

**USE OF COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY IN
TEACHING ENGLISH IN JAPAN**

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of English Education
University Campus, Kirtipur
In partial fulfilment for Master's Degree in Education
(Specialization in English Language Education)**

**By
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Pramila Neupane

ABSTRACT

The thesis entitled **Use of Communicative Methodology in Teaching English in Japan** aims to examine the extent of the use of Communicative Approach and hindrances to this approach in some of the colleges in Japan.

Communicative Approach is one of the current approaches in teaching second language. If the use of the Communicative Approach is going to continue to improve in Japan, there is a need to discover to what extent it is being used and what is hindering the approach. In an effort to discover the actual situation, both native and non-native English teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire. Thirty-six, out of forty-two, teachers at the universities and junior colleges in the prefecture (i.e. prefecture is geographical division similar to Zone in Nepal) of Saitama, Japan returned the questionnaire on the return rate of eighty-six percent. Twenty-nine out of thirty-six teachers were Japanese teachers of English. The data was collected using a series of statements evaluated on a Likert attitude scale.

Based on the responses, it is apparent that there is broad use of most of the elements of Communicative Approach, but role play is not universally accepted. The study also discovered some obstacles that hinder the use of Communicative Approach. Hindrances that are discussed include the

students' lack of confidence in their speaking ability, the students' embarrassment, and the inability of students to express their opinions, to ask questions, and to be innovative during conversation practice.

This thesis comprises of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction of the topic in which general background of the study, definition of the terminologies, literature review, objectives of the study, and significance of the study are included.

The second chapter includes the research methodology, dealing with source of data collection, population of the study, research tools, process of data collection and limitations of the study.

The third chapter covers the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. This is the body part of thesis which explains the details of data analysis and interprets the results.

Similarly, the last chapter presents the findings and recommendations of the study. Basically, the recommendations are made on the basis of the findings of the study.

References and appendices are included in the final part of the report.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Mainly, this research focuses on two issues. Firstly, the study examines how extensively the communicative method/approach of teaching English as a second language, specifically in speaking and listening course, is used in some colleges in Saitama, Japan. Secondly, the study explores some of the hindrances to the use of the Communicative Approach in these colleges. Items relating to major elements of the Communicative Approach are used to assess how much the teachers use the approach and to identify whether the fundamentals of the approach are understood. In addition, the questionnaire has items relating to whether the students are in some way rejecting feature of the approach. The study relies on the teachers to honestly evaluate their own use of, and understanding of, the features of the Communicative Approach. This study also relies on the teachers' past observation of students.

If the teachers are aware of the major hindrances, foreign language teaching can begin to improve. It is realized that overcoming obstacles to the approach is the difficult task that can not be easily accomplished. But, by being aware of the hindrances, the teacher can take the first step toward improving learning experiences for the students.

1.1.1 Theoretical Aspect of Communicative Approach

Many of the modern English as a second language textbooks and much of the recently published researches concentrate on the Communicative Approach. In the early 1970s, the “Communicative Approach grew out of the work of linguists”, including Halliday, who “viewed language first and foremost as a system for communication” (Celce-Murcia 1991:8). The Communicative Approach was started, in part, by the rejection “in the belief that consciously learning the grammar of a language will necessarily result in an ability to use the language” (Yule 1996:193-194). This focus on overall communicative competence can best be seen in the Communicative Approach, which “acknowledges the interdependence of language and communication” (Richards and Rodgers 1998:66).

The Communicative Approach is also known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards and Rodgers 1998). CLT is usually characterized as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. As such it is most often defined as a list of general principles or features. One of the most recognized of these lists is Nunan’s (1987) five features of CLT.

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning management process.
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Richards and Rodgers (1998: 76-78) cited Finocchiaro and Brumfit's features (1983) of the Communicative Approach, include:

1. Meaning is paramount.
2. Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.
3. Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning.
4. Judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible.
5. The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.
6. Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
7. Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.

It is obvious, therefore, that the Communicative Approach emphasizes meaning along with form. In Vietnam, Ellis (1994) found that there was a

concentration on the correctness of single word and not the meaning of the sentence that was being conveyed. Wolff (1994) also found that an overemphasis on grammar was hindering communication in classrooms in Europe.

1.1.2 Teaching Techniques in Communicative Approach

The origin of the Communicative Approach as a combination of different methods and techniques is clearly explained, as such as the role of the teacher and the students in communicative English as a Second Language class.

In a communicative classroom for beginners, the teacher might begin by passing out cards, each with a different name printed on it. The teacher then proceeds to model an exchange of introductions in the target language: Using a combination of the target language and gestures, the teacher conveys the task at hand, and gets the students to introduce themselves and ask their classmates for information. They are responding in Japanese to a question in Japanese. They do not know the answers beforehand, as they are each holding cards with their new identities written on them; hence, there is an authentic exchange of information.

Later during the class, as a reinforcement listening exercise, the students might hear a recorded exchange between two German freshmen meeting

each other for the first time at the gymnasium doors. Then the teacher might explain, in English, the differences among German greetings in various social situations. Finally, the teacher will explain some of the grammar points and structures used.

The following exercise is taken from a 1987 workshop on communicative foreign language teaching of the Center for Applied Linguistics. The exercise, called "Eavesdropping," is aimed at advanced students.

"Instructions to students." Listen to a conversation somewhere in a public place and be prepared to answer, in the target language, some general questions about what was said.

1. Who was talking?
2. About how old were they?
3. Where were they when you eavesdropped?
4. What were they talking about?
5. What did they say?
6. Did they become aware that you were listening to them?

The exercise puts students in a real-world listening situation where they must report information overheard. Most likely they have an opinion of the topic, and a class discussion could follow, in the target language, about their experiences and viewpoints.

Communicative exercises such as this motivate the students by treating topics of their choice.

In short, teachers in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less and listening more--becoming active facilitators of their students' learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). The teacher sets up the exercise, but because the students' performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, sometimes acting as referee or monitor. A classroom during a communicative activity is far from quiet, however. The students do most of the speaking, and frequently the scene of a classroom during a communicative exercise is active, with students leaving their seats to complete a task.

Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may find they gain confidence in using the target language in general. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

1.1.3 Educational System and Situation of English in Japan

Japan's modern educational system was established in the midst of rapid modernization after the revolution of 1868 and was reformed after the Second World War. The first modern university was a direct consequence of the governmental policy of Westernization, and was specifically authorized to serve "the needs of the state," as a kind of bureaucrat training

center. There had been private higher educational institutes in Japan previously, but until the national educational system was completely established, these were classified only as non-university educational institutions and known as Career College (*senmon gakko*). This contrasted with the situation in Western countries, where the very beginning of the modern university was always private. These same pre-war policies and purposes for higher education remain influential to this day.

Nowadays in Japan, there are national, public (prefectural and municipal), and private universities, as well as non-university higher educational institutes. Contrary to the universities, which are more or less supported by the government, private non-university institutions (*senmon gakko*) keep the freedom that financial dependence upon the government would jeopardize.

The structure of Japan's higher education has been developed from both national and private origins. In Japan children are admitted to school at the age of 6 and they start learning English at the age of 10. There are also private schools and nowadays a lot of people invest in the private schools and that gives them a very good return. Several subjects such as maths, science and drawing are taught in English there from the first day.

Former Japanese state Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ichita Yamamoto, was

quoted as saying , “Japanese political leaders also need to have sufficient English ability to be able to convey messages...by appearing on television shows even with no notice” (Toda and Mohara 2000:8). The above statement proves the how much concentration is given on English language teaching/learning in Japan.

The change in emphasis from grammar to communication can be seen in the creation of Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, a national program which has brought thousands of native speakers into Japanese junior and senior high school classrooms. As the educational environment continues to change in junior and senior high schools, the students’ abilities and confidence levels will increase. As a result, changes to become more communicative at the post-secondary level will be necessary. It will be worthwhile, therefore, to determine what is presently hindering the Communicative Approach in post-secondary educational institutions. In December 2000, Japanese Education Minister Nakasone established a panel of experts to “discuss ways to overhaul English teaching methods in high school and university entrance examinations” (Redford and Matsuzawa 2000:10). Smaller studies, such as this one, may prove helpful in assessing the current situation in various parts of the country. This research will assess the current situation in Saitama.

