

‘English Only’ Language Instruction to Japanese University Students in Low-Level Speaking & Listening Classes: An Action Research Project

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Background

An important MEXT document is open to loose interpretation due to the way it has been worded, and in April 2013, MEXT’s revised policy for the teaching of English in senior high schools looks set to fail before it is attempted. As a result, it is likely that there will continue to be a mismatch between MEXT’s English educational policy at an ideological level and the reality inside the classroom within senior high schools. In MEXT’s revised Course of Study Guidelines, one important revision concerning senior high schools states that from April 2013, English “classes, in principle, should be conducted in English in order to enhance the opportunities for students to be exposed to English”(Mahira, 2012). However, the document avoids stating that it forbids or disapproves of the use of the mother tongue (L1) by English teachers, thereby leaving the stated aim open to flexible interpretation, and importantly, enabling Japanese English senior high school teachers the freedom to continue to teach via unrestricted use of the L1, if they choose to do so. The mismatch between ideology and practice will likely continue into the foreseeable future despite the gradual recruitment of a new generation of younger high school teachers whose English oral proficiency is generally significantly better than that of their older peers. Due to the pressures of the university entrance exam system, teachers are forced to rely on time-saving ways that will help them deliver an unrealistic designated syllabus which devalues oral proficiency. Use of the L1 is perceived as a necessary time-saving pedagogical tool employed to manage syllabus demands even though the individual teacher’s private beliefs about second language learning may well eschew use of the L1 in principle.

One significant by-product of Japanese high school teachers’ reliance on use of the L1 in English lessons is the impact this approach has had on the students themselves regarding their attitude to teaching and learning English.

Japanese high school students have, in the main, only experienced models of teachers who use Japanese as the language of instruction, and understandably believe that liberal use of Japanese in the English classroom is the norm. Moreover, they may have become psychologically dependent on L1 use by teachers and may view it as necessary for understanding and learning a foreign language (Stephens, 2006). This poses challenges for EFL teachers in the university sector who have their own understanding of effective second language acquisition informed by their knowledge of current second language learning theories that give credence to an ‘English only’(EO) classroom. Students who graduate from Japanese senior high schools are enrolling in university English programs after having been conditioned to expect and rely on L1 support. Thus a conflict of interests and expectations may potentially arise between ‘EO’ EFL teachers and the students. One solution would be to teach using the L1 and for students to be allowed to resort to it. In fact, this teaching approach is what a great many teachers do even if there is institutional pressure to implement EO instruction (Klevberg 2000, Schmidt 1995), and there is a growing body of Japanese-based classroom research (Critchley 1999, Burden 2000, Stephens 2006, Norman 2008, Yphantides 2009, Carson & Kashiwara 2012) which advocates use of L1. This pro-L1 stance is reinforced by a body of non-Japanese-based literature which also recommends use of L1 in the classroom (Auerbach 1993, Schweers 1999, Prodromou 2002, Nation 2003). For the sake of expediency alone, sanctioned use of L1 in the university EFL classroom would appear to be a logical and pedagogically-sound reason to resort to it. The students are familiar with this way of learning. It can save time, enable tasks to be explained and set up quickly, and the teacher can manage the classroom effectively, particularly with regard to discipline and explaining important course information. Expediency, however, is a secondary factor in principled language teaching and not a core value. Are there more robust arguments for a sanctioned use of L1 in the EFL classroom that can provide a reassuring case for the effectiveness of L1’s role in an EFL setting?

Key Arguments for Using L1 in the EFL Classroom

Presented in this section but not in any order of importance, are four main arguments that are used to justify use of the L1 in the classroom. Those

arguments are: timesaving, anxiety-lowering, explaining difficult concepts, and managing the classroom.

The teacher’s use of L1 can save time. Atkinson (1987) contends that time-saving is a key function of using L1, and is therefore an efficient strategy when used for English classes that are of limited duration. The rationale is that time saved can then be utilized for more productive tasks and by extension, more language learning. At a practical level, this reason is the most common justification provided by teachers for L1 use. The weakness of this argument is four-fold. Firstly, time appears saved but opportunities for L2 input by the teacher is lost, especially if that input could have been attuned to an understandable level for the students. Secondly, on what principled grounds have teachers decided that time saved is more important than L2 exposure, given that those students will likely have limited and insufficient weekly L2 exposure for adequate language learning? No principled grounds are provided – only practical ones. Thirdly, the expedient use of L1 to ‘save time’ can be exploited as a tool of convenience for teachers who are ‘lazy’ about addressing meaning of unknown lexis, and fourthly, the time-saving reason is convenient for some native speaker teachers (many of whom are keen students of Japanese) to indulge their Japanese at the expense of using the target language.

It is argued that allowing students to use their mother tongue in the classroom lowers their anxiety levels (Auerbach, 1993) and serves to reduce other affective barriers that may inhibit learning. Students who do not feel that they are participating in the lesson through L2 can feel a sense of reassurance that they are participating in the lesson through L1 exchanges with partners and in their groups. For teachers whose approach is informed by humanistic teaching beliefs, these are valid arguments. However, there is a serious risk of some students over-using this privilege at the expense of using L2 when they could have attempted to use the latter. A teacher who strives to be a caring teacher should be able to lower her or his students’ anxiety levels using humanistic tools that will make redundant the need to allow students the use of their L1 as a stress-relieving medium. It is a fact that a great many teachers who teach multi-lingual EFL classes (for example, in EFL schools in the UK) successfully teach without recourse to an L1 and are expert in creating an anxiety-reduced classroom. It is also claimed that allowing L1 use by the students during communicative tasks creates a social space in which they can

check, confirm, and consult with each other in their mother tongue in order to keep control of a task or to complete it (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). On the surface, allowing students to resort to L1 to reduce the risk of their task or activity breaking down and to maintain their confidence in doing the task, may be construed as an expedient classroom management strategy by the teacher. However, such use of L1 as a mediating tool to facilitate task completion may also serve to undermine student confidence in their ability to communicate in English, and ignores the possibility that student confidence will improve in conjunction with the amount of attempts they make to communicate in English even at the risk of the task breaking down. When students try to communicate their meaning in the L2 they will be obliged to take risks that will involve miscommunication and mistakes. This will encourage confidence as they learn to appreciate that speaking spontaneously without preparation involves mistakes, risk-taking (Leane, 2006), and negotiating meaning - a scenario that mirrors real life L2 communication.

