

The Vicissitudes of Education Policy: Assessing Top-down Change on English Language Education in Japanese High Schools

Walter DAVIES

Kazuaki TSUIDO

Institute of Foreign Language Research and Education

Hiroshima University

In this discussion article, we examine the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology's specific plans for change in English language education at high schools, consider the effects that these may have, and suggest possibilities for the future development of policy in this area.

In the last ten years there has been a major effort by the central government of Japan to change mainstream English language education. This policy of reform is part of a broader strategy of educational change. Hood (2001; 2003) argues that Japan is undergoing its third major reform, contrasting the current situation with the changes that took place in Meiji Japan (1868-1911) and the period of American occupation after World War II. In both previous periods, reform can be seen as a response to major external events. They offer insights into the current Japanese situation, reflected in Schoppa's (1991) observation: "The combination of these successive transformations has left a system with often divergent tendencies. Today, the centralized nation-building conception of the role of education must compete with the more decentralized, democracy-building conception" (p.22).

An enduring theme before and since 1867 has been the continuity of an efficient state bureaucracy to effect change. Categorizing the educational context, Green (1999) describes the Japanese educational 'model' as state developmentalist where modernization has been pushed through by the state, and it is the state bureaucracies that are prime movers in development. He further cites Japan as the example for a number of other East Asian countries. In high school education, Japan is highly centralized, with prescribed curricula and state authorized textbooks. Green (1999) argues that there is a belief in education as a collective process of state formation, as well as individual development: "The major priority of the education system is to cultivate the social attitudes and personal skills which are conducive to both cohesive and orderly citizenship and to disciplined and cooperative labour" (p.64). The emphasis on social cohesion is also noted by McVeigh (2002), who identifies tertiary education as being too oriented toward socialisation at the expense of academic depth.

Change within the system is being implemented through a top-down process where a powerful centre evaluates the educational system and plans change, using local government as an intermediary. This is important in considering the impact of reform, as the educational system is

best categorized as bureaucratic, role-based and transactional. In Japan change is occurring within an existing and well-established set of institutional arrangements. This contrasts with the situation in England where Hatcher (2006) argues that the private sector is being used to discipline and transform the old institutional sites of power. While Fullan (2001) argues that the best use of state power in education is to support decentralization, local capacity building, rigorous accountability and stimulating innovation, this is not the approach of the Japanese central authorities, where top-level civil servants accumulate and analyse school data, and using specialists, set a change agenda for the country as a whole.

While the institutional bureaucracy is powerful, especially in the state sector, where the decision to transfer state school teachers ultimately rests with the local boards of education, another strong influence on high school education is tertiary education, in which the universities and colleges of Japan set their own entrance examinations. These are the final set of examinations for high school students, many of whom have often come up through a competitive examination system, in which they have been selected by the more academic high schools through an entrance examination system (All schools have the option of selecting students, though this tends to occur with only the more academic schools). It is against this background that we consider the recent plans for change.

ORIGINS AND AIMS OF THE CURRENT REFORM

The two historical periods of reform have been characterised by Hood (2001) as 'leap of faith' models where ideas for a new educational system were developed and implemented rapidly. He argues that a third great educational reform is currently underway but argues for a 'tsunami model', where new ideas are generated a long time before they are adopted and then implemented as education policy. Over stretches of time the original ideas gain strength and acceptability, finally becoming dominant. The current ideas date back to the premiership of Yasuhiro Nakasone in the 1980s where a supra-governmental council was created in relation to educational reform. While writers such as Schoppa (1991) argue that the Nakasone reforms failed due to the inclusiveness of the special education council and the accommodation of the viewpoints of too many groups, Hood (2001) argues that the ideas developed by the council took a long time to gestate and are now, two decades later, being used as the basis for reform. While the first two periods of major reform were triggered by major events that shook the established order, the current reforms are to do with the more gradual process of globalisation and the issues associated with this. Globalisation here equates with Gray's (1999) definition: "the world wide spread of modern technologies of industrial production and communication of all kinds across frontiers - in trade capital, production and information" (p.55). The reforms themselves appear to be oriented in relation to two questions:

1. In an increasingly globalised world how can a Japanese cultural identity be maintained while deriving benefits from a global community?

