned back into Japanese. If we can get people to see that language is for communicative purposes—and not just when it comes to speaking—I think we can begin to merge the ideologies of *Eigo* and *Eikaiwa.* I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds for language learners and teachers in Japan. I am truly grateful for being a witness to such linguistic change in the past forty years and I am optimistic that more positive changes will come.

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