

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE BELIEFS OF
JAPANESE LEARNERS AND TEACHERS
ABOUT LEARNING ENGLISH
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate Japanese learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning English and to explore related issues that are likely to impinge on the process of the learning of a language. The research was carried out using an interpretive paradigm and involved five multiple case studies to investigate the beliefs of five groups of Japanese language learners and teachers. The different groups were made up from seventeen secondary school students and twenty two university students located in Japan; four students studying in the UK; seven secondary school teachers of English who were also studying in the UK; and three university professors of English who taught in Japan. Data were collected from participants using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis was based around six pre-determined themes and four emerging themes.

The findings revealed that certain beliefs, for example, optimistic beliefs and the commitment to a preferred model of learning English can negatively or positively impinge on the way individuals learn in different situations. The study also suggests that language learners need to have positive attitudes towards learning a language, but that each individual is motivated differently. Whether learners regard English as a subject at school or as a means of communication is likely to make a big difference to learners' motivation to learn English. The role of aesthetic completeness in traditional Japanese arts might also negatively influence the attitudes of Japanese learners of English, in that their aspiration for precision can easily outrun their real linguistic ability, and in so doing make it more difficult for them to achieve proficiency in the use of language. With respect to teaching English, the study indicated the importance of understanding

students' beliefs in the educational context. It was also revealed that teachers' beliefs have a great influence on learners' progress or motivation for learning.

The implications of this study suggest that, as well as the consideration of individual differences, in the process of learning close attention should also be given to the psychological aspects that impinge on acquiring English in the context of Japanese culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the study

Although enthusiasm for learning English continues to grow in Japan, learners of English seem to struggle to become competent users of English. It is commonly accepted that Japanese learners of English are good at studying grammar, although they are poor at communicating in English. Among Japanese learners, however, some of them progress rapidly while others struggle, which suggests that there might be some factors influencing the process of learning. One of them could be their beliefs about language learning, which might facilitate or hinder their choice of appropriate strategies, and thus affect learners' progress and motivation in language study.

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper insight into issues relating to learning English. Knowing the nature of learner beliefs is likely to be beneficial not only for learners but also for teachers because teaching involves understanding their students. Although language teaching is often discussed from the teacher's point of view, the ultimate goal of teaching is learning by learners. As teacher beliefs are closely interrelated with learner beliefs, investigating teacher beliefs about language learning is also helpful for understanding issues about learning English. Teacher beliefs are considered to have a greater influence than their knowledge on their general classroom practice (Pajares 1992). The impact of the beliefs on learning English is being explored, therefore, since learner beliefs are considered to be one of the most significant factors influencing second language learning.

In applied linguistics, interest in learner beliefs about second language acquisition is fairly recent, emerging from the emphasis on learner autonomy and on learner strategies (Kalaja 1995: 191). Richards and Lockhart (1994) observe that learner beliefs can influence learners' motivation to learn and their perceptions about what is easy or difficult about a language. If learners believe that the best way to learn a foreign language is to memorise its component parts, they are likely to adopt positive attitudes towards vocabulary and grammar learning (Benson and Lor 1999). Although many researchers have investigated learner beliefs (Kalaja 1995; Kern 1995; Mantle-Bromley 1995; Mori 1999; Peacock 1998), they mostly collected data from learners only. In my study, I would like to explore learner beliefs both from learners' perspectives and from the teachers' point of view.

In this era of transition, a critical stance is necessary for dealing with 'learning English' which entails controversial issues. Three reasons can be identified to explain why this is controversial. First, considering the current situation that the number of English language learners has grown worldwide and that the reasons why English is learned have changed, the ways in which English is taught could be changed. The information about 'World Englishes' could be helpful for learners to develop appropriate beliefs about learning English. Secondly, the definition of 'native speaker' is changing as English becomes a global language. There is an increasing need to distinguish by proficiencies in English, rather than a dichotomy between 'native' and 'non-native'. Thirdly, learners of English may well be influenced by teachers who believe that only native-like English is authentic. Especially in the process of learning, learners'

inappropriate beliefs about ‘models of English’ could lead to a negative attitude towards learning English. Hence it is important that I take a critical perspective on each aspect in my study on the exploration of issues relating to learning English.

1.2 Research aims and questions

Dreaming of becoming a proficient English user, the number of Japanese students studying in English-speaking countries is increasing. Most of them expect to attain greater English proficiency by staying in an English-speaking country for one year or so. However, it is questionable whether merely residing in such a country is sufficient, because many people who do so do not necessarily acquire a good command of the target language. On the other hand, I have met some Japanese people whose English proficiency, especially oral proficiency, seems of a very high quality compared to other language learners. It is likely that there are some factors which differentiate successful language learners from their unsuccessful counterparts. Exploring their beliefs about English language learning might provide insights leading to possibly better approaches towards language learning.

The present study looks at learners’ beliefs about learning and teaching English as a foreign language. The theoretical framework is based on the eight categories of learner beliefs in Richards and Lockhart (1994, see p50 in this thesis). Under the title of ‘An investigation of the beliefs of Japanese learners and teachers about learning English as a foreign language’, I attempted to explore not only beliefs about learning English but also beliefs about teaching English from multiple perspectives, that is, from successful and less successful learners’ points of view as well as those of teachers. This is

underpinned by a key strength of the case study method which involves using multiple sources.

In order to explore learner beliefs and teacher beliefs as well as similarities and differences in language learners' beliefs about successful and unsuccessful learning of languages, this study investigates the beliefs of five groups of Japanese language learners: 1) secondary students in Japan (17 students), 2) university students in Japan (22 students), 3) students studying in the UK (4 students), 4) teachers of English at secondary school (7 teachers), 5) university professors of English (3 university professors). The group of university students was regarded as less successful learners because of their low English proficiency in spite of their six years of studying English whereas the other groups of participants were all considered as successful learners because of their high test results of English proficiency, or their excellent communicative competence, or their career in teaching English. Each group of participants bears a characteristic in common: participants in groups 1), 2) and 3) are learners of English with a single identity as learners while participants in groups 4) and 5) are also teachers with the double identity as learners and teachers; participants in groups 1) and 2) were studying in Japan, whereas participants in 3) and 4) were studying in the UK. It was felt that a consideration of these characteristics of each group might provide deeper insights into learning languages. The study is carried out within an interpretive research paradigm, using qualitative methods and related instruments like open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to collect data. The research questions are:

- 1) What are successful and less successful Japanese language learners' beliefs about learning English?
- 2) What are Japanese teachers' and professors' beliefs about learning and teaching English?

Exploring their beliefs about learning and teaching a language will provide some insights which could contribute to understanding why unsuccessful learners progress less rapidly than successful ones, which, in turn, might offer deeper insights into how to help them improve their learning of a language.

1.3 Overview of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The next chapter will describe the historical background of English language teaching in Japan, together with the contextual background relating to the language, society, and English education in Japan. The review of the literature of Chapter 3 will be followed by a description of research design and methodology in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides data from five groups of the participants with a discussion of the findings. In Chapter 6, an overall discussion and implications will be offered for consideration in the learning and teaching of a language, and further research.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In order to understand Japanese learners' beliefs about language learning, background information about the current English education system in Japan, as well as a historical background, are likely to be helpful.

2.1 Historical background of ELT in Japan

The characteristics of Japanese teachers and students have developed over a period of many years. Going back into history, Japan opened up its country to the United States and European countries such as the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Russia in the mid-19th century. Since then Japan has been influenced by western culture. One of the major points in the Imperial Charter Oath of 1867 was that “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world” (Henrichsen 1989). Japanese peoples' attitudes recognizing the need to learn through a foreign language, and their enthusiasm for learning that language, may well date back to this historical crux. The zest for Portuguese and Dutch was followed by enthusiasm for English, which became Japan's most widely studied language during the period from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. However, Japan's interest in English began to decline for several reasons. Firstly, it was a counter-reaction to the enthusiasm for western ways and Japanese people turned back towards their own cultural inheritance. Secondly, a period of Japanese nationalism began, as was marked in the Meiji Rescript on Education in 1890, and foreign studies tended to be criticised when Japan was strong and

self-confident. Thirdly, English was no longer needed as Japan caught up with the Western countries in the academic field through reading books written in foreign languages, and most textbooks were translated in Japanese.

During the 1870-90 period, English was the medium of instruction in many Japanese institutions of higher education, and many foreign teachers were employed from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France and Germany. Japanese students read English textbooks and learned subjects *in* English. However, with the beginning of a period of nationalism at the end of the 19th century, many foreign teachers were replaced by native Japanese teachers at universities, and linguistics was emphasised more than practical speaking skills in language courses. The way of studying had changed to learning *about* English in Japanese. In the meantime the difficult examinations to enter the universities posed strong competition to applicants, whereas the examinations were also “viewed as a means to stimulate the aspirations of students” (Amano 1990). English became a tool for screening students rather than a means of communication, which affected the way English was taught in the secondary schools (Henrichsen 1989). This is exactly the same situation as the present context of English education in Japan.

After the Russo-Japanese War in the beginning of the 20th century, as Japan’s attention turned toward continental Europe and away from the United States and Great Britain, scholars tended to regard English as a language for business purpose. Japanese English teachers tried to sweep away this practical image of English, and they emphasised the cultural and disciplinary aspects of foreign language study and placed little importance

on conversational English. Hence a controversy between the cultural and practical aspect of English study has continued for decades in Japanese English language teaching – i.e. the importance of reading in English for cultural enrichment versus the importance of English for international communication (Henrichsen 1989).

In 1920, Dr. Sawayanagi, president of the Imperial Education Association, visited London, and was impressed with the courses given by Harold E. Palmer (1877-1949), an expert in phonetics and language teaching methods. Palmer, who had been interested in Japan for a long time, was invited to become linguistic advisor to the Japanese Ministry of Education (Henrichsen 1989). Palmer was a lecturer at University College, London, and devised a method called the Oral Method. He came to Japan in 1922 and stayed for 14 years making efforts to reform the current teaching methods in Japan (Shirahata et al. 1999). Despite Palmer's emphasis on oral English, there were unfavourable political and sociological implementation factors which diminished Palmer's influence. In terms of political factors, Palmer's connection with the Ministry of Education was not strong enough and he was placed in merely an advisory position.

Sociological conditions were even more difficult to deal with, especially with regard to the attitudes of teachers and learners in Japan. Some Japanese secondary school teachers criticised Palmer's Oral Method saying that it could confuse learners probably because Japanese teachers already had the established patterns of relationships in classrooms. Japanese students lacked motivation to learn spoken English as they no longer had an opportunity to be taught by foreign teachers. The Nationalism of the 1930s inevitably had a negative impact on English study in Japan. In a difficult situation for a person to

introduce a novel approach, despite the lack of success of Palmer's endeavour to emphasise oral English, his influence remained alive in Japan for a long time.

In the 1930s, Japanese militarism and nationalism became strong and negatively affected English language study. Studying a foreign language used to be required throughout the five years in secondary schools. However, in 1937, foreign language study became optional in secondary schools after the first two years, and, with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the study of English was suspected as a sign of disloyalty to the country (Henrichsen 1989) because it was the 'enemy language' (Silver et al. 2002).

The next turning point in modern history in Japan was at the end of the Second World War in 1945. The allies occupied Japan (1945-1952), and enthusiasm for learning English grew strong once again in the 1950s. The new constitution was passed by the Diet in 1946, and both The Fundamental Law of Education and The School Education Law were passed in 1947. One of the postwar reforms – the reform of the school system in secondary education - was carried out under these laws, and the postwar reform affected the way of teaching English in Japan.

Although the prewar Japanese school system was the 6-5 school system with six years' compulsory education, it was changed to the 6-3-3 system with the U.S. Education Mission's democratic ideas of nine years' free compulsory education and coeducation (Tsuchimochi 1993). Japanese students from 12 to 18 years old had five English classes a week in 1956 and more students desired a university-level education. As the number

of prospective university students increased, entrance examinations became highly competitive and English was used as a tool for screening applicants not as a means of communication. As a consequence, entrance examinations influenced the content and method of teaching English in upper secondary schools. English-Japanese translations and grammatical analysis of complicated sentences were emphasised because they were the most important part of the entrance examinations (Henrichsen 1989).

Different forms of language-teaching tradition have developed in the years that foreign languages have been studied in Japan. One of these is a Japanese-style “grammar-translation” approach, which makes use of translation and grammar study as the main teaching and learning activities. Thus it sometimes happened that scholars who studied foreign languages were unable to converse in them.

In order to understand Japanese learners’ attitudes towards English, one should know how English is regarded in Japan. Many learners tend to think that English is the language of the United Kingdom and/or that of the United States. As stated earlier, two historical factors may be pointed out that account for this tendency: (a) the strong British influence on Japan during the period of the latter’s modernisation after it opened its doors to the world in the mid-19th century and (b) the vital role played by the United States in Japan’s postwar rehabilitation and its subsequent economic growth. Therefore, to many learners of English in Japan, the model to be aimed at is the sort of English spoken by its native speakers, especially what has traditionally been considered standard British or American English, while any other variety of the language is seen as incorrect and undesirable. Attitudes like this may have a negative effect on the learners’

learning process because, in the knowledge that their English deviates from what they think is the norm, they may be discouraged from communicating in the target language.

Historical background of English language teaching in Japan is significant to understand the current situation. English was once a tool for students to enter the universities, which is the same situation as the present context of English education in Japan. On the other hand, English was the medium of instruction in many Japanese institutions of higher education more than one hundred years ago. This historical fact is well worth consideration when we discuss using English as a means of instruction.

2.2 Contextual background

2.2.1 The language situation in Japan

Japanese is the only common language in Japan, although regional and social varieties of spoken Japanese exist. The standard Japanese language is taught as a subject for Japanese students for twelve years in primary and secondary school. In addition to the modern Japanese language, classical Japanese translation and classical Chinese translation are taught as subjects in secondary school. Apart from Japanese language requirements, a foreign language is required in secondary school and almost all the students choose English as a subject (Silver et al. 2002).

The structure of syllables in English and Japanese is different in that most Japanese syllables comprise a combination of a consonant and a vowel (Koyama 1992). This C-V structure is a significant feature of Japanese and it often hinders Japanese learners from pronouncing English sounds properly because the pronunciation of the C-V structure

has a different rhythm from that of English. According to Brownell, Japanese uses primarily a pitch accent in which the high or low pitch of a sound is more important than the force of the sound, whereas English relies heavily on stress and intonation patterns (1967: 23). One of the principal problems faced by Japanese learners of English is the difficulty in acquiring the rhythm of spoken English because English is referred to as either phrased-timed or stress-timed whereas Japanese is described as syllable-timed (Scott, 1966). Whereas relative differences of intensity are distinctive in English, they are not in Japanese, Scott claims that the whole matter of stress distinctions is of considerable importance in the teaching of English to speakers of Japanese (1966:52).

In terms of phonology, Japanese phonemic description does not have several English consonant phonemes such as /v θ ð l/. For example, the Japanese 'r' sound is pronounced with the tongue touching the hard palate, which is similar to an English 'l' sound. Therefore Japanese learners of English have pronunciation problems, and tend to substitute /b/ for /v/, /s/ for /θ/, /z/ for /ð/ and /r/ for /l/ (Scott 1966). If the teachers fail to understand these pronunciation problems, they may attribute their learners' difficulties to inappropriate causes such as stupidity, laziness or obstinacy. The reality is, Scott argues, that such problems are a natural and inevitable product of the interference of the learners' native speech habit on the phonological patterns of the target language (1966: 114).

Brownell (1967) quotes from Reischauer's paper in identifying difficulties for English language teaching and learning in Japan. Three problems are mentioned. Firstly, Japanese does not belong to the Indo-European family of languages, and this fact makes

learning English more difficult. Secondly, English syntax differs radically from Japanese and therefore the construction of thought differs. Thirdly, the traditional teaching procedures in English aim for mastery of reading without much attention to self-expression in speech (1967:19).

2.2.2 The Japanese mind and society

Although hierarchy is one of the most important principles of classification in any society, hierarchical differences undoubtedly affect interaction between Japanese people in their everyday lives. Hendry observes that Japanese language has quite clear speech levels, which are chosen according to the relationship between the people involved in a conversation (1987: 50). Self-identification is crucial for appropriate communication, and the factors which determine one's place in society include occupation, age, gender, educational background and hometown. Japanese honorifics should be used based on these factors as well as social distance. A person has to use the most appropriate register according to each situation because there are several registers in Japanese words describing the same action (Koyama 1992).

When people talk to superiors or those who are socially distant, they use honorifics. Japanese honorifics can be classified into three groups: respectful language, humble language, and polite language. The former two languages involve particular sets of expressions, while the latter is used in a more general sense expressing respectful politeness (Davies and Ikeno 2002).

Respectful language can express the feeling of respect to others directly. In respectful

language, there are many special verbs which carry honorific connotations, totally different from the neutral form of the verb. Terms of address or titles of honour are also added to people's family name. For example, *sensei* 'teacher' is accompanied by the family name, and students call their teacher *Smith sensei* 'Teacher Smith', or just *Sensei* 'Teacher' without the family name. As this is a common way of referring to teachers in Japan, calling a person of higher status by their first name sounds strange or rude to Japanese people. This might be the reason why Japanese students need a great gulp before using their lecturers' first name.

Humble language, on the other hand, is a type of speech that lowers the status of the speaker in order to show respect for one's addressee, and thus indirectly represents high regard for one's superiors or seniors. There are also many special verbs with connotations of humility, which are different from the original verbs. Even nouns have several levels of politeness. The word 'father', for example, has a humble form when you refer to your own father, and a respectful form when you refer to other people's father.

Polite language is slightly different from the other two types of Japanese honorifics in that it is used as a way of expressing politeness to people around you, especially those who are socially distant from you. This polite level of speech involves using the prefixes with nouns and polite verb endings. The use of polite language also indicates one's upbringing and social background.

If you commit a breach of honorifics, you would be seen as a rude or uneducated person.

From childhood, Koyama (1992: 111) says, the Japanese are taught to notice how others respond to their speech and actions. Children are told not to be laughed at by others, rather than being taught why their behaviour was not appropriate on public transport. This suggests that other people's opinions or social judgment take precedence over an individual's view. As most Japanese worry too much about what other people think, learners of English, for example, would feel inhibited if they spoke English with a Japanese accent for fear of being held in contempt. In the Japanese classroom, students tend to speak only when they are asked by the teacher. They often ask questions privately after the end of class (Koyama 1992) mainly because it is embarrassing for them to ask questions in class worrying about what other students think.

As for the Japanese sense of beauty, Davies and Ikeno (2002) comment that although the traditional Japanese sense of aesthetics can still be found in Japan, it is rapidly changing, and the young in particular often blindly imitate the Western world. This could impact on one's attitude in the process of learning English, such as longing for native-like pronunciation. Davies and Ikeno also point out one of the important concepts in the practice of the traditional Japanese arts: perfectionism – the pursuit of the beauty of complete perfection which aims to master all patterns completely. This concept seems another factor influencing an approach to learning English.

2.2.3 English education in Japan

The current Japanese education system is 6-3-3-4: six years of primary education followed by three years of early secondary education (junior high school), three years of late secondary education (high school) and four years of tertiary education. The first

nine years of education is compulsory, and advancement rate to high school level is 97.3 per cent, and almost half (49%) of the high school graduates go to university or junior college (MEXT, 2004). Favourable attitudes toward schooling and relatively high levels of basic education and literacy are prerequisites to widespread foreign language study (Henrichsen, 1989), and both of them are firmly established in Japan. Brownell asserts that ‘the effort of Japan to teach English ranks as the largest, single modern foreign language program in the world’ (1967: 10). Silver et al. report that English is often associated with the idea of the ‘internationalisation’ of Japan, and the language plays an important role in the screening process of education, job searches and company promotions (2002: 81).

As English is a compulsory subject in both junior and senior high schools, most Japanese study English for at least six years. English education basically deals with teaching about English through the grammar/translation approach, which aims at developing skills such as the translation of English passages into Japanese and grammatical understanding of the sentences, because the university entrance examinations focus on reading, grammatical knowledge and the vocabulary of English. Therefore, teachers of English are expected to prepare for the university entrance examinations, because English is a major subject along with math and Japanese. In consequence, although Japanese students generally have knowledge of English grammar, very few can use English as a means of communication. Wordell describes this situation saying that ‘few students, graduates, or even instructors are comfortable when called upon to converse in English’ (1985: 3), which leads to a thriving market for native speakers of English who wish to teach in Japan. However, as Wordell’s comment was

written more than twenty years ago, the current situation in English education is unlikely to still be exactly the same.

As an attempt at encouraging more communication in English language learning, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) hired native speakers for team teaching with Japanese teachers as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), usually at secondary school activities. The number of ALTs has risen since the programme's start: from 813 in 1987 to 5241 as of July, 1997 (Silver et al., 2002).

In public junior high schools and high schools, the content of the English classes is controlled by MEXT guidelines, which impose what sentence patterns, vocabulary and grammatical categories are taught. As textbooks must conform to the guidelines and must be approved by the MEXT, the individual teacher has little control over the textbooks. Unlike in junior high or high school, university English courses are not controlled by MEXT. Accordingly, university lecturers can determine the content of classes as well as the choice of textbooks.

In terms of purposes of learners of English in Japan, Wordell (1985) highlights two issues. Firstly, the Japanese consider study to be an activity of great intrinsic merit, essential to the preparation of the young. Secondly, the Japanese recognised the increasing use of English as a language of international economic and scholarly communication, and thus Japan has achieved success in both fields (1985: 4). Silver et al. (2002), on the other hand, report a survey conducted by a private language school in Japan. According to the survey, the top five purposes of learners were career, travel, job,

study abroad, and hobby. According to Best (1994), the language school students' motivations for studying English conversation are professional need, desire to travel, and prestige.

Best (1994) makes a distinction between 'language' schools and 'traditional' schools in Japan. By his definition, the language schools are the ones profiting from Japan's preoccupation with studying English, whereas the traditional schools are the universities, junior colleges, junior high and senior high schools that provide traditional education for Japanese students (1994: 23). Best quotes the Wall Street Journal's description of studying English conversation as 'one of Japan's trendiest preoccupations, offering the allures of business success and fairy tale romance'. There were over 8000 English conversation schools in Japan, and in 1991 these schools made over \$24 billion (*ibid*).

Mizuta (2003) describes the world of language schools in Japan quoting an argument of Lummis (1976 cited in Mizuta, 2003). Language schools are: a) racist; b) native speaker dominant; c) deviated from the real world, because they only provide the world view of the US/Japan dichotomy; d) far from the Japanese students' reality of language use (2003: 13). Language schools in Japan are proud of the native teachers they hire, but native teachers only mean 'white Americans', and the majority of Japanese think white American native teachers speak with the 'real' English accent (*ibid*). Mizuta (2003) suggests that Japanese people's attachment for westerners originated in an inferiority complex, and the flood of loan words from English and French is the reflection of the Japanese' desire to adopt the western language (Suzuki 1989 cited in Mizuta 2003).

According to Dougill (1995), teaching English in Japan involves confronting the cultural factors which inhibit successful language learning. One approach is promoting internationalisation. He claims that real internationalisation entails change, a far more painful process than simply learning about other cultures (1995: 72). It can be promoted by the selection of classroom material that does not pander to the West-Japan dichotomy; by seeking to diminish the foreigner complex; by countering assumptions that foreigner equals Westerner and that Westerner equals American (*ibid*). Dougill stresses the importance of attacking stereotypes directly, which could also provide animated discussion in the classroom.

2.3 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described several issues peculiar to the Japanese education context within which English is taught. Five issues can be highlighted. Firstly, Japanese learners of English have pronunciation problems as Japanese phonemic description does not have several English consonant phonemes. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of, and take into account, these pronunciation problems. Secondly, many learners in Japan think that English is the language of the United Kingdom and/or that of the United States, and they tend to aim at replicating the English of native speakers. This longing for native-like pronunciation may also stem from the concept of the traditional Japanese arts' 'perfectionism' which aims to master all patterns completely. Thirdly, because most Japanese worry too much about what other people think, learners of English, for example, are likely to feel inhibited if they speak English with a Japanese accent for fear of being held in contempt. Fourthly, English education in Japan basically deals with translation and grammar study because the university entrance examinations focus on

reading, grammatical knowledge and the vocabulary of English. English in this respect can be seen as a tool for screening students rather than a means of communication. Fifthly, the concept of 'internationalisation' is not correctly understood in that it is likely to reflect a narrow view of the world; a Western countries - Japan dichotomy. Native speakers in this context only means 'white Americans' as the majority of Japanese think white American native speakers speak with the 'real' English accent. Keeping these issues in mind, those involved in language education need to pay closer attention to the Japanese context, as these issues affect beliefs about learning English which, in turn, influence the process of learning.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter considers the literature pertinent to the present study. I shall first examine individual differences in language learning as this can be regarded as an important factor influencing the learning of a language. This leads to a discussion of attribution theory which involves learners' conception of themselves, that is, one aspect of learner beliefs. Learners' attributions for successes and failures in learning a language relates to developing motivation to learn. The literature on beliefs about language learning will be reviewed together with the impact of the learners' perceptions about preferable models of English as well as the concept of World Englishes and native-like English. Figure 3.5 shows how these aspects of the literature are related to my study.

3.1 Individual differences

3.1.1 Individual differences in language learning

Different views of the second language acquisition process were proposed by Krashen (1981) and McLaughlin (1978) more than two decades ago. Krashen argues that second language acquisition occurs unconsciously in using a target language, whereas McLaughlin claims that conscious learning is important for the automatic use of a target language. With regard to these conflicting views, Schumann (1983) suggests that the process of second language acquisition can vary according to individual learners. Although some learners may find it easier to use conscious grammatical learning, others may prefer to involve themselves in target language use to acquire proficiency.

It is considered that learners acquire a second language being influenced by both external and internal factors. The external factors involve the social situation in which learning takes place, and researchers seek external explanations of learner language using ideas from the sociolinguistic study of language. The internal factors are related to the mental process that the learners use to convert input into knowledge. Internal explanations by researchers use ideas from both cognitive psychology and linguistics (Ellis 2008).

While much of the work that has taken place in second language acquisition (SLA) research is based on the assumption that learner language provides evidence of universal learning processes, Ellis (1994: 17) claims that there is also a long tradition of research that has recognised that learners vary enormously in their rate of learning, their approach to learning and in their actual achievements. Learners try to acquire a second language in different ways, influenced by different general factors such as motivation, aptitude, and various strategies.

The outcome of the acquisition of a second language is diverse, and a great deal of this outcome variance is attributable to the impact of individual differences (Dörnyei 2005) which have been found to be the most consistent predictors of L2 learning success (Dörnyei & Skehan 2003; Sawyer & Ranta 2001 cited in Dörnyei 2005). Individual differences (IDs) are characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be shown to differ from each other (Dörnyei 2005). According to Dörnyei, IDs are related to some of the core issues in applied linguistics and they can be meaningfully linked to

the most important processes underlying second language acquisition. The factors of IDs can be divided into those that are fixed and immutable such as age and aptitude, and those that are variable such as motivation (Ellis 1994).

Ellis (1994) proposes a framework for investigating L2 acquisition (see Table 3.1), in which topics are divided into four areas, i.e. characteristics of learner language, learner-external factors, learner-internal mechanisms, and the language learner. Individual learner differences, i.e. beliefs, affective states, general factors, learner strategies, and previous learning experiences, are related to Area 4, ‘The language learner’ in the Table. Ellis defines general factors as motivation, aptitude, the use of various strategies such as inferencing and self-monitoring for obtaining input and learning from it. Learner strategies are defined as behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable (Oxford 1989 cited in Ellis 1994).

Table 3.1: A framework for investigating L2 acquisition

Focus on learning		Focus on the learner	
Description	Explanation		
Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Characteristics of learner language	Learner-external factors	Learner-internal mechanisms	The language learner
errors	social context	L1 transfer	general factors e.g. motivation
acquisition orders and developmental sequences	input and interaction	learning processes	learner strategies
variability		communication strategies	
pragmatic features		knowledge of linguistic universals	

(Table 1.1 in Ellis 1994: 18)

Ellis (1994) concludes that it is useful to distinguish two branches of enquiry within SLA research: one has its focus on learning and the other on the language learner. While the former places emphasis on identifying the universal characteristics of L2 acquisition, the latter focuses on accounting for different ways in which individual learners learn an L2. Although these two branches have tended to work independently, a complete theory of SLA must interrelate the findings from both branches.

