

# Teachers' Perceptions of Their Students' English Abilities and Attitudes Towards Learning English: A Comparison of English L1 and Japanese L1 Teachers<sup>1)</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the findings from a questionnaire survey conducted among Japanese university English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers. The responses from 154 English as-a-first-language (L1) teachers (ETs) and 170 Japanese L1 teachers (JTs) were compared in terms of the teachers' perceptions of their students' English abilities, reasons for learning English, and their approaches to learning English. The results revealed that more ETs than JTs believed that their students' oral communication skills were good and that their students were intrinsically motivated. On the other hand, more JTs than ETs felt that the use of translation was helpful and that their students were instrumentally motivated. In both groups, speaking was most commonly selected as the skill teachers thought students would like to and need to improve most, but ETs and JTs had different reasons for thinking so. For example, the tendency was stronger among the JTs to emphasize the necessity of the skill in the students' future jobs and studies. The study also revealed statistically significant correlations between targeting productive skills in class and teachers' impressions of their students' English abilities. This result implies that it is possible that teachers tend to have positive assessment of their students' abilities when they focus on productive skills in their classes. The current analysis suggests that these differences observed across the two groups may have been influenced by the different teaching roles assigned to ETs and JTs in the EFL curriculum.

Keywords : ① English as a foreign language ② teacher beliefs ③ questionnaire survey ④ universities in Japan

## Background

Teachers have various kinds of beliefs regarding teaching, including teaching philosophies, goals, methods, materials, students, other colleagues, and school systems and curricula. Exploring teachers' beliefs about their students is important because teachers' beliefs could influence their decision-making processes, along with such other factors as availability of teaching and learning materials, class size, and learners' proficiency and motivation levels (Shimo, 2014a). The teachers' decision-making regarding their classes

can make a difference in class achievement, and thus eventually, to the outcome of the curriculum goals.

In many universities in Japan, English as-a-first-language (L1) Teachers (ETs) and Japanese L1 Teachers (JTs) work together on one language program with shared curriculum goals. In such contexts, mutual understanding among teachers of different backgrounds is essential to reach the curriculum goals (Shimo, 2016). This paper aims to contribute insights to deepen understanding between ETs and JTs and propose suggestions to improve university-level

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English language learning programs.

In the past, a number of researchers have investigated English teachers' beliefs on language learning and teaching. Many explored teachers' beliefs in comparison with students' beliefs (e.g., Kern, 1995; Pan & Block, 2011; Peacock, 1999) while some solely targeted teachers' beliefs about certain instructions, teaching approaches, or important concepts in learning (e.g., Graden, 1996; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Woods & Cakir, 2011). For the former category of studies, question items, occasionally modified, from the Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1987, 1988) were often used. For Japanese learners of English, Sakui and Gaies (1999) attempted to create validated questionnaire items specifically for those learners by utilizing the BALLI. [For further discussion on previous research, see Shimo (2014b).]

In spite of the large number of studies on language learning beliefs, very few have investigated differences between ETs and JTs' beliefs. Chiba and Matsuura (1998, cited in Matsuura, Chiba, & Hilderbrandt, 2001) is among only a handful of studies to have compared both groups. Their study compared class objectives, and teaching methods and materials by targeting ETs and JTs teaching in the same university-level English language program, and revealed the following points: ETs perceived group work and game-like activities to be more useful, that ETs were more lenient about students' mistakes, and that JTs found the use of Japanese more helpful than ETs.

Moreover, Matsuura, Chiba, and Hilderbrandt (2001) explored differences between ETs, JTs, and students' beliefs regarding language learning, but only suggested that ETs and JTs may have different perceptions regarding teaching speaking and non-verbal cues but not grammar, reading, or writing. The main purpose of Matsuura et al. (2001) was a comparison between teachers and students, and so left a comparison

between ETs and JTs' beliefs mostly unexplored. By learning more about ETs and JTs' beliefs regarding their students, language teachers and others concerned with curriculum development will be able to innovate new approaches in which to make their language programs more effective for learners.

## Research Questions

This paper aims to investigate similarities and differences among ETs and JTs who teach English as a foreign language at universities in Japan. It specifically focuses on their beliefs about their students in terms of the following points:

- a) their students' English abilities,
- b) reasons why their students were learning English, and
- c) how their students should learn English or another foreign language.

## Research Method

### Questionnaire Development

The current study analyzed data from a questionnaire survey conducted between May and August 2014. The 2014 survey targeted teachers who were then teaching first- or second-year English classes at Japanese universities, aiming to collect their beliefs about their students, as well as on learning and teaching foreign languages. In this study, the author defined beliefs as to mean their opinions, views, assumptions, perceptions, and even knowledge, which is sometimes inseparable from the belief system, a whole system of one's beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996). The survey was prepared in an online format (SurveyMonkey) and a paper format, both in English and in Japanese. The respondents were requested to respond to the version of their L1. The respondents were also instructed to select

a typical class of university first- and/or second-year students that they were then teaching and base their responses on their impressions of the students in that particular class. This direction was presented in order to limit the number of teacher and teaching context variables.