2. How can the education system be adapted to maximise the potentials of the students within the system?

While the ideas concerning cultural identity are difficult to define, the council clearly wished to address this issue, developing the idea of 'healthy internationalism' that combines the maintenance of Japanese culture with an international perspective. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT) documents now emphasise the opportunities for Japanese people to involve themselves internationally and to contribute their culture and ideas to others in some form of exchange. The Ministry's plan (MEXT, 1998, section B:1) therefore focuses on maintaining Japanese traditions while being internationally minded: "Children will be encouraged to deepen their understanding of national as well as local history, culture and tradition, and to develop love to those matters. They will also be encouraged to appreciate different cultures open-mindedly, and to cultivate the mind of international cooperation and the identity as Japanese living in the international community."

In terms of maximising the potentials of students within the system, the Ministry has been working on ways of diversifying the system of education, giving schools greater freedom in the organization of their courses. This is also reflected in Ministry documentation (MEXT, 1997, chapter 1): "Thus it is important that each school, and the regional public bodies that are responsible for their establishment, namely, those most directly involved in education, should have the range of their area of discretion expanded, and be allowed to fully demonstrate creativity and originality."

Specific Plans for English Language Education

In keeping with its general philosophies, the Ministry of Education has developed and implemented a plan for English language education in Japan: The Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" (APCJEA). This document combines a broad holistic approach to the change process with a set of specific plans for change. It emphasises several interlocking areas, seeking to address issues such as the direction of change, the changes teachers need to make and how this is to be done, the effect of the evaluation system for high school students and how it can be changed, issues in first language (L1) teaching and the need for investigation of changes through research. In this article we examine the aims and specific plans of the APCJEA that affect the general body of teachers rather than those that aim towards a more elite education.

In analysing government policy, the approach we take is a pragmatic liberal one and is a form of pluralism, agonistic liberalism: Curriculum in actuality is a set of ideas and practices performed or advocated by key groups in education. Groups, or individuals within groups, may hold different conceptions on English language teaching. Whether change is effected through top-down or bottom-up processes it occurs within an existing framework of ideas and institutions. In the case of a central body setting a change agenda, the plans for change are interpreted by teachers and staffrooms with particular and varying sets of beliefs and ideas on education. These may or may not conflict with the new ideas being proposed. In this article we consider the likely

outcome of this process and consider how the process of change could be developed. The focus is on three interrelated areas: pedagogy, teacher training and development, and student assessment through examinations.

In terms of the broad direction for English language education, the aim is to develop Japanese people who can communicate in English. This dovetails with the view of 'healthy internationalism'. In contrast to past ideas of importing technology and know-how into Japan, the focus is now on communicative exchange. Japanese people should not only be able to understand information from abroad, but they should also be able to communicate their own ideas internationally, so that a greater emphasis is being placed on the development of communicative skills.

PEDAGOGIC ISSUES

In the APCJEA, teachers are encouraged to promote classes that are more student-centred and involve communication in English rather than the more traditional teacher-fronted classrooms of the past. Such changes draw strongly on the communicative approaches developed in Europe and North America in relation to foreign language teaching. These approaches contrast with the traditional Japanese grammar-translation method, known as *yakudoku*. While theories of teaching and learning tend to become idealizations, removed from classroom realities, they are important in framing arguments and supporting teaching practices, so that agendas become set in relation to teaching theories. In this sense the arguments for different teaching styles become important, and those framed in the APCJEA appear to contrast *yakudoku* with 'communicative language teaching'. The following quotation from the APCJEA (MEXT, 2003, section 1) illustrates the rejection of grammar-translation and the promotion of communicative classes: "...in English classes, instruction mainly based on grammar and translation or teacher-centered classes are not recommended. Through the repetition of activities making use of English as a means of communication, the learning of vocabulary and grammar should be enhanced, and communication abilities in 'listening,' 'speaking,' 'reading,' and 'writing' should be fostered."