Although Dörnyei (2005) suggests that the concept of individual differences (IDs) is rather loose, containing certain core variables and many optional ones, he divides IDs into six categories: personality, ability/aptitude, motivation, learning styles, language learning strategies, and other learner characteristics. In the category of other learner characteristics, Dörnyei identifies five variables: anxiety, self-esteem, creativity, willingness to communicate, and learner beliefs.

In the language teaching context, there has been a shift from introducing language as a set of forms (grammatical, phonological, lexical), to introducing language as a functional system (Tarone & Yule 1989). When language is perceived as a functional system, the use of language receives greater attention and the ability to use a language is described as communicative competence. A theoretical underpinning to a communicative approach is that we learn a language through using the language to interact meaningfully with other people (Williams and Burden 1997). Canale and Swain (1980) present the key components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Tarone and Yule (1989) argue that traditional language teaching methods and materials have focused

mainly on grammatical competence, with less attention given to sociolinguistic and strategic competence. In the real communication context, however, a learner with only grammatical competence would not be able to cope with transactional or interactional conversation, because natural conversation is dynamic, not a mechanical exchange of sentences.

Leaver, Ehrman, and Shekhtman (2005) point out the difference between knowledge and communicative competence. Knowledge such as grammar rules and vocabulary is in the background of communicative competence, but it rarely results directly in communication as it is just a stepping stone to being able to use the language. It is likely that people take a different approach to learning a language. Some people are able to use a language with very limited knowledge of the language, whereas others fail in their attempt to communicate with native speakers although they know a lot about the language (Leaver et al. 2005).

Although we tend to think that the innate ability to learn another language varies from individual to individual, strictly speaking, Dörnyei (2005) claims that there is no such thing as language ability. Instead, human beings have a number of cognitive factors that can be referred to as the learner's capacity to facilitate foreign language learning. The term 'language aptitude' is used synonymously with 'language ability' which is often used to mean 'language learning ability' in educational contexts (Dörnyei 2005). Skehan (1989) suggests that it is not clear whether language learning ability is innate or is influenced by the early environment the children have been exposed to in the first three years of their lives. According to Grigorenko et al. (2000 cited in Dörnyei 2005: 45),

language aptitude is considered as a form of developing expertise rather than as an entity fixed at birth.

The present study is based on the assumption that each learner has different characteristics which might affect the process of learning English. The literature on individual differences has provided a framework for investigating these factors.

3.1.2 Attribution theory

Although within the field of language learning and teaching comparatively little work has been carried out regarding the reasons that learners construct for their successes and failures in learning a language, Williams and Burden (1999) claim that two major psychological perspectives can shed light on this matter. They are constructivism and attribution theory. A constructivist view on learning suggests that knowledge is constructed in the process of learning which is personal to the individual. This active construction of meaning by each individual learner is formed in the social context since language is part of a social process and develops through social interactions. While much of the research in the area of learners' conceptions of themselves has been conducted in a positivist paradigm that relates personal attributes to numerical scores, there has been little work from a constructivist perspective which focuses on the actual thoughts and feelings of the participants. A promising alternative approach to this area, Williams and Burden argue, is provided by attribution theory which is concerned with the ways in which individuals make personal sense of the successes and failures, although it still tends to have generated mainly positivist research of a quantitative nature.

Heider (1944) coined the term 'naïve psychology' of the layperson and attempted to formulate the processes by which an untrained observer, i.e. a 'naïve psychologist', makes sense of the actions of others. A central aspect of Heider's theory was that it was how people *perceived* events rather than the events in themselves that influenced behaviour (Williams and Burden 1997: 104). Attribution is defined by Kelly (1967) as the process by which individuals interpret the causes of events in their environment. Success and failure are not absolutes but relative, defined in different ways by different cultures, groups and individuals (Maehr and Nicholls 1980). The causal explanations of lay people have been central to attribution theory.

Weiner (1979) reported that ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty have been identified as perceived causes of success and failure in academic and other achievement situations; the former two factors are internal, whereas the latter two are external. From this point of view, Weiner has made a great contribution to attribution theory in achievement contexts, which could be applied to the field of language learning and teaching, because common attributions for success and failure in sport are not likely the same as attributions for success and failure in learning a language, as Williams and Burden (1999) point out. Dörnyei (2001) mentions two reasons why attribution theory is particularly relevant to the study of language learning: first, failure in learning a language is very common although people spend a long period of time studying foreign languages; secondly, as the ability to learn a language is a well-known notion, people tend to regard their failure as the result of their negative ability.

In the attributional process, Weiner (1979) identified three causal dimensions: stability, locus, and control, which would affect the perceived causes. Whether people see that ability and/or effort are stable or controllable differs greatly between individuals. Williams and Burden (1997) suggest that different combinations of attributions and causal dimensions are likely to lead to different outcomes of individual behaviour. For example, if students believe they lack the ability to learn a foreign language and see this as a stable internal factor beyond personal control, they will be unlikely to make efforts to improve. Interesting findings from research in this area are also reported by Williams and Burden. First, attributions are likely to be situation specific rather than global, since the nature of the event will affect the attributions. Second, it seems that people develop different attributions to account for success and failure, possibly as a means of protecting their self-esteem.

This is supported by Jernigan (2001) who investigated learners' attributions which could affect their motivation for language study. The results of her study suggest that learners may ascribe their failures and successes to factors they can control, like effort, or factors they cannot control, like their own ability or the difficulty of the task. If learners hold noncontrollable attributions, Jernigan claims that teachers can give some advice about how to deemphasise external attributions learners cannot control and emphasise effort-based attributions that will increase learners' continued motivation.

Among various variables contributing to success and failure attributions in educational settings, Williams, Burden, and Al-Baharna (2001) identify one further contributing factor, i.e. the cultural dimension. While students in Western societies were most likely

to attribute their successes to internal causes, Asian students frequently made external attributions for their success (Fry and Ghosh 1980). In the study of Williams et al. which investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of reasons for success and failure in learning English within a non-Western culture, one of the results both in teachers' and students' attributions for success was that attitudes towards learning the English language were seen as carrying greater significance than the amount of effort expended. Williams et al. claim that students' attributions for successes and failures in learning a language could play a significant part in their continuing motivation to learn that language.

Pintrich and Schunk (2002) present two assumptions of attribution theory. The first assumption is that individuals are motivated to understand and master their own world in order to make it more predictable and controllable. The second assumption is that people try to understand the causal determinants of their own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others. These assumptions could be slightly different within different cultures, as Bains (1983) suggests that different cultures have different ways of enhancing the controllability of their world. As success and failure are not absolutes but relative, achievement is not universally defined in the same way by different cultures. Moreover, specific emotions appear to be related to certain attributional dimensions, e.g. pride and shame are related to outcomes attributed to perceived internal, controllable elements (Williams and Burden 1997: 106). Japanese culture, for example, appears to be particularly concerned about pride and shame, which could have an influence on developing attributions.

In the study by Williams and Burden (1999) which investigated secondary students' attributions for success and failure in learning French, they reported that most of these students tended to judge their success by external factors such as teacher approval or marks, and they also suggested that the teachers played a significant role in the development of students' attributions. What is omitted in most research into attributions, Williams and Burden (1999: 199) point out, is an examination of what "success" or "doing well" means to individuals, as well as how their conceptions of success and failure are constructed. The results of their study show that notions of success and failure are shaped by the expectations and demands by social interactions with significant others such as teachers, parents, and peers. Hence, attributions are also socially influenced, whereas they are constructed in a complex way among internal feelings, external influences, and social context. When individuals shape internal attributions, they are affected by external influence such as teachers' beliefs about learning. Therefore it is considered that teachers have great influence on learners' beliefs about learning, and learners' attributions of success and failure.

Considering that little research into attributions has been carried out in the area of language learning, further research looking at individuals might be helpful for a better understanding of language learners. Williams and Burden (1997) argue the importance of research which considers individuals' views of themselves as learners, because it can lead to the understanding of the reasons learners give for their perceived successes and failures. Changing learners' attributions might contribute toward having control over their language learning outcomes. If language learners view their successes and failures as unstable and controllable, it would be one promising possibility for them to become

autonomous learners.

Dörnyei (2001) also emphasises the importance of attribution research mainly because attributions play a significant role to develop motivation to learn. For example, learners who do not believe that they can succeed might lose confidence in their potential, the situation of which is termed 'learned helplessness' in the psychological literature. Unsuccessful learners reach this stage as they interpret their past learning experiences in a debilitating manner and attribute their past failures to stable and uncontrollable causes. Teachers could offer students attribution training which may change the negative attitudes by converting debilitating attributions into constructive attributions. Dörnyei claims that failure can be an agent which increases one's work morale or decreases it. It all depends on how one perceives it.

Williams, Burden, Poulet, and Maun (2004) equally emphasise attribution retraining which focuses on changing negative feelings such as a sense of 'learned helplessness', to positive feelings of personal control. In their study, which investigated secondary students' attributions for their successes and failures in learning foreign languages, they obtained nearly one thousand attributional statements from 285 students written in an open-ended questionnaire. This suggests that the students recognise the significance of questions about their success and failure attributions. Williams et al. point out that the perceived explanations that individuals construct for their success and failure are more powerful than the actual reasons when we view learning from a constructivist perspective, not as the transmission of knowledge. In the educational setting of schools, syllabus context or student abilities may well be fixed and unchangeable, whereas

students' perceptions are changeable as attributions are likely to be socially and culturally determined. Thus, Williams et al. argue that attribution retraining is helpful for enabling students to think and act in more positive ways. This appears to lead to an aspect for developing learners' motivation to learn.

As individuals make sense of their successes and failures, their conceptions of themselves as learners, which is one aspect of learner beliefs, could play a significant part in their learning. The literature on attribution indicates the possibility of changing learners' conceptions of themselves, which would contribute to the present study.

3.1.3 Motivation

Motivation is considered as one of the most influential general factors of individual learner differences on learning. The concept of motivation can be interpreted in a number of different ways, and psychological approaches to motivation have changed considerably in recent years. Behaviourist views on motivation placed emphasis on elements outside of the individual's personal control, i.e. the nature of reward systems as the most effective way of motivating desired behaviour. For example, they considered that learners who were given a reward for what they have studied would be motivated and more successful in learning (Williams and Burden 1997).

From a cognitive view of motivation, however, the most important thing is that people have choice and control over their actions (Williams and Burden 1997). Learners, therefore, can set their own goals and decide to act in order to achieve these goals. Ellis (1994) also claims that motivation is a factor that is variable as the strength of an

individual learner's motivation can change over time and is influenced by external factors.

A constructivist approach to motivation, which is within a cognitive framework, postulates that each individual is motivated differently. An individual's motivation is also influenced by social and contextual factors such as culture, the social situation, and the teacher. A central component of motivation is making decisions as to whether to do something, how much effort to expend on it, the degree of perseverance, as Williams and Burden (1997) point out. Motivation is not simply arousing interest, but a complex area involving so many interrelated factors.

The decisions people make will be affected both by internal factors and external factors. Internal factors involve learners' attributes such as personality, confidence, self-concept, and attitudes to the target language community and culture. External factors contain the social and cultural context, and significant others such as teachers, parents and peers. These internal and external factors will be interacting in a dynamic manner and will be influenced by the beliefs, the society and the culture of the world when people make decisions to act.

The learning of a foreign language is of a social nature because language is a part of one's identity. It is not simply learning a grammar or vocabulary, but involves a change in self-image and the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours, and thus affects the social nature of the learner. Therefore, confidence or friendship may be important as motivating factors (Ellis 1994), and an attitude towards the community of speakers of

that language seems an influential factor in success in learning a foreign language (Gardner 1985).

Motivation has been found to significantly affect language learning success because it provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process (Dörnyei 2005: 65). Gardner (1985) defines motivation referring to a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language.

It is obvious that motivation is a multifaceted construct which will be affected by various factors. Dörnyei (1994) proposes a three-level categorisation: the language level, the learner level, and the situation level. These categories include components related to each level, for example, the language level involves perceptions about the usefulness of the language, the learner level covers individual characteristics such as need for achievement and self-confidence, and the situation level contains the elements of the course, the teacher and the group dynamics.

From the perspective of the learner level, Jernigan (2001) conducted a study collecting data from surveys and interviews with students, instructors, and advisors in order to seek to analyse students' motivations. Her study is relevant to the motivational model with a social-cognitive approach, which highlights how students' beliefs influence cognitive processes. The results show that continued motivational strength is affected by students' beliefs about language study and by their attributions for success or failure. She argues that learners' expectancies of success influence their persistence in studying

the language, whereas misperceptions about the rate at which individuals learn a language can have negative effects on students' persistence as those who expect to be fluent in a short period of time will be frustrated when they do not progress as they anticipated.

The literature on motivation has suggested that one way in which motivation affects language learning success is by sustaining the long-term learning process. Motivation involves many interrelated factors, some of which are learner beliefs and teacher beliefs.

3.2 Beliefs in language learning

As Ellis (1994) points out, one of the branches of SLA research has its focus on accounting for different ways in which individual learners learn an L2. The study of the factors of individual differences such as beliefs, therefore, helps to explain why some learners learn more rapidly than others and why they reach higher levels of proficiency. Therefore, beliefs in language learning could be one of the important factors of individual learner differences which affect the process of learning.

3.2.1 The nature of beliefs

With regard to a mechanism of people's cognitive processes, Flavell (1979: 906) argues that the monitoring of a wide variety of cognitive enterprise occurs through the actions of and interactions among four classes of phenomena. They are (a) metacognitive knowledge, (b) metacognitive experiences, (c) goals (or tasks), and (d) actions (or strategies). Flavell (*ibid*) defines metacognitive knowledge (beliefs) as the segment of your (a child's, an adult's) stored world knowledge that has to do with people as

cognitive creatures and with their diverse cognitive tasks, goals, actions, and experiences. He claims that metacognitive knowledge can have a number of important effects on the cognitive activities, and plays a significant role in various domains such as language acquisition.

The terms “knowledge” and “beliefs” are not always easily distinguishable. According to Woods (1996), who attempts to explain the notions of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK), ‘knowledge’ refers to things which are accepted as facts, whereas ‘beliefs’ refers to an acceptance of a proposition about which there is accepted disagreement. Although Woods argues that these notions could be considered as a spectrum of meaning, Pajares (1992), on the other hand, holds a different view. While Pajares discusses the difficulty of pinpointing where knowledge ends and belief begins, he sees that belief is based on evaluation and judgment, and knowledge is based more on objective fact. Calderhead (1996) takes the view that knowledge usually refers to factual propositions and the understandings that inform skillful action, whereas beliefs generally refer to suppositions, commitments, and ideologies. Nespors (1987) suggests that beliefs have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge.

3.2.2 Learner beliefs

In applied linguistics, interest in learner beliefs (or metacognitive knowledge) about second language acquisition (SLA) is fairly recent, emerging from the emphasis on learner autonomy and on learner strategies (Kalaja 1995:191). In the late 70s and early 80s, considering language learning from the learner's point of view aroused researchers' interest as the focus changed from a teacher-centred one to a learner-centred one.

According to Wenden (1999), there are three types of knowledge in second language acquisition: *domain knowledge* in learning which is specific to the particular discipline, *social knowledge* about the environment which is the setting for learning, and *metacognitive knowledge (learner beliefs)* about learning such as the nature of learning, the learning process, and humans as learners. Beliefs are distinct from metacognitive knowledge in that they are value-related and tend to be held more tenaciously (Alexander & Dochy 1995, Wenden 1999a cited in Wenden 1999: 436), although learner beliefs are used interchangeably with metacognitive knowledge. Flavell (1979) claims that metacognitive knowledge consists primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors interact in what ways to affect the outcome of cognitive activities.

The terms ‘metacognitive knowledge’ and ‘metacognitive strategies’ are explained as follows. Metacognitive knowledge refers to *information* learners acquire about their learning, while metacognitive strategies, i.e. planning, monitoring and evaluating, are general *skills* through which learners manage, direct, regulate, and guide their learning (Wenden 1999: 436). Dickinson (1992) describes cognitive strategies as techniques or conscious ways of tackling learning tasks, while metacognitive strategies involve a series of mental operations such as identifying the learning task, selecting and monitoring the cognitive strategy.

Beliefs could be characterised as variable. They could vary from one student to another, and more importantly, they could also vary from context to context (Kalaja 1995: 196). Some beliefs might be shaped by learners’ previous experiences as language learners,

for example, an unsuccessful learning experience could make them think that special abilities are required to learn a foreign language but they do not have these abilities.

Other beliefs could be formed by learners' cultural backgrounds (Horwitz 1987). Learner beliefs are information learners obtain about their learning, and they could be acquired unconsciously through observation and imitation, or consciously with advice about how to learn from teachers, parents, or peers (Wenden 1999). Not only acquisition of learner beliefs but also operation of beliefs is activated unintentionally in an automatic way, or consciously with an effective strategy. In either case, Flavell (1979) suggests that learner beliefs may often influence the process of learning even when the learner is not aware of it. This is supported by the study carried out by Abraham & Vann (1987) which report that beliefs influence student behaviour. Learner beliefs are stable, i.e. learners are capable of developing a consciousness of their beliefs about learning, and talking about it. When learners choose a particular approach to doing a task, it is based on their beliefs about the best way to do it. Strong resistance to a new classroom methodology may also be evidence of learners' beliefs about appropriate roles of both learner and teacher (Wenden 1999).

Rubin (1987: 21) describes a growing importance of paying attention to learners' beliefs by quoting the study of Hosenfeld (1978):

Hosenfeld (1978) hints at what has become an important part of meta-cognition, namely, a student's "mini-theory of second-language". Hosenfeld calls for research about student assumptions, how they develop, how they are influenced by teachers and textbooks, and how they operate.

From a language learning perspective, metacognitive knowledge is regarded as learner beliefs. Wenden (1998: 516) cites the following definitions of metacognitive knowledge: “*In the FL/SL literature, metacognitive knowledge is also referred to as learner beliefs (Horwitz 1987), learners’ naïve psychology of learning (Wenden 1987), learner representations (Holec 1987, Gremmo and Riley 1995), each of these terms pointing to other defining characteristics of this knowledge*”. Horwitz (1988) further defines beliefs as preconceived notions about language learning which will influence a learner’s effectiveness in the classroom. Regarding the origin of learner beliefs, Wenden (1986a) specifies that they are based on experience and the opinions of respected others.

Richards and Lockhart (1994) classify learners’ belief systems into eight categories.

- (1) beliefs about the nature of English: difficult aspects of English, such as grammar, and the status of English in comparison to other languages;
- (2) beliefs about speakers of English: native speakers of English, based on learners’ contacts with speakers of English or derived from other sources, such as the media;
- (3) beliefs about the four language skills: the nature of listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- (4) beliefs about teaching: what constitutes effective or ineffective teaching; specific expectations as to how teachers teach and what their roles and responsibilities are;
- (5) beliefs about language learning: how to learn a language and about the kinds of activities and approaches they believe to be useful;
- (6) beliefs about appropriate classroom behaviour: what constitutes appropriate forms of classroom interaction and classroom behaviour;

(7) beliefs about self: learners' own abilities as language learners, and their own strengths and weaknesses as language learners;

(8) beliefs about goals: very different goals for language learning.

This framework has informed the analytical framework of the present study. The six pre-determined themes are based on this framework as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 A framework of the present study based on Richards and Lockhart (1994)

The pre-determined themes of the present study	The framework of Richards and Lockhart (1994)
Beliefs about learning English	1) beliefs about the nature of English 5) beliefs about language learning
Practice to improve English skills	3) beliefs about the four language skills
Self-concept and attribution	7) beliefs about self
Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK	original conception from my own previous experiences
A role as a teacher of English	4) beliefs about teaching 6) beliefs about appropriate classroom behaviour
A model of English for learners	2) beliefs about speakers of English 8) beliefs about goals

Richards and Lockhart (1994: 52) observe that learners' belief systems cover a wide range of issues and can influence learners' motivation to learn, their expectations about

language learning, their perceptions about what is easy or difficult about a language, as well as the kind of learning strategies they favour. Learner beliefs about learning languages are important aspects of motivation, since the degree to which individuals feel they can accomplish a certain task will largely depend on the beliefs they hold about that task (Jernigan 2001: 24).

When learners have erroneous beliefs about language learning, it is not likely that they will choose appropriate strategies. When Benson and Lor (1999) collected data from interviews with university students in Hong Kong they concluded that *“If learners believe that the best way to learn a foreign language is to memorise its component parts, it is likely that they will hold positive attitudes towards vocabulary and grammar learning and that they will be predisposed to adopt a range of strategies involving analysis, memorisation and practice”* (459). Mantle-Bromley (1995) also conducted an exploratory study with a control group, concluding that misconceptions about language learning may hinder learners’ progress and persistence in language study and sometimes be harmful to their success in the classroom.

Mori (1999) carried out a study with a questionnaire survey to investigate the beliefs of 187 college students in the USA learning Japanese as a foreign language. She describes the nature of learners’ beliefs from various perspectives. Learner beliefs consist of multiple independent dimensions, each of which has unique effects on learning, and the nature of the learning experience could affect the formulation of learner beliefs, for example a rich learning experience could refine them. She supports the correlation between beliefs and achievement. Beliefs in ‘innate ability’ and ‘avoidance of

ambiguity' are associated with lower achievement. If students have beliefs in 'innate ability' and perceive their own ability as uncontrollable, Mori recommends that teachers should make students aware of the possibility of improvement with effort.

With regard to the change in learner beliefs, many researchers report the difficulty of changing beliefs, whereas some researchers warn us that it would be dangerous to assume beliefs to be unchangeable. Kern (1995) conducted a study in the USA which compared students' beliefs about language learning with those of their teachers. He reported that learner beliefs changed very little over the whole semester, and teachers' beliefs were one of many factors that affect students' beliefs. This is supported by the study carried out by Peacock (1998) which attempted to explore the gap between teachers' and learners' beliefs with data collected by questionnaire and interview from 158 EFL students and 30 EFL teachers in a Hong Kong university. He also suggested that we should first note that learner beliefs do not automatically change when learners are merely exposed to new methods (Peacock 1998: 244). Kalaja (1995: 200) describes how beliefs have been characterised as stable, stable, and sometimes correct and sometimes incorrect.

Although many researchers agree on this issue, Peirce (1995, cited in Mori 1999: 407) expresses another opinion saying that "*learner perception may change over time. It is thus risky to assume that students' beliefs are fixed and relatively stable*". Mori (1999) claims that beliefs cannot be easily or quickly modified because they are formed over a long period, but the amount of instruction received could influence learner beliefs since learner beliefs are not just a reflection of general psychological traits that would not be

easily influenced by instruction. With respect to the desirability of the change in learner beliefs, Jernigan (2001) suggested that changes in beliefs may be needed for learners, as misconceptions about language learning can have debilitating effects on learners' persistence.

Jernigan (2001) indicates that learning about the effects of learner beliefs on motivation could help educators to foster continued motivation for language study. Researchers (Peacock 1998, Mori 1999, Benson and Lor 1999) contend that teachers need to know their learners' beliefs and to understand the instructional effects on the development of learner beliefs. It is also advisable for teachers to make course objectives, or the objectives of any activity in the class, clear to learners in order to reduce learners' misunderstanding, dissatisfaction, and opposition. Taking account of learner's beliefs is therefore very significant for both learners and teachers in the class.

Sakui and Gaies (1999) warn us that without complementary sources of data, learners' responses to questionnaires can be easily misinterpreted as evidence of instrument unreliability. They investigated almost 1300 Japanese learners' beliefs about language learning, and used interview data to help them interpret the questionnaire data more accurately. They admit the limits to what can be learned about learners' beliefs from the closed items of questionnaire, and suggest that well-conducted interviews allow learners to reveal beliefs which are not addressed in the questionnaire. Although they consider that they can only make tentative statements about Japanese learners' beliefs from the findings of an exploratory factor analysis, they claim the value of insights gained from investigating learners' beliefs such as some awareness regarding a communicatively

oriented pedagogy.

With regard to an approach to research on learner beliefs, Kalaja (1995) proposes an alternative approach to the most common one. After receiving criticism from some social scientists against the usual research tradition of studying beliefs, it was considered that beliefs could be studied by using more direct methods. Multiple-choice questionnaires could be problematic as they only measure beliefs in theory and do not focus on the contents of learner beliefs. The usual focus has been on the accuracy of measurements and the generalisability of the results collected from typical experimental research methods designed to get indirectly inside the minds of language learners. The focus within an alternative approach could be, however, on what language learners have to say, not think, about language learning through their everyday talk or writing, because beliefs are considered to be socially constructed and dependent on context.

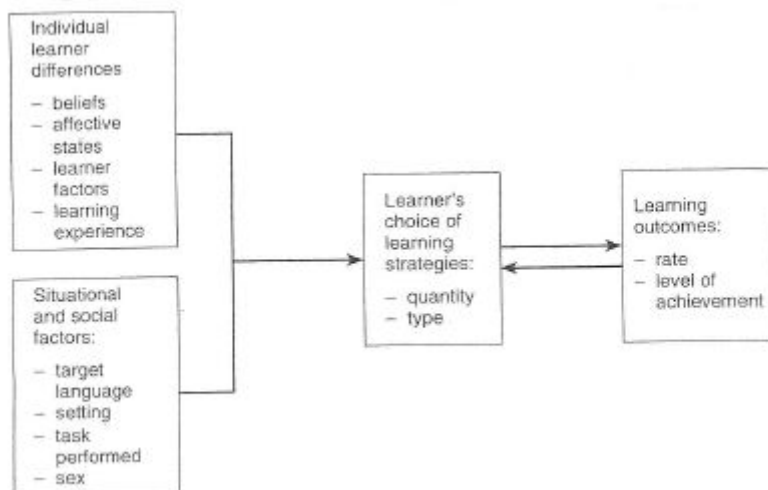
To sum up, although previous studies on learner beliefs attempted to find consistency rather than variability, Kalaja claims that the generalisability of findings should be less of a concern as the goal of research on learner beliefs could be the description of beliefs which are considered to be variable in nature. It is this approach that has influenced the research to be described in the present thesis.

3.2.3 Beliefs on the choice of learning strategies

It is a generally accepted opinion among researchers that beliefs in language learning are related to the area which concerns individual learner differences, such as learner strategies. Ellis (1994) illustrates the relationship between individual learner differences,

situational factors, learning strategies and learning outcomes, with the following figure. Individual learner differences together with various situational factors determine the learner's choice of learning strategies, which then influence two aspects of learning: the rate of acquisition and the level of achievement. The success that learners experience and their level of L2 proficiency can also affect their choice of strategies (Ellis 1994: 529).

Figure 3.1: The relationship between individual learner differences, situational factors, learning strategies and learning outcomes



(Figure 12.1 in Ellis 1994: 530)

Thus, beliefs, which are one of the factors of individual learner differences, are related to strategy use. Ellis claims that learner beliefs about language learning, together with learner factors such as motivation and personal background emerge as important factors in language learning. By the desire to discover the secrets of successful language learners, with the hope of using the information to help less effective learners, research on learner strategies has been motivated (Wenden 1986b: 199).

Rubin (1987) surveyed much of the research carried out in the 70s and found that language learning strategies were divided into two major classes, strategies which contribute directly to language learning (identifying a range of cognitive strategies) and strategies which contribute indirectly to language learning (identifying communication and social strategies). She describes the flow of the work in the following decade as follows:

The work of Wenden (1982, 1986) has added an important new dimension to our understanding of learner strategies, namely, the importance of metacognitive knowledge in second language learning. Wenden identified 5 areas of metaconitive knowledge: (1) the language (2) student proficiency (3) outcome of student's learning endeavors (4) the student's role in the language learning process, and (5) how best to approach the task of language learning. Wenden's research has contributed important insights on metacognition in second language learning, namely, what learners know about their L2 learning (metacognitive knowledge) and how they plan it (a regulatory process).

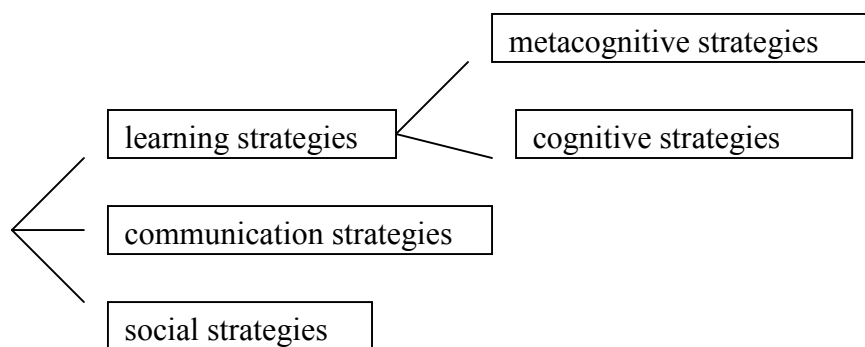
(Rubin 1987: 22)

Chamot and O'Malley (1987) provide the first clear contrast between cognitive and metacognitive strategies. It was anticipated that more work would be carried out in order to clarify the nature of the interaction between metacognitive beliefs and knowledge, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and student achievement.

