

# Minding the Gap between Japanese University Students' Expected and Actual English Use

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## Abstract

Upon starting their English studies at university, Japanese students often have limited experience of English classes taught in English and unrealistic expectations of how they will perform. In order to support this, two surveys were conducted: one administered to 210 first-year elementary and pre-intermediate students within their first week of study at an international university in Japan, and one administered to their instructors two months afterwards. The first survey inquired about the amount of English-medium instruction received in high school and their expectations about an English class with a native English-speaking instructor. Findings showed that students received most of their high school English instruction in Japanese. Nonetheless, most students believed that they would be able use to English only in class with little or no Japanese support. The second survey, administered to five native English speaking teachers (NEST) of the students from the first survey revealed that the students used English much less than they had expected and relied on Japanese translation much more often than they had expected. It was found that students had a tendency to overestimate their ability to cope with an English Only class environment. The implications of these findings are discussed in regards to creating language use guidelines that more realistically reflect the language abilities of students.

**Keywords:** Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program) Japanese Teacher of English (JTE) Native English Speaking Teacher (NEST)

## 1. Introduction

English is often referred to as a subject of major importance to Japanese secondary school students and, since April 2011, has been taught in Elementary schools across Japan (MEXT, 2008). Indeed, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology – Japan (MEXT)'s new course of study states that the goal of their curriculum is to produce students with solid communicative competence in English fostered by courses taught with English as the main medium of instruction. This misleads university administrators and teachers into having high expectations about the level of exposure students have had to English. They assume that students will be easily able to adapt to classes taught only in English by Native English Speaking Teachers (NEST) who may not be able to provide explanations in Japanese. However, the extent to which students will be able to adapt to such classes, depends largely on the exposure to the language they have had in high school.

Secondary Japanese teachers of English (JTE) play an important role in this respect, due to the amount of time they spend with their students. As a result, it is very important to know how

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much of this time is spent speaking English and the extent to which their English is comprehensible to students. Moreover, the methods that JTEs employ in teaching English have a great impact on the development of their students' English proficiency. Though it can be argued that grammar translation is useful for boosting vocabulary and reading comprehension, emphasis on listening and speaking practice is also needed to establish the communicative competence necessary to cope with classes conducted in the target language. According to MEXT, "language activities should be conducted in such a way as grammar is effectively utilized for communication, based on the idea that grammar underpins communication" (MEXT, 2008, p. 6).

Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) also have an important role in exposing Japanese children to native speaker English. They are native speakers of English who enter the classroom on certain days to assist the JTE with various aspects of the English lessons, particularly to give a model of native English. However, the time that they spend in the classroom is significantly less than the Japanese teacher. For this reason, the surveys of this paper aimed to elicit information on the frequency of the ALT's visits and the extent to which the English that they spoke was comprehensible to the students in order to ascertain exactly how much exposure to native English students received from the visits.

Along with the exposure to English students have received in their earlier education, another important consideration towards understanding student expectations about their university English classes is their own attitudes toward the language. The extent to which students believe that English is important is a very important question.

After completing their elementary and secondary English education, students have a number of expectations about what their university English classes will be like and how well they will be able to perform in them. This paper will report on the student participants' predictions of the amount of English they thought that they would use in class and the amount of instruction in Japanese that they expected to receive.

## **2. Literature Review**

Despite MEXT's call for English-medium instruction in English classes, there is a question of whether Japanese English teachers are truly up for the task. According to Nakata (2011) when Japanese university students apply to be secondary school teachers of English, even students with relatively low English language proficiency levels are accepted. To illustrate, although MEXT currently requires the second highest attainment of the main English test in Japan, called *Eiken*, only thirty percent of JTEs have met or surpassed this standard (Kano et al., 2015). Moreover, the training that JTEs receive contains only a brief introduction to concepts such as 'active learning' and communicative language teaching (CLT), covered in a short span of time, while the teacher's actual long term exposure to English education during their secondary school career has been to traditional grammar translation methods. Moreover, as Takahashi (2010) observes, the teacher training courses at Japanese universities for pre-service English language teachers use Japanese as the main medium of instruction. This is likely to reinforce a feeling that using English as a medium of instruction is

an unrealistic goal for JTEs. These realities signal significant difficulties for teachers to meet the lofty goals established by MEXT.

A common method to offset the JTE's lack of communicative competence is to bring Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) into the classroom. The most common source of these teachers is the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program, which is an initiative supported by the Japanese government which brings recently graduated students from English speaking countries to work in elementary and secondary schools across Japan (CLAIR, 2018). There are also private companies which hire native speaker teachers to work in school districts. These teachers are assigned to one or more schools within a school district and typically join one lesson a week for each of the classes in each of the grade levels. The main job of ALTs is to assist JTEs with various tasks in the classroom, though they are not supposed to teach classes themselves. They are meant to act as models of proper English use and to give students a chance to interact with a native English speaker. The presence of ALTs has the advantage of giving students exposure to native speaker English, but also has a number of disadvantages. One obvious disadvantage is that the ALT recruits are largely young, inexperienced, and for the most part uneducated in TESOL. The fact that such candidates are recruited implies a fallacious belief that the "mere presence of a native speaker will make for more effective language teaching" (Hagerman, 2009, p. 53). In addition, it has been observed that this native speaker presence has the potential to have a negative effect on the teacher, as they have been observed to be very reserved in the amount of interaction they have with the ALT in front of their students, possibly for the reason that they may make a mistake and lose face (Kachi & Choon-hwa, 2001). Considering this insecurity, there is a distinct possibility that the Japanese English teacher could use the ALT's inexperience as a justification to dominate the lesson and give them a minimal role, such as modelling conversations or keeping students on task (Carless, 2006). It has also been noted that the ALT's time in the classroom is quite limited, which also means that the impact they have in exposing students to spoken English by a native speaker is also limited (Luxton, Fennelly, & Fukuda, 2014).

