An investigation into the problems of implementing
Communicative Language Teaching
in Japanese secondary schools

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Introduction

Educational innovations in second language education have been receiving
increasing attention. The literature on this topic includes studies of curriculum
development, and the process of innovation in contexts. However, it can be seen
that examples of innovations that were implemented as planned are few and far
between (Verspoor 1989; Fullan 1992; Mitchell 1992; Low et al. 1993;
Pennington 1995; Hamilton 1996). The stark reality is that innovations fail more
times than they succeed, mainly because the process of implementing innovations
continues to be downplayed or overlooked (Fullan 1992).

With regard to attempts to implement Communicative Language Teaching
(CLT) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, they have often proved
unsuccessful. (Kirpatrick 1984; Sano et al. 1984; Gonzalez 1985; Ting 1987;
Valdes & Johnes 1991; Anderson 1993; Ellis 1994, 1996; Chick 1996; Shamin
1996; Karavas-Doukas 1998; Li 1998). Japan is one of the examples of a country
where this has been the case. The main concern of this paper is the identification
and analysis of the factors influencing the implementation of CLT. Both teachers’ and learners’ perceptions of the CLT innovation are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that innovation (Kelly 1980; Markee 1997). For this reason I undertook two different research studies: first, investigating Japanese secondary school English teachers’ perceptions of the uptake CLT, and second, students’ perceptions of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Japan. As Brindley & Hood (1990) claim, it is believed that awareness and sensitivity to the facts of how the innovation happens on the ground may prevent duplication of some mistakes made in the past and allow for the more successful planning, design and implementation of English language teaching innovations.

The first chapter will start by looking at the implementation studies of CLT in EFL countries. On the basis of these discussions, the study of teachers’ perceptions of CLT in Japan will be investigated in chapter 2. This will be followed by the second study of Japanese students’ perceptions of ELT. The overall implications of the two studies will be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 1. Considerations in implementing CLT in an EFL context

A number of reports in the literature deal with the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts. However, such innovation has often proved difficult, as mentioned before. The central issue is that, for CLT to be made suitable for EFL conditions, it needs to be both culturally attuned and culturally accepted. Firstly, in this chapter, some definitions of CLT will be examined as a rationale for cultivating the issues of implementing CLT in an EFL context.

1.1. Defining CLT

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) marked the beginning of a major paradigm shift within language teaching in the twentieth century. CLT was largely developed in Western countries, especially in Britain, Australia, and North America (BANA) institutions. CLT has spread not only because of the promotion of the approach by western specialists but also educators in many countries have advocated its adoption, due to the widespread use of English (McKay 2002). It
can be said that CLT is the current dominant methodology around the world.

1.1.1. Communicative competence

The desired outcome for CLT is that the learner can communicate successfully in the target language in real situations. The concept of communicative competence is considered as the key to this (Hymes 1972; Widdowson 1978; Canale & Swain 1980). Canale and Swain’s (1980) definition of communicative competence is probably the best known. They propose a broader notion of competence, that of communicative competence such as grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. The details of them are as follows:

1. Grammatical competence
   Knowledge and skills required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterance. Mastery of knowledge of lexical items and of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics and phonology is required.

2. Socio-linguistic competence
   Knowledge of socio-cultural rules of language use in different contexts. Knowledge and ability to produce appropriate and acceptable utterances are required.

3. Discourse competence
   Mastery to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken and written text is required. Cohesion such as grammatical links and coherence of groups utterances are required.

4. Strategic competence
   Mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies is required to compensate for breakdown in communication due to limited conditions or insufficient competence in the other area of communicative competence.

Canale & Swain’s key components have been identified and explored by a number of researchers (Stern 1983; Faerch et al. 1984; Bachman 1990; Savignon
The concept of communicative competence has helped shape the models of language teaching and learning, that is the aims of CLT is: to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills (speaking, writing, listening, reading) that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers 1986).

1.1.2. Learner-centered approach

Another dimension of CLT is “its learner-centered and experience-based view” (ibid. 69). According to Holliday (1994:171-172), CLT is characterised by:

1. a focus on communicative functions;
2. a focus on meaningful tasks rather than on language per se (e.g. grammar or vocabulary study);
3. efforts to make tasks and language relevant to a target group of learners through an analysis of genuine, realistic situations;
4. the use of authentic, from-life materials;
5. the use of group activities and the attempt to create a secure non-threatening atmosphere.

In all strands of CLT, learners are expected to direct their own learning and interact actively both with other learners and the material rather than in roles assigned by a teacher. Therefore, the teacher’s key roles within CLT are as a “facilitator”, “organiser” and “guide” of the communication process (Knight 2001: 158).