According to Rubin (1987:23), there are three kinds of strategies which have been identified which contribute directly or indirectly to language learning: learning

strategies, communication strategies, and social strategies. Among those three strategies, the main focus of my research has been on learning strategies. Rubin defines learning strategies as strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and which affect learning directly.

Figure 3.2: Three kinds of strategies



Two major kinds of learning strategies were recognised, i.e. metacognitive and cognitive strategies (Figure 3.2). Rubin (1987) explains metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the view of O'Malley et al. (1983) as follows:

metacognitive refers to: (1) knowledge about cognitive processes, and (2) regulation of cognition or executive control or self-management through such processes as planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Cognitive strategies refer to the steps or operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. Cognition consists of those processes of strategies through which an individual obtains knowledge or conceptual understanding.

(Rubin 1987: 23)

Rubin cited the conclusion of O'Malley et al.: "*Students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction and ability to review their progress, accomplishments, and future learning directions*" (*ibid*).

With respect to the role of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, Flavell (1979: 909) claims that "Cognitive strategies are invoked to *make* cognitive progress, metacognitive strategies to *monitor* it". He also suggests that "your store of metacognitive knowledge is apt to contain knowledge of metacognitive strategies as well as of cognitive ones" (*ibid*). Metacognitive knowledge - learner beliefs - appears to have a great impact on metacognitive strategies. There are more studies which investigated the relation between learners' beliefs and their learning strategies.

Wenden (1982,1986 cited in Rubin 1987: 25) examined how learners regulate their learning by planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning activities and focused on what learners know about various aspects of their language learning and how this influences their choice of strategies. The results show that students assess their needs and preferences and choose what they want to learn and how they should learn a language. This choice may be dependent upon the student's beliefs of how language is to be learned (Hosenfeld 1978, Wenden 1986 cited in Rubin 1987).

Yang (1999) investigated the relationship between students' beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies. The results showed a cyclical relationship between learner's beliefs and strategy use. The same results were indicated in Victori's

(1999) study, which investigated the relationship between the metacognitive knowledge of the students and the strategies they deployed. Yang contends that “*Second language instruction as well as strategy training programs should attend to students’ beliefs about second language learning...By encouraging appropriate beliefs, teachers may enhance effective use of learning strategies and, therefore, further contribute to students’ continuing motivation to learn a second language*”(Yang 1999: 533). These studies indicate the strong relationship between students’ beliefs and their use of learning strategies.

Piper (1994) researched learning strategies and found some evidence for the development of learning strategies over a period of time. It is conceivable that metacognitive strategies will develop along with proficiency (O’Malley et al. 1985 cited in Piper 1994). O’Malley & Chamot suggest that “learning strategies...have the potential to influence learning outcomes in a positive manner” (1990 cited in Piper 1994).

Abraham and Vann (1987) conducted a study which surveyed the different strategies used by a successful learner and a less successful learner. From the data on subjects’ use of strategies, Abraham and Vann found differences in the use of strategies between the two subjects. The successful learner used a greater variety of strategies, while the less successful learner used the same strategy for all tasks. In addition to the difference of their use of strategies, Abraham and Vann found that the two subjects had different language learning philosophies, that is, different beliefs. The successful learner appeared to take a broad view and had a belief that language learning requires attention

to both function and form, whereas the less successful learner's view was relatively limited and he appeared to think of language primarily as a set of words. Abraham and Vann contend that learners' beliefs guide their strategies, which influence the degree of success learners achieve. Victori (1999) carried out a small scale investigation with 4 subjects, two of whom were successful and two of whom were less successful students. She also found that the less successful students' metacognitive knowledge was limited and inadequate, while successful students had a more appropriate metacognitive knowledge.

Surveying these studies which investigate the relationships between learner beliefs and learners' strategies enables us to see the importance of learner beliefs in language learning, which affect the choice of learners' strategies. As further investigation of whether certain beliefs are peculiar to some learners, or an examination of possible relationships between learner beliefs and their practice to improve English skills would appear to be warranted, I attempt to explore learners' beliefs about learning English in this thesis.

3.2.4 Teacher beliefs

While much of the early research on L2 learners claimed that classroom learning would proceed most smoothly if teachers stopped interfering in the learning process, researchers have increasingly noticed the effects that a form of instruction has on L2 acquisition (Ellis 2008). In order to improve the efficacy of language pedagogy, we need to consider a role of teachers and their beliefs about language learning as they have a great impact on language learners. Research on teacher beliefs has grown rapidly since

the early 1970s. It is concerned with how teachers understand their work, and has focused on investigating the beliefs that lie behind the practice of teaching (Calderhead 1996).

Pajares (1992) argues that the investigation of teacher beliefs is a necessary and valuable avenue of educational enquiry, and suggests a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices. Beliefs about teaching include ideas about what it takes to be an effective teacher and how students ought to behave. Ernest (1989) found that the powerful effect of beliefs was more useful than knowledge in understanding and predicting how teachers made decisions.

The measurement of beliefs in teaching has changed considerably, which reflects the paradigmatic shift from a positivist approach to a more hermeneutic approach (Doyle 1990). In the 1950s, most research on the relationship between teacher beliefs and behaviours was conducted using large scale multiple-choice attitude surveys. Until the late 1980s, the relationship between teacher belief and teaching practice was usually investigated using experimental studies, in which there was a clear sense of cause (beliefs) and effect (classroom behaviours). By the 1990s, however, research on teacher beliefs tended to use qualitative methodology within the hermeneutic tradition, in order to understand how teachers make sense of the classroom, and interviews and observations were the two most widely employed data gathering techniques in this research (Richardson 1996). The paradigmatic shift was partly because it was realised that multiple-choice measures often did not validly represent teachers' beliefs, whereas

qualitative methodologies could provide a deeper understanding of the nature of teachers' thinking. In order to investigate a complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd (1991) demonstrated that teachers' beliefs related to their classroom practices, and that changes in beliefs preceded changes in practices.

It is argued that teachers' belief systems are built up gradually and serve as the background of teachers' decision making and action. Beliefs about teaching, for example, appear to be well established by the time a student gets to college (Weinstein 1989). Teachers' beliefs have a greater influence than their knowledge on the way they plan their lessons, on the kinds of decisions they make and on their general classroom practice (Pajares 1992). Research on teachers' belief systems suggests that they are derived from a number of different sources (Kindsvatter, Willen, and Isher 1988). Richards and Lockhart (1994) provide six sources of teachers' beliefs.

- (1) Their own experience as language learners.
- (2) Experience of what works best.
- (3) Established practice.
- (4) Personality factors.
- (5) Educationally based or research-based principles.
- (6) Principles derived from an approach or method.

The present research has sought to investigate whether these sources apply to specific subgroups of language learners.

Richards and Lockhart classified teachers' beliefs into five categories; (1) Beliefs about

English, (2)Beliefs about learning, (3)Beliefs about teaching, (4)Beliefs about the program and the curriculum, and (5)Beliefs about language teaching as a profession. This classification appears to be more specific than that of Williams and Burden.

Williams and Burden (1997: 56-64) classified teachers' beliefs into three categories; (1)Beliefs about learners, (2)Beliefs about learning, (3)Beliefs about themselves. As this classification is more fundamental, I will look at their statements.

(1) Beliefs about learners

Teachers may hold the beliefs about their learners, which reflect individual teachers' views of the world and impinge on their classroom practice (Meighan and Meighan 1990). Meighan suggests that learners may be construed metaphorically as: resisters; receptacles; raw materials; clients; partners; individual explores; democratic explorers. These constructs reflect the nature of the teacher-learner power relationship. The first three constructs are heavily teacher dominated while the latter constructs involve increasingly active learner participation.

(2) Beliefs about learning

Beliefs about what is involved in learning will influence the way in which teachers teach, and are inseparably linked to their beliefs about learners. Effective teaching can be realised only when teachers have a correct understanding of what is learning and what that learning is for. Teachers' beliefs about learning therefore can be assumed to have an influence upon learning outcomes achieved by learners.

(3) Beliefs about themselves

Teachers' views of themselves as persons and their beliefs about their relationship with their learners can influence the way in which they teach. Teachers' views of

teaching mirrors their view of themselves, and their teaching behaviour reflects their essence as a person. Teaching is an expression of values and attitudes, not just information or knowledge.

Williams and Burden (1997) claim that teachers' beliefs contain more significant factors than teachers' behaviour when we answer to the question of what makes a good teacher. How teachers view themselves, as well as teachers' beliefs about their students, can affect their teaching practices, and what they think learning is also has an impact on their lessons. Research by Nespor (1987) also shows the important effect of teachers' beliefs on their general classroom practices. With regard to teachers' beliefs change, Tillema (1998) reported that changes in beliefs occurred, although not in the same manner for each participant. Teachers' beliefs together with their changes are investigated in this thesis.

Borg (2006) argues that teacher cognition research has provided evidence of the way in which teachers' beliefs and knowledge influence what teachers do in the classroom. He collectively refers to the various psychological constructs such as beliefs, knowledge, attitudes conceptions as teacher cognition. Borg emphasises a causal link between teacher cognition, classroom practice and learning, because teachers' cognition can change their practice and these changes can improve student learning.

Schulz (1996) investigated student and teacher beliefs regarding the values of explicit grammar instruction and error correction in foreign or second language classrooms. The findings are of interest from three perspectives. The first finding is that students hold the

generally favourable attitudes toward explicit grammar instruction, compared with teachers. The second one is the disagreement found among foreign language teachers regarding the role of explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback. The third finding is discrepancies between student and teacher opinions regarding how foreign languages are learned. Schulz (1996: 343) recommends that in order to establish pedagogical credibility and increase their students' commitment to and involvement in learning, teachers make an effort to explore students' beliefs about language learning and to establish a fit between their own and their students' expectations. Mismatches in teacher and student beliefs can cause negative effects on instructional outcomes and result in students' frustration and lack of motivation as Schulz argues.

Learners' misconceptions about learning could also be modified by teachers. When some students have an overoptimistic view to become a fluent speaker, teachers could help them to have realistic expectations for their language development by presenting specific course objectives. Teachers could diminish students' frustration by listening closely to the students, by identifying mismatches in beliefs.

Nunan (1988) conducted a study to investigate ten of the most and least popular learning activities among students and teachers. He asked the teachers to complete a questionnaire which required them to rate activities according to their degree of importance. The results indicate that almost all activities had mismatched ratings between the students and the teachers. Teachers rated 'communicative' activities highly, and learners 'traditional' activities. Nunan suggests that the differences between learners and teachers could be accounted for in terms of the sociocultural background and

previous learning experiences of the learners, and the influence on teachers of recent directions in communicative language learning and teaching. Such differences are likely to influence the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

Peacock (1998) replicated and extended Nunan's (1988) research. A questionnaire was conducted to 158 students and 30 teachers in the City University of Hong Kong. A five-minute semi-structured interview was held to gather qualitative data to back up and assist interpretation of the quantitative data from a questionnaire. The results show a similarity to that of Nunan's study and other empirical studies, that is, teachers favour 'communicative' activities such as group work, and learners favour 'traditional' activities such as grammar exercises. Peacock (1998: 243-245) asked three important questions to teachers, and many valuable comments were made by teachers interviewed:

(1) Why did the differences of opinion occur?

- native speaker teachers are uncomfortable with the idea of teaching grammar
- students feel they can't measure their own performance in group work
- error correction and grammar exercises have an immediate effect visible to students.

(2) Do the differences affect learning?

- certainly - motivation decreases - students and teachers are going in different directions
- with group work, students are not motivated and might see it as a waste of time, may not involve themselves, might learn less
- it definitely can slow down their learning...students want grammar, but don't get

it, they can feel frustrated. It can affect their sense of achievement, even make them angry.

(3) How can the differences be eliminated?

- make course objectives clear to students...keep records of students' progress during less popular activities
- correct errors and give more personal attention during group work
- it's very important to tell students the reason for doing the activity, for example group work ...why they have to do it and how.

These are comments made by teachers interviewed, but researchers also provide suggestions. Christison & Krahnke (1986 cited in Peacock 1998: 243) observe that learners resist interactive learning because it threatens egos and has few immediate benefits. As the gap between students and teachers can cause learners' frustration and teachers' dissatisfaction, Horwitz (1988), Wenden (1986), and Kern (1995) all propose that teachers should explain the rationale of activities in the class in order to reduce the gap between learner and teacher beliefs. Riley (1996 cited in Cotterall 1999) also claims that what learners believe will influence their learning much more than what teachers believe, because it is their beliefs that affect their motivations, attitudes and learning procedures, and if there is misfit between learners' beliefs and the beliefs in the instructional structure, there will be friction or dysfunction.

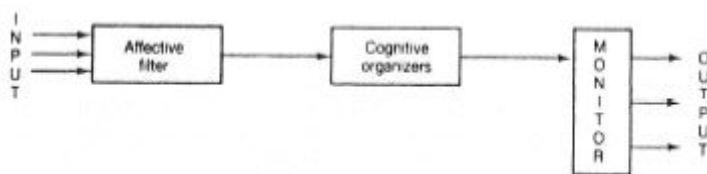
In order to bridge the gap, Nunan (1989:186) contends that teachers should be as explicit as possible about the goals and objectives of their courses, and if there are mismatches between the expectations of the learners and the official curriculum, these

should be resolved through consultation and negotiation. Another suggestion was offered by the study of Matsumoto (1996) which investigated learning strategies, learner beliefs, and attitudes of Japanese college students. She argues that encouraging learners to reflect upon classroom learning through retrospection will help bridge the gap between a learner and a teacher. It is considered that knowing students' beliefs is the first step to narrow the gap between learners' beliefs and teachers' beliefs, and it would eventually lead to successful instruction.

3.3 Good language learners

Model-making in second language learning has been a growth area. With regard to the usefulness for individual difference research, Skehan (1989) expresses the view about the 'Monitor' model proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982 cited in Skehan 1989) and the 'Good Language Learner' model proposed by Naiman, Frohlich, Todesco, and Stern (1978 cited in Skehan 1989).

Figure 3.3: 'Monitor' model



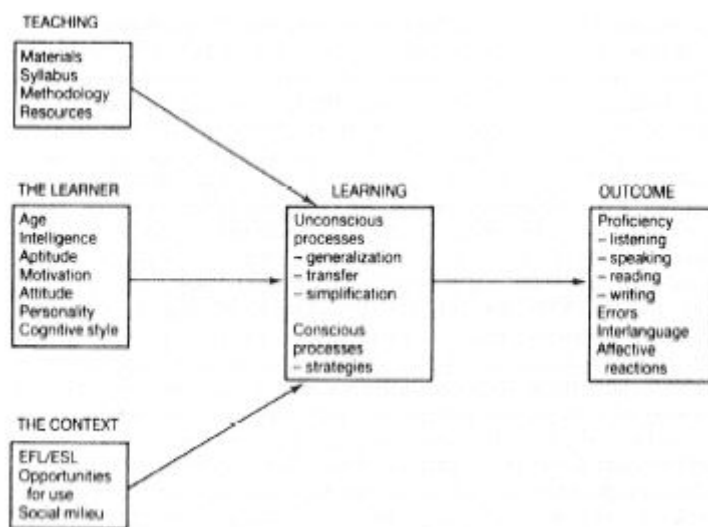
(Figure 1.1 in Skehan 1989: 2)

According to Skehan (1989), the 'Monitor' model proposes three general areas where variation is important: Input, Affective filter, and Monitor. Progress in language learning is seen to be a result of the amount of Input, and then Affective filter could be raised or

lowered according to the learner's openness or lack of anxiety, and finally there are Monitor 'over-users' whose constant striving for correctness inhibits output or Monitor 'under-users' whose lack of concern with correctness leads to talkative but less grammatical performance. Although several components in this model could be the source of individual differences, the central component, the Cognitive organisers where actual acquisition takes place, follow universal processes with no room for individual differences. Hence it is assumed that all learners will process the data in the same way and at the same speed if equal input is given. Skehan criticises this model since individual differences become trivial.

Concerning the 'Good Language Learner' model, Skehan (1989) points out three advantages. First, it gives us an overview of various influences on language learning success. Secondly, it encourages us to quantify the different influences, that is to say, it suggests how strongly each factor affects the outcome of language learning. Finally, this model provides the idea of interaction effects of each factor. For example, when personality and methodology interact, a learner with a certain personality might do poorly when exposed to the inappropriate methodology. Skehan suggests that this model seems more appropriate than 'Monitor' model as a guiding framework for individual difference (ID) research.

Figure 3.4: ‘Good Language Learner’ model



(Figure 1.2 in Skehan 1989: 4)

Defining a good language learner is problematic. The learner who is fluent in terms of communication, especially in the spoken language, is not necessarily grammatically proficient at a formal level or good at producing written work. The opposite also holds true. Krashen (1981) indicates that a learner who is overly concerned with grammatical accuracy may hesitate to communicate and have a lack of fluency. On the other hand, if language learning is developed mainly through language use for communicative purposes without great attention to grammatical accuracy, there can be some disadvantages such as producing consistently inaccurate grammatical forms of the language, although the learner may be relatively successful in communication. Tarone and Yule (1989) suggest that the long-term effects of such a learning experience can undermine language proficiency. According to Ridley (1997), good language learners give an essentially balanced picture, i.e. they pay close attention to the system of the

language as well as enjoying communication with others in the target language. In other words, they develop grammatical competence and also sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. This is an issue which will be examined further in the course of the present study.

Although defining a good language learner is difficult, it seems that some learners progress rapidly while others struggle with slow progress. It appears that there are some individual factors which might affect the process of second language learning. Among several researchers who attempted to categorise individual factors, Lightbown and Spada (1999), for example, classified individual factors into seven groups; intelligence, aptitude, personality, motivation and attitudes, learner preferences, learner beliefs, age of acquisition. In order to explore the possible factors which may well affect the process of successful and unsuccessful language learning in the present study, each factor is reviewed here.

(1) Intelligence

The term 'intelligence' has traditionally been used to refer to performance on certain kinds of tests. Some research has shown that the scores of intelligence tests were related to certain kinds of second language abilities, whereas it was unrelated to other kinds of abilities. For example, although intelligence measured by the scores of IQ tests may be a strong factor for language analysis and rule learning, it may have less effect on communication ability. It is difficult to measure intelligence since individuals have many kinds of abilities and strengths which cannot be measured.

(2) Aptitude

There are several aptitude factors such as analytic ability, strong memory, and the

ability to learn quickly. Successful language learners may not be strong in all factors of aptitude. It is reported by some research that an instructional programme focused on learners' aptitudes was more effective at developing proficiency, for example, a programme of grammatical structures for learners with high analytic ability. It is also reported that both students and teachers attained a high level of satisfaction when the programme was compatible with students' aptitudes.

(3) Personality

Personality characteristics include extroversion, self-esteem, empathy, dominance, talkativeness, and responsiveness. Although these personality traits have been studied with regard to second language acquisition, a clearly defined relationship has not been shown. One reason for this may well be the difficulty in investigating personality characteristics, since identification and measurement of these are hard to pin down. Therefore the results of these studies have not reached a consensus, partly because comparisons are made between studies that measure communicative ability and studies that measure grammatical accuracy, and also because what contributes to second language learning is not personality alone, but a combination with other factors. Personality variables may be a major factor only in the acquisition of conversational skills, not necessarily in literacy skills.

(4) Motivation and attitudes

Although there has been a great deal of research on the role of attitudes and motivation in second language learning, and most findings show positive effects on successful learning, research has not been able to indicate precisely how motivation is related to successful learning. It seems also questionable whether motivation affects the successful learning or successful experience increases motivation.

(5) Learner preferences

The term 'learning style' has usually been used to describe learner preferences for how they grapple with learning. Perceptually based learning styles include 'visual' learners who can learn something through seeing it, 'aural' learners who need to hear something for learning, and 'kinaesthetic' learners who need a physical action in the learning process. A cognitive learning style distinction is drawn between 'field independent' where an individual tends to separate details from the general background, and 'field dependent' where an individual is inclined to see things more holistically. Although many instruments of learning style assessment have been developed, very few findings have shown any interaction between different learning styles and success in second language acquisition.

(6) Learner beliefs

Even though little work has been done in the area of learner beliefs, some research indicates that learner beliefs can be strong mediating factors in the process of learning. As learners usually have beliefs about language learning and/or effective instruction, if there is a gap between their beliefs and the type of instruction they are receiving, much dissatisfaction can be created among the learners, which may negatively affect their progress. Learners' preference for learning, which normally stems from their beliefs about how languages are learned or their learning style, will influence the kinds of strategies they choose for their learning.

(7) Age of acquisition

Age is one obvious characteristic of learners, and is easier to define and measure compared to other characteristics such as personality, aptitude, or motivation. However, any relationship between ages of learners and their success is unclear. The

Critical Period Hypothesis suggests that there is a predisposal time for language acquisition, which is supposed to be younger than the age of puberty, and that older learners depend on more general learning abilities instead of the innate biological structures believed to contribute to first or second language acquisition in early childhood. Although quite a few researchers argue that language learning after the critical period is not as successful as learning with innate capacities in earlier age, the Critical Period Hypothesis has been challenged recently by some studies which claim that older learners are more efficient than younger learners at least in the early stages of second language development. One noteworthy tendency is that there were few individual differences in second language ability if learning was started in early age, whereas it varies greatly in ultimate attainment among older learners. Older learners can achieve high, if not 'native-like', levels of proficiency in second language learning. We should keep in mind whether the goals of language learning is to become 'native-like' or to attain basic communicative ability, because early intensive exposure to the second language may cause incomplete development of the child's first language. Considering that the goal of language learning in a school setting is usually to acquire basic communicative ability, it may not be advisable to begin second language teaching at too young an age. Although it is often said that older learners may well speak with an accent, we could argue that it is because they want to continue being identified with their first language culture group. The learners' age is one of the characteristics which affect approaches to second language learning, but it might interact with other characteristics, such as intelligence, aptitude, personality and motivation.

Investigating these individual learner variables is not easy, partly because of the lack of clear definitions and methods for measuring the individual characteristics, and also because learner characteristics are not independent of one another but interact in complex ways. Some of these individual factors together with other factors are investigated in the present study to explore the issues relating to learning a language.

Tarone & Yule (1989) claim that there are two domains which could influence the learning process: the 'affective domain' and the 'knowledge domain'. The 'affective domain' includes concepts such as attitude, motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. With regard to motivation for good language learning, Ushioda (2008) points out two key principles for the maintenance of motivation: first, motivation must arise from the learner, rather than be externally regulated by the teacher; second, learners must see themselves as agents of developing their motivation. Self-confidence or self-esteem is regarded as having an effect on successful learning, because it is a crucial factor in the learner's ability to overcome occasional stumbles in the process of learning a second language (Tarone & Yule 1989). They suggest that self-esteem prevents learners from thinking that making errors is foolish, and helps them to 'reach out beyond themselves,' whereas the lack of self-esteem could be an inhibiting factor for the language learning process. In order to become autonomous learners, they need methodological and psychological preparation, i.e. facility in the use of strategies, including the skills of self-directed learning and the self-confidence and willingness necessary to take on the challenges of autonomous learning (Holec 1981 cited in Wenden 1995: 192).

When conducting research into the influence of learner characteristics on second

language learning, researchers usually try to find a correlation between two variables, for example, motivation and success in language learning. Although this method may seem a valid one, Lightbown and Spada (1999: 51) point out possible difficulties. The first problem is that it is not possible to directly observe and measure qualities such as motivation, extroversion, or even intelligence. These are just labels for an entire range of behaviours and characteristics. Another problem they argue is that, because of the dependent nature of learner characteristics, different researchers have often used the same labels to describe them. For example, although one of the most popular questions in motivation questionnaires concerns opportunities for using the second language with native speakers, it is usually impossible to separate two factors, namely willingness to interact and opportunities to interact. It might be the opportunity which makes learners successful, rather than willingness, which is often associated with motivation.

One other factor which makes it difficult to understand the relationships between learner characteristics concerns the definition and measurement of language proficiency. Some research reports that highly motivated learners are likely to be successful language learners, while other research claims that highly motivated learners do not get better scores on a proficiency test. These conflicting findings can be explained by the fact that language proficiency tests do not measure the same kind of knowledge. If proficiency tests measure oral communication skills, highly motivated learners in informal language learning contexts may be more successful, but this does not seem to be the case when proficiency tests measure metalinguistic knowledge. Therefore, motivation to learn something of a second language may be related to certain aspects of successful language learning but not all.

Furthermore, interpreting the correlation between two factors is problematic, because it is difficult to define which of two factors, e.g. success and motivation, is the cause of the other. The two factors could be influenced by other factors. It seems important to keep the complex nature of learner characteristics in mind when we explore the possible factors for successful language learning.

With respect to learner beliefs and good language learners, White (2008) suggests that the focus of research has moved from identifying beliefs to a recognition of the complexity of beliefs and the way they may work in particular circumstances. White claims that our understandings of good language learners need to include a view that beliefs are constructed in everyday contexts, modified in different social contexts available for learning and using a language.

Cultural differences could be one of the factors we should keep in mind when exploring the issues about good language learners. According to Gardner (1985), success in learning a foreign language will be influenced particularly by attitudes towards the community of speakers of that language. In Gardner's distinction between integrative and instrumental orientations in motivation, an integrative orientation is considered to occur when the learner is studying a language because of a wish to identify with the culture of speakers of that language. High-level language users notice the cross-cultural differences on their own without depending on a teacher, native speaker, or book. They develop good observational skills, which is a must in reaching high levels of proficiency (Leaver 2003a cited in Leaver et al. 2005).

With respect to culturally influenced communication patterns, Rinnert (1995) focuses on differences in conversational style between English and Japanese. One of them is a cultural difference in attitude towards silence. While silence is highly valued by Japanese who have been influenced by Confucian or Buddhist where mediation and reflection are important, silence in conversation is seen as failure by English speakers, and consequently English speakers may be given the impression that Japanese speakers are quiet, shy, passive, nonassertive, and lacking in confidence. Such an apparent lack of self-confidence could make English speakers think that Japanese speakers are incompetent. In contrast, Rinnert suggests that English speakers could be seen as nonreflective, superficial, insensitive, and aggressive. In order to avoid these misunderstandings, Rinnert suggests that Japanese learners of English may find it advantageous to learn ways to fill pauses and respond more quickly to questions, and conversely, English speaking learners of Japanese may benefit from learning to pause and reflect before responding to questions in Japanese.

Dougill (1995: 70) suggests that the grammar-translation and memorisation methods so popular in Japan are evidence of the tradition of insularity, for they reflect the one-way importation of knowledge and information which characterised Japan's desire for modernisation while retaining its own identity. Given the current situation in which Japan is the second biggest economy in the world and intercultural interaction is a daily fact of life, Dougill claims that the grammar-translation and memorisation methods no longer correspond to present needs. Contrary to his argument, however, Purdie and Hattie (1996) report the Japanese students' perception about memorisation, and suggest

the positive aspect of memorisation to the academic achievement. This is an issue which will be explained further in the present study.

Purdie and Hattie (1996) conducted a study that compared the strategies for self-regulated learning used by three different cultural groups of learners: Australian students, Japanese students at school in Japan, and Japanese students studying in Australian schools. The results show that the pattern of strategy use for each cultural group varied which was also associated with academic achievement. The Japanese students used memory strategies significantly more than did the Australian students. Memorisation was the strategy rated by the Japanese students as being the most important in their learning, which is considered to stem from the traditional Japanese view that repetition for rote memorisation is sometimes more important than being taught by others. Furthermore, Purdie and Hattie report that the Japanese students maintained the importance of memorisation as a learning behaviour even after they were exposed to a Western educational system in Australia. Although this appears to be the impact of culture on learning, i.e. a stereotypical view of the Japanese student as a rote learner, the emphasis on memorisation seems not to be detrimental to the academic achievement of Japanese students as there were no differences among high, medium, and low achievers in their use of memorisation strategies. Many of the Japanese students indicated that they were not only memorising information but also trying to understand it. Purdie and Hattie argue that, in agreement with social cognitive theory, the importance of context for strategic learning has been proved. Therefore, situational adjustment of the use of learning strategies allows students to become self-regulating in learning.