Moreover, it has been observed that the main purpose of programs like the JET program has been more to promote cultural understanding than to increase language proficiency. The JET program in particular was conceived in the late 1980's, a time when there was considerable friction in US-Japanese relations. At the time, there was very little known in the US about Japan except that they were a formidable economic adversary and there was interest on both sides in cultural exchange (Hagerman, 2009; Miyazato, 2009). Thus, the program was designed just as much for the purpose of teaching the young ALTs about Japan as it was for giving young Japanese exposure to a native speaker's spoken English. As Galloway (2009) points out, the fact that the majority of JET program participants are American has the effect of reinforcing stereotypes of the "typical English speaker" that distract learners from the instrumental function of English as an International language. Instead, it reinforces the stereotype that English is the property of native speaker countries like the US. This is counterproductive to the aims of promoting English as a world language and can also be seen as reinforcing a form of 'language imperialism' due to the fact that it is impossible to completely separate culture from language.

It should be noted, however, that despite the negative picture that these accounts paint of the ALT program, they reflect worst case scenarios. Other studies have reported positive impressions of the program from both teachers and ALTs who felt that the team teaching aspect of the program helped them grow as language users and teachers (Galloway, 2009; Luxton, Fennelly, & Fukuda, 2014). Nonetheless, the “team teaching” aspect of this program ensures that native speaker exposure is always controlled by the JTE. Even students who are lucky enough to have regular visits from an ALT have not really experienced a class that has been run exclusively by a native speaker of English with no recourse to support in Japanese from the teacher, as it is strictly stated in the JET handbook that ALTs are not meant to be the main teacher (CLAIR, 2008). Indeed, it is technically illegal in Japan for ALTs to be the main teacher as they do not hold a Japanese teaching certificate.

Indeed, JTE attitudes towards student comprehension can have an effect on the amount that students are challenged to understand and use English, even in classes where the ALT is present. In a qualitative study of two second year classes at a Japanese high school, Hiratsuka (2013) found that JTEs often felt the need to ensure that students always understood the lessons and therefore would translate the ALT's instructions into Japanese instead of challenging the students to try to understand them in English. It can be inferred from this behavior that the JTEs believed that use of English as the main mode of instruction was impossible. Interestingly, students interviewed in the focus groups of the study claimed that they wanted more opportunities to be challenged to understand native English instead of always having instructions translated for them. In a study of elementary school students, Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2013) also observed that students rated JTE and ALT team teaching lessons higher when the JTE made an effort to take part in the lessons using English. Indeed, this study came to the compelling conclusion that JTE's were actually more important as models of English use than ALTs because they were culturally and socially closer to the students. For this reason, it is important to consider, not just the amount of exposure students have had to native English, but also to English spoken by their JTE. When considering the strength of the JTE's influence on students' English use, it is also reasonable to deduce that they have a strong influence on the students' confidence in understanding English. Thus, constant translation is likely to give students a strong impression that classes in which English is the main medium of instruction are impossible.

There is also the problem of secondary school teachers being too busy to properly plan team teaching lessons with their ALT counterparts. In a survey of 1,545 ALTs, Kano et al. (2016) found that 47% of ALTs felt that they were not allowed to participate in lesson planning and 71% felt that their advantages as ALTs were not being utilized. A number of the respondents commented that they believed a major reason for this was how busy the JTE's were. They had so many duties in addition to their English classes, they often simply did not have time to collaborate with the ALT. Ogawa (2011), in a comparative study of ALTs' and JTEs' perceptions of team teaching, found that ALTs did not feel that they were communicating with or getting feedback from their JTEs, though the JTEs believed that they were doing both sufficiently. Thus, it can be seen that, in addition to the priority placed on test preparation, the large workload of JTEs makes it difficult for them to prioritize the development of their students' communicative competence in English.

Much of this conflict comes from the pressure for JTEs to prepare students for entrance examinations. Despite MEXT's ambitious plans "to enable students to understand the speaker's intentions when listening to English" and "talk about their own thoughts using English" to "express themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition" (MEXT, 2008, pp. 2-3) there are a number of curricular obstacles to achieving this goal. Indeed, it has often been observed that English instruction in Japan centers around preparing students to pass entrance exams (Gorsuch, 2000; Inomori, 2012; Shibata, 2008). Hiratsuka (2013) observed that students perceived the communication classes with the JTE and ALT as a fun break from the more serious exam preparation classes run by the JTE, which they viewed as more important for their actual success on the exams. Inomori (2012) asserts that English language instruction at Japanese public schools cannot become more communication based without some modification to the entrance examinations because covering all the content required to pass entrance examinations is their main task. As Cook (2010) states, the primary focus of their English language instruction cannot be fluency of English language or CLT without successfully completing grammatical aspects of English, of which a passive understanding is key to success on entrance examinations. As a result, despite the best intentions of MEXT, the JET program, and the teachers themselves, more teacher-centered and Japanese medium instruction is adopted as the most efficient way to prepare students for this immediate goal.

