

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN JAPANESE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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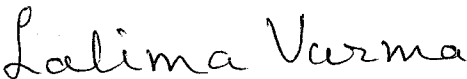
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation, entitled "**English Language in Japanese Educational System**" submitted by **Mr. Bijay Kumar Padhan**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university. This work is the result of his own research and to the best of my knowledge no part of it has earlier comprised any monograph, dissertation or book.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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To
My Nānā & Bā

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PREFACE

In this study an attempt will be made to the various aspects of English language to learning and teaching in Japan. For a student like me who has not been to Japan it is not easy to study this subject due to the non-availability of sufficient material. There is no book that covers this topic in a comprehensive manner. This subject has not been researched extensively so far. However materials can be located in the books and journals dealing with diverse disciplines.

The lack of proficiency in English language will be a “national crisis” in the 21st century, stated Tadashi Yamamoto, Executive Director of the Prime Minister’s panel for outlining “Japan’s goals for the 21st century” in the report submitted to former Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in January 2000. The panel urged all Japanese to acquire a working knowledge of English before they became adults and even called for a national debate on making English an “second official language.” It is very surprising that Japan which set on the path of modernization in 1868, adopted modern education system and has today achieved 100% literacy, still it’s population lacks proficiency in the English language.

Japan is an economic super power and it is important that it plays an important and effective role in world politics. However, one of the reasons why Japan is not able to assert itself and make a mark in international forums is due to the shortage of personals which is proficient

in English which is regarded as an international language. In a survey conducted by the United Nations in 1998 Japan scored lower than the Asian countries in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), held for students to qualify for studying in American colleges and universities. Japan's position was 153rd out of 172 countries.

Language learning is an essential part of language teaching. It is very difficult to study language teaching till it is understood how language is being taught as a mode of communication at various levels. The first chapter, therefore, deals with the question of how English language was introduced and taught in Japan during the pre-World War II era. The second chapter covers the development of English language education in Japan from the occupation period till the present time. An attempt has been made to study the manner in which English is taught in schools and universities. The government policies and the influence of cultural and social values and behaviour in the study of English in Japan are what the third chapter deals with.

The whole of my research work might not be robbed of its appeal for specialists. There might be lots of mistakes seen in the dissertation. I would like to say that all the views, errors etc. are of unconscious errors, for which I myself owe the responsibility. Still I tried my level best to complete this work whole-heartedly.

Chapter I

ENGLISH EDUCATION IN JAPAN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In an era of globalization nations are increasingly becoming dependent on each other. This dependency encompasses cultural exchanges, transmigration between nations and political dialogues in search of peace and stability in their regions. It makes people of one nation come closer to another nation. The world is getting smaller and smaller with the development of mass media and the super fast transport facilities and it is important to maintain fast communication between each other and understand each other. It is hence necessary to have command over one international language, which is generally spoken and understood by all. At present English stands as the sole leader of world languages, which is spoken by more than one billion people in the world.¹ Even a country's social political and economic ideologies flourish through its people's command of the common language.² But in the international society we are expected to express ourselves and explain our positions. We need to speak English logically not only on foreign policy matters but also conduct diplomacy with other countries. So to acquire the practical use of English has become almost absolutely necessary.

English is widely recognized as a "world language", or an "international language" or the "lingua franca" of the present world.

¹ Funk and Wangnalls New Encyclopaedia, Rand Macnally and Company, New York, 1995, p. 280.

² De Saussure, F. (1983) Course in General linguistics, Dockworth, London, p. 17.

Since the 1930's there has been intensive activity in linguistic sciences for analysis and descriptions of two main varieties of the English language, American and British. English does not represent a monolithic system, but a network of varieties- native and non-native. The world language is also known for its unique phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, semantic, stylistic, registeral, discourse and socio-cultural norms, which are widely accepted. In comparison to Sanskrit in its heyday, Latin during its grip on Europe, and French during the peak of the colonial period, English has touched more people's lives, in so many cultures and continents, in so many functional roles and has attached so much prestige. According to the Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopaedia of 1995, over 1.26 billion people in whole over the world speak English as a necessary tool of communication and as a native variety and more than 2.8 billion people use it in their day to day life.³ The chief aim of most of the users is not only to acquire the ability to read, write and understand English but also to gain the capability of communicative competence.

English Learning: Tokugawa Period

The first record of Japanese contact with English is witnessed with a meeting of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa Feudal government with the Englishman, William Adams (1564-1620). The meeting took place in 1600 sometime after Adams, on board the

³ Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopaedia, Rand Macnally and Company, New York, 1995, p. 280.

Liefde, was washed upon the shore of Bungo in Kyushu.⁴ Tokugawa Ieyasu was said to be very positive and was keen to know what was taking place in Europe and the rest of the world. It is remarkable that he and Adams were able to communicate though there was no official English interpreter in Japan at that time. It is reported that there was an interpreter well versed in Portuguese. In his letter to home, Adams wrote that he had a Jesuit father and a Japanese Christian for his interpreters.⁵ Here we can guess that positive attitudes and inquisitive minds of both parties made the meeting a success.

Adams remained in Japan for the rest of his life, teaching mathematics and building ships. When Captain John Soris arrived from Britain with a letter from Adams in 1613, Adams served as an interpreter between Tokugawa Ieyasu and Captain Soris. As a result of the meetings, an office of English merchants was established in Hirado, Nagasaki with the permission of Bakufu, the Tokugawa Government. Tokugawa Ieyasu died in 1616 and his death called for a change in the foreign policy of the Bakufu. Adams lost the patronage and suffered as a result. The English merchant's office continued to conduct business until 1623, when it was closed and the English lost Japan. The office closed because the English did not really become popular with Japanese, and the business was also not profitable enough to continue learning English. Another result seems to be that

⁴ Beasley, W.G. (ed.) Modern Japan: Aspects of History, Literature and Society, Charles E. Tuttle Com. Tokyo, 1975, p. 14.

⁵ Sakurai, M. (1971) A History of English Education in Japan, Tokyo: Bunka Hyoren, p.2-3.

English could neither meet the intensive competition from the Dutch nor could they sustain with social and political significance and also their very limited presence.

Fifty years later, in 1673, the Englishmen returned and sought permission to reopen the office, but this request was refused because of the fear of Christianity and the accompanying threat of European colonization. So they had to wait for more than 130 years to reestablish their base in Japan. In 1808, sailors from a strange British ship, the **HMS Phaeton**, arrived in Nagasaki to capture the Dutch ships in Japan as a result of European wars. The Englishmen rooted throughout the day by seizing the firewood, food and water in Nagasaki, for which the Magistrate, Matsudaria Zushonokami took responsibility and committed suicide. The Japanese were not able to understand and communicate in English. The Tokugawa government was taken by surprise by this incident and ordered six Nagasaki Tsuji (Dutch interpreters) in 1809, to learn English in addition to the Dutch, French and Russian languages. The first English teacher of Nagasaki Tsuji was Jan Cook Blomhoff of the Dutch factory. Though he was not an expert and efficient teacher of English, he could use Dutch textbooks translated into English. The study of English, however, resulted in two books (manuscripts), i.e. *Angeria Kokugowage* (English Lessons for Beginners, 1811) and *Angeria Grintaisei* (English Vocabulary, about 6000 words). The editor of these two classical books was Motoki Mosahide. The knowledge of English language possessed by Jan Cook Blomhoff was limited. But

the Bakufu government did not permit to become literate in these languages concerned with the possibility that Western thoughts and religion might influence them, and they might transmit these ideas to others. However, *Bansho-shirabedokoro* (An Office for the Translation or Examination of Barbarian Books) was founded in 1811 followed by the earlier name *Bansho-wagegoyo*. By 1825 the Bakufu ordered the feudal lords to repel all the foreign ships occupying the country. However two countries, the Dutch and the Chinese got permission to come to Nagasaki for the purpose of trading. It was through them that the news of the Opium War and the defeat of the Chinese reached the Magistrate of Nagasaki in 1840. The Bakufu government got upset with the news and warned that there was a real danger of colonization of Japan by the west. So it made the government even more isolationist.

In 1841 Shivukawa Rokuzo, a top ranking official of the Bakufu government who had studied Dutch, translated Murray's English Grammar from Dutch into Japanese.⁶ This was the first book of coordination of these three languages. Though the original translation was not published, Fuji Soburo revised and added to it.

In 1848 Ronald Macdonald, 1812-1894, an American of mixed ethnic background -his father a Scotsman and mother, an American-Indian - came to Japan and his intention was to become an interpreter. His longing for the East might have been the motivation

⁶ Omura, K., "Pre-war (before 1945) From the Phaeton incident upto the pacific war" in Koike, et al. The English Language Teaching, Eshoia, Tokyo, 1975, p. 93.

for his adventure and his visit to Japan was an American whaler. He was appointed by the Bakufu government to teach English to the 14 official Japanese interpreters of the Dutch. His tenure of ten months for teaching English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation as well as the written English was so fruitful that the interpreters could publish two parts of *Egeresugo Jisho-Wakai* (Japanese Translation of a Dutch-English Dictionary).