Yakudoku versus Communicative Language Teaching

Drawing on Suzuki, Hino (1988) argues that translation as an academic approach is over 1,000 years old and was initially used in the study of Chinese texts, also observing that it is not necessarily imposed on teachers but forms part of a long tradition deeply interwoven into the sociolinguistic structure of Japan. The variety of meanings that fall under the term 'translation' are noted by Howatt with Widdowson (2005) and they make a key distinction between the use of the mother tongue as an aid to the comprehension of a foreign language text, comparing this with its use in the full conversion of texts from one language to another. The very traditional form of Japanese grammar-translation falls into the latter category, but the use of translation by teachers can vary considerably.

While the Ministry clearly wishes to move away from grammar-translation teaching, 'communicative language teaching' (CLT) is not easy to categorise and is often defined as an approach rather than a method. In this article we equate the term 'communicative language

teaching' with the term 'communicative approach'. An approach is defined by Richards and Rogers (2004) as a theory of language and a theory of learning, in contrast to a method, which incorporates an approach but is strongly anchored in specified design and classroom techniques. 'Communicative language teaching' is identified as a 1970s change in language teaching, where teachers and applied linguists sought to move away from a focus on the internalisation of the structure of a language towards consideration of language in use. Okihara (2001) observes that communication and CLT are ambiguous terms and that the methodological implications are unclear. Nunan (1989) argues that "it is something of a misnomer to talk about the communicative approach as there is a family of approaches, each member of which claims to be communicative" (p.12). Nor is CLT without its critics. Andrewes (2005) is scathing of CLT, arguing that teachers who advocate it do not practice what they preach. However, it is questionable whether such a criticism can be directed at an approach, which allows teachers to consider teaching techniques within a framework of teaching and language theory. In this sense CLT cannot be imposed, rather teachers need to reflect on their teaching practice in relation to language and teaching theory, and their aims for their students.

The Risks of Assimilation

One of the serious risks in attempting a major change is the assimilation of new ideas, where new information and ideas are fitted into the existing concepts, categories and practices that teachers use in their teaching (Widdowson 1991), so that the result tends to become superficial. The risks of assimilation become apparent from a number of small-scale studies, where researchers have examined teacher practice in classrooms, especially in relation to a movement towards communicative classes. In Sato and Kleinsasser's (2004) investigation of English language teachers in a Japanese high school, they note that there is a tendency for teaching to approach a norm, in this case the Japanese form of grammar-translation (*yakudoku*). Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) note that the teachers in the case study were most influenced by their own experiences as students, by the views and attitudes of colleagues, and preparation for university entrance examinations: "Managing students and having students participate in routine activities were the staple means of what teaching meant in the school" (p.809). In the study 'normal' English and 'new' communicative classes were surprisingly very similar in the way that teachers practiced their English language teaching and learning. Sato and Kleinsasser conclude that the teachers did reflect, interpret and socially construct English language teaching, but not in the way that some schools would want. A key factor emerging from the study is how teacher interaction can reinforce the *yakudoku* method. Teachers who attended external training days found the ideas interesting but did not use them in practice. Inside the school, they tended to adopt the same patterns in their classrooms, these being communally regarded as effective for exam preparation and for keeping pace, so that all teachers took their classes forward at the same speed. This accords with Rohlen's (1983) observation that teachers' coordination both within and between grade levels involves teachers covering the same material at the same accelerated pace.