By looking at the definitions of CLT so far, it can be said that CLT highlights the primary goal of language instruction, namely, to go beyond the teaching of the discrete elements, rules, and patterns of the target language and to develop the learner’s ability to take part in spontaneous and meaningful communication. Knight (2001) states that CLT has become an umbrella term which covers a wide range of classroom practice. Some of these features might cause difficulty in implementing CLT in the classroom. Now I will move on to investigating the implementation studies of CLT in the EFL context.
1.2. Challenge to the use of CLT in EFL countries

Perhaps the most serious challenge to the spread of CLT comes from teachers in EFL countries who question the appropriateness of the approach for their particular teaching context. One of the earliest studies which provides evidence of this challenge is a survey of Chinese university teachers undertaken by Burnaby & Sun (1989). The Chinese teachers in the study believed that whereas CLT would be appropriate for Chinese students who intended to go to English-speaking countries, emphasis on reading and translation would best meet the needs of many English language learners in China. In addition, the teachers pointed out several factors that made the implementation of CLT difficult in China. There exist some constraints including the context of the wider curriculum, traditional teaching methods, class sizes, resources and equipment, and English teachers’ deficiencies in oral English and sociolinguistic and strategic competence (Burnaby & Sun 1989; Anderson 1993). Anderson’s (1993) study of CLT in China also reported such obstacles as a lack of properly trained teachers, a lack of appropriate materials and difficulties evaluating students taught in CLT. As Ellis (1996) mentions Orton’s (1990) discovery, for her methodology course to be accepted in China it required not only a change behaviour on the part of her Chinese participants, but also a change in their value orientation:

On reflection it seemed that for the Chinese to adopt the approach proposed, they would not only have to do more of better, and perhaps a little differently, what they had always done, but they would also have to make radical changes to some their basic beliefs, values and consequent ways of acting (Ellis 1996: 213).

Significantly, her findings touch upon a fundamental aspect of learning concerning the need to make new knowledge sensitive to existing beliefs and values. The importance of making knowledge attuned to the learner’s world view seems to be obvious, where the disjuncture between the old set of beliefs and the new experience is too great. According to Karavas-Doukas (1998), this will produce passive resistance or non-learning on the part of the student. In relation to this issue, Gonzalez (1985), who studied CLT in Philippine rural areas, found that
English instruction there was irrelevant to the population's needs, as people seldom used English. Shamin (1996) also identifies learners' resistance, among other problems, as a barrier to her attempt to introduce innovative CLT methodology in her English classroom in Pakistan.

Another study into implementing CLT has been conducted by researchers in different Asian EFL countries. A study conducted in Vietnam identified class size, grammar-based examinations, and lack of exposure to authentic language as constraints on using CLT (Ellis 1994). Li's (1998) interviews with Korean secondary school teachers on the difficulties involved in implementing CLT demonstrate similar issues.

Furthermore, in studies of CLT outside Asia, many educators also report difficulties such as teachers' lack of proficiency in English, lack of teacher training, traditional attitudes of teachers toward language teaching, the need to redesign the evaluation system, and the need to adapt textbooks to meet the needs of communicative classes. Efforts to foster CLT in KwaZulu, South Africa, met with pervasive reluctance on the part of teachers and students to adopt the ways of interacting associated with CLT (Chick 1996). Medgyes' (1986) survey of Hungarian English teachers, Karavas' (1993) study of CLT in Greek secondary schools, and Harrison's (1996) account of a large-scale EFL curriculum renewal project in Oman also reported the similar phenomena.

The implication of the discussion so far is firstly, there exists a variety of evidence to demonstrate that the adoption of CLT has not been successful in many EFL contexts. In most cases, though the accounts vary from context to context, the difficulties in implementing CLT relate to the factors which were discussed previously such as: teachers' existing attitudes and beliefs, clarity of innovation, teacher education, communication and support, and compatibility of the innovation in the context. These factors would seem to influence the extent to which CLT is introduced by teachers and the ways in which it is used.

Secondly, there is the issue of whether CLT is appropriate to the EFL context including the problem in local contexts and cultures. Asian countries, especially, would have constraints to adopt CLT, because of the huge differences between the underlying educational theories in the Asian context and those of
Western countries. The question of teachers’ confidence is also relevant to the argument of appropriateness, since the adoption of CLT holds substantial implications for the knowledge and skills of teachers. When CLT applies to a particular context, it appears likely that the factors discussed above need to be taken into consideration.

With this discussion in mind, now I will focus on the implementation of CLT in Japan. As no exception to the examples in EFL countries, Japanese teachers may have difficulties in introducing CLT in the language classroom. In the next chapter, my research studies investigating the implementation of CLT in Japanese secondary schools will be examined. Before that, it is important to look at the background of ELT in Japan.

1.3. The implementation of CLT in Japan

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has had its place in Japan since the 1980s. In 1989, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Monbusho, revised the courses of the study of foreign languages in secondary schools. One of the primary aims of the new curriculum was to put greater emphasis on the attainment of communicative language ability on the part of the learners. In other words, teachers are required to attend to speaking and listening skills in lessons. It was hoped that the ubiquitous grammar-translation approach would become less common. Therefore, to cope with the aims of the new courses of study, teachers have been expected to move in the direction of the adoption of a CLT approach. In addition, Team Teaching by a native speaker of English and a Japanese English teacher was introduced in 1987, and whilst some schools have it once a week, others have once a month or irregularly (Fukuda 1998). Furthermore, Monbusho decided to start English teaching in the primary schools at the age of six from 2002.

Despite the curricular change toward CLT by Monbusho, the reality is that the main focus of English teaching in Japanese secondary schools has not shifted from the acquisition of grammatical competence to that of communicative competence. A number of researchers claim a negative reputation of ELT in Japan for producing less than competent speakers of English (Holliday 1994; LoCastro 1996; Fukuda 1998; Gorsuch 2000). In order to investigate what actually happens in the Japanese language classroom in more depth, in the next chapter, the implementation studies
will be explored.

Chapter 2. The study: Part 1

The study reported here was to investigate Japanese English teachers perceptions of the implementation of CLT. The aim of the study was:

1. To investigate the difficulties in implementing CLT perceived by Japanese teachers of English
2. To identify the factors affecting the implementation of CLT in the language classroom.