There was also a growing awareness of the political significance of English language and some of the scholars turned away from the Dutch language. One such personality was Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901), a reformer, educator and also a writer. Beginning his career in Dutch studies in 1855, the English language, which was taught in Keio Gijuku (now Keio University) was founded by him. In 1860 and 1867, he accompanied government missions to USA and in 1861 to Europe to study western political systems, culture, art, language and literature. In 1867 he, along with Nakahoma Manjiro returned from the official trip to the U.S. bringing a number of English instruction books including a Webster's English Dictionary.⁷ He influenced the Bakufu and the Satsuma-han to send 19 and 18 students respectively to England to study the English language. He was a supporter of English utilitarianism and modernization of Japan according to Euro-American model in all spheres.

⁷ Yukichi, F. The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa, tr. by Eiichi Kiyooka, Columbia university Press, New York, 1966, p. 214.

Nakahoma Manjiro (1827-1898) also served as an interpreter for the Tasho-han in 1852 (now the Kochi prefecture) and the Bakufu because he had studied in the U.S. for 10 years. In 1853 he acted as a translator to Commodore M.C. Perry who had arrived in Japan, with a letter to the Bakufu from the President of the U.S. demanding trade relations between the two nations. But a year later he was replaced by Moriyama, one of the fourteen interpreters Macdonald had taught in Nagasaki. He was accused of favoring the U.S. But he had written an English textbook called *Ei-Bei Taiwa Shokei* (A Short Cut to Anglo-American Conversation) in 1859. In this book he had, for the first time, used Kana for pronunciation and *Kan-bun* (Chinese classic) for word-order system and this text was influenced in shaping later methods of teaching and learning English in Japan.

The beginning of the official support of the teaching of English is also evident during this period. The first state-planned English course was set up at the "Translation Office for Barbarian Literature" in Tokyo in 1857. In the next year, the Governor of Nagasaki established the first private school of English for local samurais, already familiar with Dutch. In 1862, the governmental English course was expanded and the office was significantly redesigned as the "Centre for Investigating Western Studies". A second government-run school of English language was opened nearby in Yokohama, and for the first time four American missionaries were hired to teach English. Throughout 1960s private schools teaching English and other

European languages opened up in great numbers all over the country.⁸

The missionaries from the U.S. were responsible for spreading American English as the standard form rather than British English. Even during the period of isolation, a large number of Christian missionaries had settled in Japan and there were millions of copies of the King James Version of the Bible in English available. Christianity was slowly spreading in Japan through reading the Bible; English language also surpassed people's mind unconsciously⁹ through the schools established by the missionaries. One of the first English schools was Yokohama Academy founded by the Bakufu in 1865 where James Curtis Hepburn, an American physician and missionary, Samuel Rolling Brown, and J. Ballagh, were the renowned English teachers. The year 1864 had already witnessed the arrival of 87 American Christian missionaries who taught English to many Japanese and converted them to Christianity.

Meiji Period: Enthusiastic Support to English

The Tokugawa period, especially the first half of the 19th century, saw the beginning of the opening to the western world, it was, however, during the Meiji period that interaction with the European people, their culture, tradition, ideas, philosophies, workmanship, trade and commerce and languages was encouraged by

⁸ Loveday, L (1992) Language contacts in Japan: A sociolinguistic History, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 34.

⁹ Kodansha Encyclopaedia of Japan, vol. 1, Kodansha International Limited, Tokyo, 1983, p. 306.

the government. Foreign languages, especially English was regarded as an important school-subject at the beginning of the Meiji period. In 1871 the Ministry of Education was founded and the *Gakusei* (Fundamental Code of Education) was enacted in 1872. This was the first comprehensive law, which provided for education to all Japanese. It visualized compulsory primary education for all Japanese. Teaching of foreign languages and world history were given great emphasis. Foreign language was taught in middle schools. A large number of foreign language schools were opened. Middle schools for boys taught four years of preliminary and two years of advanced courses in English. Six classes of English were held per week. However, middle schools for girls did not have English as a subject. Even primary schools offered optional English instruction in 1884 though it was abolished later. The then Education Minister Mori Arinori was eager to promote English at all school levels and it was his initiative, which led to the introduction of English in middle school for girls. The importance which he attached to English is amply clear from the fact that he even proposed that English become an official language in place of Japanese. He said:

“Without the aid of Chinese, our language has never been taught or used for any purpose of communication. This shows its poverty. The march of civilization in Japan has already reached the heart of the nation the English language following it surpasses the use of both Chinese and Japanese. The commercial power of English speaking race, which now rules the world, drives our people into some knowledge of their commercial ways and habits. The absolute necessity of mastering the English language is forced upon us. It is the requisite of our independence in the community of the nations. Under the circumstances, our meager language, which can never be of any use outside of our islands is doomed to yield to the domination of English tongue, especially when the power of steam and electricity shall have pervaded the land. Our intelligent race, eager in the

pursuit of knowledge cannot depend upon a weak and uncertain medium of communication in the endeavor to grasp the principle truths from the previous treasury of western science and art and religion. The laws of state can never be preserved in the language of Japan. All reasons suggest its disuse".¹⁰

The official justification he gave for making English official included a limited resources of the native Japanese lexicon, the difficulty of absorbing western culture through Japanese, the inconvenience of writing in characters and the control of commercial powers of English speaking nations. At that time 82 out of 91 foreign language schools in Japan were teaching English.

In 1881 the middle school curriculum guidelines by the Ministry of Education tells that there should be 7 compulsory classes for the 4 years of junior course and 6 compulsory classes for the 2 years of senior course. Out of the first 4 years, most students studied eight hours per week during the first 2 years and nine in the subsequent two years. The total numbers of classes for English and other subjects per week for the junior course was 28 and that of the senior 26. Male students learnt a second foreign language, in addition to English in the final two years. The main purpose of teaching English was to catch up with the advanced civilization of the western world and to modernize the nation. English was regarded as the basic requirement for general education as well as a prerequisite for the higher education of those days. In the early years of 1890s English education, therefore, was the focus of discussion and debate.

¹⁰ Hall, Evan P. Mori Arinari, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1973, p. 189.

The main social group to experience the benefits of English language was the children of upper classes who received a bilingual education in the middle schools. It was because of the overwhelming problems of staff, material and attendance, that the teaching of foreign languages program could not be widely implemented. A large number of foreign teachers employed in Japanese colleges and universities to teach the languages. However it was English which was very popular because of the strong influence of English speaking teachers during the Meiji era. Eminent teachers from Britain and America like Basil Hall Chamberlain and Lafadio Hearn, went onto become professors at Tokyo University.

Originally two methods as *Seisoku* (The Regular) and *Hensoku* (The irregular) were used to teach English in Japan. The explanations of these two methods can be as follows:

Seisoku: This method of learning a language focuses mainly on studying correct pronunciation as well as the meaning. This method is identical with the so-called "Direct " or "Reformed" method in the English system of teaching modern studies. It teaches the correct reading of English words with proper accents, emphasis etc. and so enables a pupil to understand them without translating them into Japanese.

Hensoku: This method emphasizes more on translating the meaning and not so much on the correct pronunciation of the word or the syntax.¹¹

But historically Japan had followed the *Hensoku* method in studying the English language. Even eminent scholars like Fukuzawa Yukichi adopted this method at his private school *Keio Gijuku*. Graduates from this institution who went on to become teachers of English at Japanese middle school and other institutions, also followed this method.

The problem of the inefficiency of English education in Japan has been vehemently argued since 1900. Some argued the problems from purely educational point of view to improving the way English should be taught and learned. Some others debated the problem politically, trying to take advantage of the rising nationalism in Japan at that time. Still in the years following the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) governmental reforms aimed to increase the number of years of instruction and to raise the quality of education in general. English was taught in middle schools for 6 or 7 class hours per week. The guidelines handed down by the Ministry of Education, were to concentrate on all aspects of teaching the English language such as pronunciation, spelling, reading, translation, speaking and listening, composition, free writing, dictation, penmanship and grammar. The basic approach consisted of special emphasis on pronunciation at

¹¹ Creadle, E. B. Brinkley's English Japanese Dictionary, vol. 1, W. Heffer and Sons Ltd., Cambridge, 1963, p. 326.

initial level, comparison between Japanese and western cultures through reading, translation and recitation of English texts and dictionary works.

It was in Kyoto in 1913 that English teachers first met to discuss and compare English teaching methods. This meeting and others that followed symbolized the co-operation between English teachers and the Ministry of Education to determine overall policies.

Professor Kanda Naibu, a noted educationist who was attached to the late Meiji period, also had accompanied Mori Arinori to America in 1871 to study the West's secret of success and adopted for Japan's all-round development. Being a great scholar he was attached to the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages (the predecessor of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies). He authored many textbooks and wrote extensively grammar books which made him a great figure in the world of English education in Japan. There are some observations drawn from Kanda Naibu's notebooks during his stay in Germany in 1900-1901. Principal features of language teaching, he comments should be:

- (i) Purely oral teaching at the beginning.
- (ii) High use of foreign tongue from the beginning and throughout.
- (iii) Absolute or partial exclusion of translation from native languages to foreign language except in higher class.
- (iv) The reduction of translation from foreign tongue to native language.

- (v) The extensive use of pictures, graphs and tables in the younger class.¹²
- (vi) The extensive teaching of alien, i.e. the life, customs and institutions, geography, history and literature of the foreign nation.
- (vii) Constant conversations on the reading book, either through preparation or revision.
- (viii) The use of the book reading as material for learning grammar.

Professor Kanda had given a proper direction for teaching a language, which was followed later by teachers like H.E. Palmer (1877-1949) and Charles C. Fries (1887-1967).