In a similar vein to Sato and Kleinsasser, Sakui (2004) investigated the ideas and actions of a set

of junior high and high school teachers who met as a self-initiated teacher development group. She notes that the Ministry produced syllabus, the Course of Study for Upper Secondary School (MEXT 2003) emphasises the fostering of communication skills as a primary goal with linguistic content such as grammar and vocabulary being secondary. However, she observes that in classroom situations conducted by a Japanese teacher alone, grammar instruction was central, and far more foregrounded than CLT and that the language of instruction and class management is usually Japanese. In her comments she states that in observations of 50-minute classes, only five minutes were spent on CLT, but where two teachers were present, especially if one was a native speaker, the situation made CLT more salient for teachers and students. The risk involved in this relates to the demarcation of class time into communicative and non-communicative areas. While over 5000 native speakers of English are extensively involved in state education as assistant language teachers (ALTs) through the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) programme, they only form a small minority of English teachers in Japan. If communicative teaching only occurs in team-teaching situations the vast majority of classes will not be taught communicatively.

The division of English teaching into different areas depending on the situation is compounded by the fracturing of English into 'subjects' and specified in the Ministry produced Course of Study for Upper Secondary Schools (MEXT 2003): *Aural/Oral Communication I*, *Aural/Oral Communication II*, *English I*, *English II*, *Reading*, *Writing*. A major subject division in the English curriculum is between *Aural/Oral Communication I* and *English I*. While *Aural/Oral Communication I* focuses on listening and speaking skills, *English I* is described in the document (MEXT, 2003, section II.3) as a four-skills course: "To develop students' basic abilities to understand what they listen to or read and to convey information, ideas, etc. by speaking or writing in English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communication through dealing with everyday topics". In reality, *English I* is usually heavily weighted towards reading texts. In its extreme form the division of specialisms leads to communicative teaching being boxed into one small area of the curriculum with more traditional methods being used in other English 'subjects'. With the small proportion of ALTs to Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) even *Aural/Oral Communication I* can be divided, with JTEs using several classes for grammar teaching and leaving communicative teaching techniques for one class where an ALT is present.

Opportunities for Change: Integrating Skills Areas

ALTs form only a small proportion of the number of English teachers in Japan. In terms of numbers, experience and influence, the main agents who can really effect change in Japan are the JTEs themselves. Consequently, changes in the way JTEs teach would have a major effect on learning. One of the Ministry's ways of keeping control within the system is through the use of specified courses and textbooks, but the subject specifications tend to increase a sense of demarcation rather than integration. For Japan, a radical solution to this problem would be the removal of the divide between *Aural/Oral Communication* subjects and *English* subjects to create a mandatory four-skills subject. By creating a combined subject this would encourage ALTs and JTEs to discuss how to approach and develop readings and listenings that are essentially

receptive, combining them with oral and written activities that are productive. The current system has tended to place ALTs in classrooms with JTEs, but the APCJEA now proposes that experienced ALTs have the chance to teach alone. Considering that many subjects require two or three lessons a week, both JTEs and ALTs could teach classes alone while coordinating on planning, materials and internal assessment of students. This would address Nunan's (2003) criticism that the whole JET scheme is very expensive because two teachers are often required to teach one class. A less radical solution would be to work towards making *English I* much more four-skills based in the way that it is defined in the Course of Study for Upper Secondary School, again offering the opportunity for ALTs and JTEs to work together on planning and implementation of the syllabus.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Currently and historically, the most important tests for high school classes are the university and college entrance examinations. A substantial number of students go on to further education. Their influence on Japanese education has led McVeigh (2002) to synthesise the term 'education-examination system'. University entrance examinations have a long history dating back to the Meiji reforms, being used as a way of allocating human resources for the planned industrial economy. The post-war system continued with university examinations and they still form an important part of the current system. In Japan entrance to the correct university is extremely important for career prospects, noted by Green (1999): "Standards-based qualifications are not an important feature in the relationship between high school or university graduates and the large firms since recruitment is based on recommendations, company assessment tests and the reputation of an institution from which the young person is graduating" (p.64). Unlike the case in England (Gorard 2006), the Japanese authorities do not publish league tables of schools. However, outside of the state, unofficial appraisals are made, most notably by the newspapers, which publish the results of university entrance examinations. The use of testing in Japan is often identified with the more traditional forms of teaching, with a focus on reading and grammar, and Japanese teachers of English are faced with conflicting objectives: preparation for university entrance examinations versus communicative English. Although the APCJEA promotes alternative methods of entry into university, university entrance examinations remain the main means of entry. While these have changed, drawing on developments in discourse analysis and pragmatics, leading a number of researchers (Mulvey 2001; Gorsuch 2000; Guest 2000) to question the relevance of *yakudoku* to the requirements of the entrance examinations, the method links more closely to the examinations than communicative techniques: Examinations tend to be multiple-choice oriented, so that although the focus is now more strongly linked towards recognising the meaning of dialogues and spoken discourse, students are required to understand and recognise language rather than produce it. The justification of translation in classroom practice is its use as a means to check understanding, often in relation to the contents of the university tests.