1.1.4 ELT Situation of Nepal

English entered Nepal with the foundation of Durbar High School in 1854 A.D. Then in 1919, it was included in higher education with the establishment of Tri-Chandra College. In course of time, SLC board and Tribhuvan University were established. Since then, English has occupied a vital position in the educational field of Nepal.

Realizing the importance of English language, the government of Nepal has included English in Schools and Higher Education curricula as a compulsory subject. Especially, the NESC (1971) has brought revolutionary change by planning curricula and text-books with the provision of compulsory English of 100 marks for each grade from four to bachelor's level including optional English in secondary level as well as higher education. Now with the proliferation of English medium schools, and growing demand for more English from the general mass the government reintroduced English from grade one to bachelor's level. In Nepal there are two types of schools: one is government funded schools and the other private schools. In government funded schools students used to start learning English only when they reach grade four but now the situation is changed. So, in government funded schools and in private schools students start learning English right from grade one.

Secondary education is divided into three years' lower secondary, two years' secondary and two years' higher secondary. The lower secondary curriculum (grades 6, 7 and 8) and the secondary curriculum (grade 9 and 10) are constructed with core subjects and optional subjects. The five lower secondary core subjects are Nepali, English, math, science and social studies. The six secondary core subjects are Nepali, English, math, science, social studies, health, population and environment (HPE).

Basically, teaching English in the schools of Nepal has the purpose of enabling the students to exchange ideas with people of any nations who speak or write English and the other is to expose them to the vast treasures of knowledge and pleasure available in written and spoken English.

1.2 Literature Review

There are rare research works in Nepal which draw attention on Japanese educational institutions. Therefore, mainly the research works of Japanese researchers has been reviewed.

A post-secondary education study done by Terdal, Dunn, and Gaynor (1996) studied the classroom behavior of one near-native speaking and fifteen native speaking teachers in Japan who had been educated in Western post-graduate courses. The study focused on how these teachers changed their teaching methods in response to the Japanese classroom and

addressed some of the barriers to teaching with the Communicative Approach. Within the confines of the sixteen teachers, Terdal, Dunn, and Gaynor (1996) found positive evidence of the use of the Communicative Approach when it was discovered that there was an emphasis on meaning more than form/grammar. In emphasizing meaning over grammar, the communicative task can be given before the grammar. If, however, the learner performs better with an explanation before the communication, the grammar explanation should be given before an attempt is made to communicate (Eisenstein 1987). Based on the Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor study (1996), it would seem there has been a change from stressing form to emphasizing meaning. Although this study provided some insights, the study did not address what non-native English speaking teachers are doing in their classrooms. Throughout the work, the number of non-native teachers outnumbers the number of native-speaking teachers (Fromkin et al. 1996). It would seem, therefore, that further study with Japanese teachers who have not studied in Western countries is warranted.

Kitajima's case study (1997) reviewed the use of the Communicative Approach at one university in Japan. The study concentrated on the communicative strategies of students. While a control group studied with form-focused instruction, two experimental groups studied with meaning-focused instruction. The three groups were compared by using pre and post

test results. Comparing the two meaning focused groups, there was no statistical difference between the students who were instructed on how to use communicative strategies and those students who were not. Students in both experimental groups who were taught with the Communicative Approach progressed in the ability to verbally communicate. This was in contrast to the control group that studied with the Grammar-Translation Method. This example demonstrated the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach. It follows, therefore, that discovering hindrances to the approach will directly and positively effect learning.

In Japan, Caprio (1988) and Miyao (1996) successfully created communicative classroom that were student centered. Caprio (1988) accomplished this by becoming a facilitator who combined all four language skills in one course. Miyao (1996) used the Communicative Approach to promote communicative writing through e-mail. Miyao's study (1996) mentioned that using e-mail may help the students to speak more communicatively. The study noted that because the students were e-mailing each other, the lessons and exercises were student centered. Because a main emphasis of the Communicative Approach is the student-centered classroom (Richards and Rodgers 1998), various statements used in the present study were included in the questionnaire in order to determine whether teachers in Saitama have student-centered classrooms.

Nakamura (1992, 1997, and 2000) has shown that there is a growing trend to evaluate the verbal communication skills of university students in Japan. This is significant because what is tested should be a reflection of what is taught in the classroom (Heaton 1997). Starting with the 1992 paper, Nakamura studied how native speakers and non-native speakers of English evaluate students. He found a discrepancy between the two groups in terms of the importance placed on and the evaluation of such things as fluency, content, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. In 1996, Nakamura progressed into rater reliability and the use of rating sheets for both monologue and dialogue tests. Nakamura (2000) also discussed a measurement model that allows teachers to evaluate student's conversations globally, judging skills as a whole, and focusing on one specific ability.

A common point of investigation by Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor (1996) in Japan, Karavas-Doukas (1996) in Greece, and Ellis (1994) in Vietnam focused on whether the classes were teacher centered or student centered. The teachers in the Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor study (1996) tried to be more student centered, but to some extent, they failed. Ellis (1994) found that not only were the classes not teacher centered but there was no attempt to make the class student centered. Karavas-Doukas (1996) discovered that most classes were teacher centered and focused on form. To make a classroom student centered, the instructor must change their role from

leader to facilitator (Richards and Rodgers 1998). In the role of facilitator, the instructor tries to help the students take more control, most often by giving the students more time to practice verbal exercises. As a facilitator, the instructor spends less time speaking as a lecturer, so the students spend more time actively participating.

Kumaravadivelu (1993:13) suggested one strategy for creating a communicative classroom is to “utilize learning opportunities created by learners”. In doing so, students’ ideas increase the meaningfulness of classroom activities. In a similar manner, Miyao (1996) concluded that a real or authentic audience promotes independent learning. In creating a communicative classroom, Caprio (1998) had the learners bring authentic materials, things that they were interested in, to class.

Nunan (1987:141) noted that “[a] classroom constraint is the attitude of the learners themselves.” Nearly ten years later, this problem still existed when Yuen’s study (1996) indicated that Japanese college and university students’ expectations of how English conversation classes should be taught may be different than how the teachers are conducting lessons. Yuen’s study (1996) concluded that the students want more of a free-talk style of class with few restrictions. He noted that students’ attitude conflicts with how most teachers conduct conversation lessons. Patek

(1996) not only discovered resistance from students and parents but also from other teachers who had not participated in the training in England. Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor (1996) found that the teachers made deviations from the standard feature of the Communicative Approach in an attempt to make the approach usable after having adverse reactions by the students to the communicative style of teaching. As a result, in the present study a questionnaire statement was made to determine whether the Saitama teachers have adjusted their approach in order to teach more effectively. In addition, the teachers were given the opportunity to discuss adverse reactions they have experienced.

Both the Ellis study (1994) and the Terdal, Dunn, and Gaynor study (1996) found that practicing in the speaking skill was difficult. Some teachers in Ellis's study (1994) were using choral repetition to practice the speaking skill, but this technique does not fall within the Communicative Approach (Richards and Rodgers 1998; Celce-Murcia 1991). Ellis (1994) attributed that to a non-communicative teaching style and to the students' inability to stay on task in using the target language. Wolff (1994:5) found that one of the problems consistently mentioned by teachers at the higher education level in Europe was the difficulty in "using only the target language." In a communicative foreign language classroom, there is a concern regarding the judicious use of the L1. Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor (1996) also noticed

that, based on interviews with the teachers and observations made of the classes, there was a lot of L1 use, especially since the students were not always using the target language when practicing in small groups or pairs. Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor (1996) concluded that the students do not realize that the target language can be used to communicate not only answers to questions on a test but also a variety of information in real-life situations. Terdal, Dunn and Gaynor (1996) went on the note that although not all of the students had this problem, it was a prevalent problem. Based on these studies, in the present study the teachers were asked to respond to a statement that students stray from the target language during pair and small group exercises.

As Brown (1994:187) noted, “Language and culture are inextricably intertwined.” Ellis’s study (1994) in Vietnam mainly dealt with the cultural and historical ideological differences between Western countries and Vietnam and with the wide gap between the teaching practices in Vietnam and the Communicative Approach. Even though Japan and Vietnam are different, many of the theories can be adapted to the Japanese context since both are non-Western countries. A major part of Ellis’ investigation (1994) concentrated on the importance of understanding the culture of the target language. Yule (1996:246) emphasized this importance when he wrote, “Linguistic variation is tied very much to the existence of different

cultures.” If one person is going to communicate with a person from a different culture, then there must be an understanding of the other culture to clearly communicate meaning. There are a lot of nuances, such as taking turns, pauses, and body language, which help the listener understand what the other person is trying to convey. These nuances, however, may be misinterpreted by people from other cultures. Additionally, when the value structure is different, an utterance that is very clear to one person can be confusing or misunderstood by the other.