Regarding the attitudes towards culture in language learning, Nakata (1995: 176) suggests that the ideal model for SLA may not be complete accommodation to the target culture, but rather the development of an international outlook that allows the learner to see the strength and weakness of both the target culture and his or her own culture. His assumption is that there may be internationalists among Japanese learners of English who have a critical point of view towards the L1 and the L2 cultures, and do not assimilate the target culture nor forsake their L1 identity. In his study, there were three groups of learners: learners with the most favourable attitudes towards American issue, towards international issue, and towards Japanese issue. The results of his study show no significant difference among the three groups regarding the cultural learning experiences' effect on learners' attitudes, probably because of the small sample size. This is another issue that will be examined in the present study.

Contrary to Nakata's results, the study conducted by Morris (2001:58) suggests that attitudes toward language learning and toward speakers of the target language can improve by allowing learners to negotiate meaning with target language speakers and by understanding the communicative and cultural contexts in which language is used. Morris administered the survey with the participants of 54 university students in the USA who were studying Spanish. Morris's study demonstrates that face-to-face contact with local native-Spanish speakers had a positive effect on the participants' motivation and attitudes toward learning Spanish and toward Spanish speakers and their culture (*ibid*). In foreign language learning, teachers often spend time teaching about the culture expecting students to become curious and motivated to learn the language. It sometimes

happens, however, that a positive change of motivation and attitudes does not occur. On the contrary, students often develop negative attitudes about the language learning and the target language culture. Morris interprets this contradictory consequence as follows. If students are being exposed to culture through the eyes of a language teacher which might be too constructed, culture could be something to be learned for students. Accordingly, firsthand contacts with places and peoples in the target language community could be a motivator which enhances an attitudinal change towards successful language learning.

Although a number of studies emphasise the role of a particular culture to motivate language learners, Mercer (2009) carried out the study which investigated tertiary-level, advanced EFL learners, and found that nine of the 12 learners did not appear to be driven by usual motivational drivers related to the social and cultural dimensions of language learning. Rather, these learners appeared to be motivated by the linguistic system of English in which they liked the sound and flow of the language itself. Mercer accentuates the importance of accepting the variety and individuality across learner motivation and attitudes since some learners may approach to language learning in more linguistic terms with a passion and love of a particular language as a system, at least possibly for advanced learners. This issue will be examined further in the present study.

As the number of study abroad programmes has continued to increase, and the interest in research on language learning in these contexts is developing, there has been considerable research on study abroad and its effect on second language acquisition in the last two decades. Although a large number of language learners desire to study

abroad, and they expect to acquire language proficiency only by living in a country where the language is used, Isabelli-García (2006: 231) states that studies which examine learners' attitude, motivation and behaviour in the host environment and link these factors to linguistic development can show that learners may not magically become fluent speakers simply by being surrounded by the target language. According to Isabelli- García, research has shown that immersion in the target culture is valuable to language learners, and that the amount of contact with native speakers is an important factor in the acquisition of sociolinguistic and sociocultural knowledge.

Isabelli- García conducted her study abroad research which explored how differences in motivation and attitudes towards the host culture of four American students studying Spanish in Argentina for five months can affect social interaction with native speakers. The study illustrates that although all learners felt frustrated during the study abroad programme, the way in which each learner dealt with these situations was different. The study also shows that the unwillingness to interact and create social networks with native speakers stemmed from the learners' motivational and attitudinal deficits and conversely the learners' continued motivation was influenced by their success or lack in incorporating themselves into social networks, and that the learners' cultural awareness or acculturation plays an important role in the study abroad context.

In the qualitative investigation into the study abroad classroom experiences of Japanese high school learners of English, Churchill (2006) suggests that some classroom experiences in the study abroad programme such as written activities in which students are expected to work on their own may increase distance between students and the host

culture, and claims the importance of interaction with native speakers.

Hassall (2006) carried out a study of the acquisition of the speech act of leave-taking in a three-month study abroad context in Indonesia which investigated one learner, i.e. himself. The study identified several important factors in the process of acquisition: conscious noticing of input, the strategies of pre-planning and post-evaluation, and affective factors such as motivation and aversion. He also reports his experience of the learning of pragmatics during study abroad through the informal exposure to the target language environment, although he observes that learners during study abroad often do not interact much with native speakers. This study suggests that paying close attention to the use of a target language during study abroad may well make a big difference.

In a study abroad setting, where many opportunities exist to interact with native speakers, McMeekin (2006: 177) argues that negotiation is not only a part of successful communication but also plays an important role in facilitating second language acquisition (SLA) because negotiation is considered to maximise three conditions necessary for SLA: (a) exposure to comprehensible input, (b) opportunities of output modification, and (c) focus on form. The participants in her study were five native speakers of English studying Japanese in the Japanese study abroad classroom and host family setting, their Japanese teachers, and their host family members. The study examined the negotiations between these participants in two study abroad settings, the classroom and the host family. Findings show that students engaged in more negotiations in the host family than in the classroom, and host family negotiations appear to provide more comprehensible input while those in the classroom offer more

opportunities for modification of output, and focus on form in both settings. Thus, McMeekin claims that a combination of in- and out-of-class interaction with native speakers in a study abroad environment would provide students with maximum opportunities for exposure towards learning a language. This finding suggests the possibility that a harmonious balance of comprehensible input and modification of output is likely to develop proficiency in the use of language.

The possible factors which may well affect the process of successful and unsuccessful language learning have been reviewed in this section. These factors are considered when the present study explores learner beliefs and their practices in learning English.

3.4 World Englishes and native-like English

Crystal (2003: 59-61) describes the status quo of English in the world citing the model suggested by the US linguist Braj Kachru, who claims that the spread of English to the world may be analysed as three concentric circles: the inner circle, the outer or extended circle and the expanding circle. The inner circle refers to the countries where English is the primary language. In the outer or extended circle, the language plays an important 'second language' role in a multilingual setting. The expanding circle involves the nations where English is recognised as an international language and is taught as a foreign language.

Tupas (2001) points out that the studies on World Englishes are usually based on several assumptions. One of them is that institutionalised Englishes are linguistically and sociolinguistically equal with old varieties of English, such as American English and

British English. In reality, however, World Englishes are played out across structures and determinations of inequality (Tupas 2001: 93). According to Norrish (2008), in the past, the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has been rather disapproved of by teachers of English. The preferred model was perceived 'Standard' English. Nowadays English is used internationally and ELF has gradually developed. An obstacle, however, to the ELF approach to the development of a 'non-standard' variety is the opinion expressed by many learners that they wish to learn a native-speaker version of the language (Norrish 2008: 5).

However, as pointed out by Crystal (2003), English is used in various settings in the world. In fact, when English becomes an international language, it can be used mainly among L2 speakers of English, often with no native speakers present at all (Jenkins 2003: 80-81). In such a situation, English cannot be limited only to American or British culture, and it could be the means of expression of the speaker's culture. Crystal (2003: 145) discusses the future of global English, indicating that international varieties express national identities. Accordingly, non-native speakers of English should have their own identities when they use English. Thus, World Englishes are defined here as varieties of English used as a means of international communication and characterised by some features or accents of local varieties of English.

As English is taught as a foreign language in Japan, I would like to focus on the issues of the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), rather than the teaching of English as a second language (ESL). Graddol (2006) criticises that EFL emphasises the importance of 'native speaker language behaviour' and 'learning about the culture and

society of native speakers'. The learner "struggles to attain acceptance by the target community" and the learner is required "to respect the superior authority of native speakers" (Graddol 2006: 83), although there is a growing awareness that the 'ownership of English' has moved away from native speakers towards an international community of non-native speakers (Norrish, 2008). In the countries where English is taught as a foreign language, learners study English as a timetabled subject at school and they need to acquire grammatical accuracy and native-speaker-like pronunciation. If learners are measured against the standard of a native speaker, they will be regarded as failures however proficient they become as Graddol points out. With regard to the ultimate goal of learning a language, however, Yashima (2009: 159) claims that learning another language should help us to change the way we relate to the world as well as how we conceptualise ourselves.

Crystal (2003) suggests that a language is always changing especially when a language moves to becoming a global language. As English is spreading around the world, people in some countries may not want to use English in the same way that native speakers do. If English is becoming a global language, Crystal (2003: 2) argues that "nobody owns it any more" or rather, "everyone who has learned it now owns it". Swales (1993) also claims that there is almost no difference between native and non-native speakers.

In spite of the argument of Crystal and Swales, Canagarajah (1999) suggests that the current situation of teaching English is that the notion of a native speaker's being the ideal teacher of English is prevalent. Canagarajah points out, however, the pedagogical and linguistic strengths of non-native speaker teachers, since language teaching is an art,

a science, and a skill that requires complex pedagogical preparation and practice. Therefore, not all speakers may make good teachers of their first language (Canagarajah 1999: 80). Speakers with multilingual competence could develop a deeper metalinguistic knowledge and more complex language awareness, and could be more effective teachers of the language than native speakers.

Kirkpatrick (2007) also describes the situation where a native speaker model of English may disadvantage local teachers as the choice of the model is associated with native speaker teachers. According to Kirkpatrick, however, most outer and expanding circle countries have made the choice of native speaker model. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, native speaker models have prestige and legitimacy, and they have codified, which means that grammars and dictionaries are available. Secondly, English language teaching materials based on native speaker models are readily available. Thirdly, Ministries of Education around the world attempt to provide an internationally recognised and internationally intelligible variety of English for their people. On the other hand, Kirkpatrick arouses our attention saying that native speaker models are not always easily understood in international communication. Contrary to this view, McKay (2002: 56) cites Kachru's (1986) argument that the varieties of English that exist within Outer Circle countries serve more local or national purposes, whereas what is termed Standard English reaches a more extensive audience.

With respect to the perception about a variety of English accents, Kirkpatrick (2007) cites a study of Giles and Powesland (1975) which reports that British school children considered people with a standard British English RP (Received Pronunciation) accent

as the most intelligent or competent compared with those with other rural or urban accents. This finding seems to be an example of linguistic prejudice. Kirkpatrick (2007: 14) claims that we are all likely to be linguistically prejudiced in some way, positively or negatively.

As globalisation changes the conditions in which language learning and language teaching take place (Block and Cameron 2002), Graddol (2006) suggests that pedagogic practices in English language teaching have rapidly evolved to meet the needs of the current situation where global English is learned and used. Considering that times are not what they were, stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning process such as learners, teachers, governments and textbook publishers should have a critical attitude towards English.

In Japan, although the term ‘internationalisation’ is frequently used like the slogans among politicians and mass media, Dougill (1995) claims that there are three aspects of difficulties in Japanese attitudes towards internationalisation: the myth of uniqueness; the obsession with the West/America; and the *gaijin* complex. While ‘*gaijin*’ originally refers to ‘foreigner’ in Japanese, it is actually used to refer to only those foreigners from the West or with Western appearance. This problem is also discussed by Kubota (2002). The myth of uniqueness, the obsession with the West/America, and the *gaijin* complex are the Japanese legacy of insularity which could inhibit language learning as Dougill suggests. In his survey among students at a university in Japan, the results show the tendency that leads to the kind of ‘fake’ or ‘forced’ internationalisation in which local governments compete to ‘internationalise’ their cities with decorative English and

decorative *gaijin* (Dougill 1995: 64). Real internationalisation, Dougill (1995: 72) argues, involves change, a far more painful process than simply learning about other cultures. Japanese tend to assume that foreigner equals Westerner and that Westerner equals American as the Japanese worldview is based on a simple dichotomy of the West versus Japan. This is supported by the contention of Kubota (2002) that learning English with an emphasis on white middle class English does not lead to international understanding, instead, it is likely to promote a narrow view of world culture which is focused on cultural differences only between Western countries and Japan. Dougill asserts that language teachers in Japan need to confront the cultural factors by combatting the West - Japan dichotomy, by seeking to diminish the *gaijin* complex, and by emphasising differences among Western countries and individuals, since these cultural factors could inhibit successful language learning.

Kubota (2002) also points out a problematic situation of teaching and learning English in Japan. She asserts that the tendency towards a heavy focus on North American and British English manifested itself in several ways. First, the Japanese government recruited young people from abroad to assist foreign language teachers in public schools as Assistant Language Teachers (ALT), and more than 86 per cent of ALTs in 1998 were from the USA, the UK or Canada, i.e. speakers of North American or British English. Secondly, Kubota cites Kachru's study (1997) which reported that the English language curriculum of fifteen universities in Japan placed the heavy focus on American and British white middle class literary canons. Kubota considers that this tendency stems from the 'native speaker myth' which entails a perceived superiority of the inner circle rather than the outer circle varieties of English. Among the native speakers of English,

Japanese schools may well additionally show linguistic biases towards Australian accent, or white biases towards African or Asian Americans, which can be also seen in hiring or advertising in private English conversation schools. According to Kubota, language learning and teaching in Japan has been influenced by the rhetoric of ‘internationalisation’ that could lead to both Anglicisation and nationalism. The Anglicisation aspect of ‘internationalisation’ suggests that the international understanding is based on the white middle class English, and cultural nationalism in ‘internationalisation’ emphasises national identity and images of Japanese language and culture contrasted with English and Anglophone culture. In other words, learning English is not likely to lead to cosmopolitan pluralism or critical multiculturalism but to cultural essentialisation and dichotomisation between Japanese and Anglophone cultures. In this age of globalisation, Kubota asserts that language education in Japan pays insufficient attention to the increased ethnic and linguistic diversity. It appears that those involved in language education need to have a broader view and a deeper understanding of the situation in the world.

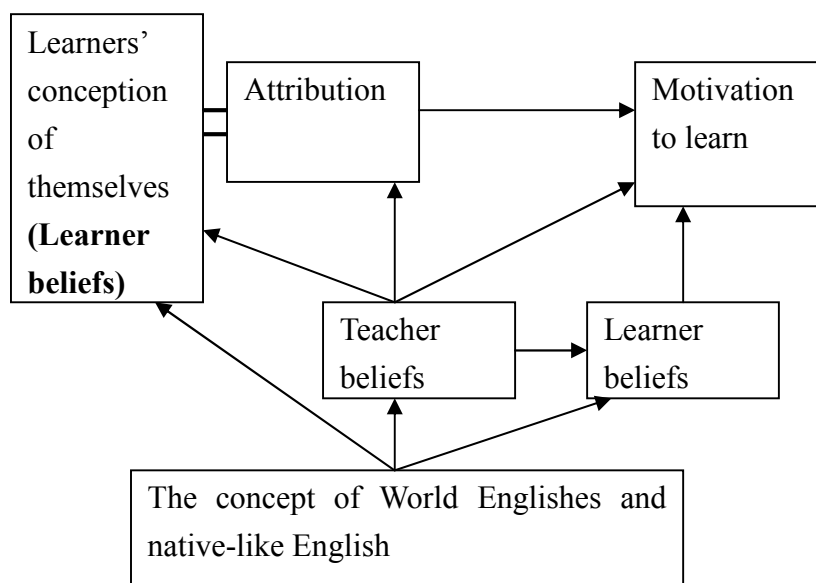
The literature reviewed in this section has indicated that the concept of World Englishes and native-like English has a great influence on learner beliefs and teacher beliefs. As this issue is related to attitudes towards learning English, it will be further investigated in the present study.

3.5 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has considered the theoretical framework of the present study and reviewed the literature relating to the areas which seem to have an influence on learning a

language, such as individual differences, beliefs about learning English, and preferred models of English for learners. Although the chapter has covered a wide range of literature concerning areas in second language learning, each aspect was considered necessary for exploring beliefs about learning English. As shown in Figure 3.5 below, an important aspect of learners' conceptions of themselves, which is one aspect of learner beliefs, is learners' attributions for successes and failures in learning a language. Learners' attributions may well affect their motivation for language study. Learner beliefs also play a significant role in developing motivation to learn. Teacher beliefs have a great influence on learner beliefs, learners' motivation and attributions for successes and failures. The concept of World Englishes and native-like English could be a factor which affects learner beliefs as well as teacher beliefs. By drawing together these interrelated aspects of the literature, we may be able to understand Japanese learners' beliefs about learning English.

Figure 3.5: Link of aspects in literature review



The next chapter will provide the methodology of the study together with a research procedure.

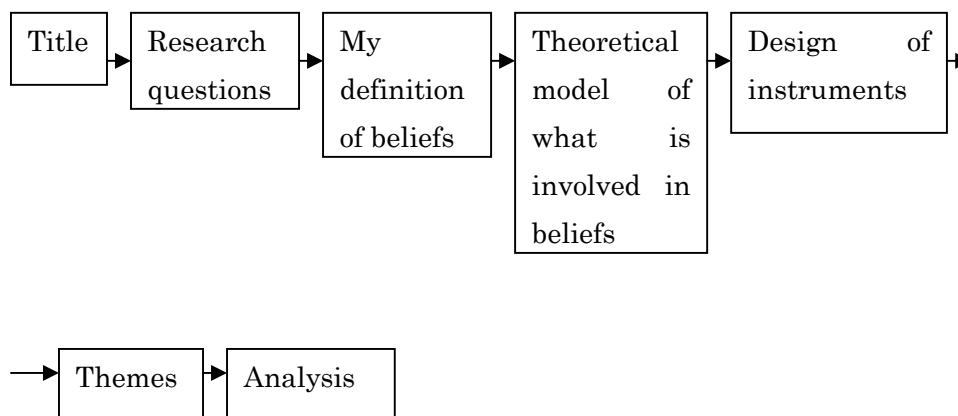
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Purpose of the study and research questions

This study stems from two main observations. Firstly, I noticed that some language learners appeared to progress more successfully and enjoyably than other language learners, which suggests that they might well have particular beliefs in language learning different from their unsuccessful counterparts. Secondly, it is often said that Japanese learners of English are less successful in communicating in English than they are at studying grammar. This characteristic of Japanese learners could also stem from their beliefs about language learning, which may well be based on the context of English education in Japan. This is because teacher beliefs about language learning inevitably influence their students' beliefs about what is necessary and most appropriate for successful language learning. By investigating beliefs about language learning and teaching of successful language learners, less successful language learners, and teachers and university professors, I hope that this study could provide helpful insights into issues relating to learning English in Japan. A conceptual framework of this study is explained with the diagram below.

Figure 4.1: Conceptual framework



The research questions which stem from these observations are:

- 1) What are successful and less successful Japanese language learners' beliefs about learning English?
- 2) What are Japanese teachers' and professors' beliefs about learning and teaching English?

My definition of beliefs is mainly based on Richards and Lockhart (1994) and Pajares (1992): Beliefs are derived from evaluation and judgment and are a more subjective notion than knowledge. It is difficult to change beliefs, but they can be changed over time by the influence of various factors, such as environment or instruction. As beliefs are considered to underlie actions, it is necessary to examine beliefs when we try to understand why and how people act in certain ways.

Within the framework of an interpretive research paradigm, the theoretical model of this study is based on Richards and Lockhart (1994). I selected six pre-determined themes mainly from eight categories of learner beliefs classified by Richards and Lockhart (1994, see p50 in this thesis) because this model covers a wide range of beliefs about learning English. Data were collected from participants using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis was based around six pre-determined themes and four emerging themes.

4.2 Research paradigm

One distinctive feature of educational research is the variety of approaches used. Although different approaches are necessary to answer different questions, each approach has its own philosophical background behind it. Educational research can be classified into three large paradigms: a scientific research paradigm, an interpretive research paradigm which is the research paradigm employed for the present study, and a critical research paradigm. I will discuss the different views of the world and the different methodologies relating to these three paradigms.

4.2.1 The scientific research paradigm

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries numerous educationists claimed that teaching would improve if teachers' practices were based on educational theory, which should stem from a 'scientific approach' (Carr & Kemmis 1986). Educationists tried to apply the principles of natural sciences to educational research. For them, education was technology, and teachers were learning technicians for effective learning. Researchers mimicked the 'scientific method' and mainly relied on quantitative methods (Wellington

2000). The ontological assumption is that social reality exists externally to individuals, that is, outside the mind. It is considered that objects have an independent existence, not concerned with consciousness of the knower. Objectivist epistemology holds that meaningful reality exists in objects apart from any consciousness (Crotty 1998).

Since the epistemological assumption is that knowledge is objective and tangible, researchers in the social sciences were expected to observe phenomena in the same way as natural science. They were impelled to discover universal laws determining individual and social behaviour, and research outcomes were considered to be predictable and replicable. This view seems questionable since educational research deals with humans and is concerned with the values and beliefs of individuals.

The scientific research paradigm is also sometimes called the positivist educational research paradigm (Ernest 1994). This paradigm employs the same methods as physical sciences, experimental psychology, etc. Scientists comprehend the world through explanation, understanding, prediction and control (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2000), and their main aim is to move towards scientific generalisation. They use scientific methods such as surveys, experimental and quasi-experimental methods involving randomised control group designs and large samples wherever possible.

When educational research is carried out in accordance with a natural scientific view of educational theory, this positivist view invites criticism. Although beliefs, values and assumptions are never made explicit in the theories produced by research, they form the way of thinking of the researchers and produce the theories. When we ask research

questions, or choose the methodology and methods to answer the questions, decisions are based on our beliefs, values and assumptions. “In this sense” Carr and Kemmis (1986: 74) argue, “theories are always ‘infected’ by the beliefs and values of the research community and are, therefore, always social products”. There are no value-free facts, and “‘facts’ are always facts as interpreted by prior assumptions and beliefs” (ibid).

This argument seems to have validity. The nature of educational research is different from that of natural scientific research, because educational research deals with human beings rather than static objects. If one is to make sense of the interaction between human beings, a positivistic view seems inappropriate.

Another critique of the positivist view is about its theory and practice. Positivists are convinced that they can explain the educational situations in a scientific way. However, educational research implies a number of complex factors which natural science does not have, such as egalitarian values and moral notions. It thus seems unsuitable to apply the methods of natural sciences to human and social phenomena. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 79) argue that educational researchers “must refrain from mimicking the surface features of the natural sciences” because natural and social sciences have different purposes and therefore should employ different methods. Educational research can describe “how individuals interpret their actions and the situations in which they act” (ibid). We have to bear in mind that outcomes of social sciences are descriptive and interpretive, whereas those of natural sciences are explanatory and predictive.

4.2.2 The research paradigm for the present study: Interpretive research paradigm

Dörnyei (2005: 1) argues that one of the most important ways in which the social sciences differ from the natural sciences stems from the existence of individual differences. It would be easier to formulate valid conclusions and generalisations about human species if everybody was alike.

As educational research based on positivist principles fails to adequately solve problems, new epistemologies have been sought to conduct investigations in more appropriate ways. One result was the interpretive approach, derived from the 'interpretive' tradition of social enquiry (Carr & Kemmis 1986) and the philosophy of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Other names for this interpretive paradigm are the naturalistic paradigm or the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm is mainly concerned with human understanding and interpretation, with reality being considered as socially constructed.

While the scientific research paradigm is involved in replicable circumstances pursuing general laws, the interpretive research paradigm tries to understand individual cases which eventually illustrate the general. In other words, the interpretive paradigm adopts a 'bottom-up' perspective to describe the general case from the particular and concrete instance, instead of using a 'top-down' perspective which uses the general law to describe the particular.

Ontological assumptions in the interpretive paradigm are that reality is socially constructed with the result that multiple realities are acknowledged. Mertens (1998: 11)

refers to different perceptions of reality, saying that “the concepts of disability, feminism, and minority are socially constructed phenomena that mean different things to different people”. Interpretive epistemology assumes that the social practices of human beings are important and meaningful and that human action has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices (Usher 1996). In other words, without the context of social practices, we cannot construct our knowledge because meaning is not discovered but we make sense of it. The epistemological assumption is that knowledge is personal, subjective and unique. In this paradigm, there is no meaning without a mind (Crotty 1998). Knowledge is assumed to reflect that “different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (Crotty 1998: 9). This assumption seems appropriate for educational research since education involves individuals who have different characteristics. In fact, within cognitive psychology, one major shift has been away from formal testing of intelligence and other attributes towards an in-depth exploration of aspects of self-perception (Williams, Burden, and Al-Baharna 2001: 170).

Kincheloe (1991) argues that one of the important aspects of the interpretive paradigm is the consideration of the context of human experience. Individual events must be understood within the context in which they occur. Each event is expressed in abstract characteristics instead of numerical expression, as each event will lose its meaning if it is considered only in a quantitative way. In the light of the complex nature of thinking and human behaviour, this contention seems sensible. Obviously judgment based on values is required to interpret the meanings and relationships of social and cultural aspects among events.

Although the interpretive paradigm aimed at comprehending the shortcomings of the scientific paradigm, it received criticism for its inability to produce generalisations. This criticism is questionable, as generalisations are unnecessary when we explore and understand particular occurrences in depth. The purpose of research in interpretive paradigm is not to generalise.

Further criticisms of the interpretive paradigm are, firstly, that it “neglects questions about the origins, causes and results of actors adopting certain interpretations of their actions and social life” (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 95), and that it “neglects the crucial problems of social conflict and social change” (ibid.). With regard to the first criticism, since in the interpretive paradigm reality is socially constructed, this criticism suggests that there is a need to answer questions about the relationships between individuals’ interpretations and external factors. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that individuals’ interpretations are constrained by the particular society in which they live. Consequently, social reality is not only the product of the meanings and actions of individuals, it also produces particular meanings. Therefore the social sciences should examine not only the meanings of social actions, but also the social factors that produce them. This assertion seems persuasive.

Concerning Carr and Kemmis’ second criticism, relating to the fact that problems of social conflict and social change are ignored, this appears to be an indication of the emergence of a new paradigm, usually referred to as the critical paradigm.

4.2.3 The critical research paradigm

The critical research paradigm, which has developed out of critical theory, arose from criticism of both the scientific and interpretive paradigms. Critical theory is mainly influenced by the work of Habermas and his predecessors in the Frankfurt School. The purpose of critical theory is not only to understand situations, but also to change them (Cohen et al. 2000). As the scientific paradigm is concerned with objectivity, prediction, controllability, the construction of laws and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality (Ernest 1994; Cohen et al. 2000), it is believed in this paradigm that educational situations can be explained scientifically. However in an educational context, we cannot respond to the instrumental question of efficiency without thinking about acceptable moral standards. The Frankfurt School regarded the influence of positivism as questionable because of its instrumental rationality and a tendency to see all practical problems as technical issues. This criticism seems valid, since it is impossible to deal with matters of lives and experiences only in a technological way. In the objective reality of positivism, individuals have no control over their own situations (Carr and Kemmis 1986).

With regard to the interpretive paradigm, it is argued that the interpretive view of social science neglects the crucial problems of social conflict and social change since the interpretive paradigm is mainly concerned with understanding the world, and this paradigm considers that meanings and interpretations of the world are important. Although the critical paradigm resembles the interpretive paradigm in that both paradigms seek understanding, the former also involves social critique and social

change.

The critical paradigm tries to emancipate people from the concept of positivism through their own understanding and actions (Carr and Kemmis 1986). This paradigm is concerned with social critique and social change (Ernest 1994), and deals with an intellectual project regarding the values, judgments and interests of humankind. If social science is carried out in a critical paradigm, Carr and Kemmis argue that it will offer awareness of distorted and frustrated situations and will provide a self-reflective understanding to eliminate these frustrations.

As for ontology, the critical paradigm recognises multiple realities in a similar way to the interpretive paradigm. However, the critical paradigm also emphasises the influence of social, political, cultural, economic, gender, and disability values in the construction of reality (Mertens 1998). In its epistemological assumptions, it not only seeks to generate knowledge of the world, but also to discover beliefs and practices that limit human freedom (Scott & Usher 1999). The relationship between the knower and the known is considered as interactive. Scott & Usher (1999: 31) argue that “knowledge is always socially constructed and geared to a particular interest, a technical problem-solving interest, a practical communicative interest or a critical emancipatory interest. In this sense, there can be no objective knowledge in any paradigm, and a critical emancipatory interest corresponds to that of the critical paradigm. Considering that this paradigm is concerned with social critique and social change, it would be applied in the educational context where political and ideological views are needed.

There are several criticisms against the critical paradigm. One of them is about the clarity and transparency which critical theory seeks and believes it can achieve in the furtherance of emancipation (Scott & Usher 1999). Although critical theory distances itself from positivism, Scott & Usher contend that the stance of critical theory on the possibility and desirability of transparency and clarity is exactly similar to that of positivism. It seems true that, if the stance of critical theory is too rigorous, it becomes less suitable for understanding the context in which human beings are involved, because human beings are not machines even of a complex kind, but creatures full of ambiguities and contradictions.