The 2014 survey was part of a three-year research project that compared and contrasted ETs' and JTs' beliefs (April 2013 to March 2016), for which the following five questions were set: a) what kinds of abilities teachers believe their students have, b) what kinds of abilities teachers believe their students want to improve; c) what kinds of activities teachers believe their students want to engage in, d) what views teachers believe their students have about learning a language, and e) how teachers believe their students are actually learning English. In order to investigate these questions, a pilot questionnaire survey was conducted in the 2013 academic year among a small group of teachers (i.e., six English L1 teachers and eleven Japanese L1 teachers) with the main purpose of developing a reliable and valid questionnaire tool for a larger scale study, the 2014 survey (Shimo, 2014b). The pilot survey contained open-ended, multiple-choice, and Likert-scale question items so that it could cover a wide variety of responses that indicate the respondents' beliefs. The Likert-scale question items were prepared based on the ones developed by Horwitz (1987, 1988) and Sakui and Gaies (1999). These original questions were designed to explore students' beliefs; hence, some were excluded and others were modified in order to meet the survey objective, namely, to explore teachers' beliefs rather than the students'.

The question items for the 2014 survey were developed based on the findings from the 2013 survey, with a special attention to the five research questions stated above, the length of the questionnaire, i.e., maximizing time efficiency and avoiding exhaust effect (Dörnyei & Tagu-

chi, 2010), and the accuracy of the English and Japanese versions (Shimo, 2014a). The questionnaire for the 2014 survey was divided into two sections. The first section contained 13 questions that focused on the respondents' teaching backgrounds, the class they chose for the survey, and their impressions of the students in this particular class. The second section contained 35 questions, 28 of which were Likert-scale questions regarding the students' English abilities, preferences in teaching styles, approaches to learning English, and so on. The Likert-scale question items asked the respondents to select between "I disagree," "I somewhat disagree," "I somewhat agree," and "I agree," which were later represented as 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively, with another option of "I don't know." For the last choice, the responses were excluded in each stage of statistical analysis as it was interpreted as neither of "agree" nor "disagree." The remaining questions, either multiple-choice or open-ended, asked about the respondents' interpretation of their students' reasons for learning English and the areas of language competence to be emphasized in learning, and so on.

Requests to participate in the 2014 survey were sent to over 1,000 teachers either online or by mail. Online requests were made through social networking services to groups for university and college teachers' academic associations or by email directly to these teachers with a link to the online survey site. Survey sheets were also sent in envelopes to teachers on the member lists of a university English teachers' association in Japan. Thus, the data was collected from a random sample of the two groups, ETs and JTs.

### Data for the Current Study and Methods for Analysis

The current paper focuses on the teachers' perceptions of their students' English abilities, reasons for learning English, and approaches to

it. Therefore, 23 Likert-scale questions<sup>2)</sup>, two multiple-choice questions, and two open-ended questions from the 2014 survey have been used for the current analysis.

A total of 374 teachers responded to the 2014 survey through paper and online formats. In this paper, responses from 154 ETs and 170 JTs who selected a class or classes for first- or second-year university students as the context for responding to the survey have been analyzed. Of 154 ETs, 66 ETs' nationalities were the USA, 33 UK, 23 Canada, 17 Australia, six New Zealand, the rest from other countries. Of 170 JTs, 169 had Japanese nationality and one Ireland (Shimo, 2016). Target skills in the particular class the respondents selected were somewhat different between ETs and JTs. For ETs, the most commonly chosen target skill was speaking whereas for JTs, it was reading (Table 1).

The data were analyzed separately for each of the three points raised as Research Questions. First, regarding teachers' beliefs about their students' English abilities, responses to seven Likert-scale questions were analyzed by calculating *t*-tests to make a comparison between ETs and JTs. The *p*-Value would be set at .007 after applying the Bonferroni correction procedure, that is, dividing the *p*-Value of .05 by the number of *t*-tests performed, in this case, seven. In order to limit the possibility of Type II errors occurring, I have indicated two asterisks (\*\*) for  $p < .01$  and three (\*\*\*) for  $p < .007$  on the tables in this paper (Table 2 and 3). Moreover, additional analysis using Pearson's product-moment coefficient (*r*) was conducted to determine the relationship

between the skills targeted in the class and the teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities.

Secondly, one multiple-choice question was asked on the survey regarding teachers' beliefs about reasons why their students were learning English. The descriptive statistics of the responses to this question were used in the analysis. On the assumption that students' majors and their motivations are closely connected, I compared the responses across teachers of different majors specifically for the items regarding intrinsic motivation.

For the third point, teachers' beliefs about how their students should learn English or another foreign language, 16 Likert-scale questions, one multiple-choice question item, and two open-ended question items provided data. For the Likert-scale questions, *t*-tests were administered. The *p*-Value after applying the Bonferroni correction procedure (dividing the *p*-Value of .05 by the number of *t*-tests administered, 13 in this case) was .003. On Table 6, four asterisks (\*\*\*\*) was used for  $p < .003$ . Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the multiple-choice question item, and coding or using key words to explore patterns in comments (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) was used to analyze open-ended responses.

