

日本人大学生の授業外での英語使用に対する意欲に関する研究

Japanese University Students' Willingness to Communicate in English Out of the Classroom with Non-native Peers

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英語を外国語として学習する学生（EFL学習者）は、会話力の上達などを通してコミュニケーションスキルの向上を目指していることが多い。しかし、同じEFL学習者同士で英語を使用することについては、どのような意欲を持っているのだろうか？本研究では、EFL学習者同士の授業外での英語使用に対して、日本人大学生が持つ意欲について調査を行った。日本人のEFL学習者同士が英語でコミュニケーションをとる機会は授業外では稀であるという仮説をたて、混合研究法の手法を用いて質的データおよび量的データを共に収集した。本研究の参加者は全員日本の大学生である。アンケート調査の分析に加え、より深く理解するためのインタビュー調査の結果についても考察を行った。本研究により、なぜ日本人EFL学習者同士で英語を使うのか、もしくは使わないかの理由と、授業外での行動と英語学習に対する動機との関連性について、理解が深まることが期待される。

Students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) are often eager to improve their communication skills through various forms of development, like oral communication. However, what kind of willingness do they have to use it with their non-native peers? This study looked into the willingness Japanese university students have to use English with their non-native peers, outside of the classroom setting. By means of a mixed methodology approach, qualitative and quantitative data was collected on the hypothesis that Japanese EFL students, largely, do not communicate in English outside of school with other non-native peers. All of the participants involved in this study are students at universities throughout Japan. In addition to an analysis of a detailed survey, the results of in-depth student interviews were also examined. This study hopes to contribute to the understanding of why, or why don't, Japanese EFL students use English with non-native peers and explore the links between out-of-class behavior and motivations towards EFL study.

1. Introduction

English language education has been ongoing in Japan for over 150 years. Today, English in compulsory education is generally 5 years in duration, from ages 10 to 15, which does not include high school. The enrollment rate of high school in Japan however, which is three years in duration, was over 98% in 2013 (MEXT, 2013) where they also usually study English. Therefore, it can be assumed that the vast majority of students in Japan, ages 10 to 18, study English. Furthermore, in post-secondary education, at university and junior college, enrollment in Japan is about 53% as of 2013 (MEXT, 2013). Wherein students also typically continue studying English and in many cases are required to do so.

The Japanese government has described English proficiency as "crucial for Japan's future" (MEXT, 2014). Despite this, many students are hesitant to use their English and their willingness to communicate (WTC) in English is relatively low in many cases because of their previous grammar-based pedagogy (Fushino, 2011). The hypothesis that many students studying English limit their use of English largely to classroom activities and do not make much, if any, practical utilization of English outside of the classroom setting. This study aimed to investigate the above hypothesis and the willingness of Japanese students studying English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) to use English, in particular how often they use English outside of the classroom and for what reason and help glean information on what can be done to get students to use it, instead of lose it. This study also investigated the reasons students did, or did not use English outside of the classroom.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies on the WTC (Osterman, 2014; Hodis, Bardhan, & Hodis, 2010) in the classroom, as well as studies done on a particular aspect of English use in daily life outside of the classroom (Ohashi, 2016) indicate both the desire to improve as well as the difficulties students have doing so. Ohashi (2016) mentioned that many students wanted to improve their English and were willing to attempt this outside of coursework and class. As well as a study by Provenzano and Yue (2011) indicating students' beliefs that extra practice outside of the classroom helped with classwork. Students in Japan have become used to simply studying English for exams and fail to develop speaking confidence, especially outside of the class but even inside the classroom, before entering university (Provenzano & Yue, 2011).

2.1 Fluency

The idea that EFL students must practice speaking to

improve their fluency and communication skills is understood by teachers and students, but to what frequency and how is debatable (Kerr, 2017). The idea that the lack of EFL students utilizing their English outside of the classroom is evident and furthermore that more practical use outside of the classroom could help. Similar to music students attaining musical skills, for language fluency, students need to practice communicating, but if they are only practicing in class once a week, there is a belief that they are not getting enough practice time (Kerr, 2017). The typical Japanese university English class typically meets only once a week for 90 minutes during two 15-week semesters over the course of one school year. Some students may have more than one English class, but overall, this amount of time is insufficient. Achieving oral fluency in an EFL setting is a challenge, one of the reasons being on-take time (Provenzano & Yue, 2011). Furthermore, the added stress and pressure some students have from the classroom, because of their lack of confidence, unwillingness to communicate can lead them to make little use of their in-class time for communicating.