The ability to use L1 by the teacher when grammar or some other conceptual language issue needs clarifying, is regarded as advantageous since students would struggle to comprehend grammar explanations in the second language. Such a use of the L1 is a strong component of high school English classes. However, numerous EFL teachers teach in multilingual classrooms where an L1 does not exist. Many EFL teachers do not speak their students' L1 well enough to provide grammar explanations yet still manage to teach the meaning of a grammatical structure unambiguously through the use of L2 'time lines' and L2 'concept questions' - two teaching skills that well-trained EFL teachers typically have at their disposal (Harbord, 1992:353). Teachers' use of L1 to explain grammar may be partly due to insufficient teacher knowledge or expertise in L2 clarification-of-meaning skills such as those mentioned above, resulting in lost opportunities to enhance L2 exposure by using important classroom time for teacher-centered L1.

One of the most common rationales provided by teachers for use of L1, is the belief that it is a practical tool, a valuable resource – a linguistic 'swiss pocket knife' that performs several useful purposes depending on the teacher's preferred ways of exploiting it, ranging from classroom management, giving instructions, to maintaining good relationships with students. Typically, this argument defending the multi-functional use of L1 in the classroom

is tempered by teachers' acknowledgement that use of the L1 needs to be used appropriately and selectively. The pro-L1 literature abounds with such reasoning. Carson & Kashihara (2012) suggest "careful use" of the L1, while Norman (2008) recommends "prudent use". Schweers (2009) proposes "limited and judicious use", and Stephens (2006) also suggest a "judicious use" of spoken Japanese. The reality is that few teachers apply systematic, robust self-policing on how much L1 they use, and end up resorting to intuition when estimating how much L1 is used in their classrooms. Furthermore, many teachers do not attempt to limit L1 use at all, but have accepted it as part of the fabric of the lesson which does not need to be addressed. Without a much more rigorous, principled control of L1 use based on clear guidelines, teachers' reliance on nebulous criteria such as 'appropriate use' 'judicious use' and '20% L1' is, as Prodromou (2002) commented, an invitation to 'abuse of L1' as much as it is 'use of L1'.

The aforementioned overview of the main arguments of L1 use in the classroom reveals that the pro-L1 approach appears to have an 'Achilles heel' with regard to second language learning. None of the above reasons for use of L1 are underpinned or informed by theories of second language acquisition and learning, although Krashen's (1983) concept of an 'affective filter' to lower anxiety (one of five elements constituting his model of second language learning) is used by some teachers to justify use of the L1. However the influence of an affective filter has not been proven despite its intuitive appeal to teachers who appreciate the difficulties of learning a second language when feeling stressed. Essentially, the pro-L1 arguments outlined above are a group of assumptions that are practical, intuitive, personal, ideas of best practice, and psychological. There is a distinct lack of second language theoretical support for use of L1 during language instruction. The next section will describe the main arguments, for an English Only approach, and examine whether they stand on firmer theoretical ground than the L1 arguments.

Key Arguments for English Only in the EFL Classroom

There are several classroom-based arguments that are provided by EO supporters in order to lend validity to an EO approach, and all stem from the basic premise that the greater the exposure to L2, the greater the likelihood of learning of the target language (Ellis, 2005). A persuasive argument is

that the EO classroom needs to reflect and resemble real-world environments by providing an L2 language-rich experience that contains genuine communication and authentic use of language. By insisting on English only, teachers force students to interact and negotiate meaning in English. If there is a communication problem between two students, for example, then only by rephrasing, trying alternative structures, and being prepared to accept mistakes as part of the process in trying to solve a communication problem, will students ‘push’ themselves linguistically and stretch their language skills. Negotiation of meaning is central to the EO perspective, and is seen as critical in aiding acquisition. The rationale informing this way of learning is that in real life students will not have a teacher or be able to resort to L1 when they encounter communication problems, and they must learn to be more independent and be able to draw on coping strategies. Students will develop strategies as they are forced to rethink their language that was not successful initially. It would be unfair to expect students to be able to negotiate meaning without input support from the teacher, so it is important that the teacher also imparts communication strategies that helps students to communicate even though their actual language skills may be limited.

Many Japanese university students lack confidence in the second language classroom. For the vast majority, they seem to have an acute awareness and acceptance that the state education system has failed to give them adequate speaking skills. An argument for an EO approach is that confidence can be strengthened by providing students with a lot of communication opportunities which involves attempts to exchange meaning through risk-taking and sometimes without overelaborate preparation. The rationale is that a classroom culture will be built which encourages speaking alongside a willingness to make mistakes. Educating students that mistakes are an unavoidable and natural part of communicating authentically in English will increase student confidence when attempting communicative exchanges.

English Only teachers also argue that because students have insufficient exposure to the L2 outside the classroom, then the classroom L2 input needs to be intense and rich enough to create conditions for L2 acquisition. Typically, Japanese students have few opportunities to speak English outside the classroom, so it is crucial that English use is maximized in the classroom. Successful learning of the target language is more likely to occur in an EO

classroom which is dedicated to using English whenever possible, so that students are instilled into the belief that their use of the L2 is a natural and regular feature of the lesson. Resorting to the L1 by the teacher or by students undermines this objective so the former has an important role of encouraging students to see the L2 as the ONLY language that is sanctioned in the classroom. Optimizing L2 use can also be achieved by the teacher managing the classroom in the L2 (Nation, 2003, p2). In other words, L2 is not only the *object* of instruction but is also the *medium* of instruction. Every lesson entails instructions, small talk to maintain rapport, simplifying sentences, repeating language, paraphrasing, explaining, modeling, concept checking, and many other classroom management scenarios. Using L2 for these situations is a logical outcome of maximizing L2 and creating an L2-rich language context (Ellis, 2005, p.8). Giving instructions is not only an opportunity to provide authentic listening practice, it is also “one of the most genuine opportunities for teacher-student communication on the classroom” (Harbord, 1992, p.353).

