

[Refereed Article]

Learner Attitudes Towards English: Considering the Japanese Context

Christopher Samuell

Abstract

Reesor (2003) contends that “for many years, Japan has been held up as a poster child for industrialized countries that have been largely unsuccessful in regards to English language education” (Reesor, 2003, p. 57). This claim is supported by the 2019 TOEFL iBT test and score data summary (TOEFL 2020), which saw Japan ranked 27th of the 29 the countries listed under the ‘Asia’ category. Reesor (2003, p. 57) suggests that attitudinal factors affect how English is perceived in Japan; thus, attitudes towards English could be one possible reason for Japan’s difficulty with EFL learning. Therefore, this paper explored the relationship between attitudes and language learning, and how this may affect English language learning (ELL) in Japan. By carrying out a literature review on the topic of attitudes and ELL it was determined that a connection between attitudes and ELL success does exist in Japan. Several factors were identified as important in terms of the formation of attitudes towards English in Japan. These included education, English for communicative purposes, Japanese cultural factors, and goals. It was concluded that although the paper clearly demonstrates a link between attitudes towards English and ELL success in Japan, further research is needed to fully address a number of the issues raised throughout the paper.

Keywords: Attitudes, Japan, Motivation, Teachers, Examinations, Communication.

Introduction

In recent years, Japanese industry has communicated an increased requirement for potential employees to possess practical English communication abilities, with many students eager to raise their English as a foreign language (EFL) test proficiency scores in order to meet this demand (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi 2009, p. 69). This increased desire for English proficiency is affirmed by the private English teaching industry, which has been estimated to generate more than 1 billion U.S. dollars annually (Voigt, 2001). Nevertheless, despite an increased focus on English in the workplace, and resultant annual expenditure on English language learning (ELL), the average proficiency levels of English learners in Japan, as evidenced by test scores, are not only failing to improve but have witnessed a decline in recent years (Reesor, 2003). A recent example of this may be seen in the results of the 2019 TOEFL iBT test and score data summary (TOEFL 2020). When examining the breakdown of

scores classified by geographic region, of the twenty-nine countries listed under 'Asia' Japan was ranked at 27, which means that Japan had one of the lowest TOEFL iBT scores in Asia in 2019.

Low test scores are not a new issue in Japan. Indeed, Kowner (cited in Amburgey, 2015, p. 30) notes that towards the end of the 1990s, Japan was ranked 180th among 189 TOEFL-taking nations. The fact that a country investing as much as one billion dollars annually into English education is demonstrating little to no improvement in terms of measurable English language ability is indicative of a continuing issue that Japan faces with regard to English. Reesor (2003, p. 57) even goes so far as to claim that "for many years, Japan has been held up as a poster child for industrialized countries that have been largely unsuccessful in regards to English language education."

Although it would be difficult to produce a singular definitive answer as to why Japan continues to face such problems with regards to English, Reesor (2003, p. 57) suggests that attitudinal factors have exerted a significant influence over how English has been disseminated in Japan, going on to state that "socio/psycholinguistic factors," are essential areas of research when considering why Japan's English proficiency level continues to stagnate. Reesor's (2003) statement will form the basis for this literature review, which will, taking a constructivist view, focus on various sociocultural factors connected to English language learning (ELL) in Japan. Through contrast and comparison of literature concerning attitudinal formation factors affecting language learners, this study aims to explore the relationship between attitudes and language learning, and how this may affect ELL in Japan.

Attitudes and Language Learning

Ajzen and Fishbein (2005, p. 185) posit that attitude can be defined as "a learned association in memory between an object and a positive or negative evaluation of that object, and attitude strength is equivalent to the strength of this association." They theorize that attitudes may be learned, which suggests that strong associations can be formed by social factors, and social attitudes, which have also been shown to affect our behavior towards particular objects (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005, p. 174). In the case of this study, the "object" will be English language learning, and the paper will investigate how societal factors cause people to form these positive or negative evaluations, and how it, in turn, creates attitudes towards English language learning.

Gardner (1985) states that that attitudes can determine how active people are in the language learning process, and that attitudes toward learning a second language have been shown to be linked with proficiency in that language. He further states that with regards to language learning, attitudes are one component of motivation, meaning that any analysis of attitudes towards ELL in Japan would best be viewed in terms of their impact on student motivation. Indeed, Yamashiro and McLaughlin (2001, p. 113) state that there has been shown to be "a significant positive correlation between favorable attitudes, motivation, and foreign language proficiency or achievement."