This chapter begins with an explanation of how I designed the research and then to express the result of the survey.

2.1. Materials

In order to achieve the aim of the study a questionnaire research was conducted. Five rating scales were employed to examine the teachers’ perceptions as to how far they agree with the opinions expressed in the questionnaire items. In the five-point scale, the five steps or extremes of agreement were defined as: *Strongly Agree* (SA), *Agree* (A), *Neither Agree nor Disagree* (N), *Disagree* (D), *Strongly Disagree* (SD).

As for the contents of fourteen questions, they were divided into five categories which were discussed in chapter 1: *teachers’ existing attitudes and beliefs, clarity of innovation, teacher education, communication and support, compatibility of the innovation*. A number of the questions in the questionnaire were formulated on the basis of the research findings or arguments made in other related studies. Especially, Li’s (1998) research findings were reflected in several questions (i.e. questions 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16). The full forms of the questionnaire is described in Appendix 1. The data of this research was calculated into percentages and analysed by using percentage figures. The advantage of this scaling method is to be able to determine the data and see the significance of different proportions from the percentage figures (Oppenheim 1992). The
summary of the raw data and its percentage figures are presented in Appendix 2.

2.2. Participants

The participants in this research were 49 Japanese secondary school English teachers employed full-time in public and private schools in Tokyo, Yokohama, Saitama, Ibaraki, Osaka, Tottori, Fukuoka prefectures, which represent a variety of urban, rural, and geographic contexts. Half of them were teaching in rural secondary schools and half in urban settings. The male and female participants were mixed-aged and their experiences in teaching English varied from 1 to more than 10 years (see table 1). At the time of the study, 12 were teaching in lower secondary schools, 18 were teaching in upper secondary schools, and 20 were teaching both in lower and upper secondary schools.

2.3. Limitations of the study

The data presented below, however, must be interpreted in the light of several limitations. The first relates to the validity of assessing beliefs with a questionnaire. Christison & Krahmke (1986) rightly point out methodological problems of objectivity, sampling, and validity inherent in all questionnaires. The second limitation has to do with the generalisability of the findings (ibid.). The results reported here pertained to the groups studied; extrapolations to other populations must remain hypothetical.

2.4. Research result

2.4.1. Difficulties of adopting CLT

First of all, I will present the data of the initial question of the extent to which Japanese English teachers perceive difficulties in implementing CLT in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Background information of the respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of years teaching English (total n=49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3years</td>
<td>4-6years</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
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the language classroom (see table 2). This result showed a meaningful implication, before analysing the exact question items of teachers’ perceived difficulties.

As described in table 2, their perceptions of the implementation of CLT were negative. 63% of participants clearly showed agreement on this question. It would reflect the fact that many teachers were striving to use CLT in their classrooms. With this result in mind, we will move on to analysing the question items which might cause difficulties in implementing CLT in Japan.

2.4.2. Teachers’ existing attitudes and beliefs

a) Teachers’ low level of communicative skills of English

More than half (55%) of the participants considered that their low level of communicative skills of English constrained them in applying CLT in their classrooms. Although the teachers generally felt that they were highly proficient in English grammar, they might report that their abilities especially in English speaking and listening were not adequate to conduct the communicative classes necessarily involved in CLT. Low levels in spoken English as well as lack of confidence apparently prevented teachers from applying CLT.

b) Grammar translation method

About half (47%) of the respondents indicated that their previous experiences, as students, of grammar translation method were detrimental for implementing CLT. However, 37% of the participants showed disagreement on this item. Most of them would not have experienced the current direction of CLT as students. Therefore, they seemed to have difficulties in introducing a new idea or practice of CLT into the classroom.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tr>
<td>I think it is difficult to implement CLT in the classroom.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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2.4.3. Clarity of innovation

a) Teachers’ lack of knowledge of the Ministry’s (Monbusho) renewals of curriculum

29% of the participants showed agreement on this item, although 33% expressed disagreement. Some teachers might consider the lack of clarity of curricular proposals, both on a theoretical and practical level, was a persistent problem, but others would not think it was a major cause of the limited implementation of CLT. This result would give a meaningful implication for curriculum developers, which related to the next question of how to use materials.

b) Little time for and expertise in materials development

The majority (74%) of participants reported that lack of time for thinking about how to use materials and tasks in the textbooks effectively was constraints for them. The new courses of study explicitly required attention to all the four skills, thereby proportionately increasing the load on the teachers and learners. The problem would be particularly serious when teachers had to prepare their own materials and activities if they want to use CLT.

2.4.4. Teacher education

39% of the participants named lack of pre-service teacher education as one of the main obstacles they faced in applying CLT. They might not have practised CLT much while training at university. However, for most of the participants few opportunities to participate in in-service teacher education seemed to be serious constraints. 65% of them reported they had difficulties receiving proper retraining opportunities along with working as a teacher. They needed to be given extensive opportunities to experiment with new ideas and express problems with their classroom context.

2.4.5. Communication and support

a) Lack of opportunities and networks to exchange ideas among English teachers

More than half (55%) of the participants found the lack of professional, collegial and administrative support discouraging for implementing CLT. This
reflected the fact that teachers could not get enough help, when they needed cooperation not only with colleagues within schools but also with fellow instructors outside schools.

b) **Negative attitudes within the school for implementing CLT**

Lack of school support for the innovation was named by 43% respondents as another serious constraint. The result showed the point that a number of schools did not provide enough help for teachers to reduce the difficulty in implementing CLT in language classrooms.