In summary, EO instruction is primarily concerned with maximizing L2 use in the classroom, and taking care to ensure that it is used to communicate within the context of authentic scenarios that may necessitate negotiation of meaning using communicative strategies. Ideally, the aim is to create independent language users who can cope without the assistance of a teacher or use of L1. It is an instructional approach that on the surface seems less attuned to the affective well-being of the student and undoubtedly puts more intensive psychological pressure on the student than L1-use instruction. The teacher’s skills are critical in the EO classroom, especially with regard to being able to create an appropriate class atmosphere where students feel secure and can take risks without feeling threatened. EO instructors run the risk of undermining the creation of a student-friendly classroom by making a rule banning outright the use of the L1 and even threatening ‘punishments’ and rebuke. L1 will occasionally be used in virtually any EO classroom. The onus is on the teacher to use her people-skills and classroom management skills in tandem, in order to make use of L1 as minimal as possible.

One critical difference between the L1-use and EO approaches is the lack of second language acquisition (SLA) theory underpinning the L1-use approach whereas the EO approach draws strongly on it. In the next section, the main SLA theoretical concepts that directly inform the EO instructional mode

of teaching will be described in order to clarify why there may be a greater justification for L1-use teachers to critically consider the efficacy of the EO approach.

The Role of Second Language Acquisition Theory in English Only Teaching

A typical English only EFL classroom lesson is characterized by maximum use of the L2. Ideally, L2 usage is the medium of instruction by the teacher as well as the object of instruction. If we look at the classroom L2 in relation to SLA theory, it is possible to view the classroom L2 as consisting of three elements – L2 input, L2 output, and L2 interaction. The importance of these three elements in the EO classroom lesson is justified theoretically by SLA researchers and theorists.

Input modified for a particular group of students, is considered necessary by all SLA theorists, and considered essential by many. Moreover, this input should be extensive and not limited so that the students receive adequate exposure to it. Without such exposure, acquisition of the L2 is unlikely. Generally, it is believed that the greater the exposure to the L2, the more and the quicker students will learn. Although there are differing viewpoints on what the nature of the L2 input should be, it is generally acknowledged that input is very important for fostering the development of the learner's implicit knowledge required for effective communication ability. Modification of input is important in all but the most advanced classrooms. Ellis (1997) notes that in real life, native speakers tend to modify their language when communicating with foreigners. So in the classroom, real life communication can be simulated by means of modified input by the teacher. This input is typically delivered at a slower pace, using shorter sentences, and simplified (but not necessarily simple). It may also consist of longer sentences when the teacher believes this will make the meaning clearer.

A second element of the EO classroom is output. Opportunities for student output in lessons, is regarded as a necessary requirement for successful second language learning. Output contributes to second language learning by allowing students to test hypotheses – that is, discover what language will work for them and what will not when communicating. Creating opportunities for student output in which they hone their discourse skills is regarded by Swain (1985) as

crucial. His 'Output Hypothesis' argues the need for 'pushed output'- stretching the learner to his or her linguistic limits when trying to convey communication - and not simply controlled practice which typically produces output limited in terms of complexity and length, and which is comparatively risk-reduced. As well as being able to test hypotheses, the teacher's promotion of output also provides opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use of the L2. Furthermore, producing output pressurizes the student to process the target language syntactically at the expense of semantic processing.

Swain's output hypothesis is an influential construct that is perceived to optimize student talking-time and minimize teacher talking-time. It also complements socio-cultural theory which stresses that social interaction is a critical factor in a person's psychological development. Interaction is the third element in second language acquisition theory that is germane to the non - use of L1 in the classroom.

Opportunities for students to interact orally are central to fostering L2 proficiency, according to Ellis (2005). According to Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, interaction promotes language acquisition when there is a communication problem and the students have to 'negotiate' the meaning of their output in order to be fully understood. In other words, the students are obliged to modify and remodify their output with each other until the communication problem is resolved. Effectively, what was originally incomprehensible input for one of the listeners in the exchange, becomes comprehensible input through interactional modifications by the speaker. Peer-scaffolding support is an important factor in such negotiated meaning – verbal and facial reactions, for instance, can inform the 'negotiator' of how communicatively successful he or she is being.

Clearly, with regard to the EO classroom, there is a dovetailing between theory and practice. The EO instructional mode is directly informed by SLA theories of input, output, and interaction. It is equally clear that there is a conflict between SLA theory and the use of L1 in the classroom. Using L1 to explain meaning, impart instructions, check understanding with peers during tasks, for example, is at odds with the goal of maximizing L2 input and output since doing so devalues the role of negotiation of meaning as a language learning strategy.

The Decision to Use Action Research

The motivation for a teacher to query his or her own teaching beliefs concerning the use of L1 in the classroom, is often fuelled by the desire to improve one's practice, and to understand that practice better. Admittedly, the idea of 'improvement' is debatable and complex. Perception and interpretation of teaching practice hinges on one's beliefs and values about second language learning. Because the research purpose is not to persuade or to reveal a universal teaching truth, the research method chosen is one specifically developed for teaching practitioners to use in their own classrooms and which focuses solely on an aspect of their own practice.

A practical, low-key, 'modest' research method which has been developed to assist individual teachers shed light on problems and puzzles in their classrooms, is action research. The term itself suggests a practical *modus operandi*. It can be described as low-key because it is typically private, small, uncomplicated, practical as opposed to theoretical; and importantly, is relatively quick research (Waters-Adams, 2006) – ideal for the busy classroom teacher who wishes to investigate a classroom phenomenon. It is not about unearthing, grandiose, universal truths about the superiority of the L1 use approach or the English Only approach, for example, but about 'analyzing one's existing practice and identifying elements for change' (Levine, 2003:2). Action research involves monitoring a planned change in teaching practice (in this case, teaching EO instead of L1 use) and after a set period of time, deciding whether or not the monitored change has produced improvements or revealed information about the teaching aspect targeted by the research.