When students do start university classes, they find that they have been so dependent on their teachers' guidance that they lack the independent study skills to cope with the structure of the classes. In a qualitative study of five first year Japanese university students, Shibata (2008) found that they lacked confidence in communicating in English because their previous classes consisted largely of grammar explanations in Japanese. Classes with a native speaker teacher were extremely difficult for them because they, in addition to being completely dependent on the teacher and the course textbook, struggled to understand his instructions. They also did not have an idea of how they could study English autonomously even though they were expected to do so. Indeed, success was largely dependent on them taking the initiative. Considering that Hiratsuka (2013) reported JTEs often resorting to translation because of their low confidence in their students' comprehension ability, it is reasonable to assume that these students' overdependence on their teacher was the result of a similar experience. It is also interesting to note that Hiratsuka (2013) also reported students being eager for more of a challenge. Berger (2011) found similar attitudes among university students as the majority of the 19 students in the study claimed to prefer English only policies in university English courses.

In summary, the literature indicates a clear gap between the policies outlined by MEXT and the realities of the English classroom at the secondary school level. Shibata (2018) suggests that university students realize that they have been ill-prepared for university studies, despite an eagerness to improve their communicative competence in an English only environment. In the following sections, the past experiences and expectations of a cohort of lower level Japanese students entering an international university in Japan will be investigated.

### 3. Context and Participants

This study took place at a medium sized international Japanese university in which nearly three thousand students are domestic Japanese and another three thousand are international students from around the world. The university is also bilingual, with content courses being offered in both Japanese and English. All of the student participants are receiving their main content courses in Japanese, but upon completing their English requirements, are required to take at least 20 credits of content courses taught in English. The participants in the study were 210 students newly admitted in the Spring 2017 semester. All of the student participants were placed in the elementary and pre-intermediate levels (between A1 and A2+ on the CEFR scale). There were also five teachers who participated in the study, all of whom were teachers of the above-mentioned students. Of the five teachers, three were elementary level teachers, and two were pre-intermediate level teachers.

Surveys were administered to the student participants in the first week of study to get a picture of both the students' experience studying English and their expectations of what their university English courses would be like and how they would perform in them. At the mid-term break, surveys were administered to teachers to ascertain both the amount of Japanese support teachers were giving and the extent to which student expectations about their course performance were being met.

### 4. Survey Design

#### 4.1 *The Student Survey*

The survey administered to students consisted of seventeen questions. All of the questions were multiple choice, with some of them using a Likert scale (see Appendix A). The questions for students were organized into two main sections: their experience of studying English in high school, and their expectations about what English classes would be like and how they would perform in them.

In the first section, nine questions centered around the teachers, ALTs and teaching methods used in junior high and senior high school English classes. Questions involving teachers asked the student participants to rate, on a Likert scale, the amount of time teachers spent speaking English in the classes and the extent to which their speech was comprehensible. As for the questions regarding ALTs, they elicited whether or not the participants actually had ALTs in their classes, the frequency of the ALT visits, and the extent to which they understood the ALT's English. In the sections about methods, participants were asked to select the methods by which they were taught grammar. This item allowed for multiple responses. The remaining questions used a Likert scale to elicit the amount of English that they themselves were able to speak and listen to.

The second section asked questions about the students' beliefs and expectations regarding their university English classes. The first two questions asked them about their beliefs about the extent that they felt that studying English would help them in both their university life and future career and their expectations about language use in a class with a native speaker. The remaining questions dealt with their expectations of the amount of instruction the teacher would give them in

their native language, the reasons for why the native English-speaking teacher (NEST) would use only English in classes, and their expectations about the amount of English they themselves would use in class.

#### 4.2 The Teacher Survey

The survey administered to teachers consisted of eight questions. These questions were all Likert scale questions designed to elicit information about the teachers' use of Japanese in the class, and their impressions of student performance. This performance included the extent to which they believed students listened to and understood instructions. It also included the frequency in which students confirmed understanding by: a) asking the teacher or another student in English, b) using Japanese to confirm what the teacher said, c) asking another student to translate what the teacher said into Japanese, and d) simply ignoring instructions they did not understand.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1 Student Survey – Section 1: Secondary School Experiences

As discussed in the literature review, ALTs are an important resource for exposing students to native speaker models of English. However, it was found that, of the 210 students who took the surveys, 18.8% (N=39) did not even have ALTs in their junior high school and senior high school. Of the respondents that did have ALTs, it can be seen in Figure 1 that the majority came either once a week or less, with only 18.8% (N=39) reporting that their ALTs visited their classes more than once week.

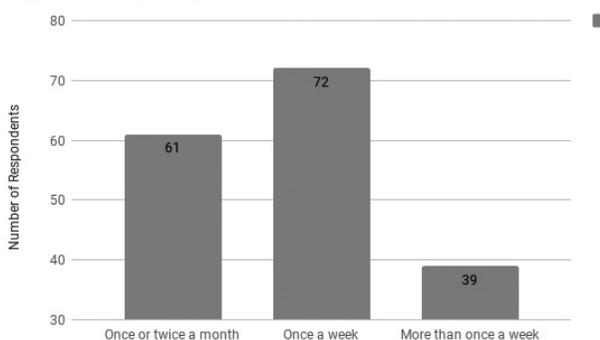


Figure 1: Frequency of ALT Visits

As for the amount of English spoken by both the JTE and the ALT, it can be seen from Figure 2 that the majority of respondents stated that their Japanese English teachers either sometimes or rarely spoke English. As for ALTs, it is unsurprising that a large majority of the respondents reported that they spoke English all of the time.