By understanding the students’ native culture, the instructor can help students grasp cultural differences between the L1 and L2. Ellis (1993), in his study of Japanese university students studying abroad in Canada, found that Japanese learners have a unique social organization. This finding is substantiated by Pacek’s post-course study (1996) which found that while the teachers attended a one-year program at the University of Birmingham in England, they had positive attitudes towards CLT. After these teachers returned to Japan, however, they found it difficult to implement the CLT methodology for a number of reasons. One problem participants encountered after returning to Japan was that CLT methods did not work in the Japanese culture.

There are, therefore, aspects of the Japanese social structure that may be limiting the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach. Ellis (1993)

noted that one social phenomenon is relationship between older and younger people. In Japan, careful consideration is given to the “sempai...kohai” relationship. Ellis (1993:14) explained that out of respect for older students, even those who are just one year older, younger students may “avoid participating for fear of offending their ‘superiors’.” Social position in the Japanese communicative classroom is a legitimate concern when planning pair and small group activities. Another cultural aspect was discovered by Miyao (1996), who found that by using e-mail and spell-check programs, the students had less anxiety about writing to others, whether they were friends or teachers. She explained that the anxiety of making mistakes in front of others is a substantial barrier for many Japanese students to overcome.

The group culture prevails in Japan. Alarid and Wang (1997) referred to it as Groupism and postulated that Japan’s group mentality originated from agricultural practices hundreds of years ago. Japanese students avoid standing out from their peers, whether it can be for good or bad reasons; this can be attributed to the value placed on group harmony. The school systems are designed to produce a homogeneous student body, and as a result, the students are not divided into high achievers and low achievers (Yoshida 1994). Instead, the high achievers are encouraged to help others; this encourages co-operation in groups. This, in turn, reduces the

likelihood that students will want to stand out and encourages students to be average, rather than above or below the norm. The goal, as both Alarid and Wang (1997) and Yoshida (1994) noted, is for everyone to succeed. Working with Japan's group philosophy has benefits, but it also has the potential to create challenges in the communicative classroom. Items in the questionnaire of the present study were designed to determine whether groupism, the anxiety of making mistakes, or other cultural aspects are limiting the students from fully participating in communicative activities.

The change in emphasis from grammar to communication can be seen in the creation of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, a national program which has brought thousands of native speakers into Japanese junior and senior high school classrooms. The focus of English education in Japanese junior high and senior high schools has shifted from grammar and vocabulary study for exams to the combined focus of passing examinations and communication (Baskin 1996). Currently, more than 6000 JET program participants are working in Japan (The Daily Yomiuri 31 July 2001:8). Presumably, as the students of junior and senior high schools become more communicative, so will be the students of post-secondary education. In Japan, national competency testing in the English language is changing to reflect this new emphasis in listening and speaking skills (Nishimura 2000). The Japanese Standard Test of English

Proficiency (STEP), a graduated test with six levels, has implemented listening and speaking components at the higher levels. As the educational environment continues to change in junior and senior high schools, the students' abilities and confidence levels will increase. As a result, changes to become more communicative at the post-secondary level will be necessary. It is worthwhile, therefore, to determine what is presently hindering the Communicative Methodology in educational institutions.

Not only this but also in Nepal, to the use of Communicative Approach from the primary level to higher secondary is advocated and emphasized. A few researches in this area are conducted in the Department of English Language Education. As the situation and practice of ELT in Japan and Nepal are similar to some extent this study may encourage future researchers to explore the situation in Nepal from this perspective.

The present study is totally different from the researches carried in the Department of English Language Education.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine how extensively the Communicative Approach of teaching English as a second language, specifically in speaking and listening course, is used in some colleges in Saitama, Japan.

2. To explore some of the hindrances to the use of the Communicative Approach in these colleges.
3. To suggest some pedagogical implications of the study.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study helps to explore the effective ways and methods of teaching English as a second language by using Communicative Approach. As in Japan, English is a second language in Nepal and Nepalese English learners and teachers can learn whether Communicative Approach can be used in the classroom or not, if not what type of hindrances are the most common ones from the research. This study is also useful to Nepalese English teachers who want to go abroad for teaching English. Since the study explores some hindrances to the use of Communicative Approach, teachers become aware of the hindrances and they can begin to improve.

1.5 Definition of Specific Terms

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): CLT is also referred to as the Communicative Approach.

Communicative Approach (CA): An approach to learning a second language based on the theory that “the purpose of language (and thus the language teaching) is communication” (Celce-Murcia 1991:8-9).

Communicative Competence: The ability to, within specific context, express ideas to others and to interpret the intended meaning on what was conveyed by others (Brown 1994:2-7)

Grammar Translation Method: An approach in studying foreign language “first through detail analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language” (Richards and Rodgers 1998:3).

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L1: The mother tongue or first language

L2: The second or target language

Likert Attitude Scale: The Likert scale contents “a number of points on scale, quite often 5, but typically an odd number. The points have designations such as ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’”. (Wiersma 1995:319).

Meaning: Communicating a natural understanding of a point which may or may not be perfectly linguistically correct, but which still conveys information and ideas that are intelligible to the individuals involved.

Target Language: The language that is being studied.

Western Cultures: Cultures that are European in nature such as Australia, The United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted during the study. The survey method was used because this study explored the opinion and attitude of the teachers. The methodology that was used is described below.

2.1 Sources of Data

This research used both primary and secondary sources of data.

2.1.1 Primary Sources

This research is based mainly on the primary sources of data, which were collected from questionnaire. The sources are the teachers of English as a foreign language at the two national universities, the national medical university, the prefectural nursing college and the prefectural junior college at Saitama, Japan. The two national universities and the national medical university are under the national educational system and the prefectural nursing college and the prefectural junior college are the Career Colleges (*senmon gakko*) that are out of national educational system.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources

The books and journals related to the English Language Teaching (ELT) and Communicative Approach are consulted as secondary source of data.

Beside this, online journals on the related topic will be studied as reference materials. Some of them are Pacek (1996), Nunan (1997), Wolff (1994), Miyao (1996).

2.2 Population of the Study

The population for this survey was defined as all teachers of English as a foreign language, both native speakers and non-native speakers, at the two national universities, the national medical university, the prefectural nursing college, and the prefectural junior college in Saitama, Japan. The universities and junior colleges share teachers, and the teaching goals also seem to be similar. It was decided that the survey study would take a census of the entire population, and as such, no sampling was required (Wiersma 1995; Borg and Gall 1983). One of the main reasons for including the survey to all English as a foreign language teachers, and not only the native-speaking teachers, was because Terdel, Dunn and Gaynor (1996) not only studied native-speaking teachers but also non native ones. Most of the second language instruction around the world is done by non-native speakers. (Fromkin et al.1996), so including non-native speakers, as well as native speakers of English, produced research that is more representative of the overall situation.

The population of teachers was ascertained from class lists and from lists of teachers maintained by the respective Department of English and

institutions. The names were then confirmed with the published list of all the teachers in Saitama. If the teachers taught literature exclusively, they were not included in the population. In total, 42 were short-listed for the study. Out of the total, 36 teachers returned the questionnaire on the return rate of 86 percent. Seventy-eight percent, or 28 of the teachers, indicated that they currently teach or have in the past taught speaking/conversation and listening (SCL). Because the focus of this study was the use of the Communicative Approach in speaking and listening courses, the group has been scrutinized unless otherwise noted.

In this sub-group of 28 English teachers, 9 are native English speakers and 19 are Japanese teachers of English. Four teachers hold a bachelor's degree, while 21 teachers have earned a Master's degree. Two teachers have a Doctorate, and 1 has a Graduate Certificate in Culture. When asked about the highest degree earned, Literature and Education were indicated by 8 people each. Only 3 people earned a degree in Applied Linguistics, and 1 instructor's degree was in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Fifty percent of the teachers have been teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for 12 or more years, while only 7 percent indicated they have been teaching for two years or less.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

Purposive, non-random procedure was used to select the population as those teachers who taught literature were excluded.