During the Taisho period (1912-1922) learning a foreign language became easier due to technological innovations in mass media such as radio and cinema. American cinemas not only popularized the English language but also the western culture. In 1924 ¹³ mass sports events were reported which also contributed to the dissemination of English. The gramophone record also made the study of oral English of interesting and easy for the common man.

The Taisho period witnessed the publications of a large number of dictionaries, grammar and phonetics books which contributed to the development of English language in Japan. The Concise Oxford

¹² Tatsunocuke, Ueda Memorials of Kanda Naibu, Charles E Tuttle, Tokyo, 1972, p.168.

¹³ Tanaka, Sachioo "The Japanese Media and English", World Englishes Vol.14, No.1, 1995, pp.37-54.

Dictionary of the Fowler Brothers was published in 1911 along with The New English Dictionary were imported to Japan from England. These two works greatly influenced on the preparation of English-Japanese dictionaries by scholars like Saito Hidesaburo(1915) Inoue Jukichi(1915), Okakura Yoshiaburo (1927) and others. R B Mackerrow and his student had published English Phonetics (1902) and an English Pronouncing Dictionary (1917), An Outline of English Phonetics (1918) by Daniel Jones and English Sounds and Spellings (1919) by Iwasaki Taminei added to the development of English language in Japan. Increasing industrialization necessitated linguistic contact and scientific world. In response to the linguistic needs, the notable dictionary of loanwords proliferated in 1931 by Inoue Arakawa prepared a text of with 5018 entries entitled "Japanized English". The Taisho period linguistically can be called the age of Dictionaries and phonetics.¹⁴ In spite of so much of language activities, English teaching in Japan still left much room for improvement. How could the methods of teaching English be improved upon? How could the students of foreign language accept these books in their day to day life? These were the questions people began to ask.

Scholars like Saito Hidesaburo (1866-1929), one of the 'Dons' of the English scholars' world of the Meiji and the Taisho period, did try to introduce methods of teaching English language. He authored a number of grammar books, prepared lots of textbooks and also edited

¹⁴ Brannen, Noa S, "Wanted! A good Dictionary" Japan Quarterly vol.40, No.2, Jan.-March 1993, Pp.142-155.

several dictionaries. Most important of his works was Practical English Grammar 4 vols. (1898-99) and Ideological English Japanese Dictionary (1915). He believed that learning a foreign language is a slow and gradual process. His opinions in regards to teaching and learning of English in Japan were as follows:

- (i) Practice rigorously, which is indispensable in acquiring any art, because the mastery of a foreign language like English is the art of arts.
- (ii) Reading whatever materials available which is used by majority of teachers and students.
- (iii) English can be studied as a science.

He opines that lexicon and grammar will help to the acquirement of a foreign language. He also abolished the traditionally established *Hensoku* method and had founded an English language school in 1896 called *Seisoku Eigo Gakko* (*Seisoku English School*).¹⁵

In the beginning of the Taisho period English took up one third of the middle school time table and was heavily oriented towards grammatical analysis and translation into Japanese. Japanese students found it very difficult to cope up with the language. A debate ensued in which one section held the view that too much emphasis on English would make Japan almost like a British colony and would create a “second class” mentality in the minds of the Japanese. Some

¹⁵ Kodansha Encyclopaedia. of Japan, vol. 3, Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, 1983.

even suggested the abolition of English as a compulsory subject. In the following decades the amount of time allotted to the study of English was gradually reduced.

However the effort towards the development of English learning and teaching did not stop. In 1922 Harold E. Palmer, the eminent linguist of English language and the Professor of the University of London, was invited to Japan as an Advisor to the Ministry of Education. He established the Institute for Research in English Teaching or IRET (later renamed as the Institute for Research in Language Teaching) in Tokyo in 1924. He stressed on the importance of several innovative procedures for teaching and learning of English language for Japanese students, such as (i) The oral approach, (ii) The direct method of explaining the story or unfamiliar words and expressions, and (iii) Direct method composition exercises such as, substitution, completion and conversion. His debates had a great impact on the well-established Grammar-Translation method. His theory outlined in The Memorandum on Problems of Teaching in the Light of a New Theory (1924), was based on Ferdinand de Saussure's work. In 1927 he published The Five Speech-learning Habits in the Bulletin, an organ of IRET, saying that the mother tongue will explain an unfamiliar word more rapidly and effectively than by direct method procedures. Several new methods were re-evaluated by the teachers in the light of Palmer's aural-oral approach for beginning language learning. For example, the English teachers at Fukushima Middle School who developed the Fukushima plan on Palmer's theory and

work: "The Fukushima plan of teaching English in schools of Middle Grade" in 1934, states that,

The aim of English course at the Fukushima school is to enable because the pupils to acquire a practical command of English as spoken or written, and by so doing to lay the foundation for studying and appreciating English literature, without neglecting their preparation for entrance examinations to higher schools and at the same time without any other subject of study or encroaching on the time given to them.¹⁶

Though his theory contrasted with the traditional and established grammar translation method, his approach and techniques were disseminated to a number of progressive schools throughout the nation.

Palmer's advocacy of teaching and learning English language in Japan made a significant contribution in the 1920s. The 1920s and 1930s were also the decades of rising nationalism in Japan. The debate here on nationalism is purely from the point of view of the effect it had on English teaching in the country. Agreement by the U.S. in 1922 led to anti-American sentiments, which triggered the much-debated movement for the abolition of English requirement in the middle school curriculum. For example, in 1924, there were a number of contributions to the Iseyo Asahi Press such as *Beigo O Oiharae* (Drive Away American English) by Fukunaga Kyusuke and *Eigo Tsuiho* (The Ousting of English from Middle School Curriculum) by a person named Sugimura.¹⁷ Even before that in 1916, just two

¹⁶ Omura, et al (eds.) A Collection of Research Materials on English Language in Japan, Vol.2, Homei Shuppan, Tokyo, 1980, Pp.279-93.

¹⁷ Omura et al...1980, Pp. 733-740.

years after the beginning of the World War I, Ooka Okuzo, former Minister of Education, had insisted English should be should be taught but not made a compulsory subject in the middle school curriculum. Fujimura Tsukuru, a Professor at Tokyo University wrote in the magazine *Gendai* (The present age) of the May issue of 1927, entitled "An Urgent Necessity to Abolish English as Compulsory Subject at Middle School" urging for the speed process to abolish English. His argument was widely debated.¹⁸

The 1930s witnessed the emergence of militarist expansionism signaled by the occupation of Manchuria in 1931. This decade also saw Western countries, starting with Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations. A policy of Japanese language purification was initiated which attempted to eradicate all western words in the language, especially of English origins.¹⁹ English language was attacked as a symbol of "enemy's language" or the "enemy within". As early as 1939 the names of foreign countries in Japan were written in Chinese characters. English was removed from all day to day life and lots of English words, terms and phrases were replaced or Japanized or diminished at a lower stage.

During the World War II some universities such as Doshisha University, Koshai University and Rikkyo University, each abolished their department of English literature. At this time the government

¹⁸ Ibid, vol. 12, Pp.745-750.

¹⁹ Loveday, L, Language Contact in Japan: A Sociolinguistic History, OUP, New York, 1992, p.74.

ordered the use of officially revised English textbook.²⁰ The Ministry of Education reduced the English program to an average of five hours in boy's middle school and to three in girls. As the war intensified, English was completely dropped from the girl's middle school curriculum and the program was reduced to four hours per week in boy's middle schools. English was regarded as the enemy language. The English teachers were also instructed to teach the books approved by the Ministry of Education. The contents of the books were aimed at instilling ultranationalist virtues and patriotism for the nation.

In spite of the indications from the government, the defence of English education were expressed. Fukunara Rintoro in The Goal and Value of Education (1936), distinguished between English teaching and English education. He argued that in 'English teaching' the target is English itself; the emphasis is on the language. In 'English education', the goal is the cultivation of the learner's mind through the learning of English. He suggested that there was much to be gained in understanding the cultural differences between two people through language learning.²¹ Ishikawa Rinshiro argued in The Theories and the Problems of English Education (1937) that language learning allows the learner to understand better his or her own language. He suggests that English language should seek to cultivate the learner's mind and broaden his or her views of the world. He examines the issues of motivation, method and scope of English instruction and

²⁰ Omura et al... 1980, Vol.3, pp.266-277.

²¹ Omura et al... 1980, Vol.2, pp.763-771.

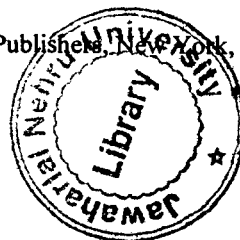
concludes that it should be an introduction to the culture of English speaking people.²² Through understanding English culture we have a greater ability to understand our own cultural identity and values. With these principles the Naval Academies in Tokyo and Nagasaki continued to teach English even during the wartime.

After Japan's defeat in the World War II and during the Allied Occupation (1945-1951) led by the U.S. the country underwent a thorough reforms based on western ideas, concepts and institutions. 5547 American bureaucrats based in Japan led the radical transformations.²³ Originally, 500,000 American soldiers, mainly English speaking, had landed in Japan. 'English fever' seemed to grip the nation with textbooks of conversational English becoming popular and bestseller too. The American soldiers on a large scale were teaching English classes. Knowledge of English language was perceived as the key to obtaining social advantages, including the market access ability. English was also regarded as the medium through which people could learn about democracy, and somewhat regained its lost importance and enthusiastically supported by liberals and internationalists. Yet it did not become an obligatory school-subject, and has never become one since. Efforts to make Japan a bilingual nation during the Meiji period in the 1920s and 1930s. English status to a great extent was limited to the academic

²² Ibid, pp.259-274.