2.4.6. **Compatibility of innovation**

1) **Difficulties caused by students**

a) **Students’ low level of communication skills of English**

57% of the participants identified the students’ low level of communicative skills in English as a primary constraint in trying CLT. CLT necessarily involved speaking activities, however, teachers found it hard to do any oral communicative activities because students did not have the necessary proficiency in English and had a limited command of English structures. Such phenomena might make teachers frustrated with CLT.

b) **Resistance to class participation**

Almost half (49%) respondents cited that the students’ resistance to class participation would limit their use of CLT. The result proves that as students have already been in school for at least 6 years by the time they enter secondary schools, they have become accustomed to the traditional teacher-centered classroom structure, in which students speak only when they are spoken to.

2) **Difficulties caused by educational settings**

a) **Large classes**

The majority of participants referred to large classes as one of the principal constraints on their attempts to use CLT. Among 77% respondents who showed agreement on this item, 45% of them strongly agreed. The average number of students in secondary school classes in Japan is around 35-40. Effectively
monitoring students’ utterances and giving guidance for language practice in these activities would become a difficult task and might be often considered as a barrier for teachers.

b) University entrance examinations

The university entrance examination was named by a number of (61%) respondents as a detrimental fact. Its grammar-based nature has remained unchanged, therefore, teachers, under pressure to make their students do well on such tests, often might devote valuable class time to teaching test-taking skills and drilling students on reading as well as on multiple-choice grammar items.

c) EFL settings

A high proportion of participants mentioned EFL settings as a constraint for implementing CLT. In Japan, there have been few opportunities to speak English or little contact with foreign countries. 71% of the participants had difficulties in using CLT in such EFL settings. Such problem would include the issues about purpose of learning English, learning environment, teachers’ English proficiency, and the availability of authentic English materials.

2.5. Discussion

The analysis of the questionnaire research data made clear the teachers’ perceived difficulties in introducing CLT and the disparity between intended and implemented CLT curriculum to the Japanese English language classroom. I will analyse the research result in more depth, according to the five categories: teachers’ existing attitudes and beliefs, clarity of innovation, teacher education, communication and support, and compatibility of innovation.

2.5.1. Teachers’ existing attitudes and beliefs

The result reported that the factor of teachers’ existing attitudes and beliefs would affect the adoption of CLT in the classroom. Firstly, more than half of the participants claim that their existing low English proficiency were constraints for implementing CLT. As I examined in chapter 1, teachers under CLT methodology are required to have a high level of proficiency so that students can
develop their communicative competence. Medgyes (1986:112) comments on the heavy linguistic demands made by CLT on non-native teachers whose energy is “inevitably used up in the constant struggle with their own language deficiencies, leaving only a small fraction for attending to their students’ problems”. This would almost certainly happen to the Japanese English teachers. Secondly, about half the students expressed the view that their experiences, as students, of grammar translation method affects using CLT in the classroom. This might relate to the issue of teacher training, communication and support or incompatibility of the innovation. Many researchers claim that teachers’ attitudes have been identified as “context-specific” (Karavas-Doukas 1998:31), influenced by the values and philosophy of the educational system of which the teacher is part, and by the attitudes held by others in the teachers’ working context such as colleagues or the headteachers (Sarason 1990; Dalin et al. 1993; Fullan 1993). When Japanese English teachers have any incompatibilities in the working context, they cannot refine their existing attitude toward a new dimension of CLT.

2.5.2. Clarity of innovation

According to the data, lack of clarity of innovation would be detrimental for the teachers to some extent. About one-third of the participants expressed the view that they did not understand the goals or principles in the curriculum. Considerably, one of the important goals of teachers would be to implement the Monbusho curriculum as manifested in the prescribed textbooks. Most of the available literature on the Japanese curriculum explain who the reforms are intended to help, but fail to define the concepts that underlie them, and explain why they should be carried out (LoCastro 1996; Fukuda 1998; Hadley 1996, 1999). Term such as “content-based, co-operative learning, and internationalisation” are frequently used but their meanings are rarely clarified (Hadley 1999:97). Teachers have considerable difficulties in defining what the term actually means, and tend to fall back on vague or idealistic impressions (Mouer & Sugimoto 1986; Hadley 1996). This lack of understanding of the objectives and principles in the curriculum and the means of its implementation, may lead to the form of non-change, as highlighted by Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991).

In addition, the Monbusho curriculum lacks the direct and explicit guidance on
how to use the materials and communicative tasks in the textbooks at classroom level. The majority of teachers, therefore, had difficulties in using them in an effective way, as the data showed. LoCastro (1996) claims that the linguistic content load in the curriculum can be considerable and little attention is officially paid to the fact that not all learners are able to achieve the stated objectives for each grade level. This would mean a heavy enough burden on the individual teacher.

2.5.3. Teacher education

One of the factors impeding the successful implementation of CLT seemed to be the lack of teacher training. As was revealed in the data, few Japanese teachers had proper opportunities for training in CLT. This would lead to not only a fragmented understanding but a misconception about CLT and also made it difficult for the teachers to leave the security of the traditional methods to take the risk of trying new unfamiliar methods.