Yamashiro and McLaughlin (2001) further argue that socio-psychological factors, such as previously formed attitudes, as well as peer attitudes also affect learner's motivation. Dörnyei (2011, p. 30) further highlights the importance of sociocultural factors on motivation, suggesting that research has shown there has been a push to broaden the analysis of motivation through sociocultural models of learning. Therefore, when considering that "motivation is undoubtedly an important factor in foreign language learning success" (Brown 2004, p. 1), and that "attitudes are correlated with motivation, and motivation has a fairly strong, direct influence on language proficiency" (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2001, p. 124) any correlation between attitudes, language, and motivation could be of great importance when investigating issues related to ELL success in Japan.

Attitudes and English in Japan

1. Positive Attitudes

1.1 Attitudes, Motivation, and Success

Teeter (2017, p. 2) posits that "if learners have positive attitudes towards the target language, their motivation to learn the language could be higher," further suggesting the correlation between attitude and motivation when learning a second language. She contends that attitudes are "considered predictors of second language learning achievement" (Teeter, 2017, p. 2). Meaning, that if people do not approach the target language with a positive attitude or sufficient motivation, they may be unsuccessful in their endeavors. McKenzie (2010) confirms that the same connections between attitudes, motivation, and language learning success do exist in Japan, stating that "in the case of Japan, learners who held positive attitudes towards English were most likely to succeed in acquiring the language" (McKenzie, 2010, p. 64). He goes on to assert that according to various studies (Chihara & Oller, 1978; Haarman, 1986; Kobayashi, 2000, as cited in McKenzie 2010) the majority of Japanese learners have positive attitudes towards the English language, and that the language enjoys a certain prestige in Japan.

McKenzie (2010) also found "a strong relationship between students' perceptions of the study of English as a core school subject and their attitudes towards long-term English learning," going on to suggest that students who hold positive attitudes towards long-term English study are those who both like English as a school subject and perceive that they are making progress in the language (McKenzie, 2010, p. 63). Ryan (2009, p. 5) draws similar conclusions in relation to the mostly positive perception of English in Japan. He states that young people in Japan often regard English as "cool" and "fashionable," and that English-speaking cultures are often thought of as "attractive." However, he goes on to state that "much of the evidence for the fashionability of English comes from individuals expressing an individual preference or interest in certain cultural products, often in marked contrast to the main social body" (Ryan, 2009, p. 5).

In making this claim, Ryan (2009) makes an interesting distinction, suggesting that although research often shows that people have positive attitudes toward English, this merely

represents personal preference and that in fact, the perception of English held by the general populace may not be entirely positive.

He further claims that, “for some learners ‘liking English’ is nothing more than an uncontroversial, socially conditioned response” (Ryan, 2009, p. 13), that allows individuals to, “maintain an appearance of common purpose, to avoid conflict and to pursue differing individual agendas without making this explicit” (Ryan, 2009, p. 13).

Another reason that research often tends to suggest that people have largely positive attitudes towards English may be due to the proclivity of researchers to use samples comprised predominantly of students, and in some cases English majors. This gap in the literature may offer an unrepresentative view of the overall attitudes of people in Japan, as generally, this would only include people up to the age of 22-24, or people who have an active interest in English. This is reflected in the research carried out by Koiso (2005, p. 102) which shows that while 50% of respondents in their 20s intend to study English in the future, “the majority of the older generations show no intention of studying.” Although this study is referencing intention to study rather than attitudes towards English, it nevertheless suggests that samples featuring a broader range of age are needed to create a more accurate idea of the consensus towards English.

1.2 English for communicative purposes

Another element that featured prominently in the literature with regards to positive attitudes and English, is the use of English for communicative purposes. In the case of Japan, McKenzie (2010, p. 63) states that “attitudes towards long-term English study were positively correlated with the expression of an interest in other cultures and a desire to communicate with non-Japanese.” Adachi (2009, p. 137) furthers this point by stating that “these attitudes have a strong relationship with attitudes toward English and motivational intensity.” Moreover, Takala (2015, p. 350) states that interactions with English speaking communities and the effective utilization of language skills will enhance students’ confidence, which is “one constituent of motivation”. Therefore, it can be seen that interactions in which the target language, in this case, English, has been utilized for the purposes of communication are shown to help create positive attitudes towards the target language, and therefore increase motivation to learn.