Further criticism is that a person or society can become emancipated by means other than ideology critique. Ideology critique can sometimes obstruct actions for emancipation (Cohen et al. 2000), which means the link between ideological critique and emancipation is neither clear nor proven. In my opinion, ideological critique holds a certain view of human experience and social interaction which may be partial and/or distorted, although the critical paradigm itself attempts to reveal the distortions and constraints of specific social situations. Critical theorists are required to be self-critical and to subject their own positions to critical scrutiny (Scott & Usher 1999), because power relations sometimes can be seen from the opposite angles.

4.3 Case study research

Case study research emerged in the period between the first and second world wars, largely within and around the University of Chicago Department of Sociology. In the period after 1945, case based social research in sociology declined in relation to survey

based and statistically analyzable methods of data collection (David 2006). According to David (2006: xxxix), in the last 25 years the shift away from quantification and large scale survey methods in the social sciences, alongside the increasing attention being given to language and meaning in constructing identity and social relations, has seen a significant revival in case study research methods.

Robert Stake defines a case as ‘a bounded system’ (1995). Such a bounded system might be any unit of research, and cases can be specific individuals, particular events or processes, although any such ‘bounded system’ can never be seen as wholly separate from the context of which it is a part (David 2006: xxv). Stake (1995 cited in David 2006: xxvii) suggests that case study research is primarily qualitative in the sense of exploring complex holistic patterns rather than seeking to map statistical and/or causal relationships between abstracted variables. On the other hand, Robert Yin (1994 cited in David 2006) holds a slightly different view. For Yin, while the utility of case study research lies in addressing complex relationships that cannot easily be reduced to simple causal models or statistical tests, quantitative research methods can just as often have a valuable contribution to offer (David 2006: xxvii).

Yin (2004) suggests that one strength of the case study method is its usefulness when phenomena and context are not readily separable, and another strength is that the method enables you to address how and why questions about the real-life events. David (2006: xxvii) points out that the most significant argument is whether the first strength (in addressing complexity) is compatible with the second strength (in identifying causes). Some argue that a focus on complexity means explanation must be put aside in

favour of phenomenological description, while others argue that case studies can yield causal explanation at the level of individual cases, and/or by comparison between cases (David 2006: xxviii). However, it is essential to remember, as Geertz (1973) claims, that the core strength of case method lies in exploration and description, and that quantitative methodology is not likely to be able to deliver significant understanding of culture as a holistic meaning, rather than as a set of causal mechanisms.

Cohen et al. (2000: 181) also claim that case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis since they provide a unique example of real people in real situations. It is widely believed that the classical qualitative educational research design is the case study (Herriott and Firestone 2006: 189), and case studies are useful in the study of human affairs because they do not provide a suitable basis for generalisation (Stake 2006: 123). According to Cohen et al., case studies do not have to seek frequencies of occurrences, rather, they should attempt to separate the *significant few* from the *insignificant many* instances of behaviour. Cohen et al. (2000: 185) emphasise that significance rather than frequency is a hallmark of case studies, offering the researcher an insight into the real dynamics of situations and people.

Although single cases are a common design for doing case studies, the same study may contain more than a single case (Yin 1984), where the study has to use a multiple-case design. Multiple-case designs have advantages and disadvantages in comparison to single-case designs. Yin points out that the findings from multiple cases are often regarded as being more convincing, while single-case designs cannot usually deal with

multiple cases, as the rationale for single-case designs is an unusual or rare nature of the case. In other words, by definition of single-case design, the case represents an extreme or unique case.

Yin (1984: 48-49) argues that each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results or (b) produces contrary results but for predictable reasons. With regard to the logic underlying the use of multiple-case studies, Yin contends that multiple-case designs should follow a replication, not a sampling, logic. If one has access to three cases, for example, and if similar results are obtained from all three cases, replication is said to have taken place. This replication logic is different from the sampling logic which is commonly used in surveys. The sampling logic requires a statistical procedure for selecting the sample which is assumed to reflect the entire universe. As this logic is applicable generally when the main interest centres around the frequency of a particular phenomenon, Yin (1984: 50) claims that any application of this sampling logic to case studies would be misplaced.

In this study, I propose to investigate five case studies, using multiple-case designs, and attempt to explore the issues about language learning across these cases because a key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources. I selected five cases, each of which was a group of Japanese learners or teachers of English. Although the number of learners or teachers varied in each group, each group was treated as a single case. Data collected from questionnaires and interviews were used to analyse and cross-reference each pre-determined theme. However, different groups of participants were used for the analysis of each pre-determined theme, as appropriate (see Table 4.4).

4.4 Assessing research quality

4.4.1 Issues of reliability, validity, and generalisability

Criteria for evaluating educational research differ depending on ontological and epistemological perspectives. As discussed earlier, each paradigm has its own perspectives towards knowledge and reality. Although there are different types of validity and reliability, these are important factors for effective research because invalid research is worthless (Cohen et al. 2000). However it would be illogical if research conducted within one paradigm were evaluated through the perspectives of validity of another paradigm. Reliability is generally construed as consistency and replicability. Cohen et al. (2000: 105) suggest that “reliability is a necessary but insufficient condition for validity in research; reliability is a necessary precondition of validity”. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), in qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched, i.e. a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage. We need to bear in mind that criteria of reliability in quantitative methodologies differ from those in qualitative methodologies.

The scientific paradigm views educational practices as ‘phenomena’ influenced by ‘objective’ treatment (Carr & Kemmis 1986). Scott & Usher (1996) put forward a number of assumptions about research within this paradigm, relating to controllability, observability, predictability, and replicability. Controllability is needed in order to generalise from sample to population. Scientific researchers assume that there is an objective reality, which can be observed, and their concern is mainly about causal

relations between phenomena, and how these can be predicted. Experimental procedure can be replicated by other researchers and in other contexts.

It seems that educational practices cannot be seen from a value-free viewpoint. In the interpretive paradigm, different criteria such as credibility, transferability, and dependability, are sought (Scott & Usher 1996). Although scientific research is concerned with the use of numbers or frequency, interpretive research involves abstract characteristics of events (Kincheloe 1991), because we cannot understand the true meanings of practices if they are expressed only in quantitative terms. For example, students' attitudes or beliefs in learning are difficult to understand exclusively in a table of statistics. Therefore it appears that those aspects which can be expressed in numerical terms are limited in any educational research area. However, quantitative research can serve as support for qualitative data if a researcher fully understands context and has an insight into human affairs (Kincheloe 1991). In fact, concern with context is one of the most important characteristics of qualitative inquiry since human behaviour can be understood only in the specific context, which means without those contexts the reality could be distorted. Consequently the principle of reliability for scientific research is likely to be unworkable for interpretive research. Scientific research values replicability, which means control and manipulation of phenomena are required, whereas interpretive research appreciates the uniqueness of the situations, such that the study cannot be replicated. Cohen et al. (2000) argue that this is the strength of interpretive research rather than the weakness.

The form of reasoning of critical educational research is practical and critical. Critical

research looks at policy from critical viewpoints and treats reform as emancipatory, because it assumes that policy is usually for the interests of dominant groups. Critical research has also weakness. Critical research may empower one set of people at the expense of another. Moreover, although notions of empowerment are considered as neutral, deciding between good and bad is problematic. The practice of education is considered essentially political, since it orients students in particular ways to the society. When a controversial issue, such as learners' attitudes towards native-like English and 'World Englishes' is investigated, a critical stance is necessary because it involves various value-laden concepts. This is why certain issues in the present study needed to be investigated from a critical viewpoint. It seems that critical educational research should take into account the values and interests of various groups of people in the educational context.

As Silverman (1993) argues that one way of controlling for reliability is to have a highly structured interview, with the same format and sequence of words and questions for each respondent, I used the same format of interviews for the third group (students studying in the UK) and the fifth group (professors of English) of the participants. By using a semi-structured interview I was able to allow for flexibility of response while maintaining a high level of reliability. In interviews, I attempted to minimise the amount of bias as much as possible because this is the most practical way of achieving greater validity, as has been argued by Cohen et al. (2000).

Triangulation can be considered to give strength or support to findings of the study. Of the six categories of triangulation in Denzin's (1970) typology, four are frequently used

in education. These are triangulation of time, space, investigator, and methodology. For my study I employed methodological triangulation, in using data from questionnaires and interviews so as not to bias or distort the reality I investigated.

In case study research, Soy (1997) argues that a study should be well constructed to ensure construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. In my study I used appropriate measures to investigate the concepts of learner beliefs to ensure construct validity, and used multiple pieces of evidence from multiple sources to ensure internal validity. External validity reflects whether or not findings are generalisable beyond the immediate case or cases. While my case study samples are too small to make generalisation possible, some of the findings revealed similarities between the successful language learners. This suggests that further confirmatory investigation would be worthwhile. Reliability refers to the stability, accuracy, and precision of measurement. In order to realise reliability I have attempted to pay careful attention to detailed documentation of the research procedure, the rich descriptions and interpretations of the data.

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research should be an indispensable part of the research methodology and process (Mertens 1998), and has been a common feature in the history of both scientific and educational research (Wellington 2000). Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that ethical issues originate from various problems caused by the methods used in social science. The ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2003) highlight the responsibilities of a researcher. These responsibilities fall into three areas:

responsibilities to participants, to sponsors of research, and to the community of educational researchers. This study will focus on the responsibilities to participants, since it is they who are likely to be the most vulnerable in any type of research.

Regarding responsibilities to participants, eight items are included: voluntary informed consent; deception; the right to withdraw; the treatment of children, vulnerable young people and vulnerable adults; incentives; any detriment arising from participation in research; privacy; disclosure (BERA 2003). Researchers should take the steps necessary to ensure that participants understand the need and purpose of the research. Participants have the right to refuse to participate in the research, or to withdraw in the middle of the research (Cohen et al. 2000). Although avoiding deception is considered the norm for the conduct of research, using deception in certain circumstances is very likely to lead to ethical problems. If deception is needed in order to get a natural response from participants as a data, researchers must seek consent on a post-hoc basis. Although ethics and morals are important factors both in educational and scientific research, they should be considered more carefully in educational research, where people are studying people (Wellington 2000).

In the present study, among the five groups of participants, only for the fourth group (teachers of English at secondary school) was an ethical procedure carried out in a written form (see Appendix 6). For the rest of the participants, I conveyed a message relating to ethical issues verbally: when they were asked to participate in the research, I explained its purpose and assured them that their responses would be confidential (see Appendix 7). For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all the

participants.

For the fourth group of participants, a consent letter was distributed to the nine Japanese teachers. It was written in English and explained the purpose of collecting the data, guaranteed the confidentiality of the responses, and asked them to sign their names if they wished to participate in my study. I asked them to read the consent letter on the spot and collected them back immediately. As all of them signed the letter, I handed each of them an open-ended questionnaire. However, two of them told me later that they could not participate because of difficulty in answering the questions and their busy situation. In the consent letter I also asked them to choose one of three options after completing the questionnaire as follows.

- 1) I will participate in the interview.
- 2) I will respond to your question by telephone.
- 3) I cannot do either 1) or 2).

All of the participants agreed to be interviewed.

4.5 Sampling

According to Morrison (1993), the quality of a piece of research not only stands or falls by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted. There are two main methods of sampling: probability sampling (also known as random sampling) and non-probability sampling (also known as purposive sampling). Small scale research such as action research or case study research often uses non-probability samples because researchers do not intend to generalise their findings. A convenience sample and a purposive sample are

the types of non-probability sampling. Convenience sampling (also called opportunity sampling), as the word implies, involves respondents who can be conveniently identified, whereas purposive sampling is selected by researchers for a specific purpose because of its typicality (Cohen et al. 2000). I used convenience sampling and purposive sampling to collect the data in my study, as described below.

This study investigates the beliefs of five groups of Japanese language learners and teachers:

- 1) Secondary students in Japan (17 students);
- 2) University students in Japan (22 students);
- 3) Students studying in the UK (4 students);
- 4) Teachers of English at secondary school (7 teachers);
- 5) University professors of English (3 university professors).

The second group of university students was regarded as less successful learners as identified in their lack of progress as measured by a weak understanding of use of grammar and listening comprehension in spite of their six years of studying English.

The other groups of participants were all considered as successful learners. The first group was considered to consist of successful students according to their English proficiency test results, and the third group was identified as successful learners because of their exceptional communicative ability. The fourth and fifth groups are self-evidently successful because they teach English in a secondary school and university setting. Each group of participants bears a characteristic in common: the

participants in the first three groups are learners of English, while the participants in the latter two are teachers; the participants in the first two groups were studying in Japan, whereas the participants in the third and fourth groups were studying in the UK. The third group of participants (students studying in the UK) can be understood as a purposive sample since they were chosen on the grounds of their exceptional English speaking skills, whereas the rest of the groups are considered as a convenience sample because they were located in a high school and university which allowed me easy access. These details are shown in Table 4.1.

Five different groups were chosen to explore multiple perspectives from different participants, which could show the complexity of opinions. When I selected each group, my decisions in sampling were conducted in a systematic way, that is, on the basis of selecting a homogeneous group.

The first group of 17 secondary students displayed considerable English proficiency probably because only the motivated students might have registered for this optional oral communication class. As the second group of 22 university students was in the lower stream in the compulsory English subject, their English proficiency was consistently low. With regard to the third group of four learners of English who were studying in the UK, their communicative competence and speaking skills in English were excellent (although this was based on my subjective judgment). Although the fourth group of seven teachers of English came from various regions in Japan, they had one characteristic in common that they were teachers of English at secondary schools in Japan. While there are many university lecturers who teach English in Japan, the fifth

group of three professors had two characteristics in common: they were involved in pre-service teacher training, and they had a great interest in a model of English for learners.

As mentioned above, the homogeneity of each group of participants was regarded as important in selecting the five different groups.

Table 4.1: Five groups of participants

Participants (number)	Place of data collection / Data used in the analysis relating to pre-determined themes	Successful / Less successful
1) Secondary students in Japan (17)	Japan / Liking for English. A model of English for learners.	Successful
2) University students in Japan (22)	Japan / Liking for English. Learning a foreign language. The most important aspects of learning English. The best ways to learn English. Practice to improve English skills. Self-concept and attribution.	Less successful
3) Students studying in the UK (4)	UK / Learning a foreign language. The most important aspects of learning English. The best ways to learn English. Practice to improve English skills. Self-concept and attribution. Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK. A model of English for learners.	Successful
4) Teachers of English at secondary school (7)	UK / The most important aspects of learning English. The best ways to learn English. Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK. A role as a teacher of English.	Successful
5) University professors of English (3)	Japan / A model of English for learners.	Successful

4.5 1 Secondary school students

The first group consisted of 17 female students in Tokyo. They were seventeen year old secondary pupils in a girls' school which has a long tradition of high academic standards. Having taken an optional Oral Communication class, their STEP (Society for Testing

English Proficiency) test results were as follows (the passing score for the second-grade STEP test is equivalent to TOEFL 456 and TOEIC 519):

Second grade: eleven students (65%);

Pre-second grade: four students (24%);

Have not taken the STEP test: two students (12%).

Observing these data, the English proficiency of this group of students is relatively high as compared with that of the average secondary student. According to the preliminary questionnaire, most of them enjoyed English as a subject at school and as a language. They had an aspiration for native-like English and were interested in pronunciation and rhythm of English.

4.5.2 University students

The second group consisted of 22 students (9 male and 13 female) attending a university in Tokyo where I taught English once a week as a compulsory subject. They had studied English for six years before entering the university. They were chosen to be participants because their English proficiency was as low as beginners in spite of their six years of studying English. Although it might seem strange that the proficiency in English of university students is lower than that of secondary students, this is sometimes the case because the required level of some universities is very low in accepting less competent students. If English was not their major, it is likely that they did not study English properly at secondary school. On the other hand, some secondary students are proficient in English partly because they love studying English, but mainly because they aim to enter a prestigious university by achieving a good score on the entrance examination. For this reason, this group of university students was considered to be less

successful learners. Differences between good and poor L2 learners have been discussed by a number of researchers and the importance of cognitive and communication strategies have been emphasised. Wenden (1987: 587) reports that no attempt to date has been made to study how unsuccessful L2 learners regulate their learning or what they know about it, and expects that future studies of good and poor learners could provide a clearer picture of the cognitive complexities that might be involved in the differences. It was hoped, therefore, that the university students in this study might provide some helpful data about the approach to language learning taken by less successful L2 learners.

4.5.3 Students studying in the UK

The third group consisted of four learners of English who were studying in the UK. When thinking of good learners of English, one could justifiably argue that students who are studying at universities in English-speaking countries are *ipso facto* good language learners, because they have usually passed some sort of English proficiency test before entering the university. Among Japanese students studying or working in the UK, four participants were chosen to collect data about good language learners. The reasons why these students were chosen will be explained below. Although the definition of a good language learner is difficult, participants were chosen in terms of their communicative ability, i.e. speaking and listening. This is a non-probability sample (a purposive sample). The four participants were selected on the grounds of their exceptional communicative competence and speaking skills in English. Tomoki and Takuya were male, and Mariko and Satomi female (pseudonyms). They were in their twenties or early thirties (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: The third group of participants: students studying in the UK

Pseudonyms	Tomoki	Takuya	Mariko	Satomi
Gender	male	male	female	female
Experience of study-abroad before this time	none	none	twice (2 years)	none
Length of stay in the UK this time	4 and a half years	11 months	10 months	5 years
Affiliation when interviewed	undergraduate student	student at an English language school	student on a master's course	salesperson in a boutique

Tomoki had been studying in the UK for about 4 and a half years, with four months in an English language school, and four years as an undergraduate at a university. His spoken English was British English and very natural and fluent, and, probably because of his special proficiency in English, he was working as an assistant for international students. This was his first time studying abroad.

The distinguishing trait of Takuya was his extraordinary progress in spoken English. When I met him for the first time, he could express himself in English freely. However, several people who had met him five months previously said he could speak only limited English, and he himself admitted this when interviewed for this study. This was also his first time studying abroad. He had been studying in the UK for eleven months, the first five months in an English language school, and the rest of the time at an English language centre at a university. Another trait which was different from other

Japanese students was that he did not speak in Japanese while in the UK, even when he talked to Japanese people.

Mariko was a student on a master's course in English literature. This was her third time living in the UK. She lived in London with her family for one year when she was a high school student, and she studied in the UK as an undergraduate seven years ago. As a master's student she wrote five assignments of 5000 words each, together with a dissertation of 20,000 words in only one year. Majoring in English literature must have been difficult, since the majority of her classmates were native speakers of English. Her spoken English is consistently at a high level of proficiency both as regards appropriateness and register.

Satomi used to be a student in an English language school in the UK, but she was subsequently working as a salesperson in a boutique in the UK. At the time I first met her in the boutique where she was working, I listened to her English without looking at her, and, I thought she must be British, since her English was very natural and she seemed to have a strong southwestern British accent and intonation. I found her particularly interesting, because I have rarely met a Japanese person who spoke English with a strong regional accent.

4.5.4 Teachers of English at secondary school

The fourth group consisted of seven teachers of English at secondary school in Japan. MEXT, which is an acronym for “Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology” in Japan, formulated the “Action Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English

Abilities” in 2003. This plan deals with several issues about English teaching and learning. One of these is “improving the teaching ability of English teachers and upgrading the teaching system” (MEXT, 2004). In this context, a group of Japanese teachers of English were sent to the UK on a MEXT project to study English and English teaching. Nine Japanese teachers of English studied in a university in the UK. Although they came from various regions in Japan, their common characteristic was that all of them taught English at junior high or high school in Japan.

Nine of these Japanese teachers of English had studied at a university in the UK for three and half months. In the first month they attended a pre-session English Language and Study Skills course with other students, and in the latter two and a half months they studied in a special programme tailored only to them at the request of the Japanese government.

Seven out of the nine teachers agreed to participate in my research. Three of them were junior high school teachers, one male and two female teachers. Four of them were high school teachers, one female and three male teachers. One teacher had eight years’ experience in teaching English, and the other six had ten to eighteen years’ experience. For six of the teachers this was the first time they had studied abroad, while the remaining teacher had studied for ten months in the USA sometime in the past (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: The fourth group of participants: seven Japanese teachers

Pseudonyms for participants	Kazumi	Tamiko	Yuka	Hideki	Koji	Asao	Ryo
Affiliation	junior high	junior high	senior high	senior high	senior high	junior high	senior high
Gender	female	female	female	male	male	male	male
Experience as a teacher	13	12	14	10	8	18	14
Experience of study-abroad before this programme	none	ten months in the USA	none	none	none	none	none

Following their study-abroad programme, they agreed to participate in my research.

4.5.5 Professors of English

My fifth group consisted of three professors of English working in a prestigious university in Japan (pseudonyms: Prof. Sakata, Prof. Mukai and Prof. Yamano). These professors teach English to pre-service English teachers. Although there are many university lecturers who teach English in Japan, there are only a few professors who are involved in pre-service teacher training. I selected them as they seemed to have a great influence on English education in Japan, and they were well-known for their competence nationally as well as internationally. One professor was female and the other two were male, and they all were in their fifties or sixties. All of them had experienced studying in the US and/or UK to obtain their higher degrees.

4.6 Data collection

As it is considered difficult to study beliefs directly, Wenden (1991) recommends the use of questionnaire or interview as instruments for data collection to research on beliefs about second language acquisition. Qualitative methods such as interviews, open-ended questionnaires and observations are most commonly used in the interpretive and critical paradigm. The use of the interview in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans (Kvale 1996).

I used two methods of data collection: a questionnaire (open-ended and closed-ended) and a semi-structured interview. I selected six pre-determined themes mainly based on the theoretical model of Richards and Lockhart (1994). These are shown in relation to the eight categories of learner beliefs classified by Richards and Lockhart in Table 3.2 (see p51).

The following pre-determined themes were used to structure interviews and questionnaires:

- Beliefs about learning English;
- Practice to improve English skills;
- Self-concept and attribution;
- Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK;
- A role as a teacher of English;

- A model of English for learners.

One pre-determined theme ‘Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK’ was chosen as a theme from my own experience.

In the preliminary questionnaire to secondary students (see Appendix 1-1), questions 1 and 2 are addressing ‘Beliefs about learning English’ and question 3 ‘A model of English for learners’, which are related to research question 1.

All the questions in the main questionnaire to secondary students (see Appendix 1-2) are addressing ‘A model of English for learners’ relating to research question 1.

In the questionnaire to university students (see Appendix 2), questions 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 are addressing ‘Beliefs about learning English’; questions 1, 3, 7 are about ‘Self-concept and attribution’; question 2 is ‘A model of English for learners’, and question 9 is ‘Practice to improve English skills’, which are all related to research question 1.

In the interview with students studying in the UK (see Appendix 3), questions 1, 2, 3 are addressing ‘Beliefs about learning English’, questions 4 and 5 are about ‘Self-concept and attribution’, question 6 is about ‘A model of English for learners’, question 7 is about ‘Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK’, and question 8 is about ‘Practice to improve English skills’, which are all related to research question 1.

In the interview with teachers of English at secondary school (see Appendix 4),

questions 1, 2, 3 are addressing 'Beliefs about learning English' relating to research question 1, and questions 4, 5, 6, 7 and B are about 'A role as a teacher of English' relating to research question 2. Questions 8, 9, 10, 11 are addressing 'Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK' which are related to both research question 1 and 2.

One question in the interview with professors of English is addressing 'A model of English for learners', which is related to research question 2.

4.6.1 Data collection: Secondary students

The seventeen female secondary students met once a week in the Oral Communication class. First, their beliefs about English were investigated, and after explaining the concept of World Englishes and the use of English in the world, their beliefs were re-examined.

A questionnaire, developed by me, investigated the participants' beliefs about English (This is available in full in Appendix 1-1). The participants were given the questionnaire in Japanese in two parts: the preliminary questionnaire and the main questionnaire. In the preliminary questionnaire, the questions were open-ended and the responses were analysed and classified into three groups: "Liking for English (as a subject, and as a language)", "Goal of learning English" and "Perceptions of Japanese English".

Four weeks after the preliminary questionnaire, the participants were given a short text about English, written in Japanese. After getting the information about English in the

world, the participants completed the main questionnaire (see Appendix 1-2). The participants were required to choose answers on a five-point scale: 5 (strongly agree), 4 (partially agree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 2 (partially disagree), 1 (strongly disagree). They were asked to select a number to describe their response to each question at two points in time, that is, the past (before getting the information) and now (after getting the information). Below each question, there was space for the participants to give reasons for their choices. The open-ended responses were analysed, and interviews were held with the participants whose answers required clarification.

4.6.2 Data collection: University students

An open-ended questionnaire written in Japanese was used to collect data from the 22 students (9 male and 13 female) in a class where English was taught as a compulsory subject in the university. To quote Cohen et al. (2000: 247): “the larger the size of the sample, the more structured, closed and numerical the questionnaire may have to be, and the smaller the size of the sample, the less structured, more open and word-based the questionnaire may be.” As the number of participants was small, a qualitative, less structured and open-ended questionnaire was considered to be more appropriate, as Cohen et al. (2000) claim. The participants were asked to write about English learning, such as important or difficult aspects of learning English, the best ways of learning English, as well as the practices they made for improving their English ability (see Appendix 2). All the participants described their thoughts in detail.

4.6.3 Data collection: Students studying in the UK

Although the main research instrument was a semi-structured interview, an open-ended

questionnaire was prepared and administered first in order to receive the participants' answers before the interview and let them know the questions to expect in the interview. However, only two out of the four participants filled in the questionnaire; the other two participants did not have time and/or preferred to be interviewed without knowing the questions in advance. Eight questions were asked: three questions were concerned with beliefs about learning, one was about the change in their views after staying in the UK, two questions were about self-concepts and attribution, one question about practice or efforts to improve each aspect of English, and one question about their views about native-speaker English. Questions on beliefs about learning were selected from Richards and Lockhart (1994), and questions about attribution were selected from Williams and Burden (1999). The rest of the questions were my own (see Appendix 3). The date and the place for interviews were arranged according to the participants' convenience. Two of them preferred being interviewed in my room whereas the rest of them chose their own room. Although Takuya wanted to be interviewed in English, the rest of the participants were interviewed in Japanese. All of them talked about their views and experiences in a relaxed manner for an average of ninety minutes.

4.6.4 Data collection: Teachers of English at secondary school

In order to collect the data, I used two methods: an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. For this group, the questions were concerned not only with beliefs about learning but also beliefs about teaching, because these participants were teachers of English. This provided an opportunity to engage in convenience sampling with additional questions about their perceptions of teaching. Questions on beliefs about learning and beliefs about teaching were selected from Richards and Lockhart (1994).

Questions on changes in their views after the study-abroad programme were constructed by me (see Appendix 4). Although the same questions were used for the questionnaire and interview, having the participants' answers to an open-ended questionnaire beforehand has been useful for making a more searching inquiry at the interview. The semi-structured interview, on the other hand, enabled clarification of what they wrote in the questionnaire and also enabled me to draw out their detailed opinions and feelings. For the participants' side, filling in the questionnaire in advance seemed a good opportunity to think about difficult questions before being interviewed.

Seven participants handed a completed questionnaire back to me within a week and wrote detailed comments in the open-ended questions. All the questions were written in English, but they were given the option of answering in Japanese, if they wished. Four answered in Japanese whereas three did so in English. When compared, the contents of their comments in Japanese were much richer and more frankly written about their feelings than those in English. After completing the questionnaire, all of the participants agreed to be interviewed.

The semi-structured interview was organised in order to clarify teachers' answers in the questionnaire and to elicit their detailed opinion and feelings. The interview proved in part to be important as a corrective to the questionnaire, as it turned out that for some answers to the questionnaire given as "No", the correct answer should have been "Yes". During the interview, most of them seemed relaxed and expressed their opinion freely, but some of them were tense at first and after a time began to relax.

4.6.5 Data collection: Professors of English

As I was already acquainted with the three professors, I was able to e-mail them to invite them to participate in the research. After obtaining their consent, I sent an e-mail attachment of an open-ended questionnaire just for their reference in advance as these questions were the same as those in a semi-structured interview. One question was used in this study (see Appendix 5). I did not ask them to fill in the questionnaire so as not to trouble them in their busy schedule. Interviews were carried out for an average of ninety minutes personally in their study of the university. They expressed their opinions about English education as well as their experiences as a language learner in detail.