²³ Yanaga, C. Japan Since Perry, Green Word Press Publishers, New York, 1975, p. 657.

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Chapter II

ENGLISH EDUCATION IN JAPAN SINCE WORLD WAR II

Japanese foreign language education policy has been facing many challenges since it regained its sovereignty in 1951. Not only has the change taken place in the teaching content but also in every other aspect of educational policy, which reflects changing social, economic and political contents. Japan has made drastic changes in teaching the methods of the English language. English has been taught only as a foreign language (EFL) and not as an important “second language.”

Several questions such as “how many languages are being taught in Japan?”, “what should be the medium of instruction in Japan?”, “what languages are being taught in Japan?” are often raised by linguists while assessing the country’s educational system. Japanese is the only language spoken by more than 92% of Japan’s population. There is no bilingual prefecture or district to be found.¹ However English is the only foreign language which is taught most intensively; 99% of secondary schools offer English² Though English occupies an important place, it is neither an “adopted”³ language nor the

¹ Reishauer, Edwin O. The Japanese Today : Change and Continuity, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc, Tokyo, 1990, p. 392.

² Ibid. P. 303

³ Kaachru, B.B. (ed.) The Other Tongue : English Across Cultures (2nd Edition), OUP, New Delhi, p. 226.

medium of instruction. The Japanese find it very difficult to master the English language. It is often joked that English is to the Japanese what French or Chinese is to the Australians or Indians.

Under the Allied Occupation (1945-1952) drastic changes were made in the Japanese educational system. The pre-World War II educational world of 6+5+3+3 school system (6 years of elementary school, middle school 5 years, higher school 3 years and university 3) was replaced by that of 6+3+3+4 system (6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high school, 3 years of senior high school and college and university 4) in 1947. The whole system was made co-educational throughout the country, with a few women's colleges and universities. English instruction was formally elective in the school system, but in practice it became obligatory.

New English textbooks were compiled with direction from the US Occupational Forces' educational Advisory. The English texts used in 1947 were the three volumes of "*Let's Learn English*" for junior high school students and the three volumes of the "*World Through English*" for senior high students. In 1948 Kenkyusha resumed the monthly publication of the *The Study of English* and published the first volume of *Shin Eigo Kyuiko Koza*

(New English Education Series). Asahi Shimbun started a serial comic strip in both English and Japanese, with an emphasis on English colloquialism, in 1949. In 1952 the first 293 Fulbright scholars left for U.S. and three years later, a group of 30 Fulbright English Teachers participated in what became an annual exchange program to the United States. Interest in English teaching methods grew and was supported by publications.⁴

Under the new educational system English was taught at the age of 12 at the lower secondary school. According to the Educational Regulation, foreign language is given as an optional subjects but according to statistics more than 90% of the students of lower secondary schools learn English. Similarly in the case of upper secondary schools also, English is as an optional subject yet almost all the students learn English 5 hours a week for 3 years.⁵

Initially almost all the teachers in Japan who taught English were Japanese nationals, the majority of them had not visited any country where English is spoken. However, after

⁴ Yuga, Suzuki, "English Language Book Publishing in Japan," Japan Quarterly vol.41, No. 2, April-June 1997, p.202.

⁵ Hoshiyama, S./, "Postwar (After 1945): A General Survey of TEFL in Postwar Japan," in I. Koike's et al.. (eds.) The Teaching of English in Japan, Eichosha Publishing Co. Ltd., Tokyo, 1978, p. 105.

1946, several opportunities were available to visit an English speaking country. The US Exchange Program of Fulbright commission and its predecessor, the GORIOA Exchange Program increased greatly the number of fellowships for Japanese students and teachers. By the end of the US occupation, the number of English teachers who visit foreign countries during the holidays had increased substantially. Restriction on travelling was also removed by the Government. To enhance English teaching programs, the Language Laboratory Association of Japan was founded in 1961. Several well-known linguists, such as, C.C. Fries, A. A. Hill, and A.H. Mackward, visited Japan. Fries, A. A. Hill, and A.H. Mackward, visited Japan. Furthermore in 1964 Kenkyusha started to publish a monthly journal, *Gendai Eigo* (Modern English Teaching) for junior and senior high school teachers.⁶

In addition to Harold E. Palmer's well-established oral method, the audio-lingual approach became widespread among junior high schools in Japan in the 1950s and the 1960s. However, senior high school teachers and students did not seem to respond very well to the new method. English which was included in the University entrance examinations, put stress on

⁶ Yuga, Suzuki, "English Language Book Publishing in Japan," *Japan Quarterly*, vol.41, no.2, April-June 1997, p.202.

reading, translation, grammar and composition. Comprehension and speech were ignored. In 1960, the Ministry of Education established the Council for Improvement of English Teaching. The aim was to help students to master all aspects of the English language such as, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The use of textbooks written in modern English, audio-visual aids, and sentence pattern practices based on audio-lingual approach were recommended. Enhancement of teacher-training curriculum for University students was also emphasized. In-service training for teachers in the areas of listening and speaking was emphasized upon.

Debate over the teaching of English gained momentum as a result of the debate between Wataru Hiraizumi, a member of the House of Councilors, and Shoichi Watanabe, a professor of linguistics at Sophia University in June 1975.⁷ Hiraizumi argues that:

- (i) English is an obligatory subject in junior high schools since it is an examination subject for senior high schools with more than 90% of population attended.
- (ii) English (or any foreign language) education in Japan is totally ineffective, for most graduates can hardly speak,

⁷ "Japan: Tongue-Tied" Newsweek, June 9, 1975, P.9.

write or understand the language which they “have presumably learned”.

- (iii) There are three reasons for the ineffective language teaching: First is that students are not well-motivated to learn a foreign language because they do not intend to use it in their daily life, they study it to pass the entrance examinations. The second reason is the level of ‘English to be tested is too high’. The third reason is that the methods of teaching English, which is structurally different from Japanese, is ineffective.
- (iv) There are three issues to be considered: (a) whether it is valid to force virtually every Japanese to study a foreign language, (b) whether to teach English exclusively, and not other foreign languages and (c) the problem of finding better teaching methods.
- (v) Proposals for Improvement :
 - a. English must be made an elective subject in high schools. English is not like subjects such as sociology and science which disseminate particular knowledge, rather English is a subject that requires many hours of practice memorizing, training new vocabulary, grammar and speech.

- b. In junior high schools, a course such as “Languages and Cultures of the World” must be taught which familiarizes the world with different languages and cultures of the world.
 - c. In senior high school English as an elective subject, must be taught for more than 2 hours per day and an intensive training course lasting for at least one month each year must be offered.
 - d. English must be eliminated from college university entrance examinations.
- (vi) Purpose of foreign language education: It is hoped that about 5% of population that is about 600,000 Japanese will become fluent in foreign language, mainly English.

Hiraizumi’s proposals were received well, but some of invited vehement oppositions from different circles, particularly from English teachers. Chief among the critics was Watanabe who argued:

- (i) It is true that Japanese people are not good at speaking English, but speaking is a different from other skills, such as, comprehension, writing, and the knowledge of grammar, so that being unable to speak English does not necessarily mean that teaching English is useless altogether.

- (ii) By teaching English we can draw on some hidden qualities of students' intellect. We should continue to give "Japanese students potential rather than visible quality in languages."⁸ It is possible for a person to acquire fluency in the language even later in life. Therefore, we should not deprive them of this potential. Thus teaching English to only 5% of the population leads to a sort of elitism and comprehension to be included in that group among high school students is sure to become beyond control.
- (iii) If too much time is to be spent in learning English as proposed by Hiraizumi then high school students will have little time to learn other important subjects.
- (iv) Testing English is a good way to measure students' intellectual standard because the knowledge of English is acquired only after diligent and concentrated efforts. This is why English must not be excluded from entrance examinations.

The verbal debate between Hiraizumi and Watanabe on the development of English teaching in Japan made a great impact on the Ministry of Education. The Council for Improvement of English Teaching was reconvened in 1975. It made several

⁸ "Japan: Tongue-Tied" Newsweek, June 9, 1975, P.9.

recommendations: one-month intensive in-service training for leading English teachers, two-month overseas training of selected English teachers; installing language laboratories in senior high schools across the nation; and expansion and establishment of specialized English courses or programs in senior high schools. Despite those proposals by the Council, English language teaching in Japan did not see much improvement. English class hours were reduced from five to three classes per week at the junior high school level in 1978. The decision was criticized not only by many English teachers but also by the general public. The justification for reducing the class hours for English teaching was to give time to study the regular curriculum. The revised Course of Study (or the National Syllabus) issued by the Ministry of Education in 1987 reformed the school Curriculum by taking such criticism.

According to the Japan statistics of 1998, approximately about 18 million people, about 10 per cent of Japan's population, are students in regular schools. Out of them 5896, 080 students are studying in 11, 266 junior high school, 5,55393 students at 5512 senior high school, 50, 934 at 63 technical college, 1994, 616 at 490 college.⁹ In addition, about 2

⁹ Japan Statistics : JIN Japan Information Network, 1998. Overseas Public Relation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Tokyo, 1998, p. 354.

million students attending cram-schools, business professionals and other adults are also studying foreign languages 38.6% of elementary school students, 65.3% of lower secondary and 34.0% of upper secondary school students joined cram schools in 1997.¹⁰ Regarding the teaching professionals, there are 73519 secondary-school English teachers and about 10,200 college and University instructors and professors who teach English. It is also estimated that there are, in total, 12,000 native English teachers working either at secondary schools, colleges and universities, or at various kinds of language institutes.¹¹ It is often seen that teachers from different disciplines, such as, Economics, History, Political Science and Commerce with proven English proficiency, are invited to teach in the Departments of English Language and Literature at respective institutions.