2.4 Tools of Data Collection

Questionnaire is the basic tool for the data collection. Plans for construction of questionnaire were drawn from Borg and Gall (1983) and from Wiersma (1995). From these two main readings, it was determined that, in order to make it easier to tabulate data and analyze the results, selected response items were preferable. It was also believed that selected response items would make the questionnaire seem less threatening to the teachers. Leading questions were avoided. In order to avoid complex items that could produce inaccurate data, an attempt was made to have each item contain only one concept. As a result, the questionnaire was too long, but the length was necessary in order to fully examine the objectives. If open-ended items had been used tabulation would have taken an exorbitant amount of time, and more importantly, there would have been an increase in the chance of making interpretation mistakes.

The questionnaire has two sections (see appendix). The first section, asking for biographical information, is quite long. The next section contains items that deal with elements of the Communicative Approach and with possible

hindrances. In order to decrease preconceptions, headings were not used. Many of the items were narrowed to the speaking skill to make a shorter questionnaire and to gather more specific data. Anticipating that some teachers do not teach and have never taught speaking, the Likert scale has a response of (F), not applicable, in the second section of the questionnaire. To avoid any misunderstanding, a conscious effort was made to use terms that all of the teachers know. In order to allow the teachers to comment upon past experience, one open-ended question was at the end of the questionnaire. Because of the length of the questionnaire, this question was made optional.

Based upon previous studies discussed in the literature review, it seemed prudent to address the following issues:

1. use of the elements of the Communicative Approach;
2. how teachers view students and the student's actions in class, as well as whether these actions are seen as hindrances to effective teaching;
3. whether student-centered classes are being utilized;
4. the average class size and whether this is seen as a deterrent.

The covering letter was constructed using suggestions from Wiersma (1995) and Borg and Gall (1983) to make professional, yet friendly, introductory letter that explained the research purpose. In addition to enclosing a self-

addressed stamped envelop, the cover letter stated the researcher's appreciation for the time and effort that would be spent in completing the questionnaire. An attempt was made to keep the letter simple and the directions minimal, so as not to prejudice the teachers in any way. A return date of one week was given so the teachers had time to complete the questionnaire but not so much time that it was forgotten.

2.5 Process of Data Collection

The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted in the beginning of the year- 2008, January. The institutions were opened after a week long New Year vacation. The questionnaires were emailed to each individual's official email address. Beside this, the questionnaires were posted to their institutions postal address for those who did not have easy email access. A self addressed stamped envelop was enclosed. Announcements were made by the Head of the Department at the universities' English faculty meetings to encourage the faculty to fill out the questionnaire. The teachers at the junior college, the nursing college, and the medical university were contacted in person, as there are fewer faculties. The questionnaires asked each instructor to give his/her name and institution for record keeping purpose. When the questionnaire was returned, the instructor was checked off the list. Follow-up letters were sent to those who did not return the questionnaire.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

The basic limitations of the study were as follows:

- The study covered one of the 34 prefectures of Japan and the results could not be fully generalized in Nepali context.
- This study covered four year graduate schools and non-university private institute, the Special Course Schools or the Career Colleges (*Senmon Gakko*) that accept the high school graduates in Japan. It will not cover the Masters and Ph.D. level education.
- The study is solely based on written form.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This Chapter consists of analysis of interpretation of data. This is the main body part of the thesis.

3.1 Analysis of the Aspects of the Communicative Approach

To determine to what extent the Communicative Approach is being used, statements directly pertaining to the features of the approach were used. Various statements about each element of the approach were devised to test consistency in response. The frequency of the answers on the Likert scale was calculated on a percent basis.

3.1.1 Focus on Meaning

Emphasizing the conveyance of meaning in communication is a fundamental tenet of the Communicative Approach, and some teachers are, in fact, valuing meaning. In response to the statements, *My speaking classes focus less on form and more on meaning* and *My speaking class focus mostly on form*, 57 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to the first statement and 57 percent disagree or strongly disagree to the second statement. The use of communicative activities is another indication that learning to communicate is not only focused on grammar. Forty-six percent of the teachers indicated they use over 50 percent of class

time on communicative activities. Furthermore, 64 percent of the teachers indicated that they do not spend a large part of the class period having students repeat phrases. Only 3.5 percent of the teachers strongly agreed to the use of repeating. Repeating is a rote memory exercise that is not part of the Communicative Approach.

The teachers are concerned with proper grammar usage, but they also believe that an ability to communicate can be accomplished with imperfect grammar. Eighty-three percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, *I encourage students to convey meaning without penalty, even if they use incorrect form/grammar*. In direct correlation, 93 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable, at times, for students to make grammar mistakes in the pursuit of conveying meaning. This is in contrast to the past when correct grammar was of the utmost importance in Japan.

In conveying meaning, grammar is used. While grammar is used during instruction, a majority of the teachers in Saitama are not explaining grammar rules but rather the inherent use of grammar. As such, communicative activities stress the conveyance of meaning between people. That is not to say, however, that grammar is being ignored. Seventy-five percent of the SCL teachers agreed or strongly agreed that

grammar, pronunciation, and spelling must be taught with speaking. Forty-one percent of the general population and 53 percent of the SCL group agreed or strongly agreed with the presentation of a communicative task before explaining the grammar. Another 41 percent of the general population and 39 percent of the SCL teachers were neutral to the concept.

On reflection of these statistics, it is evident that conveying meaning is considered paramount in English classroom instruction and that this aspect of the Communicative Approach is being used by over half of the teachers. At this level of education, the students have been studying English from six or more year. It might prove beneficial to increase in meaning during speaking and communicative instruction for those teachers who are not already doing so.

3.1.2 Emphasis on Grammar

Forty-three percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed and another 43 percent were neutral to the statement, *I encourage students to strive for correct form*. When considering the previous section, one can conclude that the intent is probably not to focus on grammar but rather to encourage students to correctly use the grammar they already know. The correct use of grammar increases understanding between participants and gives the listener the impression that the speaker is well educated. If, however,

learners of English as foreign language do not try to communicate meaning for fear of using incorrect grammar, they will not be able to improve communicative skills. The tenet of using grammar to construct understandable utterances seems to be accepted and used by teachers in Saitama.

The acceptable level of deviation from correct grammar varies widely between individuals and can not be defined without using many examples, since the question of when and how often to correct grammar is an individual, professional choice. In addition, the same instructor may have different parameters for grammar correction, based on the teaching style and the goal of the lesson and/or class. How grammar is corrected is related to what kind of grammar is being corrected. All of these factors, as well as others that have not been discussed, add to the complexity of when, how, and how often grammar correction is done. As a result, the degree of deviation was deemed beyond the scope of this research. Instead, a general statement, *In my interactions with students I correct their form/grammar more than 50 percent of the time*, was used. Possibly because what constitutes correcting grammar was not clearly defined, the response was divided with 43 percent of the teachers disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, 32 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 25 percent remaining neutral. Some of the other statements concerning the emphasis on communication

rather than grammar/form were more positively accepted, and this difference may lie in definitions. More in-depth investigation is warranted.

Grammar is an important part of language instruction, and correct grammar usage is important in the production of English. This was reflected in a statement that in order to be able to communicate, not only speaking but also grammar, pronunciation, and spelling must be taught. Seventy-five percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed. In fact, 50 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the university entrance exam system, with its emphasis on grammar, positively affected the way students were taught a second language in high school. The teachers did not, however, imply that this system helps the students develop their speaking ability. Sixty-one percent of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that university entrance exams help the students develop their speaking ability. At the post-secondary level, learners can use previously learned grammar in communication.

3.1.3 Student-centered Classroom

One of the main features of the Communicative Approach is giving the students the chance to practice the target language and have an active role in the learning process. There are positive indications that some teachers are trying to be facilitators and have student-centered classrooms. Forty-

three percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their classes are more student-centered than teacher-centered. Another 43 percent of the teachers were neutral to the statement. Having student-centered classrooms is also evident by the fact that 54 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their main role in the classroom is to be a facilitator. In addition, 36 percent of the teachers were neutral to the statement. Sixty-five percent of the teachers noted that pair work and small group exercises are part of the classroom activities.