The out-of-class setting of conversation is said by Littlewood, (1984) to allow learners to focus more on improving fluency and stress over accuracy because they typically are not surrounded by their peers and do not have a teacher monitoring them either. Osterman (2014) mentioned that many students do not like to talk in the classroom with others because they are shy, introverted, embarrassed or uncomfortable with their English. Therefore, this further supports the idea that communicating outside of the class should theoretically help them.

2.2 Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) can be defined as "one's level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977). Communication apprehension has been identified as one of the leading factors in the reduction of students' willingness to communicate at universities throughout Japan (Matsuoka, 2009). Communication apprehension can be described as a psychological phenomenon similar to social anxiety that is experienced by people speaking to others, as Markus & Kitayama (1991) noted. Accordingly, CA is likely to be a primary reason for the avoidance or disruption of communication between students. This communication apprehension is not limited to any specific location, like a classroom, therefore it can be assumed that students have similar apprehension when communicating with non-native peers outside of a classroom setting as well.

3. Methodology

This study was aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Japanese EFL students use English with their peers outside of the classroom?
2. What reasons and willingness do they have for doing so, or not doing so?

A mixed methods approach with an initial questionnaire which resulted in quantitative data, followed by an in-depth interview which resulted in qualitative data from participants. Not all participants from the initial survey were interviewed in the second stage of research.

3.1 Participants

The participants in the study were 260 university EFL students at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC) in Hamamatsu, Japan (M = 47, 18% and F = 209, 80%) over the course of two years. The vast majority of the participants were aged 18 to 20 (98%). Assuming the majority have studied in Japanese public schools; only about 8% of Japanese students attend private junior high school (MEXT, 2014, January), then they will have studied English since age 10 in their fifth year of elementary school. The reason for the percentage discrepancy between males and females is that Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC) is over 70% female. Also, at SUAC, all entering freshmen must study either Chinese or English as a foreign language. The majority of students at SUAC choose English, at 80% to 85% and all students that participated in this study were students studying English Communication (Mortali & Ryan, 2017).

3.2 Data collection

Data collection took two forms. First an anonymous survey was given to students (n=260) using Google Forms. The majority of questions used a five-point Likert Scale, while others offered a list of prepared choices, such a gender, age and what year of school they were in. The survey used was taken by two different groups of students over two consecutive years, in 2018 (n=149) and 2019 (n=111). The second form of data collection was qualitative in an interview format. This data collection allowed students to give more in depth answers and explain their reasons regarding questions from the survey (n= 15).

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 Survey Results and Discussion

The quantitative data (figure 1) shows the percentage to what extent students communicated in English with their non-native peers for the groups from both 2018

and 2019. The results indicate that both groups of students either very rarely, or rarely used English with their non-native peers outside of the classroom. In 2018, 80% of students claimed to very rarely or rarely use English with their non-native peers. In 2019, a total of 90% of students claimed the same of either very rarely, or rarely using English. A combined two-year total of 219 out of 260 (84%) students said they either very rarely, or rarely used English with their non-native peers. These numbers quite clearly indicate that students do not use English when they're with non-native peers outside of the classroom.

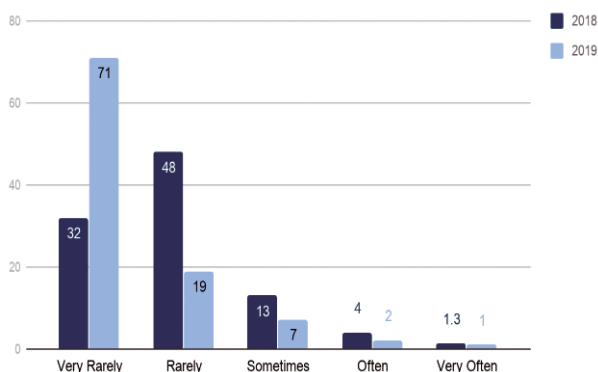


Figure 1. How often do you communicate in English with non-native peers?

The data in figure 2 displays their willingness to communicate in English with non-native peers outside of the classroom. This illustrates the contrast in what they believed to be a good idea, versus what they actually do. As previously stated, a combined total of 84% of students surveyed said they either, very rarely or rarely use English with non-native peers outside of the classroom. Despite that, in 2018, over 51% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they thought it was important for them to practice English with their non-native peers. In 2019, 40.7% of students either strongly agreed, or agreed that they thought it was important. A combined two-year total of 122 out of 260 (47%) of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they thought it is important to use and practice English with their non-native peers. This is in comparison to only the 25% of students who disagreed, or strongly disagreed in 2018 and 29% who disagreed, or strongly disagreed in 2019. A combined total of 70 out of 260 (26%) students disagreed or strongly disagreed.