A desire for cross-cultural communication, therefore, represents an invaluable vehicle for fostering positive attitudes towards English in Japan. Consequently, it should have, in one way or another, promoted a certain level of integrative motivation among the learners, and yet this is not seen in the context of Japanese EFL classrooms. (Tan & Chia, 2015, p. 43). Why is this? The first difficulty that learners face is a lack of contact with English speaking communities. For the average learner in Japan, there are few opportunities for contact with English speaking communities. Currently, only 1.95 percent of the population of Japan is made up of immigrants, who, of course, are not all English speakers, meaning that less than 1 percent of Japan’s population is made up of English speakers (Schreiber, 2018). Although the number of immigrants continues to increase every year, it is still not enough for learners to easily

interact with English-speaking communities.

Another major hindrance to cross-cultural communication, as suggested by Tan and Chia (2015, p. 44) is that Japanese students are not taught the skills required to use English communicatively. They acknowledge that “the main source of motivation in L2 learning among the Japanese students seems to be communicating with English speakers of other nationalities”, but go on to posit that “in the conventional Japanese ESL classroom, lessons are designed to train students to pass university entrance examination[s].” Ryan (2009, p. 14) also echoes this sentiment when he argues that, “English learning in Japan has little to do with contact with people from other cultures, being focused wholly around the role of English in the labyrinthine examination system.” The influence of entrance examinations on the formation of attitudes towards ELL in Japan will be investigated further in a later section of this paper.

Finally, Casil-Batang and Malenab-Temporal (2018, p. 190) suggest that successful language learning enables people to “identify themselves with the native speakers of that language and acquire or adopt various aspects of behaviors which characterize the members of the target language community.” In the case of many students in Japan, this is difficult due to the lack of direct contact with members of the target language community, and they are therefore potentially missing socio-linguistic components of the target language that are an integral factor in achieving communicative competence. This can also negatively affect motivation, as noted by Rueda and Dembo (1995, as cited in Adachi, 2009, p. 126), who suggest that in line with social constructivist theory, motivation is socially negotiated, socially distributed and context-specific.

In response to this, Tsuda (2003, p. 68) suggests that it is important to laud the benefits of English as tool for communication amongst Japanese students, while considering ways to motivate students and “make them feel more comfortable in using English as a tool to communicate and to obtain academic, political or social information from inside and outside Japan.” However, in agreement with the other studies discussed in this section, Tsuda (2003, p. 68) also notes the difficulty of such an endeavour in Japan. He posits that “In a country where most communication is in Japanese, exposure to English is very limited and it is not possible to expect the students to master basic oral communication skills by using what they have learned outside the classroom.” This lack of preparation for communicative uses of English amongst students is an issue that has been linked to the overreliance of English as a subject to be used in examinations throughout the education system in Japan, and as such, can lead to the formation of negative attitudes towards English, as will be discussed in the following section.

2. Negative Attitudes

2.1 Cultural Factors

Following on from the studies discussed in section 1.1, Reesor (2003) offers further insight into the idea that attitudes towards English, and English speakers, may not be wholly positive. He contends that any discussion of the position of Japanese people towards English is, “best

viewed within the multifaceted context of history along with identifiable social, and cultural events that have shaped the attitudes prevalent today” (Reesor, 2003, p. 59). He suggests that historically, English has been primarily viewed as a means to learn more about other countries and cultures and to understand nonnative technologies, and scientific breakthroughs (Reesor, 2003). In other words, historically speaking, English was not viewed as a tool for international communication, but rather as a means to assist Japanese people in learning more about the outside world. This could explain how attitudes towards English have been formed in Japan, while highlighting the fact that some of these attitudes that Reesor is discussing still prevail to this day. Yashima (2000) further substantiates this, suggesting that Japanese people are perhaps still not aware in what way they will be able to use English for communicative purposes. Specifically, Yashima (2000, p. 131) states that Japanese students “feel vaguely it will become a necessity to use English in the ‘internationalized’ society, but they do not have a clear idea of how they are going to use it.” Referencing her 2002 study with Lafaye, Tsuda (2003) found that in a survey of over 500 students, 67% of respondents stated they do not like studying English. It was reported that “there is a contradiction between students’ understanding of the importance of English and their attitudes towards it.” (Tsuda, 2003, p. 62) Students felt that English would not be necessary for their daily lives, and they only study English to get credit for university courses (Tsuda, 2003). These statements are concurrent with the papers discussed in section 1.2 when examining the realities of English for communicative purposes in Japan.