4.6.6 Semi-structured interviews

Although the data from the first (secondary school students) and second (university students) group of participants was mainly collected by questionnaire, the rest of the participants (students studying in the UK, teachers of English at secondary school, professors of English) were all interviewed one-to-one. Only one or two participants were interviewed personally on any one day. Interviews were carried out in Japanese (exceptionally in English for Takuya) in a relaxed manner for an average of ninety minutes in a quiet room, and all of them were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. Although their answers sometimes digressed from the questions, I let them carry on since this could provide unanticipated statements and stories, and elicit participants' interpretations of their experience.

However, it seems that collecting data through interviews has advantages and

disadvantages. A crucial advantage is that interviews can collect richer data than a closed-ended questionnaire. I was able to clarify a reason or the background of participant's answers. If I had used only a questionnaire, their answers with a vague meaning would have been misunderstood. In fact, some participants wrote a different answer from their true intention in a questionnaire. Jernigan (2001) addresses the same problem in her study on motivation. She reports that survey items that might be interpreted as instrumental in nature – for example, “because I feel it may be helpful in my future career” – were in fact based on more intrinsic motivation of wanting to live in the target country (2001: 35). Another advantage is that interviews can sometimes draw additional information other than intended questions. These advantages played a significant role in my understanding of the participants' beliefs about learning and teaching English.

Although I believe that the interview is an appropriate method for interpretive research, I also noticed disadvantages. One of them is that the interview is demanding for both an interviewer and interviewees because it takes time and energy, and arrangement of the date is also nerve-wracking. Another disadvantage is the difficulty in analyzing data compared to that of a closed-ended questionnaire, but it provides richer data.

4.7 Data analysis

I found the analysis of the data difficult because the participants talked not only about answers to the questions but also about their thoughts in general. I managed to identify what they were trying to say by searching for a similar meaning in their different expressions. I attempted to categorise the interviews.

For the first group of the participants (secondary students), the data was mainly collected from a closed-ended questionnaire. They were asked to choose answers on a five-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' at two points in time, i.e. the past (before getting the information) and now (after getting the information). Their answers were tabulated according to the change of their beliefs about native speaker English and World Englishes.

For the rest of the groups, the data was collected from an open-ended questionnaire and an interview. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The data collected from the open-ended questionnaire and the interview were analysed based on the following coding procedures: breaking down the meaning of data, comparing the information from data, conceptualizing the main point of data, and categorizing data. Although there are a number of computer packages available for analyzing qualitative data, I decided to analyse by hand as people's expressions do not always fall into one particular linguistic pattern which is determined by computer packages.

By focusing on the explicit beliefs of the participants and adopting the procedures from content analysis, I explored six pre-determined themes in the questionnaire and interview data as follows:

- Beliefs about learning English;
- Practice to improve English skills;
- Self-concept and attribution;
- Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK;

- A role as a teacher of English;
- A model of English for learners.

The six pre-determined themes are based on a framework as shown in Table 3.2 (see p51). Data collected from questionnaires and interviews were used to analyse each pre-determined theme. Different groups of participants were used for analysis of each pre-determined theme as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Participants used for analysis of each pre-determined theme

Pre-determined themes	Participants used for analysis
Beliefs about learning English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Liking for English * Learning a foreign language * The most important aspects of learning English * The best ways to learn English 	Secondary / University Students UK / University Students UK / Secondary / University Students UK / Secondary / University
Practices to improve English skills	Students UK / University
Self-concept and attribution	Students UK / University
Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK	Students UK / Teachers
A role as a teacher of English	Teachers
A model of English for learners	Professors / Students UK / Secondary

Key: ‘Secondary’ represents Secondary students; ‘University’ represents University students; ‘Students UK’ represents Students studying in the UK; ‘Teachers’ represents

Teachers of English at secondary school; 'Professors' represents Professors of English.

Although different groups of participants were used for analysis of each pre-determined theme, and they were not equivalent in size, I attempted to explore their beliefs by selecting the most appropriate participants for each pre-determined theme. The questionnaire and interview data were separated into six categories relevant to the pre-determined themes, and another four categories emerged during the analysis. Throughout the coding process, I reread category names and the coded information to ensure new information fitted the categories.

4.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described different approaches to the research process and has justified the research design and methodology employed in this study. This involved identifying the purpose of the study and research questions, the rationale for the research paradigm employed, the nature of case study research, sampling, the data collection and analysis procedure, and the issues relating to research quality. The next chapter will present the findings followed by a discussion of their potential implications.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the procedure of data analysis, by focusing on the explicit beliefs of the participants and adopting the procedures from content analysis, I explored six pre-determined themes in the questionnaire and interview data. The data that were collected from the cohorts of students will be used to answer the first research question, whereas the data for the second research question, particularly with regard to a model of English for learners, will be answered with reference to the data from the university faculty staff (see section 5.1.6.1).

5.1 Pre-determined themes

There are six pre-determined themes:

- Beliefs about learning English;
- Practice to improve English skills;
- Self-concept and attribution;
- Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK;
- A role as a teacher of English;
- A model of English for learners.

The six pre-determined themes are based on a framework as shown in Table 3.2 (see p51). The first research question will be investigated by means of the five pre-determined themes except ‘A role as a teacher of English’. The second research question will be answered by the first, fourth, fifth, and sixth pre-determined themes. I shall present the findings relating to these pre-determined themes in turn, followed by

the four additional emerging themes, together with a discussion of the study as a whole.

5.1.1 Beliefs about learning English

5.1.1.1 Liking for English

This section examines the data that was collected from the questionnaire of secondary students (successful learners) and university students (less successful learners). Secondary students were asked about ‘liking for English’ both as a subject and a language, whereas university students were asked just about ‘liking for English’.

Of the seventeen secondary students, eleven indicated that they liked English the best of all the five main subjects; Japanese, mathematics, science, social studies and English, whilst five liked English next to social studies or Japanese (Table 5.1). As a language, sixteen liked English. There are three reasons given by students: firstly, they expressed longing for speakers of English; secondly, they preferred English pronunciation and rhythm of the language to that of Japanese; thirdly, they valued English as a language because it provided the means of communication across cultural boundaries. (The term ‘longing’ is used here, for lack of a better word, as a translation of the Japanese word which means a state of mind in which one naively admires something or wishes one were able to get something). The reasons why they like English are shown in Table 5.2.

As for ‘longing for speakers of English’, one student said in the interview that, in her case, she longed for her Japanese friend who could speak English fluently. The interview was helpful in clarifying that she meant to refer to an EFL user rather than a native English speaker. Four students longed for British English as they found it elegant,

and one student expressed her interest in the culture of the English-speaking countries. Two students indicated that they would like to speak English with ‘beautiful’ or ‘native-like’ pronunciation, without a Japanese accent.

Four students gave other reasons. ‘Others’ in Table 5.2 stands for ‘differences from and similarities to Japanese’, ‘the brevity’, ‘rationality of the grammar’, ‘interest in the origin of English’. One student who disliked English as a language gave an explanation that she could not understand what was said in English.

Table 5.1: Liking for English as a subject (successful learners: N=17)

I like English the best among five subjects	11 (65%)
I like English second best among five subjects	5 (29%)
I like English third best among five subjects	1 (6%)

Table 5.2: Liking for English as a language (successful learners: N=17)

Like	16 (94%)	Longing for speakers of English	5 (29%)
		Pronunciation and rhythm	5 (29%)
		Means of communication	2 (12%)
		Others	4 (24%)
Dislike	1 (6%)		

On the other hand, the majority of less successful learners (university students) disliked English (Table 5.3). Although 14% showed some interest in English, 68% disliked English mainly because of ‘difficulty in memorising’ (27%) and ‘lack of basic

knowledge’ (23%). Two students (9%) thought English was unnecessary in Japan, and one (4%) could not comprehend what was said in English. It appears that both ‘difficulty in memorising’ and ‘lack of basic knowledge’ stem from the unconfident self-concept of learners, which is in line with Tarone & Yule’s (1989) assertion that concepts such as self-confidence and anxiety are likely to influence the learning process. In the case of these less successful learners, it is possible that lack of self-confidence may have adversely affected their learning process, although this is not given as a reason.

Table 5.3: Liking for English (less successful learners: N=22)

Like	3 (14%)	Happy when I understand English	2 (9%)
		Convenient if I can use English	1 (4%)
Dislike	15 (68%)	Difficulty in memorising	6 (27%)
		Lack of basic knowledge	5 (23%)
		Unnecessary in Japan	2 (9%)
		Cannot comprehend what is said in English	1 (4%)
Neither	4 (18%)		

Regarding the various components involved in second language motivation, Dörnyei (1994) proposes a three-level categorisation: the language level, the learner level, and the situation level. The comment of ‘unnecessary in Japan’ by a less successful learner relates to ‘language level’ in Dörnyei’s category where the usefulness of the language is concerned.

Gardner (1985) defines motivation in terms of a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language. Since 'liking for English' is considered as a favourable attitude towards learning the language, the majority of less successful learners in this study lack one part of the combination leading to motivation.

5.1.1.2 Learning a foreign language

I shall now compare the beliefs about 'learning a foreign language' of the four students studying in the UK (successful learners) with those of 22 university students (less successful learners). The four students studying in the UK were given pseudonyms: Tomoki and Takuya (male), and Mariko and Satomi (female).

The four successful learners perceived 'learning a foreign language' as something related to communication, for example, to acquire the means of communication, or learning from everyday conversation. Takuya felt that being able to communicate with others was 'cool' for him. In Mariko's opinion, if one begins to learn a new language, it is necessary to learn the fundamentals from a textbook at the beginning, but after that it is better to go to a country where a language is used, because without a situation where one can use a language, the language cannot be a means of communication. Mariko expressed her views as follows.

Learning a foreign language is just accepting everything such as language structure or expression. It's not something we can completely master, or we can learn from something like a textbook, or dictionary. The best way is to put yourself into this area where the language is spoken, and just accept everything.

(Mariko)

Similarly, Takuya explained;

Learning a foreign language is to use language in a real situation rather than to study it in front of a desk. (Takuya)

Tomoki's perception about learning a language was that there was a need to use it, for example, listening to the lyrics of the songs, watching TV or talking to people in order to acquire the means of communication. Satomi conceived learning a language to be understanding expressions and learning from conversations which take place in everyday life.

In Brindley's (1984) report, learners assumed that learning a language consisted of learning the structural rules of the language and the vocabulary through such activities as memorisation, reading and writing. However, the four successful learners in this study expressed very different views about learning. The contention of Brindley (1984), however, does seem more valid for less successful learners. Although it was impossible to categorise by the number of participants, since each participant wrote more than one factor about 'learning a foreign language' in an open-ended questionnaire, there were five comments relating to vocabulary, and three comments about grammar. One unexpected result was that twelve university students wrote some comments about 'English conversation'. This may reflect the fact that a large number of Japanese people associating 'learning English' with 'English conversation', which relates to Best's (1994) assertion that more than 8000 English conversation schools are profiting from Japan's preoccupation with studying English.

With regard to the beliefs about ‘learning a foreign language’, there were no similarities between the successful learners and the less successful learners. As for differences, the successful learners thought ‘learning a foreign language’ involved acquiring a means of communication and using a language, whereas the less successful learners believed that it involved memorising vocabulary, studying grammar, and English conversation.

5.1.1.3 The most important aspects of learning English

This section examines the beliefs of the four students studying in the UK, teachers of English at secondary school, and university students. With regard to learning aspects of English such as memorising vocabulary or understanding grammar, Mariko thought reading was most important because one could learn the pattern of English rhythm or expression by reading plenty of English sentences. Tomoki regarded ‘getting used to it’ as most important and he thought it would be difficult to choose just one important aspect of English skill such as vocabulary or grammar, because lacking one aspect made it difficult to communicate. However, he also felt pronunciation or intonation could be other important aspects since these have a significant role in making a phrase or expressions meaningful. Tomoki seemed to recognise the difference between English as a stress-timed and Japanese as a syllable-timed language; Scott (1966) describes this difference as one of the principal problems faced by Japanese learners of English, i.e. the difficulty in acquiring the rhythm of spoken English.

Takuya expressed his perception as follows.

The important thing for me is to enjoy learning rather than to force myself to

study hard. I like learning languages and having a conversation with people. I am good at grammar or writing, so for me speaking is the most important thing to do.

(Takuya)

Satomi emphasised the importance of listening since a language can be put into use through communication which requires listening and speaking. She also mentioned that how to spend the time in an English-speaking country was important. For six months after coming to the UK, she did not use Japanese except when she phoned her mother in Japan. This is in line with the contention by Isabelli-García (2006) that learners may not magically become fluent speakers merely by living in a foreign country. Not only residing in the host country but also the amount of contact with native speakers is an important factor in the acquisition of sociolinguistic and sociocultural knowledge. In this regard, Satomi attempted to increase the amount and quality of contact with native speakers by avoiding using Japanese during her stay in the UK.

Three of the four participants emphasised oral aspects, such as speaking, listening, pronunciation and intonation, and one referred to reading. Their experience of living in the UK could be the cause of their beliefs since oral communication is essential for everyday life to survive in the UK. Mariko's beliefs that reading was the most important aspect might have stemmed from her major subject, i.e. English literature, where students are required to read a large number of books in English on a regular basis. Although the four participants have somewhat different views about the most important aspects of learning English, their focus is on using a language, which corresponds to the theoretical basis of a communicative approach argued by Williams and Burden (1997) that we learn a language through using the language to interact meaningfully with other

people.

The data collected from teachers of English at secondary schools studying in the UK shows slightly different beliefs, as revealed in Table 5.4. Most teachers identified ‘vocabulary’ as the most important and/or difficult aspects. This seems surprising in the light of the fact that, in the English-learning context in Japan, listening and speaking tend to be considered as more difficult because these aspects are not focused on in teaching at school. One participant said, “Difficulty in speaking and listening stems from a small vocabulary.” Another said, “I cannot guess the meaning from the context if there are too many unknown words.” Again, it should be emphasised here that the numbers are small and do not lend themselves to wider generalisation.

Table 5.4: The beliefs about ‘Most important aspects of learning English’ of teachers of English at secondary school studying in the UK (successful learners: N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Vocabulary	4
Listening	3
Reading	3
Background knowledge of the language	2
Speaking	1

The following comments explain the difficulty of vocabulary acquisition.

I think acquisition of vocabulary should occur in the context of actual communication. As Japanese learners rarely have such opportunity, we can

“know” a vocabulary but it takes a longer time to acquire an ability to “use” vocabulary. (Ryo)

Memorising a lot of English words is hard work, and takes a great deal of time and effort. (Tamiko)

These teachers' beliefs are likely to influence their classroom practices, as Richards and Lockhart (1994) argue that teachers' beliefs express realities in classrooms. This suggests that the participants might focus most strongly on teaching vocabulary in their classrooms.

As far as background knowledge of the language is concerned, two examples were given by participants referring to the concepts of 'an apple' and 'summer'. Apples are bigger, sweeter and more expensive in Japan than those in the UK. The image or concept of summer is different in the two countries, that is, in the UK it is normally a relatively cool and temperate season, whereas in Japan it is hot and humid. We cannot understand the true meaning of the language without having such background knowledge. This is one aspect of the nature of beliefs, as Williams and Burden (1997: 56) report that beliefs “tend to be culturally bound” (see also Horwitz 1987).

With regard to the beliefs of less successful learners, 'vocabulary' is most frequently mentioned (Table 5.5), which is the same result as that of successful learners. The reasons why vocabulary is considered important are similar to those identified by successful learners, such as the fact that difficulty in speaking, listening, and reading stem from only having a small vocabulary.

Table 5.5: The beliefs about ‘Most important aspects of learning English’ of university students (less successful learners: N=22)

Categories	Frequency
Vocabulary	8
Listening	6
Grammar	4
Motivation	3

‘Grammar’ is mentioned only by less successful learners. It is commonly construed that less successful learners are aware of the need and usefulness of grammar as most of them do not have basic grammatical knowledge. It is likely that the reason for this belief is also because traditional language teaching methods have focused mainly on grammatical competence (Tarone and Yule 1989), which is prevalent in Japan as a ‘grammar-translation’ approach (Henrichsen 1989).

Concerning motivation, one of this group wrote the following in an open-ended questionnaire.

When I was not able to understand English in class, studying English was painfully boring. However, when I can understand English, I find studying English enormously enjoyable, and feel like studying it harder.

Another wrote,

I think the important thing is having a liking for English. If I don't like English, I can't memorise vocabulary however hard I may study. I can learn

a lot of English words when I feel I like English.

5.1.1.4 The best ways to learn English

When learners choose a particular approach to doing a task, it is based on their beliefs about the best way to do it (Wenden 1999). Investigating learners' beliefs about 'the best ways to learn English', therefore, can give us helpful insights into issues relating to learning English. Successful learners' beliefs about 'the best ways to learn English' were collected from two groups of participants, i.e. the four students studying in the UK, and the seven teachers of English at secondary school studying in the UK. Less successful learners' beliefs emerge from the 22 university students.

Concerning the best ways to learn English, the four students reached a close consensus on the matter. They thought that living in an English-speaking country and using the language was the best way. On top of that, the importance of how to spend the time in an English-speaking country was emphasised as follows.

We shouldn't stay with our friends who are from the same country when we study abroad. We should stay with people from other countries. (Takuya)

Tomoki thought that the best way to learn a language was to spend as much time as possible with native speakers of English since it enables one to learn a language as well as its culture. Although Mariko also advocated living in a country where the language is spoken, she felt that only staying in the country for a certain period was not sufficient. The important thing is how to spend the time there, that is, to try not to use Japanese if there is one non-Japanese person in a group. She attempted to have many non-Japanese friends who were not necessarily native speakers of English. This is also in line with the

study of Isabelli-García (2006) who argues that learners may not become fluent speakers simply by being surrounded by the target language. Even when living in Japan, it is important for Mariko to force herself into a situation in which she has to do English assignments by the deadline.

Takuya tried to use English in the UK as follows.

Occasionally I am forced to speak some Japanese to Japanese people if they speak to me in Japanese, but mostly I don't use Japanese. I sometimes found it easier to speak English rather than to speak Japanese because I can say what I want to say in English but sometimes I can't say it in Japanese due to the language difference. (Takuya)

Brindley (1984) reported the comments by learners in a communicatively oriented English class: “You need a teacher to learn English properly – you can't learn it by yourself because there's no-one to correct you.” However, the participants in my study expressed more self-oriented beliefs about the way of learning, possibly because intermediate and advanced learners of English need a more autonomous approach for learning.

Tomoki and Mariko mentioned that sociable and curious people could be good language learners because they could communicate with other people easily and positively, which corresponds with the argument of Lightbown and Spada (1999) who suggest that personality variables may be a major factor in the acquisition of conversational skills. Another trait of the good language learner is making steady efforts, and also good

imitators can pronounce the foreign words in the same way as they are heard. This will help in acquiring the correct pronunciation of a foreign language.

Satomi thought that people who are not afraid of making mistakes are likely to be good at language learning. If people tend to avoid making mistakes, they might hesitate to use the language. This finding is in line with the claim of Mori (1999) who presents a statistical finding indicating that ‘avoidance of ambiguity’ is associated with lower achievement. According to Tarone & Yule (1989), self-confidence or self-esteem is regarded as having an effect on successful learning, and self-esteem prevents learners from thinking that making errors is foolish.

Table 5.6: The beliefs about ‘The best ways to learn English’ of teachers of English at secondary school studying in the UK (successful learners: N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Use English	4
Live in English-speaking countries	4
Authentic materials	4
Sense of attainment (to motivate)	1

Most participants thought that ‘use English’, ‘live in English-speaking countries’, and ‘use authentic materials’ were the best ways to learn English (Table 5.6). Authentic materials include TV, radio, films, newspapers and books. Although most of them thought living in English-speaking countries was the best way to learn English, they also admitted that it was often impractical for ordinary Japanese students. What learners

in Japan can do is to mimic as far as possible a similar environment to living in English-speaking countries, such as communicating with an assistant language teacher (who is a native speaker of English), or engaging with authentic English materials from the Internet, TV or films. One junior high school teacher expressed the importance of having an enjoyable experience in learning English as follows:

Language learners need enjoyable experiences to motivate them, such as competitive activities in the class, listening to the lyrics of the songs or watching films which could ease any difficulty in studying English. (Tamiko)

One participant said, “Students can be motivated if they feel a sense of attainment.” A sense of attainment is also an important factor in learning English. Without it, it is hard to continue studying English, because it is not a second language but a foreign language in Japan, which means most Japanese people can easily survive without English. A sense of attainment appears to be related to goals for learners, since learners feel a sense of attainment when they achieve a goal. It is considered that there are two types of goals, that is, ‘performance goals’ where the main concern is to look good and ‘learning goals’ where an active interest is to increase knowledge and understanding (Williams and Burden 1997). In my view, although either goal can lead to a sense of attainment in classroom settings, ‘learning goals’ can be versatile and can be pursued irrespective of time or place.

One junior high school teacher mentioned pronouncing English while writing it, remembering vocabulary in the context, continuing to study English. Another high school teacher emphasised the learners’ needs which enable them to become and keep

motivated. One example he gave was qualification for job interview. Some companies require job applicants to have a qualification in English proficiency.

The responses from junior high and high school teachers were slightly different, that is, studying English in junior high school seems more subject-oriented whereas in high school it seems more needs-oriented. In Japan, as English is taught for the first time in junior high school, most students are interested in their new subject at first. However it appears that English gradually becomes a means for passing entrance examinations.

With regard to exposure to language which can best facilitate language learning, six respondents cited 'a lot of input' while 3 identified 'communication'. 'A lot of input' refers to TV, radio, films, newspapers, books, songs and extensive reading. Two participants emphasised that 'a lot of input' should be with interest or entertainment, because these are the important factors in enhancing learners' motivation.

One wrote "exposure to a situation where one can get necessary information only through English", which seems to be survival English. Another participant elaborated on the advantages of studying in a communicative way, such as conversation, where learners can ask a question on the spot or ask the speaker to repeat, which means that the proficiency level can be adjusted according to each learner. One example is reading a newspaper with an explanation in English. One participant explained her experience as a student in the UK as follows:

Without an explanation such as, "this family name implies wealth, or getting a suntan implies wealth", it can be more difficult to understand the true

meaning of articles in a newspaper. (Kazumi)

This task of reading a newspaper with explanation in English requires multiple skills such as listening to the teacher's explanation and/or asking about obscure points in the target language.

It turned out that the two groups of successful learners held the same beliefs about 'the best ways to learn English', i.e. 'using English' and 'living in English speaking countries'. By contrast, a slightly different picture emerged from the beliefs about 'the best ways to learn English' of less successful learners (Table 5.7).

A striking difference between the beliefs of successful and less successful learners is the fact that categories of 'memorise vocabulary' and 'study grammar' are considered as 'the best ways to learn English' only by less successful learners. This is probably because less successful learners have not yet acquired basic knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar, whereas successful learners take these basics for granted.

Table 5.7: The beliefs about ‘The best ways to learn English’ of university students (less successful learners: N=22)

Categories	Frequency
Memorise vocabulary	7
Live in English speaking countries	6
Study grammar	4
Watching films	3
Conversation with native speakers	3
Reading aloud	2
Interest in English	1

The categories to which we need to pay attention are ‘live in English speaking countries’ and ‘conversation with native speakers’ commented on by less successful learners. Although it appears on the surface that these comments are the same as those of successful learners, I would argue that what is really meant by these comments is conceptually different in each group. Firstly, a number of Japanese people including less successful learners in this study believe that they can become fluent speakers simply by living abroad. There was a catchphrase of an English conversation school in Japan saying that “a large number of people go abroad dreaming of acquiring proficiency of a language, and most of them come back in vain”. This is the experience for a considerable number of learners who have studied abroad. Successful learners, on the other hand, recognise the pitfalls and acknowledge the importance of how best to spend the time in a host country.

Secondly, the less successful learners' comment of 'conversation with native speakers' could also involve a notion that they can improve English skills merely by exchanging greetings with native speakers. Moreover, 'native speakers' may only mean 'white Americans' as Mizuta (2003) suggests. In this respect, successful learners have a different perspective. Their concern is not the race of the people with whom they converse, but using English itself. In fact Takuya talked to Japanese people in English, and Mariko had a lot of Chinese friends to talk to in English. This attitude seems partly because they had friends from various countries during their stay in the UK, but mainly because they recognised that English is a means of communication when conversing with people from various countries.

5.1.2 Practice to improve English skills

As beliefs are related to learners' choice of strategy use, i.e. their practice to improve their English skills, investigating learners' practice is likely to provide an insight into beliefs about learning a language. I shall now compare the successful learners' practice to improve their English skills with those of their counterparts, using the data collected from the four students studying in the UK and university students.

Tomoki's way of reading books was to read a book more than once; for example, he preferred reading five books twice to reading ten books once. This way of reading books was also mentioned by Mariko. Tomoki did not study 'English' but he studied his field in English. When he read books, he tried not to use a dictionary too often and guessed the meaning of unknown words. As for listening and speaking, he joined in

conversations with British people in a positive manner. He became confident about studying English when he thought he had mastered English basic grammar.

Although Takuya did not practise English listening and speaking in Japan, his practice changed in the UK;

In the UK, when I eat dinner or lunch, I watch TV or listen to radio. Whenever I go out, I've got a portable radio to listen. I am listening to something in English all the time. Speaking practice in the UK is just meet my friends and have a conversation with them, not try to improve my speaking but to just enjoy myself.

With respect to vocabulary and grammar, he continued to explain his practice;

In Japan I try to memorise vocabulary just to pass an entrance exam for university, but in England I just try to use them in a real conversation rather than writing them at the desk. I studied grammar quite a lot in Japan because grammar is the most important point in English study in Japan.

Mariko did nothing about English listening in Japan, but she made efforts in the UK to improve each aspect of her English as follows:

For speaking practice, when I listened to an unknown English expression used by somebody in conversation, I consult a dictionary and use the expression next time. I carry a note pad all the time to take a note when I find a difficult English phrase, and I look for the phrase in my dictionary at home. When I write English sentences, I consult an English usage dictionary to check the grammar. I read a lot of books in the UK with attention to the important points within limited time.

As the English grammar which Satomi learned in Japan was very helpful for using English in the UK, she thanked the Japanese education system where studying English grammar was treated as important. When she came to the UK, she already had a knowledge of basic English grammar, but did not have an experience of using it. Without the foundation of grammar, she felt she could not have improved her English easily in the UK. What she tried to do in the UK was to keep talking and using English. Although Krashen (1981) claims that a learner who is overly concerned with grammatical accuracy may hesitate to communicate, the foundation of grammar is likely to be necessary for flexible communication.

The data collected from an open-ended questionnaire of less successful learners revealed a contrasting result (Table 5.8). Nineteen students (86%) wrote 'rote memorisation of vocabulary', eighteen students (82%) used a word which means 'boring repetition' in Japanese to describe their study habit, and six students (27%) stated 'do grammar exercises'. Surprisingly, most of the students used the same Japanese word which suggests single-mindedly, often with a mechanical connotation. When they write English words many times for memorisation, it seems that they write them mechanically without attention to how they are used. Although it is understandable that these comments come from the situation where they study English as a subject, their study habit could spoil their enjoyment of learning, and impede their development.

Table 5.8: Practice to improve English skills

Less successful learners: University students	Successful learners: Students studying in the UK
Rote memorisation of vocabulary	Use new vocabulary in a real situation
Boring repetition	Study one's field in English
Do grammar exercises and memorise them	Read books (try not use a dictionary)
Write something in English until they memorise them	Try to join in conversation in English
Reading (look up unknown words in a dictionary and translate the sentence into English)	Carry a note pad ⇒ take a note ⇒ consult a dictionary
	Listen to something in English

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between students' beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies (Abraham and Vann 1987; Mantle-Bromley 1995; Benson and Lor 1999; Victori 1999; Yang 1999), and the results have revealed a cyclical relationship between learners' beliefs and strategy use. Benson and Lor (1999: 459) comment that *"If learners believe that the best way to learn a foreign language is to memorise its component parts, it is likely that they will hold positive attitudes towards vocabulary and grammar learning"*. The case of the less successful learners in this study closely corresponds to their comment. Beliefs of less successful learners about the best way to learn English was 'memorise vocabulary', and their practice 'rote memorisation of vocabulary' fitted their beliefs.