When presented with a statement that the students have more speaking time in class than the teachers, the respondents were evenly divided with 39 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing and 35 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This is an unexpected response in light of the answers to the first three statements. One would expect a lower rate of disagreement. One explanation for these variances could be in the definition of student-centered classrooms. Teachers may be defining their classes as student centered even though the students do not speak more than the teachers. Other explanations may exist. Further investigation is necessary to determine how student-centered classes are defined and conducted. Without student-centered classrooms, the Communicative Approach is not as effective as it could be.

Speaking and listening are skills that need to be exercised, much like practicing a sport to improve playing performance. Mastering a second language is not the result of listening to an instructor tells the students what to do and how to do it, but rather, the Communicative Approach asserts, it is the result of students actively trying to listen, speak, and write. In facilitating classes, only 53 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students are encouraged to use their own ideas during pair and small group exercises. Sixty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed that students fail to give opinions because the students fear being considered wrong. It is difficult, however, to conclude how the students feel as this study only investigated the teachers' opinions. If the teachers feel that it is difficult for the students to express themselves, then the teachers may not give the students opportunities to offer personal input. In a communicative classroom after instructions are given, the students should actively experiment and engage themselves in the language. The principle of encouraging students to express themselves is not universally implemented in Saitama.

3.1.4 Pair and Small Group Activities

In response to the item, *My speaking classes have pair and small group exercises*, 65 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed, while only 4 percent disagreed and 7 percent gave a neutral response. Twenty-five

percent responded with not applicable. It is possible that the concept of pair and small group work is theoretically supported, but in reality, the activities are not being used because of physical circumstances, such as the size of the classroom or bolted down desks, that prevent free movements. It is also possible, however, that these activities are being done but not clearly labeled as pair and small group activities. When other statements dealing with pair and small group activities are examined, this second hypothesis becomes more credible. In response to the related statements about pair and small group activities not applicable was either not chosen or was only answered by one or two of the teachers. One would expect the same 25 percent to indicate not applicable to these items if pair and small group exercises are not being utilized. This is an issue for further study.

Even though the majority of the teachers utilize pair and small group exercises, there are also indications that pair work is not as effective as it can be. With 61 percent agreeing or remaining neutral, a majority of the teachers indicated that class time for pair and small group work is limited because the students do not use all of the time to practice the target language but rather regress onto Japanese. Clearly, there are obstacles to the smooth use of pair and small group use, as discussed in the hindrances section.

3.1.5 Role-play

When students role play without a script, it can be a stimulating exercise for the learners. Because of the usefulness of the role play, it is unfortunate that more teachers do not utilize it more. The greatest number of the teachers, 36 percent, indicated neutral, and 17 percent indicated not applicable, because they do not use role play in class. The other teachers were evenly divided between agreement and disagreement. There is more indication that pair and small groups are being used, as seen in the previous section.

3.1.7 Authentic Materials

Using authentic materials from the real world triggers and elicits responses and helps the students understand the practicality of the material. 82 percent of the teachers indicated that they use authentic materials when appropriate. As one of the main elements of the Communicative Approach, this is a positive indication that elements of the approach are being used in Saitama.

3.1.8 Understanding the Target Language Culture

An understanding of the target language's culture is important in learning a foreign language. Ninety-three percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to this concept. Preassembly, these teachers believe that teaching

cultural points along with the language in important. 68 percent of the teachers indicated that students' utterances may be misinterpreted by non-Japanese. But, only 47 percent agreed or strongly agreed that differences in culture inhibit the learning of second languages. It would seem, therefore, that 46 percent of the population believes that while an understanding of the foreign culture is important, cultural differences do not prevent the students from learning the language.

3.1.9 Pronunciation

When and how to correct pronunciation is always debatable. Even if the student's utterance is understandable, 32 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed, while 43 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, to correcting that pronunciation. Before the gathering of the data, it was anticipated that the majority would agree with the item. However, nearly half of the teachers would not correct the pronunciation if the utterance is understandable. If learners are interrupted in the middle of an utterance or in the middle of an exchange, the natural flow of conversation is disrupted. If this occurs often, the joy of communication will be lost. When learners of a foreign language can make themselves understood in the target language, there is usually a sense of great accomplishment. This accomplishment gives learners the motivation to continue to try to improve communication.

3.1.10 Teachers' Understanding of the Communicative Approach

Eighty percent of the responding population and 70 percent of the SCL teachers strongly agreed or agreed to the statement, *Communicative competence is both linguistic knowledge and the skill in using this knowledge*. It is clear that teachers believe that in order to communicate, an individual must have not only a good understanding of grammar but also knowledge about when and how to use the grammar appropriate to the situation. However, only 57 percent of the teachers indicated that they understand the Communicative Approach; the most frequent response was personal experience in the classroom. This may explain why two of the teachers indicated that they have never heard the term “Communicative Approach” before. Because formal instruction has not been done, it is possible that some teachers intrinsically use fundamentals of the Communicative Approach without terming them as such. Regardless of whether or not the teachers have complete understanding of the approach, the fact remains that many of the teachers use features of the Communicative Approach. Furthermore, when the teachers were asked what approach, both in theory and in reality, is best for teaching a speaking class, the Communicative Approach was chosen most frequently in both cases.

3.2 Analysis of Teachers' Hindrances

To determine some of the hindrances to the Communicative Approach, statements asking for the teachers' opinion were used. The frequency of the answers to items on the Likert scale was calculated on a percent basis.

3.2.1 Emphasis on Grammar

In response to the statement, *I hesitate to use the Communicative Approach because it does not allow enough time to study form/grammar*, only 7 percent agreed while 57 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 21 percent were neutral, and 14 percent indicated not applicable. It is possible that because speaking, listening, reading and writing are taught as individual subjects with grammar emphasized in the reading and writing courses, several teachers indicated not applicable or were neutral to the concept. Because "enough time" spent on grammar instruction is difficult to quantify, some teachers may have also chosen to answer neutrally or with not applicable. Overall, however, it can be concluded that grammar instruction is not a major restraint to the use of the Communicative Approach.

3.2.2 Oral Proficiency

Only 3 of the non-native teachers agreed *I hesitate to use the Communicative Approach in speaking classes because it asks me to be*

orally proficiency in the target language. In self-evaluation, 2 of these same 3 teachers rated themselves as having an intermediate level of English, while the remaining indicated an advanced ability. Even though these 3 individuals evaluated their speaking skills as adequate, they still feel their ability is not sufficient for teaching with the Communicative Approach. Among the other non-native SCL teachers, 1 indicated native-like proficiency, 4 answered with highly advanced, 5 responded with advanced, 5 noted an upper-intermediate, and 1 is at an intermediate level. This indicates that the Japanese teachers feel they have the ability to vocally use English. Oral proficiency is not, therefore, a hindrance to the Communicative Approach.

3.2.3 Textbooks

Forty-three percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed and 39 percent neutral to the statement, *Current textbooks facilitate communicative skills.* Since 82 percent indicated that they use authentic materials, one can conclude that the material is being used to supplement textbooks. Although the majority of the teachers do not have a strongly negative perception of textbooks, the fact that they are supplementing them indicates that the textbooks publishers and writers could be providing more real-world activities, props, and/or conversations. Even so, the teachers have not indicated that the textbooks inhibit the use of the Communicative Approach.

3.2.4 Class Size

The teachers were asked the average class size, but rather than use a scale, they were asked to write in a number for more accuracy. Forty-three percent of the teachers in the SCL group indicated an average class size of 40 to 50 students. The next common class size was 10 to 15 students in one class, as noted by 21 percent of teachers. The third most common answer, given by 18 percent of the teachers, was 20 to 25 students. One instructor noted that the average class size was 50 students. A large number of classrooms have 40 or more students. Classrooms of this size make it difficult to give individual attention to students, but it is not impossible. It is conceivably easier to conduct a listening class with a large number of students if an adequate speaker system is used. In conversation or speaking classroom with many students, it becomes more difficult to help the students with pronunciation, grammar, and meaning, while at the same time motivating the students to use English. The success of the communicative classroom depends on not only the teachers but also the students, and in classes of this size, this becomes even more important.