In terms of pre-service training in Japan, the Ministry of Education documents state that, as part of their first degree, university students preparing to become language teachers must undergo, however, the period of training could be as short as three weeks assignment in a junior or senior high school (Muranoi 2001). Moreover, in the course of universities, there is often a literature component where the students might be required to study English or American literature, to increase their appreciation of the texts themselves (ibid.). Consequently, it appears that most students are not given the theoretical and practical aspects of the applied linguistics and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses that would be considered necessary for them.

As for the in-service training, it must be acknowledged that, particularly over the last five years, there has been a great increase in the number of "outside workshops" (LoCastro 1996:42), such as short courses and seminars by the organisation as JALT (the Japan Association of Language Teachers), the British Council, and publishers. However, in fact, these programmes are not recognised by the Ministry of Education and individuals would find resistance at their places of employment to their participating in outside, in-service training activities. In-service training are significantly important because they need to develop the appropriate skills in carrying them out and adapt new ideas to their classroom context at the stage of
implementation (Kennedy 1996). More participation in in-service teacher training may thus be seen to facilitate and establish teachers’ theoretical and practical understanding of the meanings of the innovation.

2.5.4. Communication and support

The result showed that lack of communication and support would be serious constraints for implementing CLT. More than half the participants claimed that they did not have enough opportunities to exchange opinions with other colleagues. About half of them also indicated that school was not positive for the CLT innovation. Kan (2001) argues that the creation of a supportive environment would be, to a large extent, dependent not only on the school leader but also on the policy of the Ministry of Education in Japan. Without providing the support for the innovation, by working with staff on the problems of implementation and by being supported participation in teacher education programmes, Japanese English teachers can rarely achieve the sustainable development of their teaching toward CLT.

2.5.5. Compatibility of the innovation

As described in the research data, incompatibilities of the implementation of CLT with the contingencies of the classroom and the wider educational context were perceived as detrimental facts by the participants. At first, the predominance of teacher-centered practice in a large class in Japan did not provide a basis for the student-centered activities required by CLT. Many participants in my survey thus might encounter some initial reservations in the classroom such as students’ low level of English proficiency, students’ passive attitudes, and the difficulties caused by the class being large. In addition, both university exams and EFL settings were serious constraints for majority of teachers. They would relate to the issue of students’ needs in learning English, as we discuss in more depth in chapter 4.

Next, as a support study of implementing CLT in Japan, the small scale of study of examining students’ perceptions of ELT will be discussed. As mentioned before, in the literature the learners’ perceptions have been addressed to be particularly meaningful in order to understand the condition in language classrooms. In the final part of chapter 3, I attempt to find the similarities or
differences between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the implementation of CLT.

Chapter 3. The study: Part 2

The research reported here investigated Japanese learners’ needs and perceptions of English language teaching in Japan. The aims of the research were as follows:

1. To investigate how English language teaching is perceived by students and examining whether students’ needs are fulfilled.
2. To obtain a clear picture of what the implementation of CLT that takes place actually looks like.

3.1. Materials and methodology

For achieving these aims, the questionnaire research was employed. Questionnaires can be beneficial in providing the amenable answers to a variety of questions, and they can be given to many people, at distance sites, simultaneously (King et al. 1987; Nunan 1992). The method I used, involving asking key participants, students, might provide sufficient data to describe what the implementation of CLT in Japan looked like, I was, however, aware that the questionnaire measures can have credibility problems which were discussed in the first study.

3.2. Research questions

The research was designed to address two main questions:

1. What are the students’ needs in learning English?
2. How do they perceive the English classes?

The research combined closed- and open-ended questions. The questions in the questionnaire basically reflected some research findings such as Horwitz’s (1987). Four out of seven closed-ended questions were examined by using five rating scales, which enabled participants to decide how far they agree or disagree with the
question. The only open-ended question allowed students to write freely about English language teaching in Japan. The full forms of the questionnaire is described in Appendix 3. The data was analysed by using percentage figures and I rounded the number up or down to one decimal place (e.g. 81.3 was to 81).

3.3. Participants

A total of 90 students participated in the study. The participants included students at public and private secondary schools in Tokyo, while 79 of them were students of the private women secondary school where I previously worked. The participants ranged from 12 to 15 years in age, with the average age of 14. Their experience in learning English varied from 1 to over 6 years, and half (48%) of them had 2-4 years-experiences (see Appendix 4).

3.4. Research results and Analysis

The descriptive statistics for the 7 items are presented in Appendix 4. As for analysing the open-ended question, the topics and number of mentions are also summarised in Appendix 4. We will examine the research result according to three categories: students' needs in learning English, perceptions of ELT with Japanese English teachers, and students comments on ELT.

3.4.1. Students' needs of learning English

Two items (Q2, 3) dealt with the students' needs and goals of learning English. The result of Q2 showed the skills they want to acquire as follows:

Speaking (53%) ; Listening (28%) ; Reading (11%) ; Writing (8%)

The data reflected the view that speaking ability among four skills of English is a desirable goal for students.

As for the main purpose of learning English, their answers would be divided into three characteristics:

1. English is spreading all over the world (28%)
2. Passing the exams (27%)
3. Getting better jobs (24%)

The first purpose described above could be basically categorised as "integrative motivation", which is a desire to learn a language in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak it (Richards et al. 1992: 238). In contrast, both second and third items are considered as "instrumental motivation", which relates their language learning to the usefulness for certain "instrumental goals, such as getting a job, reading a foreign newspaper, passing a examination" (ibid.). This result would also reflect the fact the educational policy by Ministry of Education which has emphasised learning English with a vision of fostering the ability to unambiguously and logically express oneself in the imagined international community (Kubota 2002).