The 2014 survey aimed to collect data by random sampling in order to capture general tendencies observed in ETs and JTs' beliefs. The survey did not ask the respondents to provide information on their students' English proficiency. It is possible that the students of the ETs who participated in the survey generally had different backgrounds (i.e., English proficiency levels and

**Table 1** *Target Skills in the Class Chosen for the Survey (N = 324)*

		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Pronunciation	Grammar	Other
ETs	<i>n</i>	98	123	49	61	24	19	30
( <i>n</i> =154)	%	63.6	79.9	31.8	39.6	15.6	12.3	19.5
JTs	<i>n</i>	90	54	114	66	24	50	14
( <i>n</i> =170)	%	52.9	31.8	67.1	38.8	14.1	29.4	8.2

*Note.* Multiple responses were allowed (This table first appeared in Shimo, 2016, p. 44)

motivation types) from those of the JTs in the survey. In other words, different teaching contexts may have a great deal with the interpretation of the data. Keeping this point in mind, let us examine the data next.

## Results and Interpretations

### Students' English Abilities

Seven questions on the survey specifically asked the respondents for their perceptions of their students' English abilities. One of the questions was about the students' foreign language abilities rather than English only, but the responses should nevertheless reflect the teachers' perception of their students' English abilities: it was English that the respondents were teaching to these students, and they hence made judgments based on their impressions of their English classes.

The mean scores were larger for the ETs in all of the question cases, and it seems that the ETs were more generous in their evaluation of their students' English abilities, which appears consistent with what Chiba and Matsuura (1998, cited

in Matsuura et al. 2001) reported. Regardless of this difference, both the ETs and the JTs considered their students' productive skills to be less developed than their receptive skills. For both groups, the teachers' perceptions regarding their students' speaking and writing skills received the lowest or the second lowest mean score (Q3 and Q5). The highest mean score was for their students' reading skills (Q4) in both groups (Table 2).

Statistically significant differences were found at  $p < 0.007$  for "the students are good at learning foreign languages" (Q1), "the students are good at speaking in English" (Q3), and "the students' English pronunciation is good" (Q6). These responses indicated that by comparison with the JTs, the ETs agreed more strongly that their students' oral communication skills were good.

The correlation values between the types of skills targeted in the class and the teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities were rather weak, but it is intriguing that a positive correlation was observed between the speaking skill being targeted in the class and the teachers'

Table 2 Teachers' Perceptions of Their Students' English Abilities ( $N = 324$ )

Questions	ETs ( $n = 154$ )		JTs ( $n = 170$ )		$df$	$t$	$d$	$p$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$				
<b>Q1.</b> The students are good at learning foreign languages.	2.72	.92	2.42	.81	313	3.083***	.35	.002
<b>Q2.</b> The students are good at listening in English.	2.61	.92	2.46	.89	313	1.429	.16	.154
<b>Q3.</b> The students are good at speaking in English.	2.41	.92	2.09	.77	285.907	3.320***	.38	.001
<b>Q4.</b> The students are good at reading in English.	2.90	.96	2.72	.89	303	1.735	.19	.084
<b>Q5.</b> The students are good at writing in English.	2.35	.93	2.12	.85	286.141	2.223	.26	.027
<b>Q6.</b> The students' English pronunciation is good.	2.61	.85	2.32	.79	312	3.185***	.35	.002
<b>Q7.</b> The students have good grammatical knowledge of English.	2.61	.89	2.53	.94	311	.793	.09	.429

Note.  $d$  means Cohen's  $d$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .007$

stronger perception of their students being good at speaking in English at a statistically significant level ( $p < 0.007$ ) (Table 3). Moreover, among the teachers targeting writing in their classes, again rather weak but positive correlations were identified between the target skill and the teachers' perceptions that their students were good at all aspects of English ( $p < 0.007$ ). The correlation between writing skills targeted in the class and the teachers' perception that their students' writing skill was good was medium ( $r = 0.33, p < 0.007$ ), and it seems that the teachers focusing on productive skills in their classes indicated a stronger sense that their students were good, at least at the focused productive skill for the class. Even though statistically significant differences were not identified, note that negative correlations were found between discrete language features (i.e., pronunciation and grammar) as the class target skills and the teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities. This response implies that, compared to those teaching integrated language skills, teachers focusing on discrete language abilities in their classes may be more likely to gain the impression that their students are not

as good at using English. Those teachers who focus on pronunciation and grammar may miss opportunities to evaluate the communicative aspects of their students' English abilities.