There is a gap between the native speakers' and the non-native speakers' responses. In most of the classrooms with native speakers of English, the most common class size was 15 students, with only two native-speaking teachers noting a class size of 30 or more students. There is reason to

believe that fundamentals of the Communicative Approach, such as pair and small group practice, are being given serious consideration when determining the number of students in each conversation class. In classes with fewer students, the students are given more time to interact with the instructor.

Class size is always a point of discussion in education, not just in teaching languages but also in other subjects. As this is the case, the teachers were asked to respond to the statement, *Speaking class size are too large*. Seventy-five percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. Forty-three percent agreed that students stray from the target language in pairs and small groups, and large class sizes may help to explain why this is occurring. If the instructor does not have enough time with each student, the student may digress back into Japanese. In spite of the fact that native-speaking teachers generally have smaller classes, 78 percent agreed or strongly agreed to this statement. Although, class size may be hindering the Communicative Approach in some cases, it is not a factor that is readily controlled by individual teachers.

3.2.5 Proficiency Tests

Instruction does not seem to be dictated or influenced by national and international proficiency tests, such as the Test of English for International

Communication (TOEIC) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Fifty percent of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement, *I feel that what I teach is somewhat controlled by national and international proficiency tests*. Only 18 percent agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. For the teachers in Saitama, proficiency tests are not creating any conflict with instruction using the Communicative Approach.

3.3 Analysis of Students' Hindrances

Based on the teachers' response on the questionnaire, the following hindrances are found facing by students.

3.3.1 Pair and Small Groups

One of the main elements of the Communicative Approach is the use of pairs and small groups to practice natural conversation in the target language, and 65 percent of the SCL teachers responded that they utilize this feature of the Communicative Approach. Forty-three percent agreed and 18 percent were neutral to the statement, *It is difficult to allow a great deal of time for pair and small group exercises because the students tend to not use the target language*. The Communicative Approach allows for some of the use of the L1 detracts from the approach. Some L1 may be needed to explain difficult points, but the Communicative Approach asserts

that students should sometimes struggle in the L2 to promote learning. Since the students fall back to using Japanese and do not take full advantage of the time for English language production, consideration should be given to using activities that will engage the students. Grading participation, attendance, and attitude may also be effective. These things are being included in the determination of term grades by 57 percent, 46 percent, and 32 percent of the teachers, respectively.

Other explanations for why students revert back to Japanese were offered in the open response section at the end of the questionnaire. Three teachers indicated they have had slightly negative responses from the students about communicating with each other in English. One teacher indicated that the students only want to interact in English with the teacher and not with their fellow students. This teacher went on to note that the students feel that practicing with non-native speakers is a waste of time in the pursuit of improved listening and speaking skills. Another reason why the students revert back to Japanese may lie in the fact that the students have different skill levels, and some students may feel that practicing with students who have less developed skills is not productive.

Another questionnaire focused on whether it is difficult for most students to interact verbally in pairs in the target language. The results were evenly

divided between teachers supporting and opposing the statement, with 43 percent and 46 percent, respectively. While some teachers find pair practices to be workable, others may have encountered students who do not use the practice time as effectively as possible. A third statement specified *it is difficult for most students to use the target language in small groups of about 5 people*. Forty-three percent again agreed or strongly agreed and 21 percent were neutral to the statement. These results may indicate that some students needed an authoritative figure or leader, some incentive other than the one given in class, or more self-discipline or motivation in order to use the target language.

In response to the statement, *It is difficult for students to disclose semi-personal information to others who they have only been in class with for about half a term, about 8 weeks*, the teachers' opinions were fairly evenly divided. While 36 percent agreed and 36 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, 25 percent remained neutral. The teachers should be aware that this problem can exist. Because the teachers who answered the questionnaire are teaching at several levels; junior college, nursing college, university, and medical university; these results are not surprising.

Almost half of the teachers feel that the students find it difficult to continually speak English in pairs and small groups, and as a result, these

teachers must spend time and energy keeping the students on task, which detracts from the learning process. Based on this data, it would seem that limiting the time spent using small groups in interactive conversations could be helpful. This would not, however, be recommended because both pair and small group work are important features of the Communicative Approach and are believed to be effective techniques for teaching learners of a second language. There are a number of things a teacher can do to create a more comfortable atmosphere for the participants. The learner can be allowed to choose their own partners or groups. Materials that the students find interesting should be used whenever possible. These findings are based on college students who are generally 17 to 22 years old. Those who teach English to mature students, that is to say, students who are older, may find that the students have more self-discipline to use the target language in small discussion groups without being monitored.

3.3.2 Embarrassment

Two statements asked the teachers to evaluate whether they think the students are embarrassed to make mistakes with other person and also in front of both small and large groups; *I feel that students are embarrassed to make grammatical and/or pronunciation mistakes when using target language with one other person* and *I feel that students are embarrassed to make grammatical and/or pronunciation mistakes in front of groups, both*

small and large. Fifty percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed to the former statements, and 71 percent agreed or strongly agreed to the latter statement. The teachers also indicated, with 72 percent agreement, that they feel that the students worry too much about making grammar mistakes and fail to try to convey meaning. This may be a cultural issue, since Japanese students are not asked to speak out in class during their schooling. As a result, they are unaccustomed to speak in front of others and are easily embarrassed.

Students' use of body language and gestures in communication can be limited by embarrassment. Fifty-four percent of the teachers agreed that students have a difficult time using body language and gestures. Standing out takes confidence. If the students are not totally comfortable with their classmates or with speaking English, they may only be comfortable using, conservative gestures and body language. Additionally, gesturing in the Japanese culture seems to be impossible.

If students' embarrassment in making mistakes distract from the ability to learn, the situation needs to be changed so that the students will participate in exercises. If the students have the ability but are not using the ability, consideration must be given as to whether the students are interested in the subject matter. In these cases, embarrassment does not limit the

Communicative Approach, but it can be viewed as a hindrance in other cases. Further research needs to be done to determine how teachers can overcome embarrassment issues that may arise.

3.3.3 Expression of Opinions

Two statements were constructed to determine whether the students resist giving their opinions in class. *Students are hesitant to give own opinions in both the target language and in the Japanese language for fear of offending other students or the teacher* elicited 65 percent agreement/strong agreement and 18 percent disagreement. The statement was changed from *offending others to for fear of being considered wrong*, and again, 65 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed and 18 percent disagreed. Both of these responses indicate that it can be difficult to have learners give their opinions. The teacher may find it helpful to begin by having the students express opinions on basic topics and gradually train them to analyze and develop arguments. But, this may be nothing more than hopeful thinking since 61 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed, while only 21 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, that students have a *difficult time being different from their peers in Japan*. In consideration of this point, before embarking an argumentative exercise, teachers may need to conduct an informal evaluation of the students to ascertain whether the students will be able to disagree with one another.

A comment made by a Japanese teacher in the final short answer section was that he thinks that many of the students simply do not have opinions. Although this is one teacher's opinion, it is something to think about. The lack of opinions could be linked to the education. In general, the students have not had much experience expressing their own opinions, even in the Japanese language. Japanese education in junior and senior high schools tends to emphasize the memorization of facts rather than the analyzing them. If the problem exists even in the L1, it is not a barrier that can be easily overcome. The issue that Japanese students may be hesitant to express opinions or have no opinions is one that needs further investigation since a majority of the teachers indicated that it is a barrier to the Communicative Approach.

3.3.4 Students' Perceptions of Their Speaking Ability

Almost every teacher is challenged by the first year students' perceptions of their speaking ability. *Most students come to the first year of college with confidence in their target language speaking ability* elicited 92 percent disagreement/strong disagreement. This is a challenge not only for higher education teachers but also for junior and senior high school teachers. Delving a bit further, 50 percent of the teachers agreed and 32 percent were neutral to the premise that most first year students have more confidence in their L2 grammar than their L2 speaking ability. Giving

students a sense of confidence in their speaking and listening skills may increase the amount of speaking in class. Without any confidence, the students' attitudes toward communication will limit the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach.