3.4.2. Students' perceptions of ELT

Four question items (Q4-7) supported the perception of English language classroom in Japan. Half of the participants expressed the positive view that they liked learning English, however, the evaluation of their language classroom was negative. Only 22% of the students were satisfied with English classes in schools. They expressed the opinions that the English teaching put too much emphasis on grammar. The majority (66%) of students claimed that ELT in Japan should change direction to teach communicative skills of English. This result would also reflect their needs to improve their speaking skills, as have been examined in the previous part.

3.4.3. Students' comments on ELT

The response to the open-ended question in which participants wrote freely their opinions about ELT also demonstrated the negative views of the implementation of CLT in the language classroom. The most frequent criticism voiced were the fact that they could not improve their oral skills of English. 42 participants clearly commented that they wished to have more opportunities to acquire communicative skills in the class. Although some of them knew that grammar would be the important aspect for learning English, they criticised the fact they were learning too complex grammar, focused on the preparation for the university exam.
Apart from this, 20 students mentioned *Team Teaching* (TT) class with a native speaker of English. The overall perception toward TT was quite positive. They considered TT as effective in terms of learning communicative skills of English. Most of them had the opportunity to have the TT class only once a week, therefore, they hoped for visiting native English teachers more in their English classes. Some of them also commented that they enjoyed practising English with native speakers and having opportunities to speak English.

3.5. Discussion

The research results provide a picture of how students perceived ELT and what actually happened between teachers and learners in the classroom.

Firstly, as a response to the questions on the *students’ needs in learning English*, more than half of students prioritised speaking skills, followed by listening skills. In other words, the students’ main needs in learning English were to acquire communicative language skills of English, which meant CLT methodology had a potential to make a major contribution to the students’ needs of learning English. However, the data showed their needs were not fully fulfilled in their classrooms.

Secondly, as for the *perception of ELT classroom*, the participants were rarely satisfied with English classes in schools. Therefore, the majority of them longed for ELT to change its direction to teach communicative skills of English. Thirdly, several points would be noteworthy about *students’ comments on ELT*. Almost half the students commented critically that they were stressed by the preparation for the exams, focused on grammar. In contrast, in terms of learning communicative English, some students commented that Team Teaching was quite effective. It reflected the fact that they were learning English in EFL settings, thus they had a limited opportunity to speak English in daily life.

The result of the study in this chapter provides the picture of what the implementation of CLT in Japan looked like. The overall students’ perceptions of this innovation was negative as were the same findings in the teachers’ study. In the following chapter, the overall implications of two research studies will be discussed. I attempt to identify the salient factors affecting the implementation of CLT in Japan in the light of the result of the two studies.
Chapter 4. Overall implications of the two studies: Factors affecting the implementation of CLT in Japan

So far two different studies have been examined. Firstly, the Japanese teachers' perceptions of CLT were discussed in chapter 2. Secondly, students' perceptions of CLT were investigated in chapter 3. As far as the implementation of CLT was concerned, the overall result was negative. A conflict apparently existed between the intended implementation of CLT and the actual situation in the classroom. In order to resolve the conflict, in this chapter, the factors causing difficulties in implementing CLT in Japan will be discussed, based on the result of the two studies.

4.1. English in a foreign setting versus an Anglophone environment

The majority of teacher participants of my survey reported that CLT has not given an adequate account EFL teaching situations. The teacher would see important differences between teaching EFL and teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). They might express frustration at the fact including purposes of learning English and teaching/learning environment. Nayar (1997) in a timely article analysing the various glosses of EFL and ESL (types 1 and 2), points out several significant differences teaching English as a second language in an Anglophone host country such as in the USA, Canada and Australia (“ESL2”), teaching English in a host country which has a high numbers of English speakers (“ESL1, as in Singapore”) and “EFL as in Thailand, Indonesia, and Japan” (Nayar 1997:13).

In ESL2, an Anglophone setting, students and teachers have the reassurance of immediate accessibility to the language from a multitude of external sources, and any number of enriching models of language use. The goals of the students are likely to be to integrate into the culture, and their motivation is high, fuelled by the need to communicate in order to ensure that daily requirements are met (Maslow 1970; Nayar 1997; Collins 1999). In ESL1, English is not regarded as native to the environment, so it is widely spoken as the mother tongue. In contrast, in EFL situations, English is taught in schools, but plays no important role in national life
(Maslow 1970).

Discussing the implications of these three different teaching situations, it is pointed out that the sociocultural and affective domains of language learning, along with language availability and teaching conditions, may render the theoretical assumptions and pedagogic practices commonly used in one setting ineffective and even inoperable in another (Nayar 1997). This is borne out in comparing the motivations of learners in an Anglophone situation, who may want to acquire English to participate fully in all levels of social engagement, and the very different motivation of students in Japan, which may be confined to passing the university examination, and a goal does not require them to use the language in their daily lives.

4.2. Large classes and Cultural values

As shown in the questionnaire data, numerous teachers identified large classes as constraints on their attempts to use CLT. The pair and group practice activities, role plays and dialogues which are seen as integral part of the CLT pre-suppose a class of 10, 15, or even 20 students (Hayes 1997). However, the average number of students in secondary schools in Japan is around 40, and is often higher (ibid.). Many researchers mention the problems of large classes which teachers are faced (Sabbandar 1989; Hayes 1997). The following list is summarises of the problems of teachers when they tried to introduce pair and group work into a large class in the study of Nolasco & Arthur (1988).