### Students' Reasons for Learning English

This section reports the survey responses about why the teachers thought their students were learning English. In the survey, the respondents were asked to select up to three reasons, with an option of "other, please specify" (Table 4). The major differences and similarities between the two groups, the ETs and JTs, were as follows: (1) the percentage of the ETs who chose "because they like English" (26.6%) was much higher than that of the JTs (10.6%); (2) the percentage of the ETs who chose "because they are interested in the cultures of English-speaking countries" (15.6%) was also much higher than that of the JTs (7.1%); (3) the percentage of teachers who selected "because they need credits to graduate from university" was the largest for both groups, but that of the JTs (75.9%) was higher than that of the ETs (63.6%); and (4) the percentage of teachers who selected

**Table 3** *Pearson's Correlations Between Target Skills and the Teacher's Perceptions of Their Students' Abilities (N = 324)*

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Pronunciation	Grammar
<b>Q1.</b> The students are good at learning foreign languages.	-.00 $p = .963$	.06 $p = .288$	-.02 $p = .746$	.26*** $p = .000$	-.05 $p = .369$	-.08 $p = .156$
<b>Q2.</b> The students are good at listening in English.	.02 $p = .745$	.03 $p = .546$	-.08 $p = .179$	.18*** $p = .002$	-.04 $p = .456$	-.04 $p = .533$
<b>Q3.</b> The students are good at speaking in English.	.06 $p = .324$	.20*** $p = .000$	-.13 $p = .020$	.20*** $p = .000$	-.09 $p = .106$	-.07 $p = .211$
<b>Q4.</b> The students are good at reading in English.	-.13 $p = .021$	-.05 $p = .399$	.06 $p = .274$	.22*** $p = .000$	-.14 $p = .015$	-.06 $p = .272$
<b>Q5.</b> The students are good at writing in English.	-.03 $p = .600$	.08 $p = .133$	.01 $p = .846$	.33*** $p = .000$	-.15** $p = .009$	-.04 $p = .436$
<b>Q6.</b> The students' English pronunciation is good.	-.10 $p = .093$	.08 $p = .178$	-.16*** $p = .005$	.22*** $p = .000$	-.12 $p = .032$	-.13 $p = .022$
<b>Q7.</b> The students have good grammatical knowledge of English.	-.16*** $p = .005$	.08 $p = .885$	.04 $p = .433$	.19*** $p = .001$	-.15** $p = .009$	-.05 $p = .393$

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .007$

**Table 4** *Students' Reasons for Learning English*

<b>Question:</b> Why do you think students learn English? Choose <u>one, two, or three</u> (maximum three) reasons.	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 154) <i>n</i> (%)	JTs ( <i>n</i> = 170) <i>n</i> (%)
1. Because they like English.	41 (26.6)	18 (10.6)
2. Because they are interested in the cultures of English-speaking countries.	24 (15.6)	12 ( 7.1)
3. Because they need credits to graduate from university.	98 (63.6)	129 (75.9)
4. Because they want to be able to use English.	52 (33.8)	63 (37.1)
5. Because they think English is useful to give and get information.	15 ( 9.7)	19 (11.2)
6. Because they think English is useful to interact with English-speaking people.	45 (29.2)	40 (23.5)
7. Because they think English is necessary to find a job.	57 (37.0)	64 (37.6)
8. Because they think it will be useful in the future if they can use English.	70 (45.5)	91 (53.5)
9. Other	13 ( 8.4)	5 ( 2.9)

“because they think it will be useful in the future if they can use English” was higher for the JTs (53.5%) than for the ETs (45.5%).

The reasons “because they like English” and “because they are interested in the cultures of English-speaking countries” can be categorized as intrinsically motivated (Ryan and Deci, 2000). On the assumption that English majors are more intrinsically motivated than other majors, I compared the responses across teachers of different majors for these two reasons (Table 5). Teachers of science majors who selected these choices were barely existent for both groups. As suspected, the percentages for teachers of English majors who selected these answers were larger than the equivalent percentages for the non-English humanity or science major teachers. Despite these differences, which seem to be attributable to students' majors, the percentages were higher

for the ETs in most of the cases (Table 5).

These responses indicated that the JTs perceived more strongly that they were teaching students with mainly instrumental motivations and lacking in intrinsic motivations. Shimo (2014b) pointed out that JTs may share a vague yearning towards English with their students that proficiency should bring some fortune to their lives. This wish, which probably is more often seen among JTs, may have contributed to the group differences regarding “because they think it will be useful in the future if they can use English” (Q8).

**Students' Approaches to Learning English**

There were 16 Likert-scale, one multiple choice, and two open-ended question items on the teachers' perceptions and opinions of their students' English learning approaches. For the

**Table 5** *Comparisons Across Students' Majors: “Because They Like English” and “Because They Are Interested in the Cultures of English-Speaking Countries.”*

Students' majors	English	Non English	Science	Other	Total
	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 22) JTs ( <i>n</i> = 14) <i>n</i> (%)	humanities ETs ( <i>n</i> = 86) JTs ( <i>n</i> = 88) <i>n</i> (%)	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 25) JTs ( <i>n</i> = 39) <i>n</i> (%)	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 21) JTs ( <i>n</i> = 29) <i>n</i> (%)	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 154) JTs ( <i>n</i> = 170) <i>n</i> (%)
1. Because they like English.	12 (54.5) 4 (28.6)	25 (29.1) 11 (12.5)	0 (0) 0 (0)	4 (19.0) 3 (10.3)	41 18
2. Because they are interested ...	5 (22.7) 4 (28.6)	13 (15.1) 6 ( 6.8)	2 (8.0) 0 (0)	4 (19.0) 2 ( 6.9)	24 12