A general survey of English Language Teaching in the schools in Japan during the period (1983-1990) was conducted by a Committee for Research on English Language Teaching in Japan headed by Ikuo Koike. The report is the most intensive and most valuable source for understanding the revisions of TEFL policies at various levels in Japan. The research was based

¹⁰ Ibid. . p. 380.

¹¹ Ibid. p.371.

on a series of nation-wide questionnaires addressed to TEFL administrators, college and university English teachers, junior and senior high-school English teachers, primary school English teachers, teachers with experience in educating Japanese students overseas, college and university students, and college graduates at large. For example, 62.6% of junior high school teachers, 58% of senior high, 80.2% of returnee teachers from Japanese school overseas, and 74.9% of college graduates evaluated their English instruction in Japan negatively.¹² Of the college graduates, 74.9% of college graduates felt that they lacked the command over speech, and yet 54.3 percent said that they would need English for their business careers. Most of the college graduates (78.3%) felt that the main objectives of TEFL at the college level should be communication and more emphasis should be given to communication at the high school level also. The other group also felt that the objective for TEFL should be communication (college and university 60.1%; junior high-school teachers of English 45.7%; senior high school teachers 36.4%; and teachers with overseas experience 70.4 %). The only

¹² Koike, Ikuo et al...(eds.) Integrated Report of Teaching English in Japanese Schools: Retrospects and Prospects, vol. 4, Keio University Press, Tokyo, 1990, P. 977.

exception was college and university teachers of English (communication-oriented 47% vs. culture-oriented 52%).¹³

The results of the Koike's survey were consistent with what the governmental proposals had stated. The Ad Hoc Committee for Education Reform in 1984 had concluded that TEFL in Japan was not very successful for several reasons. Firstly English classes in the Eastern part of the country were too large to control. Secondly enough hours were not allotted to study the language. Several proposals were set forth to resolve the problems. One of the recommendations was that English teachers use more reliable tests to evaluate students' ability in English, and to establish intensive language programs to help those who had performed badly in the tests. Another proposal was to organize an in-service training program for teachers of English. It was also decided that a policy should be adopted to have more native teachers at all levels. Concerning TEFL courses at colleges and Universities, recommendation was that the courses be changed by offering intensive training seminars, opening summer programs, and retraining the faculty in methodology and materials development.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid....vol.4, P. 992.

¹⁴ ibid... vol. 5, Pp. 1472-1480.

The proposals by the Ad Hoc Committee for Education Reform helped in the better policy-making for TEFL revision both in secondary schools and colleges/ Universities. The Ministry of Education held a conference in 1987 to decide on the curricular of primary and secondary schools. The revision on the course of study (National Syllabus) for foreign languages (I. Koike Committee Chair) was also included. As far as secondary schools were concerned, it was decided that communication at the international level should be the ultimate goal. The courses called Aural-Oral Communication in senior high-school English classes are very important. The conference also recommended three new courses for training students' and speaking abilities through (a) daily conversation activities, (b) listening comprehension-centred language activities and (c) speaking-centred language activities including speech, discussion, and debate in English. International understanding is one of the main targets of high-school English. In order to enhance the students' communicative abilities and international understanding, the government opened the largest program ever conceived for inviting assistant native teachers of English, which is abbreviated as AET (Assistant English Teachers) in Japan.

One of the proposals the 1987 Course of Study recommended was the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program

(JET). It was a joint project of the Conference of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), assisted by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of the JET program was to deepen mutual international understanding through cooperation between the AETs and the local citizens in Japan. Through the AETs it was also sought to help the general public and returnees from abroad to improve their English. In 1990 the Program was expanded to invite other language teachers to work under the same conditions. The program now includes teachers from eighteen countries who are generally called as young native speakers' Assistant Language Teacher (ALTs). The ALTs' main job is to assist Japanese teachers of foreign languages. In the summer of 1992, about 3200 young native teachers from six English-speaking countries as well as France, Germany, Russia and China were invited, and in 1999, the number has exceeded to about 6000.¹⁵ Young native assistant teachers are eager to learn through the team-teach process with Japanese teachers of English, French, German, and Chinese and both the teachers and students also welcome this process. Team-teaching has also helped make language classes more effective and at the

¹⁵ Sato, Y. "English Education in Japan : From the View of the Ministry of Education Guidelines", www.jcic.jp, 1998.

same time more challenging. Though the JET programme has been declared successful it has nonetheless faced some problems.

One of the useful outcomes from the proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee was the establishment of the University Council on Educational Reform, which was finalized and came into effect in July 1991. This was the very first drastic revision since the new university system was inaugurated just after the World War II. According to this reform concerning the detailed regulations the working of new colleges and Universities were abolished and the general fundamental rules were to be followed. The colleges and Universities could revise their curricula and other educational and academic matters according to the facilities available. For example, the English course, which is treated as a liberal art, the college and university can waive the minimum of eight obligatory credits required for a compulsory course. This means that colleges and universities are to determine the courses and credits of the courses including English. A University can now decide upon how many EFL course a student should take, whether or not an intensive training course should be given to the students who have passed some recognized tests in an open system or to those who have studied abroad, and even whether the credits from certain

authorized foreign language schools should be approved as valid.¹⁶

Meanwhile, a self-accreditation system was also introduced to keep a check on faculty research and on the functioning of colleges and of the institutions. Students now evaluate the courses, which they offer. All colleges and Universities had adopted these revisions from July 1991. Till 1998 higher education in Japan had grown in quantity, and there are now 1219 colleges and universities with over 2.7 million students.¹⁷ The Ministry of Education wants the colleges and Universities to survive by mobilizing their own resources and cares to the needs of the common people, business community and government. A decade has passed since the new regulations for self-determination started. The general support for revisions of foreign language teaching has prevailed among the faculties at many colleges and universities.

The 1990's has witnessed heated discussion on whether English should be taught at the primary school level. In 1998 Ministry of Education report says that there are about 2.1 million children learning English in schools, homes, or through

¹⁶ . Cummings, W.K. "From Knowledge Seeking to knowledge Creation : The Japanese University's Challenges". Higher Education, June 94, p.402-3.

¹⁷ . Japan Statistics : JIN Japan Information Network 1998, Overseas Public Relation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Tokyo, 1998, p.344.

private lessons. According to the Education report, 127 private primary schools out of the total of 281 are teaching English regularly, which is less than 1 per cent of the 28727 primary schools in Japan¹⁸ However, many more school children are learning English outside their schools. The survey on English teaching made by I. Koike et al. (1990) points out that 78.8% of the primary school teachers of English responded that they need to teach English to small children. This idea was also supported by 43% of junior high school English teachers and 42.2% senior high-school teachers. 76% of the people of the business sector also agreed to the necessity and effectiveness of early childhood English education. Over 91.3 per cent of the private primary teachers of English point out the importance of acquisition of natural sounds, intonation and rhythm of English. Most (74.8 %) parents also approved this approach. From the survey made by Koike, I. et al, it can be said that teachers and parents alike overwhelmingly support TEFL at the primary school level. The suggestion from the Director of the Bureau for Primary and Secondary School Education in the Ministry of Education for the possibility of starting TEFL in primary schools, the governmental commission of revisions of public life had

¹⁸ . Ministry of Education: References on Education Revisions, Ministry of Education, Tokyo, 1998.

presented a proposal to the Prime Minister of Japan in 1992. Although there will be many problems in implementing it, majority of the people concerned have a favourable opinion about proceeding towards the goal. Italy, Greece, and Spain from Europe and many countries from Asia and Africa have already introduced foreign language teaching at an early stage.¹⁹ Due to this, the Ministry also begun experimentation with early childhood English education in two public primary schools in Osaka in 1992, two more in other prefectures in 1993, and officially announced an addition of twelve more schools in 1994. In 1998, there were public schools where English teaching began at the primary level. ²⁰ Even the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in February 2000 had received the report. Schools have been requested to present their reports regarding this matter to the Ministry, which will help to come to a final decision by 2002.²¹

Teachers' Training is one of the important components of spreading English language. The Teachers' Licence Act allows the University students two to five weeks training for teaching

¹⁹ . Ferguson, C.A. "Language Development." In J.A. Fishman's Language Problems in Developing Nations, John Wiley & Sons Inc, New York, 1993, Pp. 27-35.

²⁰ Ministry of Education: Reports and References, Ministry of Education, Tokyo, 1998.

²¹ Takashi. " Stating Japan's case Globally : Question for firm English footing. The Japan Times, dt. 18-2-2000.

English. There are also several kinds of teachers' training institutes apart from the college and university education. The certificates for teachers are granted to those who graduate from these institutions or universities. Recognized institutes have four years of training for the students. The graduates from junior college (2-year course) received certificates for teachers for the lower secondary schools. On the other hand, graduates from senior colleges the second part of the university examination, emerge as teachers of senior secondary schools. So the experience of higher education in learning English goes as an asset to teach the students. Even the grading system shows the importance of English language as an important course subject.