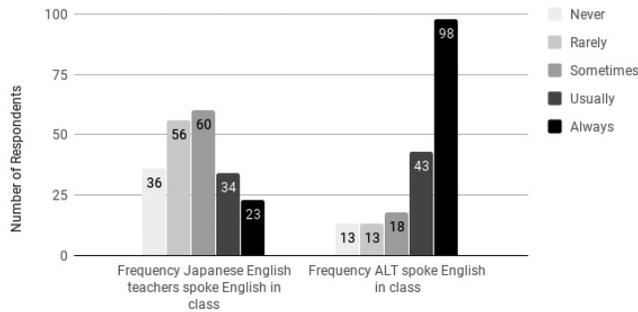


Figure 2: Frequency Japanese English teachers and ALTs spoke English class

In terms of the understandability of the JTE's and ALT's English, it can be seen from Figure 3 that the JTE's English was seen as being slightly easier to understand than that of ALTs. The majority of respondents (N=93) stated that they were usually able to understand the JTE's English. On the other hand, the majority of participants (N=69) claimed to have only sometimes been able to understand their ALT's English.

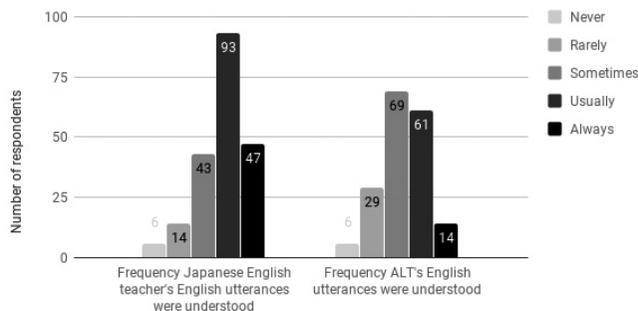


Figure 3: Frequency that Japanese English teachers and ALTs English was understood

When asked to select from a multiple answer test item about common methods for teaching grammar, the most common items were translation from Japanese to English (N=116), multiple choice questions (N=93), or fill in the blank questions (N=82). The least common were questions that called on students to listen to a passage and answer questions about it (N=33), or to read and answer questions about example sentences using the target structure in context (N=57).

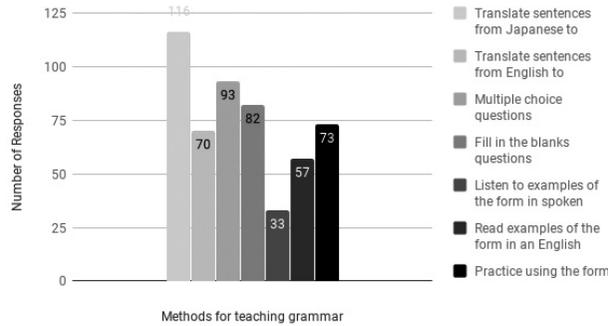


Figure 4: Most common methods for teaching grammar

The results of questions asked about speaking practice in secondary school English classes show that the majority of students reported that they never or almost never spoke English in classes or had conversation practice. Even when they did have such practice, they reported only sometimes using English. The responses to questions about listening comprehension practice were slightly more positive, with students stating that they sometimes or usually had some kind of English listening comprehension practice.

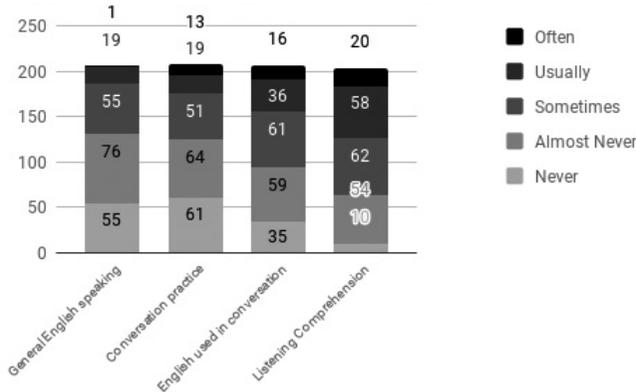


Figure 5: Speaking and Listening Practice in Secondary School

5.2 Student Survey – Section 2: Student expectations about English classes

Despite a lack of solid productive practice in English, students had very sanguine attitudes about both the importance of English for their futures and the amount of English that they would use in their classes. They also had very clear expectations that their teachers would not use Japanese in classes and supported quite sound pedagogical reasons for their doing so. Figure 6 shows that students had overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the potential for English to both improve their present and post university life.

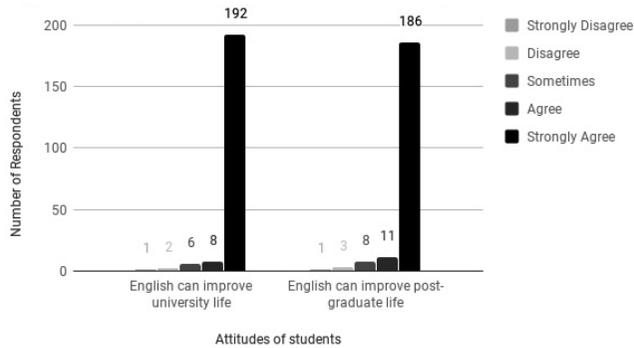


Figure 6: Attitudes about the benefits of English

As illustrated in Figure 7, when asked about the amount of Japanese their native speaker teachers would use, the majority of students expected that teachers would either never use Japanese or hardly ever use it. As shown in Figure 8, when asked about the reason for this, an overwhelming majority of students (98%) responded that it was important for improving their English skill to immerse themselves into an English environment, as opposed to other proposed reasons, such as the teachers' inability to use Japanese or the arbitrary rules of the university.