Likert-scale items, statistically significant differences were identified at  $p < .003$  for “the students want to learn English from native English-speaking teachers rather than from native Japanese-speaking teachers” (Q13), “the students want to do speaking activities in their English classes at university” (Q15), “the students want teachers to use Japanese whenever possible in their English classes at university” (Q21), “the students want teachers to use English whenever possible in their English classes at university” (Q22), “the students should learn English rather than other foreign languages” (Q24), “the students should practice translating from English to Japanese in learning English” (Q27), and “the students should practice translating from Japanese to English in learning English” (Q28), and at  $p < .01$  for “the students should learn about English-speaking countries and regions in order to improve their English” (Q26). (Table 6)

The responses to Q13 (“the students want to learn English from native English-speaking teachers...”) may relate to the ETs’ and JTs’ perceptions regarding their students’ reasons for learning English: as discussed in the previous section, more of the ETs selected intrinsic motivation (i.e., interests in English language and culture) as their students’ reasons to learn, whereas the JTs’ perceptions, rather, leaned towards their students being extrinsically or instrumentally motivated. It is logical to assume that students who are interested in English language and culture would like to interact with people who have an immediate background in the actual language and culture, and therefore they are willing to take the ETs’ classes. At the same time, Q13 may not have been a fair question for the JTs. There should have been a statement saying “The students want to learn English from Japanese L1 teachers rather than from English L1 teachers” in order to be able to make a proper comparison.

As for Q15 (“the students want to do speaking

activities in their English classes at university”), note that nearly 80% of the ETs were teaching speaking as their class target (Table 1). This response implies that ETs in general perceive more strongly that they are teaching the skills that they think their students want to learn. On the other hand, even among the JTs, speaking activities ranked first ( $MS = 3.18$ ) among the skills that the teachers think their students want to practice in their classes. The skills that followed speaking, from the highest to the lowest, were basically the same both for the ETs and the JTs, namely, pronunciation, listening (for the ETs these both had the same mean score), reading, grammatical knowledge, and writing. The JTs may be more frustrated than the ETs in the sense they may often feel that they are teaching the skills that their students do not particularly want to improve.

Regarding the use of English and Japanese in class, there seemed to be differences among the ETs and the JTs. The JTs agreed more strongly that their students expected them to use Japanese than the ETs did. On the other hand, the mean scores for Q21 (the use of Japanese in class) and Q22 (the use of English in class) were roughly the same (2.70 and 2.66, respectively), indicating that the JTs did not necessarily think that their students resist the teachers’ use of English in class.

As for Q24 (“The students should learn English rather than other foreign languages”), the JTs believed more strongly than the ETs that students should learn English, although this did not mean that their students should be deprived of opportunities to learn other foreign languages (see Q23, “The students should be given a chance to learn a language other than English”). Moreover, the responses to Q26 indicated that the JTs believed more strongly than the ETs that their students should learn about English-speaking countries and regions in order to improve their English.



Table 6 Teachers' Perceptions of Their Students' Approaches to Learning English

Questions	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 154)		JTs ( <i>n</i> = 170)		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
<b>Q13.</b> The students want to learn English from native English-speaking teachers rather than from native Japanese-speaking teachers.	3.14	.72	2.50	.82	224.184	6.398****	.83	.000
<b>Q14.</b> The students want to do listening activities in their English classes at university.	3.04	.78	2.95	.81	269	.975	.11	.330
<b>Q15.</b> The students want to do speaking activities in their English classes at university.	3.45	.74	3.18	.79	296	3.098****	.35	.002
<b>Q16.</b> The students want to do reading activities in their English classes at university.	2.86	.84	2.67	.77	264	1.929	.24	.055
<b>Q17.</b> The students want to do writing activities in their English classes at university.	2.58	.83	2.53	.86	271	.490	.06	.625
<b>Q18.</b> The students want to do pronunciation improvement activities in their English classes at university.	3.04	.86	3.01	.83	278	.260	.04	.795
<b>Q19.</b> The students want to do activities to improve their grammatical knowledge in their English classes at university.	2.72	.84	2.62	.84	282	1.039	.12	.300
<b>Q20.</b> The students want Japanese translation to be utilized in their English classes at university.	2.68	.93	2.74	.93	256	-.487	-.06	.627
<b>Q21.</b> The students want teachers to use Japanese whenever possible in their English classes at university.	2.08	1.02	2.70	.90	281	-5.434****	-.64	.000
<b>Q22.</b> The students want teachers to use English whenever possible in their English classes at university.	3.16	.83	2.66	.83	276	5.053****	.60	.000
<b>Q23.</b> The students should be given a chance to learn a language other than English.	3.76	.50	3.65	.63	296.305	1.662	.19	.098
<b>Q24.</b> The students should learn English rather than other foreign languages.	2.05	1.05	2.53	1.00	298	-4.021****	-.47	.000
<b>Q25.</b> The students should live in a country where English is spoken in order to improve their English.	2.91	.99	2.70	.97	304	1.850	.21	.065
<b>Q26.</b> The students should learn about English-speaking countries and regions in order to improve their English.	2.94	.92	3.22	.89	303	-2.661**	-.31	.008
<b>Q27.</b> The students should practice translating from English to Japanese in learning English.	1.91	.87	2.26	1.04	301.740	-3.176****	-.37	.002
<b>Q28.</b> The students should practice translating from Japanese to English in learning English.	2.06	.95	2.66	1.03	305	-5.334****	-.61	.000