Adult education is one of the important fields of English education in Japan. Toward the end of the occupation period, there was raised a claim by businessmen that English teaching in Japan should be more practical. In answer to this claim, in early 1955, ELEC (the English Language Education Council) was established. Since then ELEC has been conducting seminars, workshops for adults and middle-aged people and practical teachers' training programs at various places. Till 1993 the number of trainees are more than 16000.²²ELEC Program is

²² Ministry of Education : Reports and References, Ministry of Education, Government of Japan Press, Tokyo, 1993.

mainly for the businessmen, retired servicemen, and residents staying near the port areas and teachers of disciplines other than English. The seminars are characterized by the employment of number of able native speakers of English and also by the full use of language laboratories.

In spite of so much efforts to improve English language training since World War II, still the results are far from satisfactory. Till today not a single prefecture has adopted English as an official language along with Japanese. Nevertheless the Japanese are very keen to master this language.

Ainu, which is originally, inhabited the northern most main island, Hokkaido. This is an ethnic group, which had its own culture and language, which they retained until the early part of the 20th century. But now in spite of all efforts, both their language and culture are on decline. Hardly 1 per cent of its population of 30,000 can speak the Ainu language.²³ This group has gradually shifted its option to English along with Japanese. They maintain the same proficiency in both the languages.

The second and largest group of bilingual people is residing abroad and their children. According to the government figures,

²³ Kodansha Encyclopaedia of Japan, vol. 1, Kodansha International Limited, Tokyo, 1983, p. 36.

population of approximately 1.7 million is foreign nationals residing in Japan or naturalized citizens. Seventy-two of these foreign nationals are Koreans, 13% Chinese, 3.5% Americans and 3.4% Filipinos.²⁴ These foreign residents learn Japanese for their day-to day life, but also learn a foreign language like English, so they can communicate with organizations like human rights group etc. Also by communicating in English, they feel confident and an attitude of superiority over the Japanese.

The third group of possible bilinguals is the students who have studied abroad. There were over 15,000 students who have returned after prolonged periods and are staying in Japan.²⁵ These Japanese students who return from abroad often find it difficult to retain their proficiency in the language due to the social norms existing in Japan which pressurizes the students to get back to the Japanese way of life in which westernization is not looked upon with favour.

Another group, which is proficient in two languages, is those Japanese who have married to foreigners. In recent years the number of mixed marriage registered in Japan has gone up.

²⁴ Ibid... vol.2, p. 313.

²⁵ Japan Statistics: JIN Japan Information Network, Overseas Public Relation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Tokyo, 1998.

During the last 30 years, the number has risen from 4156 in 1965 to 16171 in 1995. Yamamoto points out:

“It is also very difficult to estimate the number of children who are in bilingual environments, because although the offspring of mixed marriage are the persons most likely to be exposed to two different languages and cultural environments, not every such children actually receive those kind of exposure.”²⁶

Other than the above four doubtful and not so confident bilingual speakers, one new group of fluent English speakers is the foreign students who are pursuing higher studies in Japan. These students who live in Japan learn Japanese to communicate with the locals but most of the time they communicate in English but at the same time the Japanese are also compelled to interact with them in English.

Since 1987 there have been some changes taken place in English education in Japan. Apart from the Jet program some other changes visible are:

Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI): has expanded a great deal in the past twelve years with more computers and software becoming available and more schools making use of it. Though CAI is not a panacea for all the problems of English education, it does offer potential in many areas. One such area is individualized instruction. With this students can choose their

²⁶ Campbell, K.H. “Ultranationalism in the English Language Classroom”, Japan Quarterly, vol. 34, No. 1, January-March 1987, p. 49.

own materials according to appropriate difficulty levels, contents in which they are interested, their goals and purpose of studying English, etc. and study at their own pace.

Oral Communication: Oral Communication courses, emphasizing listening, speech, debate, etc. have become more important in secondary schools. Thus greater emphasis oral/aural English may result in improved listening and speaking skills and more emphasis on using English as a means of communication, especially if college entrance examinations also increase the weight that they give these skills. However this change was started in 1994 and the actual consequence is still to be seen.

Removal of Language requirements: Due to changes in the Ministry of Education regulations in 1996, universities no longer have to require students to take 8 credits of a foreign language. Since this change is also new, it is not yet clear what the results will be, but there is also a chance that the schools may reduce or eliminate or increase the requirements or give students a greater variety of choices about how they fulfil their language requirements.

The 1990s have seen a greater interest in the learning of English. The Ministry of Education of Japan is emphasizing more on teaching and learning communication. It is also

emphasizing more on communicative English at junior and senior high schools. Students are also learning English from the use of audio-visual aids like radio and television. Their interest in improving practical language learning is growing for it is very useful for business personnel's stationed outside the country. To take care of their demands some private business language institutions have opened claiming "In three weeks you could become a good speaker of English." This is, to some extent, leads to commercialization of the language teaching. That is why foreign language education policies are changing rapidly, mainly due to the drastic changes in the international scene. Most of the linguistic critics are waiting till June 2002. When a bill will be proposed in the Diet for implementing English as a second language.

Japan has become an economic super power. However to sustain its economic prowess it is heavily dependent on other countries. Japan during the last one decade has become the largest aid donor; its investment in a large number has grown joint ventures with most of the countries. Japan is also a major contributor to international organizations like the UN and its affiliated agencies. Even though Japan's contribution after the US is the largest at present, it lacks the ability to play an

important political role in the world politics because of its chagrin in communicating. The English language handicap restricts the role of Japan in spheres (other than economic) of global activities.

Chapter III

PROBLEMS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Japan's difficulty in mastering the English language to a great extent can be attributed to its unique geographical position. Japan, an archipelago off the Eastern coast of Asia had little contact with American and other European countries and was at the same time very much influenced by Korea and China. During the Tokugawa period the rulers had followed a policy of isolation from the outside world for almost 200 years. Though Western studies were introduced in the curriculum of some schools especially for the samurais still by and large the common man was not familiar with Western language or studies.

Japan has never been colonized except when it was occupied for a brief period (1945-52) after its defeat in World War II. Consequently it has not really been compelled to learn another language. Unlike Japan developing countries like India have been under the rule of one or the other Western powers as a result of which learning and understanding one of the international language to English or French has become a way of life for them. For centuries the language of the masters has been included in the education system. During the Meiji period the Japanese were enthusiastic to study English but the aim was to learn all that the advanced countries had to offer so that Japan could strengthen its "economy and military". Though there was great enthusiasm to learn foreign languages during the Meiji period as is

seen in Chapter I, it was, to a great extent, limited to the elite and academic world at a higher level in particular. The common man was not really very much concerned about learning a foreign language nor was it very necessary in their day-to-day life. Besides the initial popularity and enthusiasm of learning a foreign language was greatly curbed by the spread of nationalism and ultranationalist teaching in Japan. Thus learning of English language could not really pick up in Japan. Moreover, Japan is almost a homogeneous country where people speak only one language and that is Japanese. The Japanese have never felt the need to study another language. Consequently, their ability to study another language somewhat diminishes. In contrast, in a country like India where about seventeen different languages exist, an Indian, on an average, knows two if not more Indian languages.

Difficulties in Spoken English

A typical Japanese student is always reluctant to speak in English in spite of having studied English for more than 6 years. The reason for this is 80% of the students feel it is because of their educational system and language policy. They feel that the emphasis is mainly on reading writing, translating, grammar etc. but not on conversation.¹ To some extent this explanation may be correct but it is also a fact that in Japan school children are not encouraged to ask questions or argue. They are also afraid of making mistakes. On the

¹ An answer from my questionnaire circulated to Japanese students studying in JNU.

other hand, American students studying foreign languages show eagerness and are bold to ask questions and not afraid of making mistakes nor shy nor afraid to speak.² The difficulties that Japanese have in learning English may emanate more from their cultural and historical experience.

Along with several pedagogical barriers, students of English always cope with “false friends” whose Japanese style of pronunciation has been pasted in Japanese brains by the Passaic of writing of foreign words “phonetically” in “Katakana”. They always believe in the radical difference between Japanese and English pronunciation. They also always fail to distinguish in their own language between “l’s” and “r’s” sounds and confuse others. A major fundamental problem is that there are only 5 vowels in Japanese compared to more than a dozen vowel sounds in English. It is true that the pronunciation of English varies from one English speaking nation and region to another. For example, the British speakers pronounce “clerk” as “Clark” while “era” in New York is pronounced “error” in Los Angeles. The use of Katakana maximizes the comprehension problem by assigning a fixed value to English vowels, for example, “walk” and “work” are pronounced as “work” in Japan.

The nature of the Japanese language and the social values which stresses on hierarchy and group consciousness make it difficult

² Nishiyama, S. “Speaking English in Japanese Mind”, World English, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1995, p. 26-27.

for an individual to speak freely and comfortably in their places of work or other places.³ To exchange one's ideas frankly with another is considered self-assertive and impolite. A sound and modest behaviour is regarded as virtuous. For the Japanese 'silence is golden'-which it is believed leads an individual to success in life. Again Japanese students throughout their school years have not been trained to ask questions, give their opinions, discuss problems frankly, exchange ideas etc. Meaningful oral communication is restricted to the most part of one's group: family, close friends, classmates, co-workers of equal rank etc. where he can feel relaxed, comfortable and accepted. So it is not surprising students do not show eagerness to respond actively in a class conducted by a foreigner.