Regarding this particular action research project, data evidence about the effects of a change in teaching practice from a L1-use teaching mode to an English Only teaching mode was required. That entailed gathering data that would hopefully provide information useful for answering the research question. The major method of gathering data was an introspective tool called a Teacher Diary (McDonough, 1994). The diary was written up written up after every lesson and enabled the teacher to record observations, analyze pertinent experiences, and reflect upon and interpret the written data.

Research Purpose

The broad purpose of the classroom study was to experience teaching

English Only instruction for teacher development reasons and to glean a deeper understanding of its merits or otherwise. The specific purpose was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of English Only teaching to low level students of English.

Method

Research Question

Is an English Only approach a more appropriate and effective way of instruction than L1-use instruction for Japanese university students who have a very low-level of speaking and listening proficiency ?

Setting and Participants

The action research focused on two classes of the Unit B Speaking and Listening English program, a General English program which is delivered using Communicative Language Teaching techniques typical of many EFL classrooms. The participants who took part in the research were 21 low-level first year students (a class of 8 very weak students, and a class of 13 who were less weak but still categorized as being in a 'low' band).The students were informed about the research at the beginning of Semester Two. Before receiving EO instruction, they were asked to fill in a bi-lingual questionnaire that was intended to reveal their views and feelings about teaching and learning through English Only instruction.

Study Design and Data Collection

The study was conducted over a four-week period during which time the students had twelve sixty minute lessons. The lessons taught were designed to emphasize the speaking skill through pairwork and personalization activities, and to minimize grammar activities and teacher-centeredness. Using this approach, interaction between students would be maximized and prioritized. Prior to the twelve EO lessons, students were informed about the new classroom language policy – specifically that the Unit B classroom would be an English only environment and for students to refrain from using Japanese. A strict, zero-tolerance approach rule was deliberately not imposed as it seemed punitive, and might backfire due to student resentment. Instead, throughout the research period, the teacher discretely and politely urged "English only" to

individual students who lapsed into L1.

In order to collect data for the action research, two data collection methods were employed – a questionnaire (a pre-English Only instruction questionnaire and a post-English Only instruction questionnaire), and a teacher diary. First, a pre-EO instruction questionnaire to find out participants' views on learning in an EO classroom was employed. The students' minds would not be 'tabula rasa' when experiencing EO teaching since they would bring all their previous English learning experiences to bear when giving an opinion of it (Atkinson, 1987), so the questionnaire aimed to inform the teacher of the range of experiences and opinions within each group before delivering the English only lessons. Also, having the students complete the questionnaire contributed to psychologically preparing them for the four week EO instruction period. The questionnaire made them more aware of the research that was intended. Also, the actual initial EO instruction in the first week in which teacher behavior would markedly differ in some aspects, would be less of a shock to them.

A second data-gathering method was a teacher diary, in which were recorded 'hot' notes very soon after each of the twelve lessons was completed. These 'hot' notes described what were considered relevant events and problems that had occurred during the lesson in relation to EO teaching and learning while they were still fresh in the teacher's memory. Later, the descriptive 'hot' notes were augmented by more reflective, 'cooler' notes that attempted to be analytical and evaluative of the former, and to provide possible explanations for salient classroom events that had been observed the lessons.

Findings

Pre-English Only Instruction Questionnaire

The findings below describe only the most informative aspects of the data and do not reflect an exhaustive description of it.

Q3: Do you speak Japanese in the Speaking and Listening lessons?

Almost all (20 out of 21) students stated that they resorted to L1 use. 10 students said they "often" used L1 and 10 said they used L1 "a little". One explanation may be that low-level students may feel a 'psychological need' (Burden: 2000) to use L1 occasionally to reduce anxiety and feel affectively comfortable during the lesson.

Q4: Why do you speak Japanese in the Unit B classes?

Question 4 revealed that 7 out of 21 students (33%) resorted to Japanese because they did not understand the teacher's English fully, and used Japanese with other classmates to check meaning of instructions, clarify what they had to do in tasks, to check the teacher's explanations of vocabulary, and to reply to the teacher's other students who asked for clarification. Another 5 students stated that their English was so weak that they had to use Japanese in order to 'survive' the lesson. There seems to be common ground with the first group of 7 students - weak understanding and resorting to Japanese in an attempt to manage their learning experience. To summarize, 57% of the students used Japanese as a coping strategy because they felt they did not have adequate English speaking and listening skills.

Q6: Which way of learning English do you prefer?

On this question, the students were almost equally divided. According to the data, 10 of the 21 students (48%), wanted freedom to use Japanese in the classroom, while 11 students (52%) did not want students to use Japanese at all. Of the latter, 6 subjects wanted an English Only classroom, and 5 wanted only the teacher to use Japanese. To sum up, 28% of the student sample preferred an English Only classroom, and 72% did not, prior to EO instruction.

Q9: Do you think it is necessary for the foreign English teacher to be able to speak and understand some Japanese?

Answers to question 9 showed that 20 out of 21 students felt that it was necessary for the foreign teacher to know some Japanese. This concurred with a study by Carson & Kashihara (2012) whose findings showed that most of their low level students also preferred a teacher who knew and could use the L1.

Q10: Have you ever been taught using the English Only method of instruction?

It was revealed that 9 out of 21 students (43%) had had an EO experience (in cram school (2), elementary school (1), junior high (2), the university's Communication Seminar classes (3), private English school (1)). Of these 9 students, 6 expressed negative feelings ranging from "very stressful" to "we needed to use a little Japanese". Two students said it was a "fun" experience without commenting on the effectiveness of this way of instruction. Of the three Communication Seminar students, two disliked the experience and the third thought it "was difficult but fun".