\*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*\*  $p < .003$

As for the use of translations (Q27 and Q28), the tendency was stronger among the JTs than the ETs to argue that translation between English and Japanese should be utilized. However, the JTs' mean score still leaned towards the negative side for translation from English to Japanese ( $MS = 2.26$ ); and even for the translation from Japanese to English, it was approximately in the middle ( $MS = 2.66$ ).

Next, one multiple-choice question item asked the respondents to select the skills or abilities that they believed needed particular emphasis for Japanese university English students (Table 7). A large percentage (70.1%) of the ETs chose speaking, which was also the most commonly chosen skill for the JTs, although the percentage was much lower (42.9%). The difference was fairly large also for pronunciation and grammar. Among the ETs, 12.3% selected pronunciation, compared to only 5.9% of the JTs. The JTs considered grammar much more important at 21.8% whereas only 5.8% of the ETs selected it.

Finally, let us examine the two open-ended questions. The first one asked the respondents to state the reasons why they thought their students should try to improve the skills/abilities listed on Table 7, and the other asked them what kinds of learning activities they thought their students should particularly utilize for their English

learning, and why. As for the first question, the responses of teachers who selected "speaking" and "reading," which were analyzed by coding their comments (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), are reported in this paper with a particular focus. It is because the former was selected by most ETs, and the latter was selected by most JTs as the target skill for their classes, and moreover, the percentage of the teachers who selected these skills as needing the most emphasis was fairly different between the two groups with a gap of 15% or higher (Table 7).

Although the ETs and JTs provided generally similar reasons why they thought the respective skills should be emphasized (Table 8 and 9), a few differences were also identified. For speaking, the ETs seem to attend more than the JTs to the fact that their students' oral communication skills were weak due to lack of practice, whereas the JTs seemed to subscribe more to the belief that their students would be expected to speak English in the future. This may relate to the previously reported result that the JTs believed more strongly that their students learn English "because they think it will be useful in the future." As for reading, nearly half (44.3%) of the JTs who selected it claimed it to be the basis of learning language or general academic skills, whereas the ETs' equivalent percentage was high

Table 7 *Skills or Abilities That Need Particular Emphasis (N = 324)*

<b>Question:</b> Which skills or abilities do you think students should particularly try to improve? If you were asked to choose <u>only one or two (maximum two) skills / abilities</u> to focus on, which one(s) would you choose?	ETs ( $n = 154$ ) $n$ (%)	JTs ( $n = 170$ ) $n$ (%)
1. Listening	56 (36.4)	44 (25.9)
2. Speaking	108 (70.1)	73 (42.9)
3. Reading	28 (18.2)	61 (35.9)
4. Writing	25 (16.2)	45 (26.5)
5. Pronunciation	19 (12.3)	10 ( 5.9)
6. Grammar	9 ( 5.8)	37 (21.8)
7. Vocabulary	32 (20.8)	31 (18.2)
8. Other	14 ( 9.1)	7 ( 4.1)

(28.6%) but not to the extent of the JT's.

On the other hand, a number of the ETs emphasized the importance of providing an extensive amount of input through reading. One ET commented that “[reading] is erroneously believed to be a strength of Japanese language learners. I think my students will benefit from a focus on reading for fluency.” Another wrote, “reading is a very good way to increase input, which is essential.” A couple of the JTs also commented on their students' poor ability to comprehend contexts, story outlines, and logics, emphasizing the importance of improving their reading skills. The tendency was stronger among the JTs to claim that reading is an effective way of learning a foreign language in an EFL context such as Japan. Of the 27 JTs who stated that reading helps to create a foundation for language learning, eight specifically mentioned that passive skills should precede the acquisition of productive skills. Quite a few teachers in both groups commented that teaching not only one independent type of skills but also integrated skills would be important.

In language skill or ability categories other than speaking and reading, the teachers' comments were generally similar in both groups. For example, among the teachers who selected grammar on this question item, most teachers commented that grammar is the foundation of all language skills and that it is necessary in order to be able to listen, speak, read, or write. As for writ-

ing, many teachers in both groups commented that their students were required to write during their academic life or that their productive skills were weaker than other skills. However, similarly to the teachers' comments on speaking skills, as many as 12 of the JTs' comments were future-oriented in stating that writing would be required in society or useful in their students' future careers whereas there was only one such comment among the ET's responses.