In comparison to Japan, the English speaking world represents entirely different traditions as far as oral communications is concerned. This tradition began in ancient Greece and continues to the present day. From the beginning the Greeks put great emphasis on language and communication. Many of the institutions of England and America closely still follow this tradition. Students are encouraged to ask questions, give their opinions, and discuss their problems and exchange ideas. In contrast, Japanese students, in an out-group situation show reluctance to speak and are rather timid, reserved, formal and indirect. In short, most of them do not enjoy talking.

³ Okamura-Bichard, F. "Mother-tongue Maintenance and Second Language Learning: A Case of Japanese Students", Language Learning, vol. 35, No. 1, 1985, p. 83.

Many students and teachers still believe that only the ability to read is necessary for the Japanese. Since most Japanese speak their own language there is hardly any occasion or reason to speak to each other in any other language. So a broader thrust should be applied to improve their reading skills, which will, in turn, help in improving English speaking skills. It is, as P.G. Hamerton has said in his book *The Intellectual Life*, "By far the shortest way to learn to read a language is by speaking it".⁴ The students consider reading as a task to find a Japanese equivalent for each English word. They know the meaning of each word but they do not understand how the individual sentences fit together or what the meaning of the passage is as a whole. Therefore, the students find it difficult to understand the central idea of a passage.

The blame for this lamentable situation is usually put on the English teachers and their teaching methods. Since the Meiji Era they have placed under emphasis on English literature and graduate or "Entrance Examination English" for higher levels of schools instead of the development of the practical use of English conversation. Most of the critics insist that conversational or practical English should be taught in schools. They also maintain that if Japanese students can speak or write their native language with confidence without knowing any grammar the same should be applicable to them for learning another language.

⁴ Yuga, S. "English Language Book Publishing in Japan", *Japan Quarterly*, vol. 41, No. 3, July-September 1994, p. 299.

First of all Japanese students are constantly aware of the fact that English is not their mother tongue. The teacher's business is teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) not as a second language (TESL). The approach of teachers creates confusion in a student's mind. By comparing native language learning people make the mistake of thinking that a Japanese student can learn English the same way. It is very difficult for anyone to learn a foreign language as they learn their mother tongue. Japanese start their education in their mother tongue and later start learning English. This means that a child acquires his native language as the first language and learns English only as a foreign language, with the prescience of the nuances of his own language. This interlingual interface arises, which is a major difficulty for students of the new language.

The Japanese students begin learning English in junior high school at the age of 12. The neurophysiologists who have studied language functioning in the brain say that between four and ten is the best time to learn a foreign language. At this age they consider the brain is still young and healthy for the child to absorb more and learn faster. The child can pick up pronunciation also more easily since speech is not fixed to one style. Thus, Japanese students are late beginners. By the time they reach junior high school their speech is already firmly established. This makes it harder for them to learn the new language. Moreover, Japanese reading and writing is very different and requires years of practice. One of the major factors, which makes it difficult for the Japanese to learn English, is the difference in the

two languages. While Japanese belongs to the Altic family of languages, English is one of the languages of the Indo-European family. The grammar etc. is very different. As it is seen that Japanese is a language isolated from the rest.

Teaching situations also make a difference between Japanese and English language. Japanese learn the Japanese language in an ideal situation plunged completely in the Japanese atmosphere hearing and speaking Japanese most of their working hours. On the other hand, they learn English as one of the school subjects within an unnatural environment with fewer opportunities of practicing the language. Since they do not live in a multilingual situation, learning a foreign language is an artificial experience for them. It is understandable in such a situation if an adult learner cannot learn the English language easily, especially when who is younger, finds it difficult to learn it. Some times people say that the secret of success in foreign language learning is "God" and "law" which means the propagation through religion and imperialism. Developing countries colonized by Western countries were under great economical, social, and political pressure to acquire the foreign ruler's language. Most of the colonized countries have linguistic advantages over the Japanese because this country was never under foreign rule and no foreign language has ever superceded the native language in the country's education system. Japan never felt the need earlier to communicate as urgently as it feels today. Consequently, in comparison to some of the

colonized countries in Asia and Africa, Japan's command over English is rather poor.

One of the serious problems in teaching English, especially spoken English, is the acute shortage of qualified native speakers of English in Japan. Successful language teaching requires staffs who have acquired a high degree of competence. A very small percentage of universities and much less in colleges and schools in Japan has with native speakers on their staff for teaching English language. Nevertheless there is not a single national university where native speakers are not employed as full time instructors specially with the help of several government schemes like JET which recruits teachers trained in foreign countries. However, there are only a few well-qualified Japanese teachers of spoken English who have studied in English speaking countries and who have full command of spoken English.

Learning a second language is an activity that requires effort and a considerable amount of time. In Japan only limited time is devoted to English in the school curriculum. In junior high school the English teachers get just 50 minutes per period and only 3 classes in a week are allotted to English. In other words, 105 hours a year are allotted to English in junior and senior high schools which adds up to a total of around 630 hours of exposure in the 6 years of secondary education. These figures are among the lowest in countries where English is taught as a second language. A University graduate has at least 180

hours a year, for 4 years which means 810 if the same amount of time is spent on home work the student still spends only 1500 hours in 8 years on English. A Student is expected to be able to handle English with fair success within this time, which is inadequate in the mastery of a foreign language.

In comparison to English the time spent on native language acquisition is very high in Japan. Children learn to speak Japanese from the time they are capable of speech; and they keep on learning their mother tongue as part of their syllabus till the completion of their compulsory education. This means almost all the Japanese spend around 11-12 years practicing Japanese which roughly amounts to 52,000 hours of intensive study. With only a few hours a week of English study at school and several situational handicaps in learning the language it is not easy to attain the level of competence which is expected from the Japanese students. If, however, a student spends 6 hours a week studying English he will study 50 week a year which would mean 300 hours a year. In 6 years of junior and senior high school is combined the student would then spend 1800 hours before entering college on studying English then most college freshmen would be able to speak, write and read English more fluently.

Entrance Examination

There are some Japanese teachers of English who are aware of modern Teaching methods, yet they seem reluctant to put it to use

because it does not prepare the students for the entrance examinations. There are two types of entrance examination. One is a uniform examination, which is administered nationally and their results are used by most of the national and public universities. Some schools and universities conduct their own entrance examination. The decision whether to accept the results of the uniform examination or not, is entirely left to the institution only. The entrance examinations are often criticized for the manner in which they are prepared. Some times those good in the language cannot answer the questions. Some feel that a few hours of special training would be sufficient to pass the examination and that there is no need to waste more time on it, that it will be useful to devote the time to other subjects.

There can be several reasons why the Grammar-Translation method⁵ method is still the predominant style of TEFL in Japan. Blame may be laid on the colleges and Universities where no distinction is made between the study of literature, language and language teaching by the professors of English. Experts in English, language and literature look upon English as an object of art and not as a tool of communication. Even though some of them know the language fairly well they are not able to speak in English. The methods of teaching English- TEFL (*Kyoka kyoiku ho*) is more often than not taught by professors who have little knowledge of how best

⁵ Brannen, Noah S. "Translating Style", *Japan Quarterly*, vol. 40, No. 2, Jan-Mar 1993, p. 148.

English can be taught in secondary schools. So university graduates are hardly prepared to become English teachers.

Those graduates who have no idea how English should be taught to adolescents simply teach the way they were taught when they were younger i.e. Grammar Translation method. There are others who have better training and are able to teach well but choose to stick to the traditional way because the traditional way of correcting errors or teaching grammar is certainly easier.

Another problem facing the teachers is having too many students in a class. There are 40-50 students in each class. This makes it difficult for a teacher to give attention to the weaker students. The most severe limitation on teaching English is by the parents who want their children to pass the entrance exams on any account and expect the schools to prepare the student in the best possible way available. Since spoken English is not included in entrance examination the parents warn the teachers against 'wasting' time on Spoken-English. Even principals of institutions force the teachers to follow the Grammar Translation method in accordance with the wishes of the parents.

By the time students reach senior high School, they are initiated into English translation (*Eiyaku*), English composition (*Eisaku*) and grammar (*Eibumpo*). The three courses are usually taught with little co-relation to each other. While translation from English to Japanese the student have to grapple grammar. Grammar

in the class text book called "reader" has no co-relation with what is in the grammar text book. Since the "reader" is usually a compilation of stories and essays.

The Grammar - Translation method tends to encourage word to word translation. But too often, such translation does not reflect what is meant in the original text. Only when the mismatch is too obvious does the teacher point out the more appropriate translation in Japanese. The teacher often justifies the *iyaku* (different translation) by calling the English version "idioms", "phrases" or "colloquial expressions". There are broadly two problems that students face in translation. They are:

- (a) Students always understand English through translation and not directly from the texts .
- (b) They make errors when ever they try to express themselves in English while speaking or writing.

In English composition classes much time is once again spent in translating Japanese into English or vice-versa. A class in which students really compose their thoughts in English, will hardly be found, and it takes a Japanese student a long time to come up with a few paragraphs in English . Even at the university level, most of the English classes are based on enhancing reading skills. Keeping an eye on the Grammar - Translation method, professors generally ask students in the English class to translate sentences into Japanese covering between 5-10 pages in the 90 minute class (Koike, 1982).

Most textbooks carry essays which give students little opportunity to develop strategies to deal with other forms of literary writing and literature such as dialogue, newspaper articles, advertisements, etc. which makes it difficult in dealing with these types of literary forms.