Q12: Do you think you would enjoy English Only lessons in your Unit B class?

Exactly 33% (7 students) stated that they would. The other students stated that they would not (67%) thus revealing that a significant majority doubt the value of an EO approach. Of the 9 students who stated they had experienced an English Only classroom in previous learning situations, 5 believed that they would enjoy Speaking and Listening classes using English Only instruction, and 4 students believed they would not enjoy the experience. Noticeably, of the 7 students who stated that they would enjoy EO instruction, 5 of them had already had EO experience.

Teacher Diary

Recording of salient events in the EO classroom primarily consisted of ‘hot’ notes written during the class or immediately after a lesson had finished in order to circumvent any possible memory lapse of events when writing up the ‘cold’ notes hours later. ‘Hot’ notes were typically hastily written jottings, keywords, names, and scribbles on bits of paper made during the lesson. They were very quick to write and never impinged on the delivery of the lessons since they were usually written while students were on task. The findings of the diary can be broadly divided into positive observations of EO instruction and negative observations.

Positive observations of English Only instruction to low level Japanese students

1. There was a noticeable decrease in use of L1 by students over the 12-lesson study. At the beginning of every lesson, the teacher wrote up “English Only” on the blackboard as a visual reminder. This tactic foregrounded in the students’ minds the necessity to not use L1. Students self-policed themselves and sometimes policed their classmates. “English Only” said to their partner became a tongue-in-cheek joke among some students. The teacher occasionally used gentle, low-key admonishments to students who persisted in using L1 too readily. Occasional use of L1 by 20 out of 21 students continued throughout the study although the amount used lessened in most cases. It was noticed that good friends sitting together resulted in more low-key L1 whispered chat throughout the study than when not sitting together.

2. There was a significant increase in use of L2 communication strategies by many students. At the beginning of the study, several communication

strategies were introduced in the form of A4-sized magnetic flashcards on which were written useful classroom language phrases. Students, generally, were enthusiastic about trying to use them, particularly “*Shall I start first?*”, “*You go first?*” and other phrases useful for pair work and games. They were less inclined to use “*What does ___ mean?*” despite frequent urging. Perhaps this was due to inhibition or quietly checking meaning with the person sat next to them, or because asking the question contained the possibility of the student being ‘spotlighted’ by the teacher. Interestingly, these same communication strategies had been introduced during L1-use instruction in the previous semester but the students had never used them consistently and usage had virtually petered out. Perhaps allowing L1 use in my classroom undermined the need to use them. Now they were actively self-policing themselves and occasionally policing their partners in order to use them. Consistent usage of most of the strategies increased during the time-frame of the study.

3. Quality of teaching skills and lesson planning increased as a response to the new teaching demands and inability to use L1. Prior to the EO lessons, much more attention was paid to possible unknown vocabulary that might arise and to techniques that would help to clarify the meaning of them. Instructions and setting up tasks had to be more precise and better thought-out.

4. L1 use was not as necessary as believed. It was noted by the teacher that the EO experience highlighted that it was not necessary to resort to L1 use in many classroom situations in which it would have been convenient to use it. Resorting too quickly to L1 use had led to a culture of over-reliance on it by both teacher and students, and the study period showed that we could manage as a classroom community without L1 for the vast majority of lesson time.

Negative observations of English Only instruction to low level Japanese students

1. Affect and student well-being were critical issues. Unresolved non-understanding of meaning of lexis by individual students caused noticeable anxiety and frustration. These events were the ones that particularly caused concern during the EO study period. On several occasions, despite persisting with ways to clarify the meaning of a lexical item using L2, the student could still not grasp the meaning. In these situations, which sometimes labored on for a few minutes, various techniques were employed to make clear the

meaning of the word, the students invariably become more anxious, stressed, and frustrated. These were students who had never displayed such negative attitudinal behavior before, and witnessing their confidence being undermined raised self-doubt concerning the EO argument of justifying these situations on the grounds that it maximized L2 exposure and prevented the student depending on the L1. The classroom atmosphere was always more somber after these events, and definitely dented the positive affect that had been nurtured with the two groups of students since the beginning of the language course. It is worth mentioning that the L1 definition was always finally provided by the teacher in these situations, and doing so resolved the problem in one second, much to the relief of the individual students concerned. Examples of the problematic lexis were: *actually* and *I'm into ____* (interests) and *Me neither*. It is also worth mentioning that both groups were very relaxed, friendly, joking sets of students who, to my knowledge, had never felt individually 'threatened' by the language learning experience until these events.

2. Weakening of rapport was felt. With very low level students it was difficult to maintain my default teaching style in speaking and listening classes whilst using an EO instructional approach. This style valued humor, repartee, and spontaneous asides to impart laughter and maintain positive individual relationships with certain students. Prior to the EO study, my humor input was usually imparted in L1 since using L2 often had a high risk of not being understood. Using the latter risked the humor falling flat, and worst of all, causing confusion. My frequent usage of humor significantly decreased during the EO lessons. Before the EO study, this had meant 'stepping out of the lesson plan' and indulging in a bit of banter and getting the students laughing or smiling. It was felt that this could not be successfully done using only the L2, due to their weak language ability. Although the lessons were still pleasant and relaxed, the joviality was considerably reduced. Admittedly, this may not be an important factor for many teachers, but teaching style is shaped by personality and teacher beliefs, and I believe humor, laughter, and smiles are important ingredients of speaking and listening lessons, especially low level classes where nerves and anxiety need to be addressed by the humanistic teacher.

3. Too much time was spent on clarification of meaning. The pro-English Only camp would argue that this is an oxymoron since any length of time spent on negotiating meaning is helping to maximize exposure to the L2.