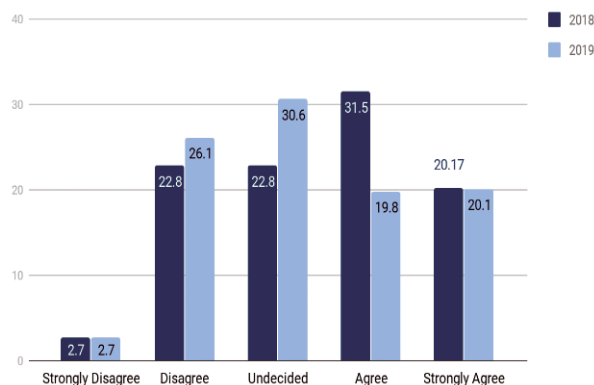


Figure 2. Willingness to Communicate

The stark differences in what students believed to be a good idea, that of using English with their non-native peers, versus what they actually do, very rarely or rarely using it is surprising. There are of course many factors to consider, but the interview results do help in understanding this discrepancy.

4.2 Interview Results

Questions from the interview gave a qualitative perspective to the quantitative results to the survey. Students (n=15) were asked why they thought it was important to use English with non-native peers outside of the classroom. As previously mentioned, a combined total of 47% of students thought that it was either important or very important. The students gave a mixed array of positive, neutral and negative responses indicating what they thought.

Of the fifteen students interviewed, about seven gave some kind of negative response. Three of those students directly said they were embarrassed by their English pronunciation and that is why they did not use it often. Another student said that they could not imagine an instance where they would be speaking English to a non-native peer, indicating that they have no interest in doing so. One other student said that they do not have any opportunities to use English outside of university. When asked why in regards to their response they said they do not know anyone who would want to do that. This would lead us to believe they do not have the motivation to create and opportunities, therefore they do not try.

Two students gave more neutral comments to the interview. One student said they thought it would be a good idea to do so, but they also were worried about their lack of good pronunciation. Another neutral student said again, they thought it would be good practice, but they were afraid of not knowing how to express Japanese language nuances in English.

The six remaining students all gave positive answers in the interview. One student said they think that most

people in the world are not native English speakers and that they think it is a good idea to use English with non-native speakers. Two other students both had similar ideas in that they think that they could learn from each other's mistakes while speaking English. One other student said that it may be difficult, but over time they could adapt and get used to speaking English with their non-native peers.

4.3 Discussion

The results from both the survey and interview helped provide a look into the minds of Japanese university students on why they do or do not use English with their non-native peers. While it is clear that most students do not (84%), close to half of the students showed some willingness to communicate (47%). The issue with this large discrepancy could be linked to the students' embarrassment to their poor English pronunciation skills, as some students mentioned in the subsequent interview or the natural desire to use their L1 as others implied. Also, as Osterman (2014) said, many Japanese students may simply just not know how to approach other students and start a normal conversation in their native language, much less a foreign one. Additionally, regarding the student who mentioned in the interview not being able to imagine themselves speaking English with a non-native peer further illustrates the idea that in Japan, English is seen as static subject, not a communicative tool.

The idea that the environment also plays a large role in, where and when students communicate in English can be linked to the aforementioned as well. The classroom environment has been proven to cause some problems with some students, like shyness, embarrassment or pressure from a teacher (Osterman, 2014). Therefore, it is plausible that if the desire is there, students would feel more at ease using English with their non-native peers in and outside environment. The results however did not match the hypothesis well.

5. Conclusion

The idea that university students would be interested in improving their English, especially their communication skills, by communicating with non-native peers was shown to be implausible, but the idea that students are interested in doing so was shown to be possible. The vast majority of students do not communicate in English with their peers even though about half of them thought it is a good idea to do so. In this study there were a lack of interviews done in comparison to the number of students surveyed, in the future having more would perhaps give more insight into why so many of them said they do not use English with their peers. There are many possibilities as to why they do not, but the most

obvious answer being, it is not their native language, suggests that even though they think it is a good idea, they do not have the motivation or desire to do so and simply use the far more natural L1. Moving forward, because a large portion of students thought it would be a good idea, future research on what would motivate students to use English with their non-native peers outside of class, as well as how to help students better understand the benefits of doing so would be helpful.

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