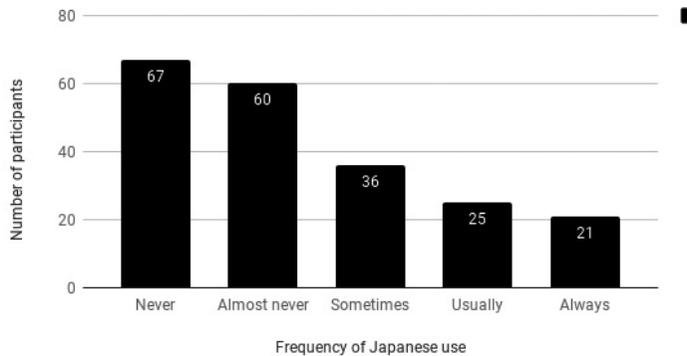


Figure 7: Amount of Japanese expected from native English speaking teacher

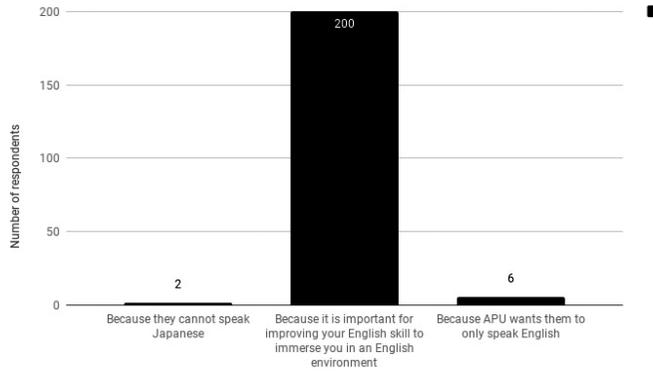


Figure 8: Perceived reasons for teacher use of English

In regards to the students' beliefs about their own use of English, Figure 9 shows that students showed a high degree of confidence that they would be able to easily adapt to speaking only English in their classes. The vast majority said that they should use English even during breaks.

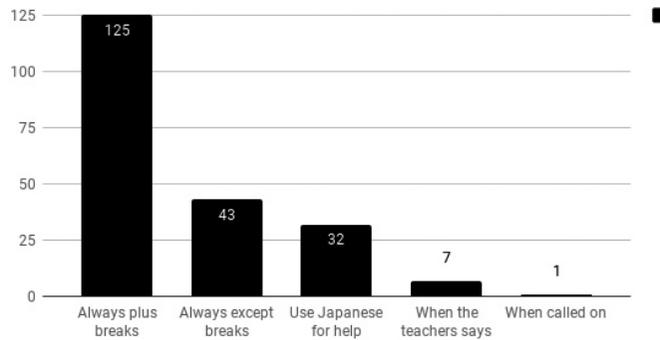


Figure 9: Students expectations about the amount of English they would produce

As for their conceptions of how they would deal with comprehension difficulties in the classroom, as illustrated in Figure 10 students reported that they would either ask the teacher in English if they had a problem or translate what the teacher said into Japanese and confirm with a classmate.

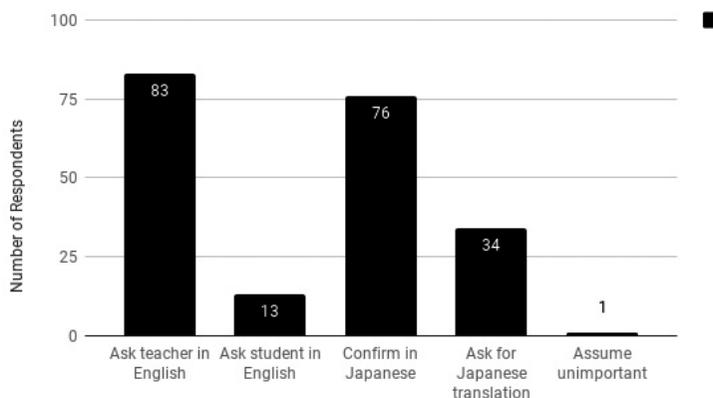


Figure 10: Methods for dealing with comprehension Problems

They also stated, overwhelmingly, that instead of being silent and pretending to understand (3.4%), or talking to classmates in a quiet voice and asking them to translate what the teacher had said (2.9%), they should be silent and concentrate on what the teacher was saying (93.7%). They also, overwhelmingly, stated that the purpose of English class was to practice using vocabulary and grammar and gain confidence listening to, reading, speaking, and writing English (90.8%), as opposed to simply studying to pass the English requirements of the degree (2.9%) or to only learn new vocabulary and grammar (6.3%).

#### *Teacher Survey*

Teachers reported that they spoke very little Japanese in English classes. Of the five teachers surveyed, two said they never used Japanese and three said they spoke Japanese only occasionally. When asked about the reason for using it, all of the teachers that reported using it said that they did so to clarify instructions. As for student understanding of instructions, the majority of teachers felt that students understood instructions at least satisfactorily, though one instructor felt that they didn't understand them well at all.

As can be seen in Figure 11, teachers felt that the most common strategies for dealing with comprehension problems used by students were to ask another student to translate the instructions into Japanese or to use Japanese to confirm their understanding of teacher instructions. Surprisingly there was some discrepancy between teachers about how often students used English to ask for clarification. For example, most teachers thought that it was rare for their students to ask each other for clarification in English, though one respondent felt that this was a common practice. Similarly, though most teachers found that it was rare for students to even ask the teacher for clarification in English, there were two respondents that felt that students did this quite often. It is reassuring to

note that, although it was felt that students sometimes ignored instruction, there was a general consensus that this did not happen often.