Lastly, the responses to the other open-ended question were examined. The question asked the respondents for the kinds of learning activities they thought their students should particularly utilize for their English learning. The responses were varied: in both groups, teachers mentioned all kinds of activities involving reading, speaking, listening, grammar, presentations, projects, discussion, fluency-building activities, and task-based learning. As many as 23 ETs mentioned reading, 14 of whom specifically mentioned extensive reading or the use of graded readers. Among the JTs, 19 teachers mentioned reading, and eight of them specifically mentioned extensive reading. There is a general consensus among both groups that reading provides a basic foundation for language learning. Although 18 ETs specifically wrote about improving students' oral communication skills using the word “speaking,” only five JTs did so. However, the JTs also used other oral communication-related words such as “productive skills” (six JTs), “presentations”

**Table 8** *Main Reasons Why Speaking Should Be Emphasized (N = 181)*

Coding	ETs ( <i>n</i> = 108)		JTs ( <i>n</i> = 73)	
1. lack of practice, need to improve, weakest skill or weaker than other skills	51	47.2%	21	28.8%
2. necessary for communication, basics of communication, basics of language, most important in language use	26	24.1%	17	23.3%
3. necessary for jobs, studies, travels, useful in the future, expected or required by society	12	11.1%	16	21.9%
4. motivating, rewarding, will lead to confidence	8	7.4%	6	8.2%
5. students want to improve it	5	4.6%	4	5.5%

(six JTs), “discussion” (two JTs), and “debate” (one JT), suggesting that the use of these skills or activities should be promoted. In both groups, comments regarding student-centered, autonomous, and out-of-class learning were found.

### Study Implications

The current analysis has suggested that there were a few differences between the ETs and JTs’ perceptions of their students’ English abilities, reasons for learning English, and approaches to learning English. However, the differences cannot be explained simply by them having different L1s. The backgrounds are fairly complicated, as the following points indicate:

1. More ETs than JTs agreed that their students’ oral communication skills were good. In the background of this tendency, may the fact have something to do that nearly 80% of the ETs were targeting speaking in their class.
2. Positive correlations were identified between teachers targeting productive skills such as speaking and writing and their evaluations of those skills of their students. The study indicated a possibility that teachers targeting discrete language features, such as pronunciation and grammar, tended to think that their students were not good at using English.
3. The ETs showed a stronger tendency to agree that their students were intrinsically motivat-

ed. Both the ETs and JTs thought that their students were also extrinsically or instrumentally motivated, but the tendency to think so was stronger among the JTs.

4. Both the JTs and ETs thought that their students would like to improve their speaking skills most. For both groups, speaking was selected by most teachers as the skill that needs particular emphasis, but the percentage was much higher for the ETs (ETs = 70.1%, JTs = 42.9%). There were some differences regarding the reasons why the teachers thought their students needed more speaking practice. A high percentage of the ETs (47.2%) stated that the students had simply been lacking in practice. The percentage of the JTs who claimed that speaking was useful in the future or required by society was higher at 21.9% than that of ETs at 11.1%.
5. The skill that the majority of the ETs were targeting in their class matched with the skill that they thought their students wanted to improve (i.e., speaking). Shimo (2016) revealed that more of the ETs perceived that their students were “cheerful” and “willing to communicate in English” than the JTs. The ETs’ positive impressions of their students may be related to the match between the target skills and the skills that the teachers thought their students want to improve.
6. Differences were found between the ETs and

Table 9 *Main Reasons Why Reading Should Be Emphasized (N = 89)*

Coding	ETs (n = 28)		JTs (n = 61)	
1. foundation for academic studies, foundation to enhance other abilities, basis for language learning	8	28.6%	27	44.3%
2. necessary or useful for an academic, research, or business path, useful in the future, required by society	7	25.0%	16	26.2%
3. useful in an EFL learning context, effective for Japanese students	0	0.0%	6	9.8%
4. useful way to provide a lot of input	5	17.9%	3	1.6%
5. autonomous or life-long learning	2	7.1%	1	1.6%
6. to build up confidence	0	0.0%	1	1.6%

- JTs with respect to the use of English and Japanese and translations in class (English to Japanese and Japanese to English). The JTs tended to value the practice of translating Japanese to English more highly than the ETs.
7. A number of teachers in both groups stated that teaching not only one discrete skill but integrated skills would be most important. Many teachers in both groups commented that reading was the foundation for academic studies or basis for language learning, but the percentage was much higher for the JTs at 44.3% than for the ETs at 28.6%.

For the interpretation of these findings of the current study, research limitations have to be taken into account. First, are ETs more likely to be assigned classes of students with a higher-proficiency level of English? As stated before, the 2014 survey did not collect information about the students' English proficiency levels. If the students of the ETs who participated in the survey had better English abilities than those of the JTs in the survey, then it seems reasonable to assume that the difference between the students simply explains why ETs' evaluations of their students' English abilities were higher.

On the other hand, how does this assumption explain the tendency revealed in this study that the teachers targeting productive skills tended to assess their students' language abilities more positively? Was it simply because the students' abilities were actually better? The problem may not be as simple as it appears because we cannot deny the possibility that teachers tend to have positive assessment of their students skills when they focus on productive skills. In other words, if the teachers do more fluency-based activities (e.g., writing and speaking with a limited attention to mistakes) rather than accuracy-based activities (e.g., focusing on correct grammar), they may start to have more positive opinions of their students' abilities. More exploration into this

issue is necessary.