3.3.5 Students Asking Questions

In western society, students are encouraged to ask questions as part of the learning process, which emphasizes active class participation. In contrast, this is not a dominant part of classroom activities in Japan. Seventy-five percent of the teachers indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement, *Students often ask questions without being asked if they have a question*. This can be partially attributed to class sizes that are too large. As previously notes, class sizes range from 15 to 50 students, and students may be reluctant to ask questions in large groups. It can also, however, be accounted for by the Japanese idiom, “the nail that sticks up will get hammered down”. As one teacher noted in the short answer response, standing out, whether it be for positive or for negative reasons, is not encouraged in the Japanese education system, and in fact, in Japanese society. This is changing, but very slowly. By overcoming the challenge of creating a classroom atmosphere that encourages questions, two-way communication between the students and the teachers will be promoted. Until this is done, the Communicative Approach can not be fully effective.

3.3.6 Creating Conversations

In Students have a difficult time using their imaginations to construct variations on studied conversation, 57 percent indicated they agree or strongly agreed on the statement while, 25 percent of the teachers were neutral. When a conversation is only repeated a few times, it is not truly understood. By applying it, the students understand the real use of the language. The language becomes something personal rather than theoretical. At the present time, the students' inability to create new dialogues is a hindrance to the Communicative Approach.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis in previous chapter, the following findings are observed and some recommendations are suggested followed by conclusions.

4.1 Findings

The findings of the research are listed as follows:

1. Most of the teachers are using most of the techniques of Communicative Approach of teaching English as a second language in Saitama, Japan. However, role-play technique is rare in use.
2. In course of exploring some hindrances to the use of the Communicative Approach, the following findings are observed:
 - a) Most of the Japanese teachers of English feel they have adequate speaking ability. As this is the case, non-native speaking ability is not prohibiting the Communicative Approach. The teachers, as a whole, did not indicate that the Communicative Approach is limited by grammar instruction. Additionally, current textbooks and proficiency tests do not detract from the Communicative Approach.
 - b) The teachers indicated that class sizes are too large, but there is no

determination that large class sizes are directly inhibiting the approach. Smaller class sizes would be helpful, but barring that, the teachers' choices of activities appropriate to large groups are important.

- c) The largest challenge the teachers seem to face is the students' reactions and attitudes, specifically during pair and small group work. Almost half of the teachers agreed that it is difficult for the students to interact verbally in pairs and small groups.
- d) The teachers believe that the students are embarrassed to make mistakes. Furthermore, pair and small group work are limited because students either do not have opinions or are unwilling to express them for fear of offending others or for fear of being considered wrong.
- e) The teachers perceive the first year students to lack confidence in speaking English, which is another hindrance to pair work and to the Communicative Approach.
- f) The teachers noted that students do not actively participate in class by asking questions and by creating new dialogues. This passivity is limiting the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach.

4.2 Recommendations

The recommendations part has been categorized in the three different headings as follows.

4.2.1 Recommendations to Teachers

The following recommendations are made to overcome the hindrances of teachers.

1. Developing own oral proficiency helps to make the teaching process more effective. However, making students active in the classroom is the main success of teacher rather than being active oneself.
2. Two-way communication between the students and the teachers should be promoted.
3. Use of pairs and small groups to practice natural conversation in English is recommended.

4.2.2 Recommendations to Students

Based on the research findings following recommendations are made for students.

1. Take active participation in peer or small group conversation/activities ignoring mistakes in communication.
2. Do not be embarrassed with mistakes, because it is the major

hindrances for learning English. Making mistakes is a process of learning.

3. Do not hesitate to express your own interest and opinions.
4. Try to use your imaginations to construct variations on studied conversations.

4.2.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The following two issues are recommended for further research.

1. The issue that Japanese students may be hesitant to express opinions or have no opinions is one that needs further investigation since a majority of the teachers indicated that it is a barrier to the Communicative Approach.
2. As embarrassment is viewed as a hindrance in Communicative Approach, further research needs to be done to determine how teacher can overcome embarrassment issues that may arise.

4.3 Conclusions

This research addresses two issues. The first is how extensively the Communicative Methodology is used in post-secondary institutions in the prefecture of Saitama, Japan, specifically in speaking and listening courses. On average, 60 percent of the teachers supported principles of the Communicative Approach. While seven percent of the teachers disagreed

to elements of the Communicative Approach more than 20 percent of the time, 43 percent of the teachers agreed to Communicative Approach tenets at least 70 percent of the time. Most of the elements of the Communicative Approach are being utilized by a majority of the teachers. Furthermore, a minority of the teachers has not implemented a few of the tenets of the Communicative Approach, such as the use of pair and small group activities.

Secondly, the study discovers some of the hindrances to the use of the Communicative Approach. The awareness of problems is the first step to improvement. Although the teachers are not limiting the approach, the teachers' perceptions of the students indicate that the students are hampering the effective use of the Communicative Approach. Of course, these students are not consciously attempting to do this. Unfortunately, several of these obstacles are based on cultural values, and they will be quite difficult to overcome. As motivation varies between students, the teachers must determine what motivates their students. By doing so, the teachers can work to overcome obstacles, such as a lack of confidence and the fear of making mistakes so that the students become more active participants in the learning process.

Different teachers have different experiences, and there is no definitive

answer as to how to make the Communicative Approach more effective in every situation. As human beings, nothing can be 100 percent effective, and certainly not the application of communicative theories. In the open response section, five out of the nine comments made about students' reactions to the use of the Communicative Approach of teaching English were positive. One teacher indicated that the students enjoy communicative-style instruction, as opposed to reading and listening exercises that have comprehension checked at the end of the exercise. In four of the five positive responses, the teachers indicated that the students initially had some difficulty with or resistance to the approach but finally adapted communicating with classmates in English. Teachers may need to persevere for certain time before the students accept the Communicative Approach, accepting the fact that their teaching will not be as smooth as desired. Perhaps more than anything else, adaptability to various groups of students is required to effectively use the Communicative Approach.

*

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APPENDICES

1. One sample and two collected questionnaires
2. Data and result in tables

Questionnaire

(Part 1)

Please circle the appropriate response or fill in the blanks, when necessary.

All references to a speaking class refer to a speaking/conversation class and references to the target language refer to the second language you are teaching.

1. Is the second language that you are teaching your first language?
Yes No

2. If the language that you teach is not your first language, what is your general speaking level?
(A) native like (B) highly advanced (C) advanced (D) upper
intermediate (E) intermediate (F) others _____ (G)
native speaker

3. Highest degree earned. (A) Bachelors (B) Graduate Certificate (C)
Masters (D) Ph.D.

4. If you have studies overseas, please list the country, length of stay and level of study.

5. Area of study in highest degree earned.
(A) Education (B) TEFL (C) Applied Linguistics (D) Literature
(E) Others _____

6. Area of study in the first degree earned.
(A) Education (B) International Studies (C) Business (D) Political
Science (E) History (F) Others _____

7. Level you most often teach at (A) Junior college (B) University or four year college
8. How many years have you been teaching at the post-secondary level?
 (A) 0-2 (B) 3-5 (C) 6-8 (D) 9-11 (E) 12 or more
9. How many years have you taught a second language?
 (A) 0-2 (B) 3-5 (C) 6-8 (D) 9-11 (E) 12 or more
10. Have you taught the target language at post-secondary institutions outside of Saitama? Yes No
11. What language do you teach?
 (A) English (B) German (C) French (D) Chinese (E) Korean
 (F) Other _____
12. What is your average class size? _____
13. In theory, the best approach for teaching a speaking class is:
 (A) Communicative (B) Grammar-translation (C) Audio-lingual (D) Situational (E) Affective-humanistic (F) Comprehension based (G) Eclectic (H) Other
14. In reality, what approaches do you use, singularly or in combination, when teaching a speaking class? Please rank all appropriate approaches from most (1) to least used.
 () Communicative () Grammar-translation () Audio-lingual
 () Situational () Affective-humanistic () Comprehension based
 () Eclectic () Others

15. Circle the answer that best describe how you learned the approach(es) you are using.
- (A) seminars (B) a certificate course (C) Masters course
(D) Doctorate coursework (E) Professional journals (F) other teachers
(G) personal experience in the classroom
16. If you use the communicative approach, circle the answer that best describes the process of how you learned this approach.
- (A) not applicable (B) a certificate course (C) Masters course
(D) Doctorate coursework (E) Professional journals (F) other teachers
(G) personal experience in the classroom (H) seminars
17. How do you determine a student's grade for the term in speaking classes?
(more than one answer is acceptable) (A) speaking test with the teacher
(B) making a speech in front of class (C) multiple choice paper test (D)
fill in the blanks paper test (E) cloze tests (F) attitude (G) attendance (H)
participation (I) translation test (J) other(s) _____
18. I feel that I understand the Communicative Approach.
- (A) Yes (B) No
19. Do you teach or have you taught speaking/conversation or listening?
- (A) Yes (B) No
20. Is this the first time you have heard of the term, "Communicative Approach"?
- (A) Yes (B) No

(Part 2)

Please circle your answer.