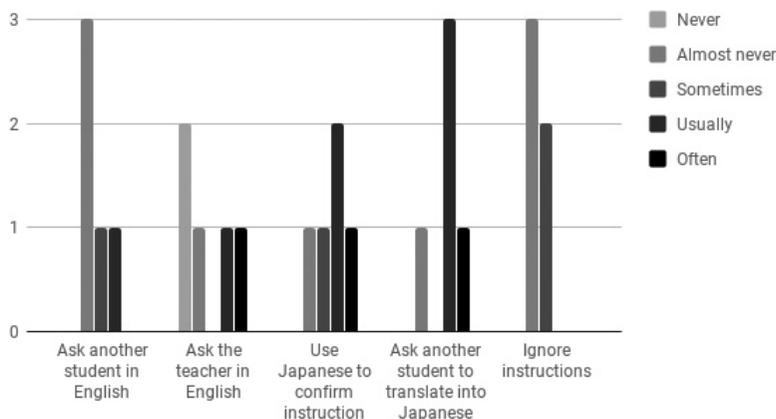


Figure 11: Students strategies in asking for clarification

## 6. Discussion

In line with previous, there was a large disconnect between student expectations of how much English they would use before they entered the university and their actual performance in their classes. This can be partly attributed to the amount of exposure they had to English in their secondary school education, as it was shown that the amount of English their teachers spoke was limited, though it was highly comprehensible. This can be interpreted both positively and negatively, as it has been observed in past studies that the JTE can be an important role model for English use, though they can also underestimate their students' comprehension ability and thus fail to sufficiently challenge them. As for their exposure to native English through ALTs, this was limited to infrequent visits, with the majority of students having had visits from ALTs once a week, or once or twice a month, and a sizeable number (18%) having never had any ALT visits at all. As for their comprehension of the ALT's English, it is encouraging that a sizeable number of respondents claimed that they either usually or always understood the ALT's English, though the majority claimed to only sometimes understand. It is, however, unclear to what extent the ALT's English was translated by the JTE.

This lack of exposure was compounded by the fact that, despite MEXT's requirement that students would be expected to do activities that required an understanding of grammar in context and a use of active and receptive skills, such as speaking and listening in coordination with each other, classroom grammar activities were largely passive, revolving around translation, multiple choice and fill in the blank exercises. Indeed, it was found that the least amount of time was spent developing speaking, though slightly more time was reported to be spent on more passive skills, such as reading and listening. It should also be noted that active listening is a possible exercise that

could have been practiced in these classes, but it was unclear from this data the type of listening in which the students were engaged. As suggested previously, a likely reason for this was that passing the final examination, which focused on receptive, not productive skills was the most immediate goal. Unfortunately, this goal was accomplished at the expense of adequate preparation for the general communication skills required in university level English courses.

Although the education which students received fell short of the highly active and communicative curriculum outlined by MEXT, students showed a strong belief both in the importance of English for their future and in their ability to cope with classes conducted only in English by native speaking instructors. There seems to be a disconnect between the idealized concept of “native English” and students’ ability to actively engage with it. Hiratsuka (2013) noted that this was a common phenomenon even among teachers, as the two teachers in the study stressed that building communication skills in English was highly important, though their practice of providing students with translations for any words that they perceived as difficult, worked to undermine this aim because in doing so they deprived their students of the chance to take risks and engage with the language without immediate Japanese support. It brings into question whether students were being entirely ingenuous when “asking the teacher in English” was the item chosen by the most respondents when asked about dealing with comprehension problems in the classroom. It could be that, like the teachers who claimed that building communication skill was important, they felt that the native speaker would be the best source of correct information because of the belief commonly held in Japan of the native speaker being the ultimate language expert (Butler, 2007). However, like the JTEs in Hiratsuka (2013) it may be that they ultimately felt more comfortable receiving that information in Japanese.

Research suggests that it is much more difficult for students to leave the mother tongue out of the language classroom than they might expect, especially for the lower level students that were involved in this project. As Cook (1999) points out, the mother tongue is ever present in an EFL class because even when it is not being spoken it is being thought. This explains why the second most popular choice of students was to use Japanese to confirm what they thought the teacher said. This is actually more realistic than expecting students to communicate in English 100% of the time, especially for students who lack experience using the target language. For this reason, it is suggested that, instead of enforcing language policies that strictly forbid the use of the mother tongue, it is more realistic to provide clear guidelines on how it should be used.

In the middle of the semester, when a follow up questionnaire was administered to the students’ teachers, there was a definite discrepancy between the expectations that students had of how they would behave and the behavior reported by their teachers. As they had expected, teachers gave very little assistance in Japanese, though they did offer some Japanese translation when giving instructions. Using some Japanese in class should not be seen as a failure on the part of the teachers. Indeed, some use of the mother tongue in class by NESTs, as Holthouse (2003) explains, is quite useful and, perhaps, the only way to communicate certain abstract concepts to students who lack any English vocabulary related to them. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the mother tongue has

positive applications in the classroom, there is always the danger that it will be overused, especially if the students are not given proper guidelines about the appropriate time and method for its use.