1. The students are not interested when teachers try things they are unfamiliar with.
2. Discipline is a problem.
3. There are too many physical constraints, such as the rows of desks which are screwed to the floor.
4. It is virtually impossible to provide the necessary duplicated materials.
5. The school administration and the teachers in other classes do not like the noise when all the students talk at the same time.
6. Students will not use English when they are put into pairs and
groups.
7. The students complain teachers are not teaching them while they are working in pairs and groups.
8. Once motivated by more interesting classroom activities the students become over-enthusiastic and difficult to control.

These phenomena will apply to what Japanese English teachers feel when they introduce communicative activities into their classrooms.

Apart from these aspects, problems with large classes in Japan may be fundamentally related to the educational system as teacher-centered in which the students play quite passive roles, often expected to just listen, or to rely on one or two stronger students to answer the teacher’s questions. In communicative classrooms in Anglophone countries one of the prime tenets of CLT is that the teacher’s role is to facilitate communication, and that his/her contribution to classroom talk should be limited (Collins 1999). In Japan, students may have only limited exposure to spoken English. Under this condition it may seem easier and more manageable to stay with the more traditional lockstep patterns, which also reflect certain strongly-held cultural values such as mutual co-operation, with the aim of improving the classes as a whole entity (ibid.), rather than the more typically western promotion of individuality and assertiveness associated with certain kinds of role play. In recent years, along with traditional rote learning, teachers have been making more attempts to encourage their students to ask questions in the classroom. Teachers now tend to regard themselves as being less “authoritarian” than before (Fukuda 1998:60). Nonetheless, there is still a gulf between notions of the roles of teachers and learners in Japan and in Anglophone countries.

4.3. University entrance examinations

As described in the result of the data of questionnaires, the majority of teachers and students considered university examinations a detrimental fact for implementing CLT. Many researchers point out the fact that Japan is essentially a hierarchical or vertical society where one’s social position is strictly decided one’s school career (Matsuyama 1978; McKay 1992; LoCastro 1996; Leonald 1998;
Gorsuch 2000). One of the conspicuous phenomena is the Sunday crowd of pupils going to prep or cram schools. One can find the fact that pupils study hard with one definite purpose: to pass the entrance examination of prestigious higher universities. This phenomenon was described as "Examination Hell" (Matsuyama 1978:35; Gorsuch 2000: 687).

Teachers at Japanese secondary schools are under high pressure by preparing for exams, as schools are ranked according to which university exams they have successfully prepared students to take (Rohlen 1983; Gorsuch 1999). The entrance examination system can be said to have a deleterious washback effect on methodologies teacher use in the classroom. In an analysis of both public and private university entrance exams (Gorsuch 1999), it was found that they emphasised translation skills, mostly from English into Japanese, reading skills with items testing students’ comprehension of sentence and discourse-level meaning, and knowledge of grammar points, vocabulary, and English usage. Therefore, teachers would focus their instruction on developing students’ linguistic knowledge at the expense of linguistic skills. In other words, it brought about the situation that they might use the traditional grammar-translation method in the class rather than CLT.

Moreover, it also affects the students’ communicative skills in English, which were perceived as low level in the questionnaire data, and needs of English learning. Being confronted with the pressure by the exams, students would prioritise their instrumental needs of passing examinations rather than their integrative needs of acquiring communicative skills of English, as we examined in chapter 3. Collins (1999) indicates that Japanese students appear to de-value the acquisition of oral skills by the fact that is reflected in the award of fewer points for preparing for the exams, but, in contrast, they may have an intrinsic motivation to acquire communicative English.

Some private universities could change their programmes and exams, including interview tests, writing tests, or tests of listening comprehension (Hadley 1999; Gorsuch 2000), however, few changes in university examinations appears to have been made. Unless the university examination system is reconsidered, many feel that the new curriculum will be virtually ignored, which means the implementation of CLT will not be successful in Japan.
4.4. Needs for systematic and on-going teacher training

Teacher education still has the honour of being simultaneously the worst problem and the best solution in education (Fullan 1993:105).

As Fullan indicates, many researchers claim that effective change in practice is synonymous with continuous and systematic teacher education (Fullan & Pomfret 1977; Stern & Keislar 1977; Fullan & Park 1981; Parish & Arrends 1983; Verspoor 1989; Fullan & Steigelbauer 1991; Fullan 1992,1993). Most teacher training in Japan, however, seems to do little towards effecting changes in the ways teachers behave and think as examined in chapter 2. Both pre-service and in-service teacher training must encourage teachers to clarify their attitudes and, subsequently, accommodate new elements within the existing framework (Breen 1991; Ellis 1996). Moreover, training must be geared towards the specific needs of teachers and schools and focus on the problems and issues teacher will face during implementation. As Fullan & Steigelbauer (1991:326) states, educational reform will never amount to anything “until teachers become simultaneously inquiry oriented, skilled, reflective, and collaborative professionals”. This would be the core agenda for teacher education, and the key to bring about the meaningful, effective implementation of CLT.