The issue of inefficient use of time in lessons which could otherwise be spent more wisely, was a key complaint by Atkinson (1987), and there were events during the study that tend to support this stance. Firstly, it was not guaranteed that all students would get the meaning of the words and phrases that were problematic, especially in low level classes. When this occurred, in retrospect, the time spent by the teacher seemed a waste of time (sometimes involving minutes). Secondly, exposure to L2 *per se* is not necessarily of value if the L2 is not of high quality. During this research, it was not felt that efforts using L2 to get 'the penny to drop' with regard to meaning with individual students, consisted of quality discourse that they would benefit from. Spending five minutes on one lexical item could have been alternatively used to expose the students to much more useful L2 using a pair work activity, for example.

4. Classroom management using only EO instruction was challenging in specific instances. Disruptive behavior or student attitude issues did not loom large at all during the study. But there were times when the use of L2 only did not accomplish my aim. On one occasion, a particular student who persisted in using a lot of L1 during the research period, was particularly noisy and talkative to the detriment of the other pairs of students on task. Trying to persuade him to desist using L2, then finally politely admonishing him a few times in L2 did not have any effect. Finally, I uttered "*Urusai*". The problem was immediately solved. Also, there were three instances of students who were clearly a little ill or under the weather during the study. Asking them what the matter was and talking about their illness using L2 was extremely difficult given their linguistic limitations. Arguing from an EO standpoint, that this was a perfect opportunity to expose students to a real, meaningful L2 conversation in which meaning could be negotiated, ignores the simple fact that the students were not in a physical and mental state suitable for active language learning. Instead, I chose to regard them as people first and students second, and used L1 to check their well-being as a concerned and caring teacher.

5. Total EO is not workable in low levels classes unless the teacher imposes a very strict EO regime, which I did not. Student good-will was relied upon supported by low-key 'nudging' by the teacher to keep to the target language. None of the twenty four lessons observed in the research project were pure English Only experiences. Every lesson contained students quietly chatting or whispering in L1, the teacher spontaneously using L1 (and quickly self-

policing), and events where a humanistic teaching style ruled out maintaining an EO mode. However, as described earlier, the amount of L1 was greatly reduced.

6. English Only lessons were generally not as professionally satisfying as L1-use lessons. Concentrating on maintaining an EO classroom affected my teaching style which resulted in a more business-like teacher who was less relaxed in the classroom than normally. It was noted in the diary how an inner voice was warning "chill out" when I found myself getting a little anxious and fixed on maintaining EO during teaching. No doubt this problem would have resolved itself as confidence grew over time, but for the four weeks of the study, the EO lessons were never the highlight of the teaching week. Despite a general dissatisfaction about the lessons, there were, however, periods within lessons when use of English only was successful and rewarding for both teacher and students. There were occasions when both teacher and students experienced a sense of satisfied self-achievement when tasks had been managed and completed without resort to L1.

Post-English Only Instruction Questionnaire

The post-classroom research questionnaire was constructed after the classroom research had been carried out. In this way, the questions decided upon, could be made more germane to actual experiences in the classroom.

As noted in the teacher diary, the vast majority of the students continued to use some Japanese in the EO classroom. A contributing factor to that behavior may be that a very strict non-L1 regime was not imposed on the students and some of them exploited that fact. However, it was noticed that even impeccably behaved, 'model students' occasionally lapsed into L1 at times, albeit less frequently than other students. The questionnaire attempted to discover why students resorted to Japanese despite being highly aware that it was an English Only classroom.

Q3: Why did you speak Japanese in the classroom and in what situations?

The main trigger for L1 use was non-understanding of meaning. The data revealed that 17 of the 20 students who completed the questionnaire, used Japanese by asking their partner questions in L1 in order to check meaning of the teacher's instructions, language explanations, clarifications, or simply because they did not understand. They were also likely to use Japanese in

order to respond to questions by their partners who had similar difficulties. From this, it can be deduced, that despite being much more purposeful and conscientious about getting meaning across to the students in the EO lessons than in the L1-use lessons - and sometimes going to considerable lengths to do so – I was not always successful. In fact, it appears to have been a key problem throughout the EO instructional period. Interestingly, it was not noted by the teacher in the teacher diary that students were using L1 for 'meaning' problems. It may have been done quietly, low-key, and not overtly observable. This point validates the need for more than one kind of data-gathering tool, particularly one that garners students' views, in order to compensate for inherent weaknesses in the teacher-centered diary method of data collecting.

Q5: Were the English Only lessons as enjoyable, less enjoyable, or more enjoyable than the normal lessons?

This question was inserted into the questionnaire, as a direct result of the teacher feeling that there was generally, more tension in the lessons, and significantly, more examples of individual students showing anxiety and discomfort vis-à-vis explaining the meaning of new lexis, and being pressured to use English only in tasks. At the end of the trial period, It was expected that there would be a resounding 'less enjoyable' response. However, this was not the case. In the 'less-low' class, 10 out of 13 students stated that they found the EO lessons enjoyable (only 1 said 'more enjoyable') despite my misgivings. Two students appreciated having to speak English as much as possible, and 1 student said that she/he gradually got used to speaking English only in the lessons. In contrast, in the 'very low' class, only 1 student out of 8 said the EO lessons were enjoyable. This group of students commented much more about 'stress' than the 'less low' class. Only two answers could be construed as being positive about the lessons. Examples of the 'very low' students' comments were: '*effective but difficult*', '*more stress*', '*more stress and more boring*', and '*too hard*'. Responses also showed that 11 out of 13 students in the 'less low' class wanted to continue English Only lessons, while 3 out of 8 students in the 'very low' class, wanted to continue with English only lessons.

Discussion

The data indicated that minimizing the mother tongue in the classroom is a goal to strive for, as it has benefits for both teaching and learning. However,

it is felt that the students' low level of proficiency makes the use of Japanese unavoidable and necessary at times.

Students became more aware of the need to reduce their expedient use of the L1, and made efforts to do so. Consistent low-key reminding by the teacher to try to use English only, appeared to contribute to students' efforts to use L1 minimally. In this study, the teacher decided that the English Only instructional mode was inherently weak with regard to affect, rapport, and pastoral caring when students appeared to have problems or illnesses. By the end of the study, in Week Three and Four, there were serious concerns and doubts about the efficacy and appropriateness of EO instruction for low level Japanese students. Moreover, there was a tension between my humanistic, affect-oriented philosophy of teaching which prioritised student self-esteem. There were too many times in the EO lessons when this core belief was under pressure in the EO classroom.