Students clearly did not meet their own expectations regarding English use, especially in situations where they faced communication problems. Though some teachers reported that students would ask questions in English, either to the teacher or another student, teachers tended to feel that students used more Japanese. This also should not be seen as a failure on the part of the students. The use of the mother tongue has proven to be both inevitable and beneficial (Cook, 1999; Holthouse, 2003) as long as it is used sparingly and for the right reasons. Therefore, the students who were reported by their teachers as using Japanese to confirm their understanding of instructions were actively engaged in language study because they were at least using their receptive skills. On the other hand, students who simply asked others to translate for them were not using the mother tongue properly because they were not using their own English skills, but merely relying on the skills of others. Unfortunately, this was reported as being one of the most common ways for students to negotiate comprehension problems. It is also unlikely that students were aware of the demerits of this practice. Indeed, they were simply trying to understand the content of the class. What is more, they have likely become used to this strategy because their JTEs utilized it in their secondary school English classes. It may have even been something they came to rely on. For this reason, it is essential to make students aware of how certain uses of the mother tongue require them to demonstrate some comprehension, such as confirmation, while others, like translation, can be employed without the student even attempting to listen to the teacher.

## **7. Limitations and Implications for Further Study**

The present study had a number of limitations related to the structure of the study, the nature of the questions asked to the participants, and the number of surveys administered. First, surveys are only able to provide impressionistic information. In assessing the realities of a student's English education it would be much better to observe their performance while they are studying in that system than to simply ask them to reflect on their secondary school English experience retrospectively. Unfortunately, given the scope of the present study, such an inquiry was not feasible. Perhaps a more accurate description of student mid-semester beliefs and behavior would have been attained if a second survey were administered to students about the extent to which their own expectations of how they would behave in English classes differed from their actual behavior. This would have presented a much more robust data set. As it stands the data is somewhat lopsided, with a large number of student responses painting a fairly clear picture of their past experiences and expectations about their classes, but only a few teacher responses to give an idea of their actual performance. Indeed, this is only how the teachers perceived their performance and teacher perception and reality can sometimes be different. Moreover, the questions in the teacher survey asked them to give their overall impressions of the class, which did not allow for much detail. This detail could have been better achieved if both the teachers and individual students responded to mid-term surveys.

Nonetheless, this study offers a valuable insight into the expectations of students entering English classes at an international Japanese university. It also offers suggestions for how these results can be used to generate language use guidelines, though the actual content of those guidelines has been left up to the reader to decide. Further studies could do more to investigate the nature of students' English experience before entering the university and their experiences afterward, especially in regard to their expectations. A study which goes beyond a simple survey structure, but also gives experimental, performance related data about students' communicative competence and comprehension of teacher instructions would be especially useful.

### **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study revealed a marked difference between students' expectations of their behavior in a university English course and their actual performance. Clearly, limitations in their previous exposure to studying English play a part in this. This study uncovered a clear lack of exposure to English production, particularly in speaking, but also in reading and listening at the secondary school level. As a result, teachers observed that students were not able to understand all of the English in classes taught in the target-language without often resorting to asking for help in their native language, though they had previously reported that they felt that this would be unnecessary. These results point to a need to clarify the extent to which the use of the mother tongue is acceptable in the language classroom and recommend that it is perfectly acceptable for it to be used by both teachers and students for the purpose of clarifying instructions. However, students should not rely on the mother tongue before making a reasonable effort to understand target language input.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Student Survey

#### New Students Expectations About English Class at APU

Who is your English A class teacher?

1. In your English classes in junior and senior high school, how often did your teachers speak English? / 中学、高校の英語の授業中、先生は、どのくらい英語を話しましたか。

Never/ 全く話さなかった	1	2	3	4	5	Always/いつも
	○	○	○	○	○	

2. Did you have an ALT in your high school and junior high school classes? / 中学、高校の英語の授業にALTが来ましたか。

- Yes / はい
- No / いいえ

If yes, how often did he or she visit your class? / 来ていた場合、どのくらいの頻度でしたか。

- Once or twice a month / 一ヶ月に1～2回
- Once a week / 一週間に一回
- More than once a week / 一週間に一回以上

3. How often did your ALT speak English to the class? / どの程度ALTは英語を話していましたか。

Never/ 全く話さなかった	1	2	3	4	5	Always/いつも
	○	○	○	○	○	

4. When your teacher spoke English, how much could you understand? / 先生が授業中に英語を話していた時、どのくらい理解できていましたか。

0%	1	2	3	4	5	100%
	○	○	○	○	○	

5. When your ALT spoke English, how much did you understand? / ALTが英語を話していた時、どのくらい理解できていましたか。

0%	1	2	3	4	5	100%
	○	○	○	○	○	

6. When you learned a new grammar point in junior and senior high school, how did you practice it? (You can select more than one) 新しい文法事項を授業で学習した後、どのようにそれを練習しましたか。

- Translate sentences from English to Japanese / 英語を和訳する
- Translate sentences from Japanese to English / 日本語を英訳する
- Multiple-choice questions / 選択問題の練習
- Fill in the blanks questions / 穴埋め問題
- Listen to examples of the form in spoken English and answer questions / 英文法のリスニング問題を解く
- Read examples of the form in an English passage and answer questions / 英文法のリーディング問題を解く
- Practice using the form in speaking and/or writing / 会話や英作文の中で英文法を使いながら練習

7. How often did you speak English in your junior high school and high school classes? / 中学・高校では、どのくらい英語を話しましたか

Never/ 全く話さなかった	1	2	3	4	5	Always/ いつも
	0	0	0	0	0	

8. How often did you have English conversation practice? / どのくらい英会話を練習しましたか。

Never/全く	1	2	3	4	5	Every class/ 毎クラス
	0	0	0	0	0	

If you had conversation practice, how much English did you use during the conversation? / スピーキングの練習で、どのくらい英語を使いましたか。