While the APCJEA encourages more communicative forms of teaching, it also aims to assess students through the use of examinations. In order to set benchmark standards it has stated

international test targets. Hato (2005) notes the risks of using such tests as benchmarks for proficiency in English. She argues that students and teachers may treat these as final goals and that this may have a powerful effect on teaching. Hato (2005) perceives the targets as being unrealistic, given the differing amounts of time students spend studying English, and observes that “examinations conducted on a large scale cannot faithfully reflect the nature of communication abilities and their development” (p.45). She advocates the use of attainment goals similar to those produced by the Council of Europe. These should be realistic and practical, so that they can be effective guidelines in the cause of teaching and learning but do not over-pressurise those involved in achieving them.

Opportunities for Change: Balancing Testing with Project Work

While the current system is one where universities have a great deal of autonomy in being able to set very challenging examinations to select the best students, it does not really cater for those students who are less academically oriented but who could still develop their language skills to a reasonable level. If the Ministry wishes to improve communication skills, then it could encourage the universities to seriously think how they can add a communication component to their entrance examinations and/or work with schools to develop projects for students that are more communication and less examination oriented. One possibility would be to specify that students develop a portfolio of their own work that could be passed to universities and employers in their applications. This might include evidence of presentations, essays, short dialogues, interviews and other items that encourage the production of English in both written and spoken form. In a system that has historically valued examinations written tests are likely to remain, but it is possible to balance these by building other areas of assessment which encourage the skills that the Ministry is setting as aims. In a system that involves a very powerful centralized bureaucracy it is important that the bureaucracy itself engages in such developments as it ultimately affects the frameworks within which students and teachers operate.

TEACHER (RE)TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Teacher training is covered in section 2 of the APCJEA, where JTEs are to undergo training that accords with the new approach. As noted above, the Japanese educational system is highly centralised. Local governments act as intermediary bodies, interpreting the directives and policies of the centre and passing them on to schools. Shimahara (1998) defines the established form of teacher development as craft-oriented, defined by Roberts (1998) as one which views teacher learning as ‘imitative’ in process and ‘model-based’ in content. He further notes that it is consistent with a stable society that values seniority and tradition. Shimahara (1998) argues that this is advantageous: “In-service education in Japan offers a structure by which craft knowledge undergoes the process of creation, reformulation, and transmission promoted collaboratively by peer teachers” (p.453). However, Takaki (2002) identifies the situation as one with a teacher attitude of professional isolation and non-intervention. Combined with the pressures of an educational system which focuses on the whole person, he argues that teachers are generally too

burdened with professional commitments to focus much on in-service training despite the number of in-service programmes.

In the APCJEA (MEXT, 2003, section 2) there is a plan for training in all the regions of Japan: "Intensive training given by the prefectural boards of education in conjunction with training at the national level will be supported so that all English teachers can undertake training in the five years from 2003 through 2007". It is the way that teachers are to be re-trained so that they can fulfil the objectives of the new Course of Study for Upper Secondary School and move to a more communicative way of teaching. This re-training takes place over a relatively short period. For example, in the 5-year period from 2003 to 2007, Hiroshima Prefecture teachers underwent 10 days of mandatory re-training involving lectures, group-work and feedback sessions. In addition they undertook assignment writing, which was used in the training sessions. While training offers teachers the opportunity to develop, the question remains whether a relatively short period of re-training will lead to a major change in teaching, or if the established status quo combined with the pressure of the current style of university entrance examinations will result in a minimal impact on high school English language education.