The results suggest, albeit not definitively, that from this very modest study using a very small sample, low level students possess an awareness of the need to try to actively use English more and use Japanese less despite the difficulties, both psychological and linguistic, that hinder this. With regard to a majority of students preferring English Only lessons (especially in the 'less low' class, it is important not to fall into the trap of assuming that pure, L1-free English Only lessons are preferred. The lessons in the trial period of EO instruction were NOT pure EO lessons, and an English Only rule was not strictly imposed or used to penalize. The teacher, too, at times resorted to Japanese despite his best intentions. It is possible that the students prefer lessons in which L1-use is reluctantly allowed within a framework of gentle policing and conscious minimizing without it being banned outright, rather than pure EO lessons, or the 'unpoliced' L1-use lessons that were delivered before the research.

Conclusion

The research question posited whether or not an English Only approach is a more appropriate and effective way of instruction than L1-use instruction for Japanese university students who have a very low-level of speaking and listening proficiency, and no clear-cut answer is possible for this particular action research study given that pure English Only lessons never occurred (see Findings section) and therefore could not be evaluated. However, the following

useful information for teachers was gleaned.

- 1) The study indicated that local contextual factors must be considered carefully before deciding to try to utilize an English Only instructional mode of teaching in the classroom. Students who are not very intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn English seriously, who have no intention or plan to live or work abroad in an L2 speaking country, and who primarily want to have an enjoyable, relatively stress-free learning experience, will not benefit from EO instruction as much as they would from a mode of instruction that sanctions a modicum of L1 use.
- 2) Teachers need to be more rigorous about how they use L1 in the classroom. Guidelines that detail when code-switching is a preferred option by the teacher, might help to provide a more robust framework within which the L1-using teacher can operate. Without guidelines, the teacher will continue to rely on the 'judicious' and 'minimal' notions that are intuitive and not very efficient.
- 3) Teachers can learn from such small-scale classroom research. Learner behaviors which either discourage or facilitate second language acquisition through use or non-use of L2 can be identified and subsequently encouraged or neutralized through careful planning and considered classroom practice.
- 4) With respect to low proficiency students, humanistic teachers who greatly value positive affect and rapport will struggle with themselves to implement a pure English Only course of instruction due to sensitivity regarding students' well-being.
- 5) Low proficiency students have severe problems understanding and negotiating meaning, and unless the students are highly motivated to adhering to an English Only policy, they will resort to some L1 use. However, this inability to cope with meaning by students can be offset to a greater or lesser extent by effective teaching skills and techniques. Teachers need to look to their own teacher development and broaden the range of meaning clarification techniques at their disposal by learning how to use time-lines, concept questions, paraphrasing, backed up by careful, thoughtful lesson planning that identifies possible problems in the lesson with regard to unknown lexis and language used for instructions.

The action research was an enlightening consciousness-raising exercise for

the teacher concerned. Although reservations about both L1-use and English Only modes of instruction are still retained, this teacher considers local contextual factors combined with informed teacher intuition about classroom teaching to be more pertinent than objective second language theoretical justifications, and will continue to make classroom teaching decisions based on those two key factors. This research project experience has led to a more concerted effort to minimize L1-use with low-level students because they do not benefit from its overuse. Indeed, the views and opinions of the students indicate that they themselves recognize that reducing L1-use will help improve their English speaking ability, but that in order for this aim to be realized, a teacher is required who actively commits to minimizing L1-use also.

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Appendix 1: Pre-English Only Instruction Student Questionnaire

Survey アンケート調査

I am doing research about teachers' use or non-use, and students' use or non-use of Japanese language in the Unit B English 'Speaking and Listening' lessons.

This survey is to find out your opinions about the issue.

There is no correct or wrong answer, and I do not need to know your name.

Thank you for your time.

Patrick Lee

私は、英語B「話す聴く」の授業での教師および生徒の日本語の使用・不使用について研究をしています。このアンケート調査は、授業内の日本語の使用・不使用について、あなたの意見を知るものですので、正しい・間違った答えというものはありません。また、あなたの名前を知らせる必要はありません。

ご協力に感謝します。

パトリック リー

- Should teachers speak Japanese in the Unit B Speaking & Listening classes?

英語B「話す聴く」の授業で教師は日本語を話すべきですか？

Yes, of course. It's normal to do that

はい、もちろん。それが普通です。

Yes, but only a little

はい、少しなら。

No

いいえ。

- Should students speak Japanese in the Unit B Speaking and Listening classes?

英語B「話す聴く」の授業で生徒は日本語を話すべきですか？

Yes, of course. It's normal to do that

Yes, but only a little

No

はい、もちろん。それが普通です。

はい、少しなら。

いいえ。

- Do you usually speak Japanese in your Unit B class?

あなたは英語Bの授業で、大抵の場合、日本語を話しますか？

Yes, often

Yes, but only a little

No

はい、よく話します。 はい、少しだけ話します。 いいえ。

- Why do you speak Japanese in the Unit B Speaking and Listening classes? Please write your answer below

(If you answered 'No' to Question 3, skip this question).

あなたが英語B「話す聴く」の授業で日本語を話すのは何故ですか？
以下にその理由を書いてください（質問3で「いいえ」と答えた人は、次の質問に進んでください）。

- What is the best way to learn Speaking skills in the classroom?

教室内で英語を話す力を身につける、一番良い方法は？

- When the teacher can explains things in Japanese. 教師が日本語で説明する。
- When students are allowed to talk in Japanese. 生徒が日本語で話してもよい。
- When no Japanese is allowed at all. 日本語はすべて使用禁止にする。

- Which way of learning to speak English do you prefer?