With regards to Japanese speakers of English within Japan, Reesor (2003), based on research carried out by Inoguchi (1999, as cited in Reesor, 2003, p. 60) suggests that “proficient English language speakers face discrimination in the workplace, and in fact, examples of discrimination based on advanced English proficiency can be found throughout Japanese society.” This prejudice is said to also extend to the children of Japanese people who have experience of living in English-speaking countries. Reesor claims that according to Minoura (1996) and White (1988) they, “often face bullying, slurs, and ostracization upon their return to Japanese schools on account of their English language skills” (Minoura, 1996; White, 1988, as cited in Reesor, 2003, pp. 60–61). These Japanese students who have lived abroad for more than a year and then returned to Japan are often referred to as *returnees*. Returnee students must often suffer through various difficulties such as isolation and bullying in Japanese classrooms regarding their English abilities and cultural identity. (Enomoto, 2018; Kanno, 2003) Thompson (2012) reports that in order to avoid bullying in schools, children with a high level of English proficiency often hide this fact by affecting a fake *katakana* accent. These reports are in contrast to the research carried out by both McKenzie (2010) and Ryan (2009) who mostly reported that Japanese people have positive attitudes towards English.

However, an important distinction between these findings is that the studies discussed above are mostly discussing Japanese speakers of English, rather than English speakers in general—thereby alluding to the fact that it is possible that Japanese and non-Japanese English speakers are viewed differently in Japanese society, with non-Japanese English speakers enjoying a more positive experience with regards to their English proficiency.

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Finally, it has been suggested Japanese people are perhaps their own harshest critics in terms of local English ability levels. Reesor (2003, pp. 63–64) proposes this when he observes “there is a prevailing attitude among Japanese speakers that they are, for one reason or another, poor English speakers and more importantly, believe that this situation cannot be changed. Such a strong, pervasive attitude cannot help but have contributed to the general lack of success among Japanese.” Kubota (1998, p. 303) substantiates this claim by stating that Japanese people’s attitude towards English have been constructed by “discourse which regards English and Anglo-speakers of English as developed, civilized, and superior.” It could, therefore, be argued that certain negative attitudes towards English in Japan are deeply ingrained into the Japanese cultural psyche.

2.2 English Education in Japan

As alluded to several times throughout this paper thus far, English education in Japan plays a large role in forming attitudes towards ELL in Japan. Johnson and Johnson (2010) theorize that a mixture of both Japanese cultural norms and negative experiences relating to English could explain how attitudes towards English are formed in Japan. They contend that many students suffer from a form of “language learning trauma” that typically starts in junior and senior high school and is carried forward into university (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 46). They proceed to explain that this trauma is evidenced by low self-esteem, and negative self-appraisal arising from negative experiences, including being humiliated by teachers in the classroom and suffering through grammar and vocabulary based pedagogies targeted at university entrance tests (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 46).

When considering Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura’s (2001, p. 50) suggestion that “anxiety or self-confidence is one of the major contributing factors determining attitude and motivation towards learning a second language,” the idea of learner anxiety becomes an extremely important area of study when investigating the formation of attitudes towards English in Japan. Even though English for communicative purposes was shown to be linked to positive attitudes towards English, this idea of language learning anxiety can also be seen in classes that focus on oral communication. Said and Weda (2018, p. 34) found that, in general, “there was a significant correlation between ELL anxiety and students’ oral communication.” These anxiety issues are then further compounded by Japanese “modesty norms, and a culturally-derived fear of making mistakes in front of others,” “resulting in language learning anxiety and demotivation” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 46). These assertions highlight issues that start during schooling and are, in some cases perhaps, unique to Japan. Further demonstrating that deep-seated cultural factors such as those discussed above could indeed be contributing to Japan’s poor English performance.

Sawada (2005, p. 35) identifies the importance of teachers in creating positive experiences for students and suggesting that teachers can play an essential role in enhancing learners’ motivation by working to create comfortable classroom environments, stimulating material, and engaging classes. Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura (2001, p. 36) stress how important this is when they state that “those who have had negative experiences due to poor teachers or

teaching may have high negative anxiety. Such learners may be inactive in class and may have lost interest in learning the foreign language.” They go on to note that the role of the teacher is especially crucial in non-English as a second language (ESL) settings, such as Japan. They contend that “unlike in ESL contexts, where learners are exposed to the target language outside of class, teachers in the Japanese EFL context tend to be the main provider of English due to the absence of a target language community,” and therefore, “may have a greater influence on their learners in both positive and negative ways” (Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001, p. 62).