In addition to developing their understanding of CLT, language improvement is the crucial aspect in both pre-and in-service teacher education. As described in the result of the questionnaire, the main students’ need was acquiring speaking skills, however, teachers considered their low level of communicative skills of English as a constraint in applying CLT. Indeed, CLT requires of teachers that they have a very high degree of competence in English. Teachers without the requisite language skills will lack authority and self-confidence in the language classroom. Teacher education in Japan does not fully take the language demands into account. The way to incorporate a language development component in the teacher training course has long been a neglected area in Japan. Teachers’ language development will be important aspects for the successful implementation of CLT in Japan.
4.5. Concluding remarks

Throughout the course of this paper I have explored the issue of implementing the educational innovation. The result of my research studies has revealed that the implementation of CLT in the Japanese language classroom has so far not been successful and that teachers facing this innovation have had to cope with a lot of factors which limit the implementation of CLT. Overall, the ELT innovation toward CLT in Japan should take more into consideration of what actually happens in the classroom and how teachers and learners perceive the implementation of CLT. However, much more empirical research work is needed on Japanese classrooms and around the world before any practical recommendations can be made for culturally appropriate innovations in the EFL curricula and the successful implementation of CLT in Japan.
Appendix. 1. Questionnaire for Japanese teachers of English

* Please complete the following questions as appropriate.

(1) Are you teaching in a lower secondary school or upper secondary school?

(2) How many years have you been a teacher of English?
   1. 1-3 years   2. 4-6 years   3. 7-9 years   4. 10 years or more

(3) I think it is difficult to implement “Communicative Language Teaching” in the classroom.
   1. strongly agree   2. agree   3. neither agree nor disagree   4. disagree
   5. strongly disagree

* The following are some difficulties that other EFL teachers had in adopting “Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)”. Do you think they might be difficulties for you in introducing CLT in Japan?

Please decide which degree of agreement or disagreement you feel.

(1. strongly agree   2. agree   3. neither agree nor disagree
   4. disagree   5. strongly disagree)

(4) Teachers’ low level of communicative skills of English

(5) Teachers’ previous experience, as students, of grammar translation method for learning English

(6) Teachers’ lack of knowledge of the Ministry’s renewal of curriculum

(7) Teachers’ having little time for thinking about how to use materials effectively

(8) Lack of pre-service teacher education for CLT

(9) Few opportunities to participate in in-service teacher education

(10) Lack of opportunities and networks to exchange ideas among English teachers

(11) Lack of support (negative attitudes) within the school for implementing CLT

(12) Students’ low level of communicative skills of English

(13) Students’ passive attitudes toward communication activities
(14) Large class
(15) The fact that English is a subject needed to pass university entrance examination
(16) Few opportunities to speak English or little contact with foreign cultures in Japan
Appendix 2. Summary of the research result of the "Teacher’s Questionnaire"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Raw data (Total n=49)</th>
<th>Percentage figures (Sum=100%)</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>20.4% 18.4% 10.2% 51.0% 0.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA  A   N   D   SD</td>
<td>SA    A   N   D   SD</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6    17  8   16  2</td>
<td>12.2% 34.7% 16.3% 32.7% 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4    10  19  10  6</td>
<td>8.2% 20.4% 38.8% 20.4% 12.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>20.4% 53.1% 8.2% 16.3% 2.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>18.4% 24.5% 42.9% 10.2% 4.1%</td>
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<td>16   19  8   5   1</td>
<td>32.7% 38.8% 16.3% 10.2% 2.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Note: A1=Answer1; A2=Answer2; A3=Answer3; A4=Answer4; A5=Answer5; SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither agree nor disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree)
Appendix. 3. Questionnaire for Japanese students

* Read each statement and then decide your answer.

1. How many years have you learned English?
   (1) 0-2 years     (2) 2-4 years     (3) 4-6 years     (4) more than 6 years

2. What is most important for you to study English? --- (Circle the number)
   (1) Listening     (2) Speaking     (3) Reading     (4) Writing

3. What is your main (best) purpose of learning English? --- (Circle the number)
   (1) Passing the exams
   (2) Using English as an international language
   (3) Getting better jobs
   (4) Using English for traveling abroad
   (5) Interest in English-speaking cultures and music

* Read each statement and then decide if you are:
   (1. strongly agree  2. agree  3. neither disagree nor agree
    4. disagree  5. strongly disagree)

4. I like English.
5. I am satisfied with English classes in my school.
6. I think English language teaching in Japan puts too much emphasis on grammar.
7. I think English language teaching in Japan should change direction to teach communicative skills of English.

* Please write your opinion freely about English language teaching in Japan.
Appendix 4. Summary of the research result of the “Student’s Questionnaire”

a) [Question 1-7]

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24 25 22 8 11</td>
<td>26.8%  27.8%  24.4%  8.9%   12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
<td>SA     A      N     D     SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>20.0%  30.0%  33.3%  11.1%  5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6 14 49 11 10</td>
<td>6.7%   15.6%  54.4%  12.2%  11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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(Note: A1=Answer1; A2=Answer2; A3=Answer3; A4=Answer4; A5=Answer5; SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N=Neither agree nor disagree; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree)

b) [Students’ comments on ELT in Japan]

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<td>Team Teaching is effective to learn communicative English.</td>
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<td>I enjoy practicing English with a native English teacher in the Team Teaching class.</td>
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Bibliography


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Li, D. “It’s always more difficult than you plan and imagine: Teachers’ perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea.” *TESOL Quarterly* 32 (1998) : 677-703.