Motivation

It is said that in the first year of junior high school students are initially highly motivated to learn English. However, some believe that students after studying English during the first term have a month long vacation; after their return for their second term their enthusiasm seems to be considerably reduced. The initial enthusiasm it seems to more out of curiosity. About the second year of English teaching two factors should be borne in mind:

- a) The text book becomes a bit too difficult for many students because of which these students are not able to incorporate all of what they studied in the first year with that of the second year.
- b) Both students and teachers become very conscious of the high school entrance examination which the students have to take in less than 2 years.

If students are really motivated to learn English, they can learn it no matter what materials or teaching methods are used. In order to be motivated one has to be interested in what one is learning. It is the duty of the Institution and the Education Board to make the class more interesting and motivating.

Language Policies

The Japanese have a reputation of being poor communicators in foreign tongues. The reasons for this can be detailed as:

1. The Japanese are thoroughly trained in receptive language and very little in productive of which they are not able to handle spoken English very well.
2. They are so conscious about the accuracy that they seem unable to gain enough fluency to communicate.
3. English classes in Japan concentrated more on the written form of English that the learners do not seem to pick up the extra-verbal and non-verbal clues of English when they try to communicate.
4. While communication involves thinking in the medium in which they have studied Japanese children are, at the same time, as imaginative as children from other countries are. However, they use this imagination more to prepare for entrance examination when they spend hours for memorizing facts and figures. In other words, in Japanese schools learning is memorizing not thinking.

The Japanese feel that their own culture can be understood only by a proper knowledge of their own language. The Japanese are to some extent, rather nationalist which at times leads them to have a

biased attitude towards a foreign language. The government also seems to feel that there is a need to instill some patriotism in the young group. Compulsory hoisting of flag and singing of the national anthem in schools is to some extent aimed at achieving this purpose. Moral education is also like in pre-war days, to 'uphold public moral, hold Japanese culture in esteem, and be aware of their place as Japanese in the world'⁶, is sought to be introduced.

This attitude of ultranationalism is reflected in English education in Japan. Colleagues and parents pressure those teacher who try to use communicative approach of teaching in class⁷. A large number of native speaks of English visit Japan to develop the communicative ability of students in English, but many teachers in their dealings with English speakers, treat them with undeserved fuss or out sight antagonism. The 'assistant' teachers appointed under the aegis of the JET programme are given little opportunity to develop a healthy relationship with the students. They are shunted from school to school rather like showpiece at a fair simply to show their foreign faces.

The antagonism felt towards native speakers of English is further deepened by the differences in dressing. A number of English teachers sometimes argue that the Western dress or bearing of foreignness can be seen as unconventional. Foreign teachers, who

⁶ Cambell, K. L. "Ultrnationalism in English Language Classroom", Japan Quarterly, vol.34, No. 1, Jan-Mar 1987, p. 49.

⁷ ibid. p. 47.

wear jeans or sit on desks, convey negative impressions of western manner. If an EFL teacher expects students to be more aggressive in communication or; if the teacher employs confrontation tactics or teasing, the hurt and confused students with already unbalanced attitudes will make further negative generalizations about foreigners. That will lead to the student being frustrated about his inability and deepen his hatred towards English language learning.

As a homogeneous country Japan has been spared from divisive factors that plagues other nations. People of Japanese origin in America and Brazil think, behave and even speak like Japanese who are in Japan as much care is taken by these expatriates to continue their Japanese traditions despite being away from their native land. Still they alienate themselves staying in a foreign country by not using English for communication.

Some critics also attribute English language deficiency to some cultural factors. One is diffidence in dealing with foreigners, second is embarrassment at making mistakes, third shyness etc. The main problem in regard to poor grasping of English by the Japanese is that they have developed an inferiority complex regarding the English language. They think that English is beyond their reach and which enjoys a reputation of primary global language, so they tend to be conservative and build greater resistance to learning the English language.

Another obstacle to English language education in Japan is some people's mentality of the "Nagasaki Degima" towards the outside world. As an outcome of the Degima approach those who have gained proficiency in a foreign language, especially English, are accorded low status. Sometimes some conservative leaders of Japan argue that nationalism should not suffer just for the sake of learning a foreign language. Americanization of Japanese culture should always be avoided, Japanese language should not lose its importance to a foreign language.

There seems to be an urgent need to re-examine the significance of language and language teaching in Japan as a whole. Questions such as, "what is language?" , "what is language for ?" , "what are the differences between Japanese and a foreign language?" , "which foreign language should be taught?" , "what are the methods of language teaching?" etc. should be discussed thoroughly. The discussion should be a broad based one involving teachers students, educational administrators, linguists, psychologists, media personalities, businessmen and other professionals whose fields are related to language and language teaching.

Chapter IV

CONCLUSION

Rapid changes in the foreign language teaching policies have been witnessed in Japan in recent times. The changes in the governmental policies, as seen, are usually slower than the changes in society, which take place at a faster pace. The Japanese policy of isolation from the rest of the world, for centuries, has been like a double-edged sword. If, on the one hand, they have been able to build up a strong economy and have achieved a state of self-sufficiency, on the other hand, they have also cut themselves from the rest of the world. The development of science and technology has in a major way led to the shrinking of the world into a global village. No where in the world is there a place, which is totally inaccessible. In these circumstances, every country of the first world plays a significant role in global politics. Japan has begun to feel the brunt of being irrelevant in matters of global politics in spite of being one of the decisive forces in the global economy. So a realization that improving their proficiency in English is necessary to actively participate in world affairs is a welcome attitude.

The Japanese had, as explained in earlier chapters, made deliberate attempts during the Tokugawa period to seclude from the Western civilization and culture. To restrict the country's

exposure to English language was one of the ways of doing this. Japan, this was a late starter in introducing the learning of foreign languages in the country.

Lack of proficiency in the English language learning has adversely affected Japan from playing a more effective and meaning role in the international arena. They now feel the need to gear the country to be able to face any global challenge for which it is absolutely essential to be well-versed in an international language. Now the Japanese have realized the importance of English and opinions are gradually building up to make it a second it a second official language. Effort is also on to make it a compulsory language at all the academic levels. This measure is also taken with a view to equip the young Japanese with a tool that will in every sense makes them true citizens of the global community. So that they are not like their predecessors at a disadvantage because of their lack of English speaking and comprehension skills.

To understand English language better and to use it naturally and fluently is one of the important aims of millions of Japanese people. Linguists are working hard to find more comprehensive ways to characterize the nature and function of English language. The Ministry of Education places more emphasis on developing communicating abilities of the language

rather than developing general knowledge about that language. Teachers are also finding hard to find better ways and materials by which to teach English more efficiently in the classrooms. Everyday publishers are busy discussing new projects to meet the needs of potential readers who want to be more efficient in English. New English is being made more accessible to a larger audience through mass media, for example CNN Master Course and BBC's Basic English of C.K. Odgen.

To improve the educational system, the Ministry of Education has to change the contents of the entrance examination which will lead to students' English proficiency. They put emphasis on listening and grasping outline of an article as well as improving the quality of questions. The number of classes for English communication should be increased in secondary schools. Students must be encouraged to speak only English to during their English classes.

A study of Japanese people's lack of proficiency in the English language shows that great stress must be put on acquiring practical knowledge of English, which is very important for negotiations at the international level. Japan, to some extent, due to the lack of sufficient English speaking personnels, is not well represented in important international bodies. Even when representatives are present at times they

cannot argue very effectively due to lack of proficiency in English language. Also Japan which has emerged as an economic power and has economic interest all over the world command over English is necessary to communicate with their counterparts. The Japanese Government and people increasingly realize the importance of having knowledge of the English Language. Some leaders and scholars also term Japanese lack of proficiency in the language a 'national crises'.

Since the entrance examination for higher education is very critical for students in Japan, it is important that the requirements for English subject be upgraded, this, in turn, will compel the students and teachers to study and make improvements in the teaching methods. Japan can also have an integrated education from junior high school to college. For example, in junior high school, classes should focus on improving English communication ability. There are not many students who actually travel abroad immediately after graduating from junior high school so that they have an opportunity to improve their language skills. It is hence important that English language be imparted at school in a manner that they can at least converse in English. In high school, writing and reading should also be added. Only at this

stage grammar is desirable. Students, by the time, finish high school must be well-versed in reading, writing and speaking.

To successfully overcome this problem the Japanese government should involve all agencies of politics, economic, administrative or education. In this process, public opinions should also be taken into account. Recently the Government Commission on Foreign Language Policy Revision for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by I. Koike, the most important committee for proposing basic plans and policies on foreign language teaching, was established. This committee is making efforts to gather opinions from all sections of the society.

The committee has recommended seven large-scale, nine medium scales and thirty seven small-scale revision items for improving policy from both descriptive and analytic points of view. The large-scale issues include objectives of foreign language education, courses of study, overseas and domestic teacher training system, AET projects (under JET program) teaching methods and materials, standardized public exchange programs, more choice on foreign language, primary school foreign language teaching programs, etc. These proposals by the commission will have vast and lasting influence over the national English language policies for the twenty-first century.

The Ministry of Education has also declared that it will try to fulfil all the goals mentioned in the agenda.

The Japanese have shown time and again that they are a “*never say die*” nation and they have the capacity to make virtue out of necessity. Given their capacity and the will to come out of difficulties Japan for all we know may, in a short span of time, become masters of the English language.

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