Teeter (2017), meanwhile, found that students also “attribute their demotivation to disappointment in performance, course content and pace, and teacher’s pedagogical approach” (Teeter, 2017, p. 6). The majority of papers included in this study discuss the effects of negative learning experiences, while the impact of positive experiences was not discussed nearly as frequently. This trend in the literature could suggest that negative experiences lead to stronger feelings when forming attitudes. This data is concurrent with the views noted above with regards to learner anxiety. Therefore, the importance of teachers, and their impact on students during the formation of attitudes towards English in Japan can be seen clearly. Indeed, Kobayashi (2001) states that, teachers need to serve as role models of successful English learners, especially in EFL environments like Japan.

2.3 Examinations

Many students in Japan will have to sit entrance examinations at some point, and many of these tests include an English language test. Typically, students must take these tests when entering high school or university. However, more and more schools, especially private schools are requiring students to take English tests to enter junior high school, too. Therefore, English language tests are an important part of school curricula throughout Japan. This is often cited as one reason why English classes in Japan tend to focus on English grammar and reading, at the expense of communicative uses of the language. This is evidenced by Kobayashi (2001, p. 71) when she states that “students’ English learning environment is complicated by exam-oriented English classes nearly devoid of communicative activities.”

Examinations have, however, been shown to be beneficial to students in terms of motivation. Johnson and Johnson (2010), found that motivation increases the closer students are to entrance exams. As such, participants showed an increase in motivation during the 3rd year of junior high school and the 3rd year of high school. They also reported that in the course of their research, 46 respondents identified entrance exams as the primary motivational factor in the 3rd year of junior high school (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 51). In addition to this, in their aforementioned survey of 518 university students, Lafaye and Tsuda (2002) found that 56% of the respondents stated that their sole motivation for studying English was to pass university entrance exams. This data shows that, as noted above, rather than studying English for communicative purposes, passing entrance examinations is the primary focus for many students studying English. Indeed, Seargeant (2009, p. 127) states that “English for communicative purposes is not a priority for many people in Japan.” Therefore,

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suggesting a prevalence of instrumental motivation for Japanese learners of English. This reliance on entrance exams for motivation is problematic, because, as noted by Kelly (2005, p. 40), “for Japanese university students, once an instrumental goal, for example passing an entrance exam is achieved, motivation quickly dwindles.” Yamashiro and McLaughlin (2001, p. 119) refer to this as an “instrumental motivational vacuum” that is the result of years of studying English for university entrance examinations. The combination of these factors may indicate that intrinsic motivation is not common among Japanese students, and unless they are studying for an entrance exam, they also do not possess much instrumental motivation. This was also demonstrated in the study by Lafaye and Tsuda (2002), in which 56% of the students were most motivated in their English studies by exams, and only 17% because of the possibility of communicating with native speakers. This data becomes even more significant when considering that, as noted in section 2.1, 67% of students in the same survey also noted that they do not like studying English.

Thus, a clear relationship exists between Japanese EFL students, the entrance examination system, and negative attitudes. This is meaningful because learner anxiety can be increased by “students suffering through grammar and vocabulary-based pedagogies targeted at university entrance tests.” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 46) And as it has been established that learner anxiety can lead to negative attitudes – and thus, lower motivation – it is apparent that entrance examinations certainly do affect the formation of attitudes towards ELL in Japan.

3. Changing Attitudes

3.1 Goals

In order to combat dwindling motivation following entrance exams, Kelly (2005) notes the importance of establishing goals. Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura (2001, pp. 61–62) suggest that instead of setting short-term goals, such as entrance exams, if learners find a continuous purpose, “it seems possible that an instrumental motivation would also continue to be effective.” This could be achieved by setting personal goals, which are specific and clear. This is echoed by Atsuta (2003, p. 5), who posits that “successful learners of English have specific goals.”

It is crucial that these goals are attainable, as Takala (2015, p. 341) found, the more probable students consider their success to be, the higher their motivation is. Progress in language learning is an essential factor in the formation of attitudes towards that language as discussed above and stated by McKenzie (2010, p. 63) “students who both liked English as a school subject and perceived that they were making progress in the language were most likely to hold positive attitudes towards long-term English study.”