Opportunities for Change: Allocating Time for Staffroom Development

Much depends on whether the central government considers the period covered by the APCJEA to be a one-off change or part of an ongoing process towards more communicative language classes. It is the teachers themselves who are central to the curriculum as it is they who actually instruct and guide the students, a point noted by Burden (2000). They need to find ways in which to develop classroom techniques that promote communication in their language classes. While it is important to avoid a superficial assimilation of communicative techniques, change is unlikely to be a complete re-working of classroom practice, but a process of accommodation, where teachers critically evaluate their practice and make substantive changes. In this sense more recent ideas on reflection have a role to play. Williams and Burden (1997), citing Schon, observe "there is often a discrepancy between what professionals say they believe (their 'espoused theories') and the ways in which they act (their 'theories in action')" (pp.53-54). Teachers who wish to create more communicative classes need time to consider what they do, and how it aids their students in becoming more communicative. To do this they need time to reflect and to discuss. As noted above, a lot of teacher development is craft-based, centred on school staffrooms. Teacher re-training takes place over a relatively short period with teachers then returning to the school environments that play the dominant role in shaping their teaching practice. In cases where there is a culture of teaching that is more *yakudoku* oriented, the newly acquired skills of re-trained teachers may not be utilised as they fit back into the existing practices and routines of their school departments. A greater opportunity for change lies in working with whole staffrooms of teachers rather than sending individuals on courses. In terms of such 'classroom exceeding' approaches to teacher development, the APCJEA does this with its 'Super English Language High School' program where key schools work directly with the Ministry to develop English courses for high-flying students with an interest in languages. This kind of approach, where schools work with

external specialists/authorities is more similar to the school improvement programmes in the UK and USA, noted by Stoll et al (1996), such as the Halton Board of Education Effective Schools Project, the IQEA project, and the Lewisham School Improvement Project. In these cases, schools work with local authorities and/or universities to improve the education of their students. While the APCJEA states that innovation from high-flying schools will be disseminated to other schools through reports and articles, there are strong arguments against this approach to change. One of the strongest of these relates to the tacit knowledge and beliefs of teachers. Success in improving a school is often contingent on factors specific to the school in question. While published research is useful there is still a need for teachers to assess what changes may be appropriate for their own school environments.

In the Japanese context there is a strong emphasis on 'whole person education' with teachers committing a considerable amount of time to students outside of their teaching commitments. With the addition of bureaucratic responsibilities and duties, teacher development is low priority in comparison to day-to-day commitments to classes, pastoral care, clubs and paperwork. In a system that is essentially bureaucratic, there is unlikely to be effective change unless central and local government work towards creating time for teachers who work together to develop collectively. This is important because where JTEs are taking on new ideas they are not doing so in the form of simply adopting a new prescription. In making positive changes they clearly understand how they can improve their teaching. If teaching is to move in a more communicative direction, it is important that teachers gain sufficient understanding of the techniques themselves and the rationales behind them in order to make a judgement on where and when to use them. For teachers to develop their ideas, time has to be specifically allocated for teacher training and development. This would involve more than occasional training days, including, for example, intensive courses in teaching techniques and more opportunities for debate and discussion. Unless teachers are given the space and time to consider these techniques and how they may be appropriately used in classes, they are unlikely to be widely adopted. For the most part, current teacher development seems to be something that teachers do as a voluntary part of their job. In a system that is essentially bureaucratic, this will remain the case until more prolonged training becomes a scheduled part of teachers' calendars. While writers such as Takaki (2002) argue for grassroots development, this does not address the major issue of the time constraints on teachers due to their professional duties. One solution to this would be for the Ministry to find ways of reducing the teachers' workloads in order to accommodate two weeks a year of teachers' time to training/development and requiring school English departments to submit a plan of how those two weeks will be spent by their teachers.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have identified some of the key areas on which successful English language education reform rests. As noted above there are a variety of problems relating to changes proposed in the APCJEA. While the overall aim of the document is commendable there are a number of obstacles to be overcome if change is to be more than superficial. In the document a