あなたが望む、英語を話す力を身につける方法は？

- With the teacher and students using Japanese 教師、生徒ともに日

本語を使用する。

- b) With the teacher using Japanese but the students not allowed to 教師は日本語を使用するが、生徒は使用できない。
- c) No Japanese allowed at all in the classroom (an English Only classroom) 教室内での日本語はすべて使用禁止にする（教室内では英語のみを使用）。

Why did you choose the above answer?

その方法を選んだのは何故ですか？

7. When do you think it is necessary for the teacher to speak Japanese in class?

授業内で教師が日本語を話す必要があると感じるのはどんな時ですか？

- a) to explain grammar concepts 文法について説明する時。
- b) explain how to do speaking activities スピーキング・アクティビティの仕方を説明する時。
- c) to chat casually with students and joke 生徒に碎けた話しや冗談を言う時。
- d) to explain new vocabulary items 新しい語彙を説明する時。
- e) to help students feel more relaxed 生徒をリラックスさせたい時。
- f) to check if students have any problems 生徒に何か問題がないか確認する時。
- g) never 必要は感じない。

8. How much Japanese do you think the teacher should use in the Unit B classes?

英語Bの授業で、教師はどのくらい日本語を使用るべきだと思いますか？

- a) 0%
- b) 10% – 20%
- c) 30% – 40%
- d) 50% – 60%
- e) More than 60% 60%以上

9. Do you think it is necessary for the foreign English teacher in the Unit B Speaking and Listening classes to be able to speak and understand some Japanese?

英語B「話す聴く」の授業で、外国人教師がいくらか日本語を話せたり、理解できたりすることは必要だと思いますか？

Yes No

はい。 いいえ。

10. Have you ever been taught English by a teacher using English Only method (no Japanese allowed)?

英語だけしか使用しない（日本語はまったく使用しない）方法で授業をする先生に英語を教えてもらった経験はありますか？

Yes No

はい。 いいえ。

If you answered "Yes", where?

「はい」と答えた人にお聞きします。その授業はどこで受けましたか？

What did you think of this experience?

その授業について、どのように感じましたか？

11. What do you think would be the biggest problems for you if your Unit B teacher taught using the English Only method in Semester Two?

後期の英語Bの授業で、英語だけしか使用しない授業方法が用いられた場合、どのような問題が考えられますか？

Appendix 2: Post-English Only Instruction Student Questionnaire

Survey アンケート調査

The English Only lessons are finished. I am interested in your opinions and feelings about this learning experience. Please think carefully about the question before you answer.

This survey is to find out your opinions about the issue.

There is no correct or wrong answer, and I do not need to know your name.

Thank you for your time.

Patrick Lee

このアンケート調査は、授業内の日本語の使用・不使用について、あなたの意見を知るものですので、正しい・間違った答えというものはありません。また、あなたの名前を知らせる必要はありません。

ご協力に感謝します。

パトリック リー

1. Regarding the English Only lessons, how much less Japanese did you speak in these lessons than the usual Unit B lessons?

英語のみを使用する授業について、普段のUnit Bの授業よりも英語のみを使用する授業で、どれくらい少なく日本語を話しましたか。

- a) A lot less b) a little less c) no change
とても少なく 少しだけ少なく 変わらない

2. Did you speak Japanese in the English Only lessons?

英語のみを使用する授業の中で、日本語を話しましたか。

- a) Yes b) No
はい いいえ

3. If you answered ‘Yes’ for Question 2, why did you speak Japanese? And in what situations. Please write below.

質問2に「はい」と答えた人は、なぜ日本語を話したのですか。そして、それはどんな状況でしたか。以下に書いて下さい。

4. Were the English Only lessons as enjoyable as the normal lessons, less enjoyable, or more enjoyable? Did you feel more stress or less stress? Please explain.

英語のみを使用する授業は、普通の授業と同じくらい楽しかったですか。それとも普通の授業よりあまり楽しくなかったですか。もしくはより楽しかったですか。

また、よりストレスを感じましたか。それともあまりストレスを感じませんでしたか。説明して下さい。

5. Would you prefer to continue having English Only lessons in this semester?

この学期で、英語のみを使用する授業を続けて受けたいですか。

- a) Yes b) No
はい いいえ

Why? Why not?

なぜ受けたいのですか。なぜ受けたくないのですか。

6. What problems did you have with understanding the meaning of vocabulary in the English Only lessons?

英語のみを使用する授業で、単語の意味の理解に関してどんな問題がありましたか。

Please explain.

説明して下さい。

Consideration on American Individualism II: Individualism Transformed and its Subsequent Impasse

Yoshimi Nakamura

Introduction

In part I (Nakamura, 2012), I discussed how the early European immigrants initiated their experience in the New World. They generated the powerful American mythology that stressed progress and self-reliance. On the other hand, they inherited a large portion of European thought characterized by civic and biblical traditions. “Traditional individualism” has inspired Americans to be committed to their religions and to be virtuous citizens who voluntarily contribute to the public good.

This paper, part II, mainly discusses the transformation of American individualism and its impasse that followed. The virtues of American individualism have suffered from the rapid social changes brought by industrial capitalism. In the nineteenth century, America developed a new kind of individualism that put a priority on individual self-improvement over the good of the larger social body. “Modern individualism” has made Americans more preoccupied with their work and private time, isolating themselves from public commitment.

Let me emphasize that the purpose of this paper is not to disparage or negate American values. Having experienced American life for 6 years in the 1990s, I directly saw many Americans who voluntarily and appreciatively participated in civic and religious activities. Up to the present, I have often been amazed at the potential power of America through sharing ideas and actions with many Americans around me. Based on these personal experiences, my gratitude to America has never been diminished in my life so far.

On the other hand, when I objectively look at the statistics of disproportionately high percentage of crimes, drug problems, family breakdowns, and other troubling social phenomena that the media continuously report, I recognize a negative side of American individualism. It seems certain that, in this culture of separation, contemporary Americans are widely suffering from some profound mental and social problems.