On the other hand, according to Ajzen and Fishbein (2005, p. 195) “people who believe that they lack the skills required to perform a behavior may anticipate failure and, thus, may develop a negative attitude toward the behavior.” In this case, if the motivation to study a foreign language could be considered as a behavior, this assertion suggests that unrealistic learning goals, resulting in perceived failures will lead to negative attitudes towards studying.

3.2 World Englishes

Another issue in Japan in relation to language learning goals is that of the native speaker as a model for correct English use. Tan and Chia (2015, p. 43) argue that “the emphasis on native speakers and native culture in Japan might have caused the Japanese learners to set unrealistic learning goals.” Ishikawa (2016, p. 87) also suggests the lack of exposure to English as a lingua franca (ELF) in Japan might have something to do with students’ “negative orientations to their own English, or more generally, to Japanese people’s English.”

One possible solution to this problem was suggested by Lee (2005, p. 9), who recommends using alternative terms in the absence of native speakers. This would act to “shift not only the attention away from ‘who you are,’ but to focus the attention on what we are actually attempting to accomplish in language teaching; communicative competence.”

Another way to combat the idea of the native speaker as a goal would be to place a greater emphasis on promoting varieties of English, as, according to Liu and Cheng (2017), in today’s world non-native English speakers actually outnumber native English speakers. Therefore, more contact with a wider variety of English could be achieved through increased contact with international English speaking communities. Tsuda (2003, p. 70) also posits that if Japanese students are made aware of varieties of Asian Englishes used both in Japan and internationally, they will “find it easier to speak English without being afraid of making mistakes or feeling inferior for not being able to speak like native speakers.”

Interacting with a wider variety of world Englishes could therefore help Japanese students to manage their expectations, and set more easily attainable goals, creating positive learning experiences, which could ultimately lead to more generally positive attitudes towards the target language. This idea is concurrent with research carried out by Nguyen (2017, p. 15) on university students in Vietnam, in which it is theorized that awareness of *World Englishes*, and the difficulties faced by English learners in a variety of settings helps English learners to gain critical insight into their own identity as non-native speakers of English, which can help to improve confidence in their own variety of English. According to Sasayama (2013, p. 277), “Japanese people may be, or are becoming, more willing to consider JE [Japanese English] as one legitimate variety of English.” As Sasayama made this statement in 2013, a follow-up study could be of great importance in determining to what extent Japanese people are willing to embrace JE as a legitimate variety of English in 2021.

Conclusions & Suggestions for Further Research

The literature analyzed for this review confirms that there is indeed a link between attitudes towards a target language, motivation to learn that language and, in turn, language learning success. The processes by which these attitudes are formed is multi-faceted and complicated in nature, yet as seen throughout this paper, some themes are shared amongst Japanese learners. It would appear as though, according to the literature, the most prominent influence on attitudes towards English in Japan is English education, and specifically Japan’s reliance on English as a subject for tests. Although tests provide short bursts of instrumental

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motivation, as seen in the literature, the adverse effects could potentially outweigh this positive one. An argument could even be made that many of the negative teaching experiences reported by the students could stem from the teacher having no choice but to teach English designed for entrance exams. More research is needed to examine this issue further.

The use of English primarily as a test subject has created a problem in Japan where learners are aware that English is a tool for communication, but are never taught the skills to use it in this way. They also have few chances to use English outside of the classroom, therefore causing English to become just another subject to be tested. In order to address this, a fundamental overhaul of the way English is presented in the Japanese education/test system is needed. The Japanese government should move away from their current heavy reliance on tests and give teachers a chance to re-evaluate why, if at all, English language education is important in Japan, while allowing people to consider their own personal reasons for studying English.

Increased contact with English-speaking communities may continue to be a difficult prospect in Japan, but a reframing of English as a tool for communication within Japanese classrooms would certainly help improve students' attitudes towards English and desire for cross-cultural communication. As opposed to the current situation, which according to the literature explored in this study, sees people lamenting the fact that they must study English for tests, thereby creating negative associations between English, exams, and anxiety.

This literature review was intended to provide an overview of literature relating to attitudes and ELL in Japan, while searching for areas that may require further research. In that regard it has been successful. With a link between attitudes, motivation and language learning success established, it is suggested that in order to confirm any conclusions cited above, further, primary research is required. Utilizing questionnaires would yield the largest sample sizes, however, due to the subjective nature of the topic, if further research were to be carried out, qualitative research methods, such as personal interviews may result in more detailed responses providing new insight into the issues raised throughout this investigation. Therefore, qualitative research interviews would likely be the best choice for any future research on this topic.

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