Please note that any reference to college also refers to junior college, when appropriate.

**(A) strongly agree, (B) agree, (C) neutral, (D) disagree,
(E) strongly disagree, (F) not applicable**

1. Communicative competence is both linguistic knowledge and the skill in using this knowledge. A B C D E F
2. An understanding of the target language's culture is essential to learning the language. A B C D E F
3. Teaching grammar, pronunciation and spelling alongside speaking is very important to being able to communicate. A B C D E F
4. Students should first cope with communicative tasks and then be given the grammatical form. A B C D E F
5. My speaking classes focus less on form/grammar and more on meaning. A B C D E F
6. My speaking classes focus mostly on form/grammar. A B C D E F
7. My speaking classes have pair and small group exercises. A B C D E F
8. I use authentic materials from the real world in class when appropriate.

A B C D E F

9. Over 50% of class time is used in some kind of communicative activity.

A B C D E F

10. Role-play is utilized a great deal in my class.

A B C D E F

11. The students have more speaking time in class than I do.

A B C D E F

12. Students are encouraged to use their own ideas to make conversations or change conversations in pair and small group exercises.

A B C D E F

13. My classes are most student-centered than teacher-centered.

A B C D E F

14. One of main purposes or roles in class is to be a facilitator.

A B C D E F

15. My classes repeat phrases for a large part of the class period.

A B C D E F

16. In my reactions with students I correct their form/grammar more than 50% of the time.

A B C D E

F

17. I try to always correct my students' pronunciations, even if they can still be understood.

A B C D E F

18. It is acceptable, at times, for the students to make form/grammar mistakes in

- the pursuit of conveying meaning. A B C D E F
19. I encourage students to convey meanings without penalty, even if they use incorrect form/grammar. A B C D E F
20. I encourage students to strive for correct form/grammar. A B C D E F
21. I hesitate to use the communicative approach because it does not allow enough time to study form/grammar. A B C D E F
22. I hesitate to use the communicative approach in speaking classes because it asks me to be orally proficient in the target language. A B C D E F
23. It is difficult to allow a great deal of time for pair and small group exercises because the students tend to not use the target language. A B C D E F
24. Current textbooks facilitate communicative skills. A B C D E F
25. Speaking class sizes are too large. A B C D E F
26. I feel that what I teach is somewhat controlled by national and international proficiency tests. A B C D E F
27. University entrance exams help students develop their second language speaking ability. A B C D E F
28. Because grammar is highly emphasized, the entrance exams positively affected the way students were taught a second language in high schools. A B C D E F

29. In order to teach more effectively, I have had to adjust the approach that I studied. A B C D E F
30. It is difficult for most students to use the target language in small groups of about 5 people. A B C D E F
31. It is difficult for most students to interact verbally in pairs in the target language. A B C D E F
32. Students have a difficult time using their imaginations to construct variations on studied conversations. A B C D E F
33. Students have a difficult time using body language and gestures to communicate. A B C D E F
34. I feel that students are embarrassed to make grammatical and/or pronunciation mistakes when using the target language with one other person. A B C D E F
35. I feel that students are embarrassed to make grammatical and/or pronunciation mistakes in front of groups, both small and large. A B C D E F
36. Students are hesitant to give their own opinions in both the target language and in the Japanese language for fear of offending other students or the teacher. A B C D E F
37. Students are hesitant to give their own opinions in both the target language and in the Japanese language for fear of being considered wrong. A B C D E F

38. I feel that students worry too much about their form/grammar and fail to try to convey meanings A B C D E F
39. I feel that Japanese students have a difficult time learning second languages because of the differences in culture. A B C D E F
40. I feel that students have a difficult time being different from their peers in Japan. A B C D E F
41. It is difficult for students to disclose semi-personal information to others who they have only been in class with for about half a term, about 8 weeks. [For example, what they did on the weekend.] A B C D E F
42. Most students come to the first year of college with confidence in their target language speaking ability. A B C D E F
43. Most students come to the first year of college with more confidence on their target language grammar than in their speaking ability. A B C D E F
44. Students often ask questions without being asked if they have a question. A B C D E F
45. At times, students' intended meaning or their definitions of words/phrases could be interpreted differently by someone with a non-Japanese point of view. A B C D E F
46. For non-Japanese teachers only: I have found that I have had to adapt my teaching methods to the Japanese culture. A B C D E F

47. For non-Japanese teachers only: I have had to change my style of teaching because the Japanese students are more accustomed to lecture style instruction.

A B C D E F

For record keeping purpose only:

Name: _____ Institution: _____

*** The next short answer question is optional.**

Please give a two to four sentence answer, when appropriate.

If you have had adverse reactions from students and/or other teachers to the use of the communicative approach, what type of reactions have you encountered? In your opinion, why did they react this way?

TABLES

Table 1. Basic information of data (Population)

Description	Number	Percent	Remarks
Total questionnaire distributed	42	100	
Total questionnaire collected	36	86	
Speaking/Conversation and Listening (SCL) teachers	28	78	Out of 36 respondent
Japanese SCL respondent	19	68	Out of 28 SCL respondent
Native speaker of English	9	32	Out of 28 SCL respondent

Table 2. Distribution of non-native respondent based on their general speaking level

	Number of respondent	Percent	Remarks
Native like	1	5	
Highly Advanced	4	22	
Advanced	5	26	
Upper Intermediate	5	26	
Intermediate	3	16	
Others	1	5	

Table 3. Distribution of respondent based on their educational level

	Ph.D.	Masters	Bachelors	Graduate Certificate	Others
No.	2	21	4	1	-
Percent	7	75	14	4	

Table 4. Distribution of respondent based on their area of study in their highest degree earned

	Education	TEFL	Applied Linguistics	Literature	Others
No.	8	1	3	8	8
Percent	29	3	10	29	29

Table 5: The frequency distribution of Likert scale in percentage basis (Part 2)

(A) strongly agree (B) agree (C) neutral (D) disagree (E) strongly disagree
 (F) not applicable

Questionnaire No.	Responses in Percent						Remarks
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
1	35	45	7	10	-	3	
2	69	24	4	-	-	3	
3	47	28	8	9	8	-	
4	26	27	39	-	8	-	
5	31	26	25	12	6	-	
6	8	7	-	28	33	24	
7	42	23	7	3	-	25	
8	65	17	13	5	-	-	
9	38	8	22	18	14	-	
10	-	24	36	23	-	17	
11	22	17	26	22	13	-	
12	31	34	4	13	10	8	
13	22	21	43	8	6	-	
14	31	23	36	6	4	-	
15	3.5	15	17.5	43	21	-	
16	12	20	25	18	25	-	
17	16	16	25	26	17	-	
18	66	27	5	2	-	-	
19	56	27	2	9	6	-	
20	23	20	43	5	9	-	
21	-	7	21	22	35	15	
22	-	7	0	79	14	-	
23	61	-	39	-	-	-	
24	20	23	39	11	7	-	
25	39	36	11	5	5	4	
26	7	11	15	24	26	17	

27	9	14	8	25	36	8	
28	23	27	31	5	3	11	
29	35	43	22	-	-	-	
30	23	20	21	19	17	-	
31	19	24	11	26	20	-	
32	29	28	25	10	8	-	
33	-	54	23	8	11	4	
34	23	27	18	20	12	-	
35	37	34	17	6	6	-	
36	40	25	9	18	-	8	
37	30	35	-	18	17	-	
38	32	40	8	12	8	-	
39	28	19	21	9	18	5	
40	42	19	18	13	8	-	
41	-	36	25	19	17	3	
42	-	1	7	40	52	-	
43	-	50	32	16	2	-	
44	6	7	12	39	36	-	
45	34	30	17	11	8	-	
46	56	22	22	-	-	-	Out of 9 non-Japanese respondent
47	33	23	33	11	-	-	Out of 9 non-Japanese respondent

I genuinely thank you for your valuable time.

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