5.1.3 Self-concept and attribution

Individuals' views of themselves as learners are important for their perceived successes and failures in language learning, as Williams and Burden (1997) argue. I have therefore attempted to compare the attributions of the successful learners and less successful learners in this study, using the data collected from the four students studying in the UK and the university students.

Two of the four successful students studying in the UK (Satomi and Takuya) considered that they were good at learning English, whereas the remaining two (Mariko and Tomoki) said they did not think they were. Satomi thought that she could learn a language easily because she was not afraid about making mistakes. Although many Japanese people are considered as perfectionists, she just corrected the way she had spoken if she had made mistakes. Her belief about learning a foreign language was that it was impossible for non-native speakers to be perfect in using the language. It was important to use the language with a vague grasp of the meaning even if one could not understand perfectly.

Takuya was enjoying what he was doing. In this sense, he thought that he was good at learning English.

I don't think my skill of learning languages is very good because I'm not good at memorising something compared with other people. However, when I meet new people, I don't hesitate to speak to them, which is very important to learn languages.

Mariko did not think she was good at learning English because the result of her long period of studying English did not satisfy her. Although she had thought she would be able to read English books without any difficulty when she became a doctoral student a couple of years previously in Japan, it was still difficult for her in the strict sense. This raises a significant issue relating to what each individual means by 'good', because Mariko was regarded as a proficient user of English by others although she herself did not think so. This finding is in line with the contention of Williams and Burden (1999) that *"an examination of what 'success' or 'doing well' means to individuals is omitted in most research into attributions"*.

Tomoki considered his special proficiency in English was just because he had lived in the UK for four and half long years. He also thought that he was fortunate to live with British people. Mariko and Tomoki seem to have an unassuming way of thinking about their proficiency in English. Takuya and Mariko thought they had a weak memory, which reflects the contention of Lightbown and Spada (1999) that successful language learners may not be strong in all factors of aptitude.

Kelly (1967) defines attribution as the process by which individuals interpret the causes of events in their environment. Satomi identified two reasons; she had a good British teacher who knew both her strong and weak points and gave her appropriate advice about studying English. Another reason was Satomi's personality; she was unafraid of making mistakes and her positive attitudes in speaking English. She tried to join in conversation whenever she found some people talking in English.

Mariko liked languages and was interested in the differences between languages. She did not find studying English painful because she wanted to achieve her aim of reading English novels and talking with foreign friends in English, even though they were not native speakers of English. Studying English was something to help her accomplish what she wanted to do. Mariko achieves a suitable combination of the kind of motivation defined by Gardner (1985), i.e. a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language, plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language. Interestingly, when she spoke in English, she felt that her personality had changed and could live an unrestricted way of life, namely, she could be bold. This is in line with the contention of Williams and Burden (1997) that the learning of a foreign language involves a change in self-image because language is a part of one's identity. While speaking in English, Mariko had no fear of using incorrect honorific language in Japanese. She would be embarrassed if she made mistakes in Japanese, because if you commit a breach of honorifics in Japanese, you would be seen as a rude or uneducated person (Koyama 1992). When she spoke in English, however, she did not mind a minor mistake. It seems that this experience and her interests in English were the motives for her study.

Tomoki thought he was fortunate because he used only English in the department of the British university where he had no Japanese classmates. He had lived with four British friends for three years. Such favourable experiences made him use English all the time. This coincides with research reported by Isabelli-García (2006) which has shown that immersion in the target culture is valuable to language learners. Another story of the source of Tomoki's fighting spirit was interesting. His motivation came from his

friend's abusive comment in Japan. He failed to pass a university entrance exam and was preparing for the following year's entrance exam. However, before taking the exam, he came to the UK. His friend said "Are you running away from Japan?" He was shocked by the comment and thought he had to be successful in the UK. Ellis (1994) suggests that confidence or friendship may be important as motivating factors. According to Williams and Burden (1997), specific emotions such as pride and shame are related to outcomes attributed to perceived internal, controllable elements. In Tomoki's case, it seems that his pride and shame affected his motivation favourably. Although Tomoki failed to pass a university entrance exam, failure can be an agent which increases one's work morale or decreases it, as Dörnyei (2001) claims. These were the reasons Tomoki was doing well as a language learner.

In the attributional process, Weiner (1979) identified three causal dimensions: stability, locus, and control, which would affect the perceived causes. The four successful students in this study appeared to think that their ability and effort were controllable and they subsequently used their negative experiences as motivational drivers to improve the learning situation.

Among the 22 university students (less successful learners), 17 students (77%) thought they were not successful as learners of English, three students (14%) wrote of only successful experiences of learning, and two students (9%) mentioned both successful and unsuccessful experiences. Among the 17 students who thought they were unsuccessful learners, 15 students (88%) attributed their failure to lack of effort. This finding exactly coincides with the finding of Fry and Ghosh (1980) that Asian students

were more likely than their Western counterparts to attribute failure to internal causes such as lack of ability or lack of effort, and that Asian students frequently made external attributions for their success. In fact, all the three students who wrote about their successful experiences in my study attributed success to external causes, i.e. their teacher. This finding corresponds to the assertion of Williams et al. (2001) that one further powerful contributing factor to attributions is the cultural dimension whereby different cultural groups are likely to cite different attributions for success and failure. It appears that less successful learners in my study give a clear picture of attributions influenced by the cultural dimension.

Another interesting finding is that no students attribute failure to lack of ability. This is in contrast to the claim by Dörnyei (2001) that unsuccessful learners are likely to attribute their past failures to stable and uncontrollable causes. Instead, a majority of the less successful learners in this study attribute failure to controllable causes, i.e. lack of effort rather than lack of ability, possibly as a means of protecting their self-esteem, as Williams and Burden (1997) suggest. Considering that effort-based attributions are controllable, it would be a fair possibility for them to become better learners.

5.1.4 Changes in beliefs and practices after studying in the UK

Two groups of successful learners were studying in the UK when they participated in the study. To investigate whether their beliefs had changed after a period of time studying in the UK, I shall first present the changes in beliefs and practices of the four students studying in the UK, and then those of the seven teachers of English at secondary school.

All of four students said that their beliefs and practices in language learning had changed after studying in the UK. They all thought that English study in Japan was just a part of studying to pass an exam, but in the UK it was the means of studying their own academic fields. For Mariko this was the third period of study in the UK, and her experience of secondary school days had changed her perception about English. She came to the UK for the first time then and lived there with her family for one year. She realised that English was not only a subject at school but also a means of communication. It was a big surprise for her.

For Takuya, English study in the UK was a part of his enjoyment because he could enjoy using English and at the same time he could learn it. Mariko and Satomi therefore realised that listening and speaking were more important and useful than reading and writing for learning English. Although many researchers report the difficulty of changing beliefs (Kern 1995; Peacock 1998; Kalaja 1995), it is likely that major changes in their environment made the participants' beliefs change possible.

Satomi's way of memorising vocabulary items in Japan was rote learning in alphabetical order. Although rote learning is popular in Japan for preparing exams, students tend to forget what they memorised immediately after passing the exam, which seems a waste of time and effort. In the UK Satomi learned English words by using them in a sentence, and this way of learning these words remained firmly in her memory.

Takuya did not try to memorise grammar or vocabulary in the UK, but instead he tried to use them in a real conversation, which was much more effective for him than trying to memorise them. He thought that language was something which we had to use in a real situation, so it should be very practical. All the four students were aware that Japanese learners of English did not have the chance to speak English in Japan, and thus they appreciated this as an essential way of learning in the UK.

Although a number of studies have shown the difficulty of changing beliefs, Kalaja (1995) suggests that beliefs could vary from context to context. A significant reason for changes in beliefs of four students can therefore be explained as being related to their learning context having changed from Japan to the UK.

The seven teachers of English were asked about their changed beliefs by four questions, i.e. changes in beliefs about learning and teaching, changes in the way you teach, changes of your attitudes towards students, changes of your views on the textbook or teaching material.

Changes in beliefs about learning and teaching

All the seven teachers wrote that their views had changed in some ways. Three of them noticed that their beliefs and attitudes had changed drastically. One participant realised that he could and should use English confidently (even if it was Japanese English), after a conversation with a tutor in the UK. When he was asked by the tutor when he could use English as a means of instruction in Japan, he answered “when I can use native-like English”. He was told that it was nearly impossible to use native-like English and that it

was permissible to use Japanese English in the classroom. His tutor's advice was reasonable since English is not only a subject at school but also a means of communication. Considering that English is not so frequently used as a means of instruction in English classes in Japan, mainly because lack of confidence of teachers, this advice seems practical and acceptable in terms of the context in Japanese school. As beliefs are information people obtain about their learning or teaching, and they could be acquired with advice from other people (Wenden 1999), this teacher's beliefs can be seen to have been shaped by his tutor's advice. By using English in the classroom, teachers can show their self-confidence to students, and students might also feel inspired to use it. The beliefs change of this participant reflects the view of Williams and Burden (1997: 62) that the language teacher needs to convey a sense of self-confidence in using the language.

Participants noticed the increased importance of 'how to use authentic materials', 'teachers' attitudes (positive, supportive, passionate)', 'motivating students' and 'extensive reading'. Specifically, the participants realised that it was a teacher's function in making lessons motivating or demotivating.

Table 5.9: Changes in beliefs about learning and teaching (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
My beliefs and attitudes have changed drastically	3
How to use authentic materials	3
Teachers' attitudes (positive, supportive, passionate)	2
Motivating students	2
Extensive reading	2

Changes in the way you teach

With regard to the changes in beliefs about the way they taught, ‘Using English as a means of instruction’ has four entries; ‘Using authentic materials’ and ‘Introducing interactive activities’ has three entries. The participants appear to emphasise again that using English as a means of instruction and how to use authentic materials are important in their teaching context. As for ‘Introducing interactive activities’, participants gave examples as follows: “Activities dealing with more than two skills, e.g. listening and writing”, “Activities involving explanation with questions to students in pair work or group work”. With regard to ‘Brainstorming’, one participant explained that teachers should give students some time to prepare for main lessons, for example, presenting pictures or authentic materials relevant to main lessons at the beginning of the class. Other entries are as follows: “Giving students homework which enables them to experience English outside the classroom, such as interviewing a native English speaker teacher”, and, “Giving students pronunciation practice regularly”.

Although participants emphasised the importance of using English as a means of instruction, two participants admitted difficulty in doing so in the examination-oriented classes, because the students' perceived needs were only to pass an entrance examination. Students preferred an efficient 'crammed' way of instruction in Japanese and their demand was for their teachers to explain important points for exam questions.

It is considered that the main cause of the change in their beliefs is that the participants took these lessons in the UK and found them very effective. Their educative experiences seemed to have had a great influence on their beliefs.

Table 5.10: Changes in the way you teach (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Using English as a means of instruction	4
Using authentic materials	3
Introducing interactive activities	3
Brainstorming	1

Changes of your attitudes towards students

Six out of seven indicated that their attitudes toward students had changed. Three of them said it was because they could understand students' feelings better as a result of their experience as a student in the UK. They felt that teachers' ability and attitudes could affect the process of learning and that teachers should not get angry with students as a result of their mood of the moment. Other entries were 'positive interaction with students', 'encourage students to have confidence', and 'being generous to students'.

Participants expressed their feeling as students in the UK as follows:

I felt uneasy when I could not understand teachers' explanation or did not know how to study. (Yuka)

I could understand unconfident students' feelings and how they were hurt by teachers' attitudes or comments. (Kazumi)

Taking lessons from several teachers in the UK (both good models and bad models) made participants aware of the role of a teacher, because teachers can change the lessons and students' motivation. One participant confessed that he had not been motivated to teach, but he would like to change his attitudes to become more enthusiastic.

Table 5.11: Changes of your attitudes towards students (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Through experience as a student in the UK	3
Teachers' ability and attitudes affect the process of learning	1
Positive interaction with students	1
Encourage students to have confidence	1
Being generous to students	1

Changes of your views on the textbook or teaching material

Six indicated that their views on the use of textbooks had changed, and one said that he did not change his views because he was convinced of what he had believed. Four identified 'making the most of textbooks creatively' and two cited 'using authentic

materials'. Participants' comments on the textbook were as follows:

Textbook with authentic materials will bridge the gap between grammatical usage and everyday English. (Yuka)

I used to examine students' comprehension by translating the text, but I would like to check their understanding by asking the questions about the content of the text, which may enable them to experience the pleasure of reading English. (Hideki)

Participants recognised the importance of using the textbooks effectively and creatively, in other words, 'how to cook the textbooks'. One of them expressed her surprise that she had found the systematic way of presentation of English pronunciation in the textbooks, although she had not been aware of how to use it effectively. They realised that textbooks could be used in an attractive way, not merely routinely.

Table 5.12: Changes of views on the textbook or teaching material (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Making the most of textbooks creatively	4
Using authentic materials	2

Contrary to Mori's (1999) claim that beliefs cannot be easily or quickly modified, seven teachers of English in this study appeared to change their beliefs after the study-abroad programme. The results suggest the possibility of a positive impact of new experience, such as studying abroad or becoming a student again. The main changes in their beliefs appear to be in turning their attention to psychological factors, such as incentive,

motivation and stress reduction. It might take some time to change their practices in a class because it is usually considered that changes in beliefs precede changes in practices, as Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991) report in their study. However, as teachers' beliefs have a great influence on their general classroom practices, it is believed that changes in their beliefs should have a significant impact when they go back to their classroom in Japan. Considering that paying attention to psychological aspects is not prevalent in most Japanese schools, it is hoped that these teachers of English will promote a new way of teaching in Japan.

These findings may have important implications for the in-service training of teachers of English. According to Brown and McIntyre (1992: 114), in-service teacher education has generally been built on a 'deficit model' of teaching, aimed at overcoming teachers' perceived weaknesses. The deficit approach to in-service education focuses more on teachers' inadequacies than on their own skillfulness. Therefore teachers are unlikely to recognise their valuable expertise and are reluctant to consider their own teaching analytically, because they assume such analysis is a demoralising experience. An emphasis on teachers' weak points is not likely to encourage their existing strengths. The in-service training discussed earlier in the study, however, appeared to follow a productive and encouraging approach because teachers' belief changes were positive and ambitious.

5.1.5 A role as a teacher of English

The seven teachers were asked four questions relating to their role as a teacher of English, i.e. your role as a teacher of English, metaphors for teachers, the qualities of a

good teacher of English, and effective teaching.

Your role as a teacher of English

There are three categories of responses to this question (Table 5.13). ‘A role model as a learner (or a user) of English’ and ‘Help students learn English’ have 5 entries each. As a role model, participants thought that students would be influenced by teachers who were interested in learning English, and that teachers should convey to students that studying English was interesting and pleasurable.

The teachers have given the following examples of how they might help students’ language learning:

I should use more English in the lessons. I would like to help make students feel confident. (Asao & Koji)

I will give learners the opportunity of exposure to English both inside and outside the class. I should be a role model as an English language user. (Hideki)

I will explain the difficult parts with advice about the best ways to study, and I will be a role model as an English learner to show students the pleasure of studying English. Helping learners to become autonomous is a teacher’s role. (Tamiko & Yuka)

These teachers’ roles reflect Feuerstein’s theory of mediation. Williams and Burden (1997) explain mediation theory in the following way. It is considered that learning is enhanced by mediators, who select appropriate stimuli for learners to facilitate their

learning. Participants' comments such as explaining the difficult parts or helping make students feel confident reflect the characteristics of mediation. It is likely that participants understand implicitly the significance of the teacher-as-mediator. These beliefs will eventually have an impact on their classroom teaching, as Woods (1996) argues that structuring the classroom teaching depends on teachers' beliefs about teaching.

Table 5.13: Your role as a teacher of English (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
A role model as a learner (a user) of English	5
Helping students learn English	5
Transmitting knowledge of English	1

There is only one entry under “Transmitting knowledge of English”, but the participant who wrote this also mentioned several other roles belonging to the other two categories. Thus all participants think both facilitating learners to study English and being a role model are important roles for teachers.

Metaphors for teachers

The participants' metaphors can be found in Table 5.14. Although “actor”, “counsellor”, and “entertainer” were not in the list of examples in the questionnaire, more than one participant mentioned these roles as metaphors for teachers. ‘Actor’ has three entries. One participant's comment is as follows:

An actor can perform differently using the same script. Similarly, a teacher

can teach students by adjusting to the level of each student while using the same textbook. (Asao)

‘Sports manager’, ‘counsellor’ and ‘entertainer’ have two entries each. The explanation for “sports manager” was as follows:

As learning is done by students themselves, teachers cannot force them to learn. However, it is a teacher who assists them in learning, and the outcome of learning depends on the ability of the teacher. The role of a teacher is similar to that of a sports manager, because it depends on the ability of a sports manager whether a good athlete can be trained successfully or not. (Tamiko)

One junior high school teacher expressed her opinion that teachers were required to fill various roles by saying that:

When we make teaching materials, we foresee students’ setbacks from the point of view of our roles as counsellors. During lessons we teach like entertainers because how good we are as entertainers can make a big difference as to whether a lesson plan will be successful or not. However I particularly liked the metaphor of a gardener. A gardener 1) seeks for a better way to grow plants; 2) can see far into the future; 3) watches plants carefully and patiently as well as providing care such as adding fertiliser, or finding a shady or sunny place; 4) enjoys growing plants. (Kazumi)

Table 5.14: Metaphors for teachers (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Actor	3
Sports manager	2
Counsellor	2
Entertainer	2
Orchestra conductor	1
Gardener	1
Stagehand in black	1

One interesting metaphor is ‘stagehand in black’. This is a person dealing with scenery or props during Kabuki, a form of traditional Japanese drama. It is a convention of Kabuki that the colour black is regarded as invisible, so it is considered that ‘stagehand in black’ who wears black clothes, cannot be seen by the audience. However, he plays an important role in assisting leading actors on the stage. In an English education context, learners are leading actors and teachers assist them as ‘stagehands in black’.

The traditional way of thinking demonstrated by audio-lingual methods, assumed that learners were considered to know neither the target language nor the ways of learning it, while teachers were deemed to know the language but not the way the language was learned or taught. Although motivation for learning is considered to be intrinsically within the learner, Woods (1996) argues for the alternative assumption that teachers should consider themselves important motivators. The results of this study illustrate his

argument because metaphors such as ‘actor’, ‘sports manager’ and ‘counsellor’ can be motivators. It appeared therefore that participants expressed alternative assumptions to traditional ones. Taking into account the contention of Williams and Burden (1997) that teachers play a significant part in an individual’s motivation, these beliefs expressed as metaphors for teachers imply that these teachers will be likely to act as motivators and mediators in their classrooms.

The qualities of a good teacher of English

There are six categories depicting the qualities of a good teacher of English. In Table 5.15, the first three categories are concerned with psychological factors. These are:

“Being able to understand students’ needs, feelings and progress”;

“Being passionately involved in education”;

“Being able to interest students in studying English”.

Table 5.15: The qualities of a good teacher of English (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Understanding students’ needs, feelings, and progress	3
Passionately involvement in education	3
Encouraging students’ interest in the study of English	3
Being oneself a user of English	3
Transmitting knowledge of English smoothly	3
Organising and planning lessons	2

The latter two categories in Table 5.15 are concerned with pedagogy:

“Being able to transmit knowledge of English smoothly”;

“Being able to organise lessons”.

“Being a user of English” seems to be concerned with both aspects, that is, psychological factors and pedagogy, because proficiency in English is necessary for anyone to be a user of English and students are likely to be more motivated by teachers who use English in the classroom as the main language of instruction. This result shows that participants appreciate the psychological factors in education.

Considering the situation of English language education in Japan, where many learners and some teachers have difficulty in using English, being a competent user of English is one of factors necessary in order to acquire a positive self-image. With respect to learners, Williams and Burden (1997) maintain that encouraging a positive self-image is an important function for teachers of a foreign language because learners who feel competent are inclined to be successful learners.

Effective teaching

When asked to define effective teaching, entries about ‘incentive, motivation and stress reduction’ are the biggest in frequency. The others are ‘learn something through English (‘something’ refers to culture, global issues)’, ‘opportunities to use English’, ‘teaching students how to learn’. Hence, psychological factors are again focused on by the participants.

Table 5.16: Effective teaching (N=7)

Categories	Frequency
Incentive, motivation, stress reduction	4
Learning something through English	2
Opportunities to use English	1
Teaching students how to learn	1

To give students incentives and motivation, participants thought that having students involved in classroom activities, such as group work or pair work, would be effective.

One participant gave an example as follows:

If the group consists of mixed proficiency students, high proficiency students could explain the difficult parts to others. (Koji)

As an example of stress reduction, one participant proposed extensive reading.

In extensive reading, it is preferable to choose easier books which can be read without using a dictionary, and it should be reading for pleasure without stress. (Hideki)

It was also mentioned by one participant that teachers should use plenty of English as the main language of instruction, and give students opportunities to use the English learned in lessons.

Most of the existing good-teacher studies are positivistic (Ericksen 1984, Bennett 1987, Rosenshine 1971), where the main concerns are with measuring, correlating, and generalisation. The findings from these studies are, however, unhelpful to many teachers,

partly because the findings are vague, and also because good teachers have different personalities (Williams and Burden 1997). In this study, however, the open-ended questionnaire and interviews enabled the participants to express their individual beliefs at great length, and, for the most part, their responses were not simply expressed as numbers.

Brown and McIntyre (1992) report another good-teacher study, which collected the opinions of students in the UK. Although their findings are more helpful for understanding the characteristics of good teachers, it still seems difficult to define a good teacher because of the range of factors involved. Williams and Burden (1997) suggest ‘an inner exploration of oneself’ as an alternative approach to attempting to identify the characteristics of good teachers, which implies the need for a more psychological approach. The findings of the present study indicate that participants try to understand not only the pedagogical aspects but also the impact of psychological factors on language learning.

5.1.6 A model of English for learners

The data that were collected from the three professors of English will be used here to answer the second research question, particularly with regard to a model of English for learners. To teachers and learners of English, the model to be aimed at appears to be significant as well as problematic. I attempted to investigate the beliefs of both Japanese professors of English and Japanese learners of English about native-like English and ‘World Englishes’ and to explore the impact of their beliefs on learning English. The data was collected from three groups of participants, that is, professors of English, the

four students studying in the UK, and the secondary students, all of whom are successful learners.

5.1.6.1 Professors' beliefs about native-like English and World Englishes

Prof. Sakata's beliefs

Prof. Sakata did not consider that World Englishes were not good, or learners should not use them. However, from the perspective of intelligibility, he believed that learners should learn so-called standard English. Therefore he did not subscribe to World Englishes without reservation. From his experience that he could not understand English with a strong accent, he was concerned that Japanese English could cause the same problem. Therefore, learners should get rid of any strong Japanese accent. He expressed his beliefs about teaching English as follows:

Although tapes of varieties of English can be used for listening comprehension, the model by which to learn English pronunciation should be standard British or American. When I teach phonetics to prospective English teachers, I make them pronounce words in the exam, as well as doing the written test, because they have to teach intelligible English in the future.

As for English education in junior high or high school (secondary education), Prof. Sakata thought it a good idea to give information about World Englishes, and to encourage students to use English even if their English was not necessarily British or American. However, he proposed the following conditions:

Teachers should also tell the students that World Englishes have a problem of intelligibility, and that it is preferable to use British or American English because

they are more intelligible. One more thing to be noted is that the concept of World Englishes should be only about pronunciation and not grammar, because if grammar is incorrect, the user of English would be despised.

According to Graddol (2006), grammatical accuracy and native-like pronunciation are required in EFL context since English is a subject in schools. This may explain Prof. Sakata's beliefs about grammar and pronunciation.

Prof. Mukai's beliefs

Prof. Mukai claimed that World Englishes such as Indian English, Singaporean English and Malaysian English already existed and were used. However, as Japan is an EFL country, she stated the situation of teaching English in Japan as follows:

We have no choice but to teach British or American English since there is no neutral English as lingua franca nor any established Japanese English.

Her beliefs about native-like English and World Englishes were that teachers did not have to require students to pronounce precisely British or American English, as English was mainly used among non-native speakers. This is supported by Jenkins (2003) who claims that English can be used mainly among L2 speakers without any native speaker involvement. After teaching English on the basis of the British or American model, teachers should subsequently inform students that there are other forms of English used in countries like India or Singapore.

Prof. Yamano's beliefs

With regard to native speakers, although Prof. Yamano admitted that they had native speakers' intuition, he claimed that even native speakers had to learn a wide vocabulary or writing style through education in order to become intelligent English users. He

believed that the English of educated non-native speakers was better than that of uneducated native speakers, which fits with the argument of Swales (1993). Prof. Yamano stated his beliefs about World Englishes as follows:

If Indian or Japanese English refers to just an aspect of pronunciation, not grammar, I agree with using a variety of English because it then acquires a local identity. Varieties of English don't necessarily have to meet the standard of American or British English, as long as they are intelligible. Speaking a grammatically correct sentence with a strong local accent is much better than speaking a grammatically incorrect sentence with a native-like accent.

This comment by Prof. Yamano seems to be in line with the argument of Crystal (2003) who suggests that people in some countries may want to use English in their own way different from native speakers. Although it might be better to choose either American or British English as a model to avoid confusion at the beginners' level, Prof. Yamano claimed that it was important to expose learners to varieties of English.

Prof. Yamano was concerned about English education in Japan because beliefs or attitudes of some Japanese English teachers seemed to be problematic. They thought that native-like pronunciation was the necessity, and that English with a Japanese accent was poor English. They regarded American English as authentic and Japanese English as an imitation. One possible cause of these teachers' beliefs might be that Japanese people respond strongly to the aesthetic of English pronunciation. The beliefs of these teachers are influenced by attitudes of "to respect the superior authority of native speakers" (Graddol 2006: 83). Prof. Yamano disagreed with these teachers' opinions and contended that the educated speakers' use of English had nothing to do with being either

native or non-native.

As for English spelling and pronunciation, Prof. Yamano expressed the following opinion:

English spelling should have regular rules: for example, the plural form of symposium should be symposiums, instead of symposia. The relationship of spelling and pronunciation should be as close as possible: for example, the British pronunciation of 'twenty' is better than the American one, whereas the American pronunciation of 'park' with 'r' sound is better than the British one. The British spelling of 'programme' is useless because we can understand it without additional 'me'.

Summary of the three professors' beliefs

Prof. Sakata was rather more favourable towards native-like English and cautious about World Englishes, whereas Prof. Mukai and Prof. Yamano were favourable towards World Englishes. However, there are two points in common to all three professors:

- (1) The varieties of English should only relate to pronunciation, not grammar;
- (2) Although a model for learners should initially be standard British or American English, it is better to later expose learners to the varieties of English.

5.1.6.2 Four students' beliefs about native-like English and World Englishes

Although Tomoki could tolerate other people speaking Japanese English, he did not want to use it:

I would like to speak English like a native speaker, especially a British speaker.

I like the British prime minister's way of speaking because it sounds intelligent, whereas the American president doesn't sound intelligent. So long as we study English, we have to make it similar to native-like English.

When Tomoki spoke English, he felt that his personality changed; it became much stronger than when he spoke in Japanese. With respect to culture, his view was as follows:

When we talk to British people, we need to know about British culture. Otherwise, we can be hurt, because British expression is too direct and sarcastic compared to indirect and roundabout Japanese expression.

Tomoki considered a native speaker to be an authoritative role model just as Graddol (2006) suggests that EFL (English as a foreign language) emphasises the importance of 'native speaker language behaviour'.

Mariko could also tolerate English with a local accent as long as it was intelligible. Her view about language learning and culture was as follows.

As I think that a language emerges from its cultural roots, learners of English should learn British or American culture together with the language. When a language is used, there is a background behind the expression.

Mariko's beliefs about culture are shown in the comment by Graddol (2006), which describes the attitudes of EFL learners who would like to learn about the culture and society of native speakers.

Takuya thought that native-like English was cool and he did not like Japanese English.

He said in the interview, “People who speak local varieties of English are those who failed when attempting to learn English”. This severe comment by Takuya can be found in Graddol (2006), who points out that EFL learners could easily be failures when measured against the standard of a native speaker.

Satomi’s beliefs about native-like English were that “*Although it is better to speak with an accent than to be unable to speak, native-like pronunciation is desirable because it is easier to understand. English with a local accent is okay providing native speakers can understand it*”. Satomi also regarded a native speaker as an authority in line with Graddol’s (2006) description of EFL approaches where the learner is required to respect the superior authority of native speakers.

Summary of the good language learners’ beliefs

To summarise the four good language learners’ beliefs:

- (1) All learners have beliefs that native-like English is desirable and favourable;
- (2) Three out of four tolerate English with a local accent providing it is intelligible;
- (3) Their aspiration to native-like English is strong and their beliefs about this are different from that of the two professors.