major tension is between an equality of aims for students and a system that is increasingly recognizing and encouraging diversity. On the one hand, students as a whole are expected to achieve levels of English established through recognised tests. On the other, schools have more autonomy in the organisation of their courses, so that students receive differing quantities and levels of English classes. The set-up of courses at different schools is evidence that the system allows more autonomy in this area, consistent with the liberalisation process. Schools have greater flexibility in how they organise their courses and this allows greater choice for students. In what appears to be an attempt to bring more accountability to the system the Ministry is setting benchmark test targets, but ironically this may drive schools towards even more emphasis on non-communicative forms of teaching that are effective for increasing test scores. Multiple choice testing is likely to become more rather than less prevalent. In a top-down system the Ministry can be most effective by setting the change agenda and freeing up the system to allow the changes to develop, rather than trying to measure improvements through testing.

While the APCJEA is creating change in schools, we have argued that it can only be seen as the beginning of a much longer process. Even the liberal 'leap of faith' Meiji reforms occurred over a 10 year period, and these were followed by a conservative reaction. We have argued that successful change in a bureaucratic system can occur if two key areas are addressed:

1. If institutional arrangements are modified. The key issue here relates to the current emphasis on examination success and assessment. While examinations are likely to remain popular as means of entry to university, their influence can be balanced by alternative forms of assessment that can benefit all high school students. The use of international tests and changes to university entrance examinations is likely to encourage the development of listening skills but risks moving teachers away from the communicative teaching specified in the APCJEA.
2. Giving teachers the opportunity to develop together in an ongoing process. Ultimately it is the teachers who create changes in students' learning environments. We have argued that the proposed changes are moves towards an approach - one that does not prescribe technique but allows teachers to reflect on their practices and discuss their ideas in relation to theories of learning and language. In the Japanese case there is a clear need to discuss L1 use and how it may be used effectively, as well as a need to consider how, utilizing theories of language and learning, this can be combined with communicative techniques.

We have argued that a central authority has limitations on what it can achieve in creating top-down change. However, its decisions can be enormously influential in achieving successful change. Many of the changes specified in the APCJEA are valuable, but risk being ineffective if they are not modified or developed over longer stretches of time.

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要 約

教育政策の変容

—日本の高等学校英語教育へのトップダウンによる改革の評価を巡って—

ウォルター・デイヴィス

築 道 和 明

広島大学外国語教育研究センター

本論文では、日本の高等学校の英語教育における英語教育改革を教育における変化・変容というより広い文脈に位置づけて考察を加える。日本の教育改革における際立つ特徴として、筆者らは中央の権威によって主導される変革という意味で、官僚主義的であり、役割モデル的な側面を指摘する。文部科学省が公開した文書に示されている現在進行中の英語教育改革(例えばアクション・プラン)に関連づけて述べるならば、そのような改革の成否は「コミュニケーション志向の英語教育改革という流れの詳細な分析、考察」「教師に対する研修機会の提供」「試験やその他の手段による学習者の適切な評価」という3つの事柄にかかっていると考える。より具体的に言えば、日本の英語教育改革を理念的に支えているコミュニケーション志向のアプローチは、確立した一つの教授法という性格は有しておらず、教師が自らの教育方法や指導技術を同僚らと議論し、内省的に評価しうる場が必要であること、そのための物理的な時間を現場の教師は保証されるべきであると考え。また、学習者の評価に関わっては多肢選択型の入試が学校教育にもたらすマイナス作用というものをコミュニケーション志向の英語教育改革という基本的な方向性により整合性を有する他の評価手段(たとえばポートフォリオを用いた評価)を採用することによって相殺する必要があることも指摘する。