0%	1	2	3	4	5	100%
	0	0	0	0	0	

9. How often did you listen to conversations in English and answer questions about them? / どのくらい英語のリスニング問題を解きましたか。

Never/全く	1	2	3	4	5	Every class/ 毎クラス
	0	0	0	0	0	

10. Do you agree that learning to understand and communicate in English can improve your university life? / 英語を今よりも理解できるようになれば、APUでの大学生活がもっと楽しくなると思いませんか。

Strongly disagree/ 全く思わない	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree/ 強く思う
	0	0	0	0	0	

11. Do you agree that learning to understand and communicate in English can give you more job and travel opportunities after you finish your university life? / 英語を今よりも理解できるようになれば、仕事や、旅行へ行く機会がより増えると思いませんか。

Strongly disagree/ 全く思わない	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree/ 強く思う
	0	0	0	0	0	

12. How much Japanese do you expect your native English speaking teacher to use in class? / 授業中どのくらいネイティブスピーカーの英語の先生が日本語を話すことを期待していますか。

0%	1	2	3	4	5	100%
	0	0	0	0	0	

13. Why do you think your native English speaker teachers speak only or mostly English in class? / なぜネイティブスピーカーの英語の先生が授業中英語のみ、またはほとんど英語を使うと思いませんか

- Because they cannot speak Japanese / 日本語が話せないから
- Because it is important for improving your English skill to immerse you in an English environment / 学生の英語能力を向上させるために、英語のみの環境を作ること重要と考えているから
- Because APU wants them to only speak English / 大学の方針だから

14. How often do you think you should speak English in a class with a native speaker at APU? / 授業中、どのくらいネイティブスピーカーと話すべきと思いませんか

- All the time, including breaks / 休憩時間を含めて、いつも
- All the time, except breaks / 休憩時間を除いて、いつも
- Most of the time, but I will speak Japanese when I ask a classmate for help / ほとんどの場合英語で話すが、クラスメイトに質問をしたりするときは日本語を使う
- Some of the time, when the teacher says we have to, and when I speak to the teacher, but

I mostly speak to my classmates in Japanese /時々。先生の指示がある時、または先生と話す時。クラスメイトに話す時は必ず日本語を使う

- Rarely, only when the teacher requires me to speak English, otherwise I will speak Japanese /ほとんど話さない。先生に指示された場合以外は日本語で話す

Why did you give that answer? (You can answer in English or Japanese) /なぜその答えを選びましたか (英語、日本語どちらで答えても構いません)

15. What do you think is the main purpose of an English class with a native speaker? /授業中、ネイティブスピーカーと話す目的とはなんだと思いますか

- To learn new vocabulary and grammar /新しい単語と文法を学習するため
- To practice using vocabulary and grammar and gain confidence listening to, reading, speaking, and writing English /単語と文法を練習し、リスニングやスピーキング、ライティングに自信を得るため
- To pass the English requirements to graduate from the university/英語の必修を修了し、大学を卒業するため

16. What do you do when your native English speaker teacher is giving instructions?/英語のネイティブの先生が授業中に何か指示を出している時、どう行動しますか

- Be silent and concentrate on what he or she is saying/静かにして、何を言っているのか集中して聞く
- Be silent and pretend to listen to what he or she is saying and ask other classmates to translate what he or she said./静かにして、聞いているフリをする。そのあと、クラスメイトに何を言っていたか教えてもらう
- Talk to other classmates in a quiet voice and ask other classmates to translate what he or she said./静かな声で、クラスメイトに何を言っているのか聞き教えてもらう

17. If you are not sure what your teacher said, what should you do?/先生が何を言っていたかわからなかった時、どうしますか

- Ask the teacher for clarification in English /先生に英語でわかるよう教えてもらう
- Ask another student for clarification in English /他の人に英語でわかるよう教えてもらう
- Say what you think the teacher said in Japanese and ask another student to confirm /日本語でなんと言ったのかは、クラスメイトに話し、確かめる
- Ask another student to translate what the teacher said into Japanese /クラスメイトに先生がなんと言っていたのか日本語で通訳してもらう
- Don't ask anyone and assume it is unimportant /特に重要でないので誰にも聞かない

## Appendix B - Teacher Survey

### New Student Expectations Follow Up

Please take a minute to answer these 8 questions about your class

1. How much Japanese do you use in your class?

None or very little	1	2	3	4	5	A lot
	<input type="radio"/>					

If you use Japanese, when do you use it and what do you use it for?

Your answer

2. On average, how often do your students speak English in a class?

- All the time, including breaks
- All the time, except breaks
- Most of the time, but they speak Japanese when classmates need help
- Some of the time, when I say they have to, and when they speak to me, but they mostly speak to each other in Japanese
- Rarely, only when I require them to speak English, otherwise they speak Japanese

3. How well do your students listen to instructions?

Not well at all	1	2	3	4	5	Very well
	<input type="radio"/>					

4. How often do students ask for clarification in English?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Very often
	<input type="radio"/>					

5. How often do students ask another student for clarification in English?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Very often
	<input type="radio"/>					

6. How often do students say what they think the teacher said in Japanese and ask another student to confirm?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Very often
	<input type="radio"/>					

7. How often do students ask another student to translate what the teacher said into Japanese?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Very often
	<input type="radio"/>					

8. How often do students ignore instructions and assume they are unimportant?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Very often
	<input type="radio"/>					