Differences observed between ETs' and JTs' perceptions of their students' motivations may also be related to differences actually seen among the students themselves. If ETs are targeting the skills that they think their students want to improve, synthetic effect may be expected among the teachers' and students' impressions of the class—leading both to more positive impressions of each other, and of the class itself, and eventually skills dealt in the class as well. The ratio of the ETs teaching English majors was larger (22 out of 154) than that of the JTs (14 out of 170), which could imply that the chance is higher for ETs than for JTs that they teach students who are interested in learning the language and English-speaking people's culture.

As for reasons for learning English or reasons for learning certain skills of English, the JTs showed a stronger tendency to refer to "the necessity in society or in the future." Terasawa (2015) criticized English language educators and researchers in Japan for naïvely believing that English is required in that society, referring to data that indicated that only a minority, 10 to 20% at most, of the whole Japanese population would need English at work. As professionals teaching English, it is very natural for English teachers to believe that learning English is useful. They would have to leave their profession if they judge that it is of no value. When teachers have students who are not intrinsically but simply instrumentally motivated to learn English in class, this teaching context may allow those teachers to resort even more to instrumental motivations by emphasizing social expectations for the use of English and the advantages that students may appreciate in job hunting.

If ETs and JTs being assigned different roles and certain groups of students is causing different impressions about their students, it is necessary to examine if such different role assignments

are actually beneficial for students' learning. Such assignments could simply be reinforcing stereotypical views about the use or learning of English.

One commonly accepted difference between the ETs and JTs is by definition that ETs or English L1 users have intuitive and implicit knowledge about the English language. On the contrary, JTs generally have more explicit grammatical knowledge. This background may automatically place the two groups in two different positions regarding preferred methods of teaching and learning grammar. This is one of the factors that allow some English learning curriculum developers to assign ETs speaking classes where the focus is often on fluency, and JTs reading and grammar classes which focuses on students' accurate understanding of sentence structures. However, in such an English language program as utilize binary opposition (i.e., ETs or JTs in teaching contexts in Japan), individual teachers' qualifications are not reviewed first, but the fact that the teacher is an L1 speaker or not becomes the most valued priority in determining the teachers' roles. If ETs are assigned speaking classes simply because they are L1 speakers of the language, it may reinforce the notion among the students that speaking skills are owned by L1 speakers and will never be attained by non-native speakers. When JTs start to teach more speaking and writing, their perceptions of their students' English abilities may change. If ETs start to teach more reading and grammar, they may notice different learner characteristics among their students.

### Conclusion

In order to develop an effective English learning program, individual teachers' roles should be determined not by their L1s but rather by their qualifications, skills, abilities, and experiences.

This study has adopted a simple method in which teachers were grouped into two separate groups based on the teachers' L1. However, the differences identified between the groups could not be explained merely by their different L1s. Such differences may have been attributed to the types of skills targeted in class, and to the proficiency levels or motivation types of the students.

English language learning programs in which teachers' roles are divided simply by their L1, have a risk of reinforcing the stereotypes of the teacher groups (i.e., Japanese teachers and English "native" teachers). Such programs may be reinforcing certain ideologies among learners (e.g., oral communication is owned only by "native" speakers). Perhaps, both students and teachers may benefit more from English language learning programs where multilingual and multicultural aspects are emphasized rather than such dichotomous features. Oda (August 2015) suggested that hiring teachers who are capable of using more than one language is one way of making the program more multilingual and multicultural. In his program at a university in Tokyo, teachers come from various backgrounds, the majority of which are non-Japanese L2 speakers of English. Further investigation regarding the relationships between teachers' roles, curriculum features, and teachers' and students' beliefs is still needed.

### Notes

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- 2) The numbers of question items have been left the same as appeared on the original survey. Likert-scale questions, Q8 to Q12, question items regarding teachers' beliefs about their students' personalities and other, were analyzed in Shimo (2016).

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### 学生の英語力と英語学習への態度についての教師の認識： 英語母語話者教師と日本語母語話者教師の比較

本稿では日本の大学の英語（EFL）教員を対象に実施した質問紙調査の結果を考察した。学生の英語力・英語を学習する理由・英語学習への取り組みに関して、英語第一言語教師（ETs）154名と日本語第一言語教師（JTs）170名の認識を比較した。その結果、JTsに比べてETsのほうが、学生が口頭でのコミュニケーションスキルがある、また、学生が内発的に動機づけされていると認識する割合が高かった。一方、訳の使用が役立つという認識や学生が道具的に動機づけされているという認識はETsよりもJTsのほうが高かった。学生が最も向上させたいと思っていると考えられるスキルとして、両グループでスピーキングが挙げられたが、そのように認識する理由はグループ間で異なった。例えば、スピーキングが学生にとって将来必要であると強調する傾向はETsよりもJTsのほうが強かった。さらに、本研究では、授業で発信スキルを目標としている場合と学生の英語力についての教師の印象に統計的に有意な相関が明らかになった。両グループに見られるこのような差異には、ETsとJTsがEFLプログラムにおいて割り当てられる役割の違いが背景にあると示唆される。