5.1.6.3 Secondary school students’ beliefs about native-like English and World Englishes

According to their grades of the English licensing examination, the English proficiency of the 17 high school students was high. Students were given a piece of written information about usage of English in the world. Just after getting the information, the

students filled in a questionnaire. They answered questions at two points in time: before they obtained the information about World Englishes, and after they had been informed about it. Below each question, there were blank spaces to describe their thinking.

The preliminary questionnaire revealed that these students were interested in English and their goal of learning English was very high. However, they thought Japanese features of English were difficult to eliminate. The written information and a part of the questionnaire have been translated and are given in the Appendix 1-2.

Secondary school students' acceptance of World Englishes

Nine students made a positive change towards World Englishes (Table 5.17).

Table 5.17: Acceptance of World Englishes (N=17)

Continue to approve	5 (29%)
Positive change towards World Englishes	9 (53%)
Continue to disapprove	3 (18%)

One student wrote in blank spaces as follows.

I was surprised that the number of native speakers was far smaller than that of non-native speakers, so I came to think English with each country's feature would be OK. I want to use English and communicate with people of other countries.

Another wrote,

Japanese language has various regional dialects, and each dialect has its own culture. In the same manner, the way of respecting each 'English with a regional accent' can be considered as a cultural exchange. If English is forced to be

standardised, that could be seen as an act of vandalism.

Although Kern (1995) reports that learner beliefs changed very little, these students seem to have changed their beliefs about English after getting information about how English is learned and used.

Secondary school students' aspiration for fluent native-like English

The second question was about the students' aspiration to speak fluent native-like English. Although none of them made a change towards greater aspiration for native-like English, thirteen students continued to have aspirations to speak native-like English (Table 5.18).

Table 5.18: Aspiration for fluent native-like English (N=17)

Continue to have an aspiration for native-like English	13 (76%)
A change towards more aspiration for native-like English	0 (0%)
A change towards less aspiration for native-like English	4 (24%)

According to their description, although they were tolerant toward varieties of English, they wanted to make an effort to master English so that they could speak like a native speaker. Probably this is because most of them had a high proficiency and interest in English, which made them set high standards for themselves.

One student expressed her aspiration for native-like English as follows:

After I learned the idea about 'World Englishes' I became more tolerant than before toward accepting the varieties of English. Nevertheless, my belief that I should make an effort to acquire native-like proficiency has remained unchanged.

One student who made a change for less aspiration for native-like English wrote:

In Japan, there is an atmosphere in which the goal is the mastery of native-like English, for many teachers use the word “native”. I felt attracted to the word “native”, but after learning about the fact that many non-native speakers use or study English in the world, I think varieties of English are important, too.

Although learners of English in Japan appear to be influenced by their teachers to have an aspiration for native-like English, Canagarajah (1999) warns that overestimating a native speaker is problematic.

Secondary school students' attitudes towards Japanese non-native speakers

The third question concerns the attitudes towards the non-native speaker. Twelve students out of seventeen changed to a more positive attitude towards the non-native speaker (Table 5.19). This is a remarkable change. One of them described the reason for her change as follows:

After knowing that not only Japanese but people of many other countries use their own versions of English, I am now more comfortable with my English having Japanese English features.

Another wrote,

Although English is an international language and many people use English in the world, the number of native speakers of English is far smaller than that of non-native speakers. I was surprised to know this fact. I came to think that a Japanese accent was one of the characteristics. It would be far better to use English than to hesitate about using it for fear of trifles.

The belief change of these students indicates a more positive approach towards

language learning. If the students had had inappropriate beliefs about English, they would have had difficulty in making progress, just as Mantle-Bromley (1995) claims that misconceptions about language learning may hinder learners' progress in language study.

Table 5.19: Positive attitudes towards Japanese non-native speakers (N=17)

Remains positive attitudes	4 (24%)
A change for more positive attitudes	12 (71%)
Remains negative attitudes	1 (6%)

5.1.6.4 Summary: A model of English for learners

There was a gap between the professors' beliefs and successful language learners' beliefs about native-like English. Three reasons are worth mentioning. The first one is that two professors in this research seemed to advocate World Englishes. In reality, however, as Prof. Yamano mentioned, there are many English teachers in Japan who think mastering native-like English is extremely important. Therefore, Japanese learners in this research could have been influenced by teachers like these. The second reason is that successful language learners studying in the UK set higher standards for themselves than normal. That could be a reason for their strong aspiration for native-like English. The third reason might be that they are influenced and attracted by British language and culture during their stay in the UK.

The third group of participants suggested two possibilities. The first one is "certain beliefs about English language learning make learners less apprehensive about using the target language". The second one is "learners come to have such beliefs when they are

given information about World Englishes”. Japanese learners of English have the potential for changing their beliefs towards their target language in order to overcome their inhibitions about using it. The changes in their beliefs would have a positive effect on their learning process. In other words, the concept of World Englishes could be an encouraging trigger for learners who hesitate to use English because of their Japanese English.

5.2 Emerging themes

The following additional themes emerged as the research was carried out:

- Effective approaches to take;
- The need to avoid perfectionism;
- The importance of positive attitudes towards learning English;
- The need to use English and avoid Japanese.

5.2.1 Effective approaches to take

With regard to the beliefs about ‘most important aspects of learning English’, both successful and less successful learners had the same beliefs and reasons; i.e. ‘vocabulary’ was considered one of the most important aspects of learning English because difficulty in speaking, listening, and reading stem from a small vocabulary. However, their approaches to learning vocabulary were significantly different. The less successful language learners’ most common way of memorising vocabulary was by writing words down mechanically without attention to how they are used, whereas successful language learners were inclined to use new vocabulary in a real situation in order to memorise them. As one of the successful learners stated in the interview,

“Japanese learners rarely have an opportunity to use new words in the context of actual communication, which makes it difficult for Japanese learners to acquire an ability to ‘use’ the new words, but they can only ‘know’ them”.

An approach to reading was also different between two groups of learners. Less successful language learners were more likely to look up unknown words in a dictionary, translate the sentence into English and memorise sentences. However, when successful language learners read books, they tried not to use a dictionary if there were some unknown words. This can be construed that successful language learners can tolerate the ambiguities. This finding could fit in with the claim of Mori (1999) who presents a statistical finding indicating that ‘avoidance of ambiguity’ is associated with lower achievement.

When people live or study abroad, it was emphasised by successful language learners that how to spend the time was important. This was also considered as ‘an approach to studying abroad’. While it is obvious that ‘what you do’ or ‘what you study’ is important in the process of learning, ‘how to approach it’ seems to have a more significant impact on progress in learning.

5.2.2 The need to avoid perfectionism

Dörnyei (2001) suggests that failure in learning a language is very common in spite of a long period of time studying foreign languages, and people tend to regard their failure as the result of their negative ability. Therefore, many people may think that the ability to learn a language is necessary and that an expert in a foreign language must be a

perfectionist. According to the findings of this study, however, it seems that perfectionists might find it difficult to study languages. This is a finding that warrants further investigation in a large scale study.

In Satomi's opinion, if we are too serious-minded in learning a foreign language, we are not likely to be successful. She talked about her experience of studying Spanish. Although she had studied only the present tense of Spanish grammar then, she tried to use Spanish at a local restaurant in Spain. Japanese people tend to be perfectionists, but she believed that it was impossible to acquire a foreign language perfectly. Therefore, Satomi's strong beliefs are 'avoid perfectionism', and 'don't be afraid of making a mistake and just use it.'

Successful language learners' way of reading books, i.e. trying not to use a dictionary if there were some unknown words, can be considered as their inclination to avoid perfectionism. Tomoki admitted that he was not able to understand BBC news or English films perfectly, but Tomoki and Mariko agreed in thinking that improvement in listening comprehension would take place gradually, not suddenly. It appears important that language learners should tolerate imperfect understanding of what they listen to, in other words, they should not be perfectionists.

5.2.3 The importance of positive attitudes towards learning English

Anyone can guess that having positive attitudes towards learning English is conducive to the process of learning. The problem here is, however, that it is often difficult to have such attitudes in a country where English is not a second language but a foreign

language; in other words, most Japanese people can easily survive without English. In fact, two of the less successful learners in this study commented “We don’t need English in Japan”. Maiklad (2001) reports the situation in Thailand where English is taught as a foreign language. The Thai students believed that successful language learning was based on the one factor, that is, learners’ positive attitudes towards the target language. It therefore appeared to be important to have positive attitudes towards learning English particularly in the countries where English is a foreign language.

Gardner (1985) defines motivation referring to a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language. Relating to these three factors of motivation, i.e. effort, desire, and favourable attitudes, Williams, Burden, and Al-Baharna (2001) report an interesting finding from their study which investigated teachers’ and students’ perceptions of reasons for success and failure in learning English within a non-Western culture. One of the results both in teachers’ and students’ attributions for success was that attitudes towards learning the English language were seen as carrying greater significance than the amount of effort expended. This result shows how important it is to have favourable attitudes towards learning the language.

Successful language learners (secondary students) in this study liked English as a subject at school, and as a language. This can be seen as one of the three factors of motivation defined by Gardner (1985), i.e. favourable attitudes towards learning the language. The four successful learners studying in the UK also stated that they liked and enjoyed learning English, which is likely to have played a significant part in their

continuing motivation to learn English.

5.2.4 The need to use English and avoid Japanese

The beliefs about ‘learning a foreign language’ of successful language learners and less successful learners were different. The successful learners thought ‘learning a foreign language’ involved ‘use a language’, whereas the less successful learners believed that it involved ‘memorise vocabulary’ and ‘study grammar’.

While it was easier for the four successful language learners to use a language as they were studying in the UK, they tried to use English in various ways. Satomi learned expressions from everyday conversation. Takuya liked meeting new people and having a conversation with them, and he tried to use language in a real situation rather than to study it in front of a desk. Throughout their conversation in English, it can be considered that they were actually practising listening and speaking, in other words, they were learning a language by using it.

Tomoki improved his English because he studied his academic field in English, not by studying ‘English’ itself. He used English as a means of studying ‘something’, i.e. reading books in his academic field and writing assignments. Thus ‘using English’ involves not only listening and speaking but also reading and writing. Tomoki said *“using English is important, that is, watching TV, listening to radio or the lyrics of the songs, and talking to people in order to acquire the means of communication”*. In order to learn a foreign language, Mariko accentuated the importance of a learning environment where one can use a language. Without a situation where a language was

used, she thought that the language could not be a means of communication.

All of the successful language learners tried not to speak Japanese during their stay in the UK. Satomi did not use Japanese for six months after coming to the UK except when she phoned her mother in Japan. Mariko tried to have many non-Japanese friends who were not necessarily native speakers of English. In Takuya's case, he invariably avoided using Japanese even when he talked with Japanese people. When I met him for the first time, as he was talking with several Japanese people in English, I thought he was not Japanese, but Chinese or Korean. Takuya mentioned a reason to avoid Japanese as follows:

Many Japanese students come to England in a group, or with people from Japan, which is a problem. It's the worst thing to do to speak Japanese during the stay in the UK. I didn't pay any money at all to come here, but my parents did, so I feel sorry for them if I speak Japanese here in the UK.

During his stay in the UK, his beliefs and practices about 'avoiding Japanese' were unshakable. It has been shown that successful learners directed their efforts to use English, which was supported by the theoretical basis of a communicative approach that we learn a language through using the language to interact meaningfully with other people (Williams and Burden 1997). Successful language learners appeared to enjoy communication with others in the target language as well as paying close attention to the system of the language, as Ridley (1997) suggests.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

While previous studies on learner beliefs attempted to find consistency rather than variability, Kalaja (1995) claims that the generalisability of findings should be less of a concern as the goal of research on learner beliefs could be the description of beliefs which are considered to be variable in nature. In this thesis, eight categories of learners' belief systems classified by Richards and Lockhart (1994) were investigated: beliefs about the nature of English; beliefs about speakers of English; beliefs about the four language skills; beliefs about teaching; beliefs about language learning; beliefs about appropriate classroom behaviour; beliefs about self; beliefs about goals. As I have argued so far, although it seems impossible to find one good way for successful language learning which can be applied to all language learners since each individual has different characteristics, the issues raised in this thesis could provide an insight into what is needed for *some* successful language learning.

6.1 Beliefs of successful and less successful learners about language learning

This study had two research questions. The first research question was: What are successful and less successful Japanese language learners' beliefs about learning English? The outcome of the study identified that the beliefs of successful and less successful language learners were similar in certain respect, and different in others. With regard to certain beliefs, such as the beliefs about the most important aspects of learning English, both the successful learners and the less successful learners had the

same beliefs. However, with regard to the beliefs about ‘learning a foreign language’, there were no similarities between the successful learners and the less successful learners. As for differences, the successful learners thought ‘learning a foreign language’ involved acquiring a means of communication and using a language, whereas the less successful learners believed that it involved memorising vocabulary, studying grammar, and English conversation. It was revealed from the findings, however, that what we needed to focus on was not only similarities and differences of their beliefs but also the reasons why they had these beliefs or how they tried to approach their beliefs.

Implications are drawn with regard to the nature of learning and to language teaching. Concerning the attitudes towards the target culture, although Nakata (1995) suggests that language learners do not have to assimilate the target culture, some successful language learners in my study indicated that they had a strong longing for the target culture. In my opinion, for some language learners, a longing for the target culture could be an effective source for developing their motivation at some point of their process of learning, even if not the whole process nor the only goal of language learning. After acquiring the target language to some extent, language learners could have their own L1 identity apart from the target culture. Language learning could be a love affair in that we need to fall in love with the target language or culture at some point of the process of learning in order to facilitate our studying the language.

Motivational drivers are not only love of the social and cultural dimensions of the language, but also love of a particular language as a system, a point which was identified by successful language learners in the study (secondary students). More than

half of them (53%) liked English because of its pronunciation and rhythm, the brevity, rationality of the grammar, and their interest in the origin of English. This finding is in line with Mercer's (2009) result that advanced EFL learners' motivation was related to the linguistic system of English such as its sound and flow. Thus, motivational drivers could be various and individually different.

Students studying in the UK (successful learners) expressed the source of their motivation from various aspects. For Takuya, English study was a part of his enjoyment during his stay in the UK, and this is just what he liked to do. If he did not like it, Takuya continued, he could not have any motivation at all. Mariko wanted to achieve her aim of reading English novels and talking with foreign friends in English. Studying English was something to help her accomplish what she wanted to do. Satomi had two motivational drivers, i.e. a desire to read Shakespeare in the original, and a painful experience when she could not respond in English when asked the way by a foreigner in Japan. Tomoki's motivation also came from his fighting spirit towards a painful experience by his friend's criticism in Japan described in the preceding chapter. These findings are in line with a constructivist approach to motivation which postulates that each individual is motivated differently (Williams and Burden 1997). Thus, it appears that language learners need to have some sort of positive attitudes towards learning a language, but that these attitudes will differ between individuals.

Another aspect which should be taken into account appears to be culturally influenced communication patterns, as Rinnert (1995) suggests. While silence is highly valued by Japanese, silence in conversation is seen as failure by English speakers. In order to be

seen as competent speakers, Japanese learners of English are advised to learn ways to fill pauses and respond quickly to questions.

In Skehan's (1989) 'Good Language Learner' model, and in Lightbown and Spada's (1999) category, there are several individual factors which are likely to influence the learning of a language. Some of these factors were discussed in the present study, for example, learner beliefs, motivation, attitude, aptitude, and personality. Although successful language learners had a couple of individual factors in common, such as favourable attitudes towards learning English, it was revealed that there was a factor which appeared to reflect individual differences. These individual factors are considered to interact with other factors, which leads to affect the process of learning.

The findings also suggest that grammatical foundation is an essential prerequisite for improving communicative competence, such as listening and speaking. Without it, it seems difficult to make rapid progress in communicative competence during a stay in a foreign country. Successful language learners in the study mentioned the importance and helpfulness of grammatical knowledge. Takuya said "I am good at grammar or writing because I studied grammar quite a lot in Japan". Tomoki stated that he felt confident when he had mastered English basic grammar. Mariko emphasised necessity of learning the fundamentals at the beginning stage of learning a language. Satomi thanked the Japanese education system where studying English grammar was treated as important, since English grammar which Satomi learned in Japan was very helpful for using English in the UK.

Leaver, Ehrman, and Shekhtman (2005) point out the difference between knowledge and communicative competence. Knowledge such as grammar rules and vocabulary is in the background of communicative competence, but it rarely results directly in communication as it is just a stepping stone to being able to use the language. In the case of successful learners in the study, however, their grammatical knowledge is considered to have been effectively stimulated by exposure to the target language, used as a stepping stone to using the language, resulting in acquisition of communicative competence. Considering that the goal of learning a language is not merely exchanging greetings or stereotyped phrases but expressing one's thoughts freely, it is obvious that grammatical knowledge is necessary for acquiring communicative competence.

This finding of the importance of grammar runs counter to the overoptimistic and simplistic beliefs of less successful learners, such as merely residing in a foreign country or simply exchanging greetings with native speakers makes learners proficient users of the language. The reality is, however, quite different from what less successful learners expect it to be. Without grammatical foundation, it is not likely that learners will be successful in acquiring proficiency in the use of language even after studying abroad or having conversations with native speakers. This leads us to suggest that it is important to discard overoptimistic and simplistic beliefs about learning a language since misperceptions about the rate at which individuals learn a language can frustrate learners when they do not progress as they anticipated, which corresponds with the argument of Jernigan (2001).

On the other hand, we sometimes need to have optimistic beliefs about learning a

language. For example, when we are not able to understand what is said in English perfectly, we should have optimistic beliefs that it is natural for non-native speakers to understand imperfectly. Optimistic beliefs in this case are helpful for maintaining motivation to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Thus we must keep in mind when and how we should have certain beliefs, such as optimistic beliefs, in the process of learning a language since these beliefs can affect the learning either negatively or positively according to situations or individuals. Davies and Ikeno (2002) point out one of the important concepts in the practice of the traditional Japanese arts: perfectionism – the pursuit of the beauty of complete perfection which aims to master all patterns completely. Having been influenced by this concept ‘perfectionism’, many Japanese people might have some sort of the quest for the aesthetic of completeness. However, a significant finding from this study was that it appeared that perfectionists found it extremely difficult to study languages.

Although both successful and less successful learners had the same beliefs that ‘vocabulary’ was the most important aspect of learning English, because difficulty in speaking, listening, and reading stemmed from a small vocabulary, it was revealed that how to approach learning vocabulary was different. The less successful language learners’ way of memorising vocabulary was writing words down mechanically without attention to how they were used, whereas successful language learners used new vocabulary in a real situation in order to memorise it. The change of Satomi’s way of memorising vocabulary items suggests that she had adopted a successful learners’ way of memorising vocabulary when she came to the UK. Although she tried to memorise vocabulary by rote learning in alphabetical order in Japan, she learned English words by

using them in a sentence in the UK, and in this way of learning these words remained firmly in her memory. Satomi admitted that she had forgotten most words that she had memorised by rote learning. Having experienced the two approaches Satomi realised the difference in retainment of new words she had memorised.

While Dougill (1995) claims that the grammar-translation and memorisation methods no longer correspond to present needs in Japan, Purdie and Hattie (1996) report Japanese students' perception about memorisation, and suggest the positive aspect of memorisation to academic achievement. As has been shown in this study, what matters in the process of learning a language could be how to approach memorisation, rather than memorisation itself.

As English education in Japan basically deals with teaching English through the grammar/translation approach, learners tend to prefer 'traditional' activities, whereas teachers rate 'communicative' activities highly. The differences between learners and teachers could be accounted for by the previous learning experiences of the learners, and the influence on teachers of recent directions in communicative language learning and teaching. Such differences are likely to result in an inappropriate approach to learning a language. In order to eliminate the differences, it appears to be important to tell students the reason for doing the activity which was unpopular among the students.

6.2 Japanese teachers' and professors' beliefs about language learning and teaching

The second research question in this study was: What are Japanese teachers' and professors' beliefs about learning and teaching English? As the teachers of English at secondary school were studying in the UK when they participated in this research, they seemed to have an opportunity to think about teachers' beliefs together with learners' beliefs. Three professors in this study expressed their beliefs about a preferable model of English for learners together with the concept of World Englishes, because this issue was likely to impinge on the process of learning English.

With respect to teaching English, the teachers of English at secondary school expressed the importance of psychological factors on language learning. Understanding students' feelings and needs is considered to be necessary to be a good teacher; in other words, participants appreciated the significance of understanding students' beliefs in educational contexts. It was also recognised by the participants that teachers' attitudes affect the process of learning, which can be alternatively explained as teachers' beliefs having a powerful influence on learners' progress or motivation for learning. Thus it appears that learners' beliefs and teachers' beliefs play a vital role in language learning and teaching. This finding was possibly obtained because these teachers of English were learners of English during their stay in the UK, to put it another way, they had an opportunity to think about learners' beliefs together with teachers' beliefs.

The necessity of using English as a means of instruction was emphasised by the

teachers of English at secondary school. As was shown in the beliefs of less successful learners in the study, English is considered as just a subject at school by many learners in Japan; students can be motivated by teachers who use English as the main language of instruction in the classroom, setting a good example for the students to be 'a user of English'. Whether learners regard English as a subject at school or as a means of communication is likely to make a big difference to learners' motivation to learn English, as noted by the four successful learners in the study.

Learners' and teachers' beliefs about a preferable model of English to be aimed at could immensely affect the learning of English. If learners' beliefs were 'we need to master native-like pronunciation to speak English', they would hesitate to speak out. Teachers' beliefs about the necessity of native-like pronunciation could inevitably influence learners' beliefs and attitudes about using English, and teachers' words can be a great encouragement to the learners who are not confident about using the language because of their Japanese accent. However, practical advice not to worry about one's pronunciation with an accent is not always applicable to all learners. For example, prospective English teachers need to acquire more accurate pronunciation, and advanced learners may want to use native-like English. Therefore we need to develop appropriate strategies or approaches to meet each situation.

One thing we must keep in mind about World Englishes is that the concept of World Englishes should be only about pronunciation and not about grammar, as commented by professors in the study. While it might be a practical idea to be tolerant about varieties of English, considering the current situation where global English is used, it would be

better to think that World Englishes is not something to be emulated by learners, but something we need to understand and accept as a member of the globalised international community. Therefore, the model of English for learners should be standard British or American English, and teachers should subsequently inform learners that there are other forms of English used in the world mainly because this information could make learners less apprehensive about using English.

While a considerable number of people spend a long period of time studying foreign languages, failure in learning a language is very common because of the difficulty in sustaining the laborious learning process. One could compare the learning of a foreign language to a marathon, where psychological attention is needed for the long process. What has been discussed in the thesis was the importance of this psychological attention from the learners' and teachers' point of view. It is also pertinent to note here that the learning of a foreign language implies a change in self-image since language is a part of one's identity. These are reasons why we need to pay close attention to psychological issues in the process of learning a language which involves plenty of sensitive concerns.

Considering these findings in relation to further research, a couple of recommendations suggest themselves. As discussed in this thesis, if language learners view their successes and failures as unstable and controllable, it would be one promising possibility for them to become autonomous learners, because attributions play a significant role to develop motivation to learn. Thus, changing learners' attributions might contribute toward having control over their language learning outcomes. Taking into account that comparatively little research into attribution has been carried out in the area of language

learning, further research which considers individuals' views of themselves as learners, would appear to be warranted.

This study provided several findings: the participants identified 'vocabulary' as the most important aspect of learning English; perfectionists might find it difficult to study languages; the participants' favourable attitudes towards learning English are likely to have played a significant part in their continuing motivation. These findings, however, are not generalisable because of the small number of the participants. Nevertheless, it is believed that they do give rise to helpful hypotheses for further research on a large scale.

It is perhaps worth commenting finally on the consideration to individual differences. According to Dörnyei (2005), human behaviour may vary significantly in response to a certain stimulus since a primary feature of the human beings is variability. This principle can be applied to the context of the learning of a foreign language. Even if one strategy or approach to language learning seems extremely efficient for rapid progress, it appears to be impossible to adopt a fixed procrustean rule to all learners since everybody is different. In this respect both learners and teachers need to keep 'individual differences' in mind when looking for an effective strategy for their own.

6.3 Limitations and implications

One of the limitations of the study relates to the objectivity of my interpretation of the data, which comes from the nature of interpretive research where individual interpretations unavoidably vary. While every attempt has been made to eschew

researcher bias, I inevitably approached my study with certain beliefs and values, which may not be free from subjectivity. However, I used my knowledge associated with the literature reviewed so as not to interpret the data with researcher bias.

Another limitation relates to the definition of good language learners. For the fourth group (teachers of English at secondary school) and the fifth group (professors of English) of the participants, one may safely assume that these participants are good language learners as they are involved in teaching English. However, for the third group of the participants (students studying in the UK), four participants were chosen by virtue of their communicative ability. Despite the fact that I tried to set a standard and to find appropriate participants, their selection could have been subjective, because I focused mainly on communicative oral competence, i.e. speaking and listening skills.

After the secondary students were given the reading passage about usage of English in the world and World Englishes, they seemed to have changed their beliefs about learning English towards more positive attitudes as non-native speakers. Considering their pervasive perception that English was merely a subject at school, there is a strong case to be made that their beliefs had changed markedly when they knew a practical aspect of English as a means of communication. However, it should be kept in mind that their changed beliefs might not be deep-rooted, so further evidence is needed to confirm this conclusion. Follow-up interviews would seem to be warranted to investigate this finding further.

The three professors in my fifth group of participants only addressed one small part of

the research focus, mainly because their beliefs about ‘a model of English for learners’ have a great influence on English education in Japan. Although I only focused on one significant aspect of their beliefs, an investigation into other aspects of their beliefs might have provided useful findings.

Each of the case study samples is small. They were not selected in the same way, nor are they equivalent in size. The structure and length of the interviews also varied quite markedly at times. Therefore, the results from each sample must be considered in their own right in the first instance. Only then may it be possible to make connections and draw comparisons by taking into account the procedures described above.

If I repeated the study, I would like to pursue more in-depth investigation into how and why individual learners hold their beliefs about learning English, as developing beliefs in their own abilities to control the process of learning English could play a critical role in sustaining their learning over an extended period of time.

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Appendix 1-1: Preliminary questionnaire to secondary students

Partial list of questions (asked in Japanese) in the questionnaire

Please give your answer to each of the following questions.

1. As a subject at school, where would you place English in order of preference among the five main subjects (Japanese, English, mathematics, science, social studies)? ____

2. As a language, do you like English or not? _____

What are the reasons you (do not) like English as a language? Circle the number that corresponds to the answer you have chosen. If you have chosen 6), specify clearly.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) pronunciation or rhythm of English | 2) rationality of English grammar |
| 3) complexity of English grammar | 4) longing for speakers of English |
| 5) hatred towards speakers of English | |
| 6) others _____ | |

3. Please explain in detail what kind of English you are aiming at?

Name _____

Appendix 1-2: Main questionnaire to secondary students

Partial list of questions (asked in Japanese) in the questionnaire

Name _____

Please read the following paragraphs and answer the questions below.

About 350 million people use English as their native or primary language, as in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. About 1.2 billion people, or about four times as many as native speakers, use English as their second or foreign language. In Singapore, India, Nigeria and many other countries, English is used as the second language. In Japan, China, Korea, France, Poland, Greece and a large number of other countries, English is taught as a foreign language.

Thus, English is used around the world. Since the 1980s, the idea of World Englishes has been gaining general acceptance. This way of thinking regards English as a means of communication, and its principle is that not only the English of native speakers but also the English of non-native speakers is to be valued as a means of expression of the speaker's identity. People around the world should appreciate it and communicate with one another.

Give your answer to each of the following questions as of two points in time: before you obtained the above information and at the present time. Indicate your answer on a five-point scale: 5 (strongly agree), 4 (partially agree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 2 (partially disagree), 1 (strongly disagree). Also, indicate the reasons for your answer in the space provided.

- 2-1) Since there are varieties of English in the world besides American and British English, we should use them to communicate one another. before_____ after____
- 2-2) I want to use English like native speakers of English such as American and British people. before_____ after_____
- 2-3) • I don't want to use Japanese English. before_____ after_____
- When I realise my English is Japanese English, I lose confidence and hesitate to use English. before_____ after_____
 - Since it is natural that Japanese people use Japanese English, I should use my English confidently even if it is Japanese English. before_____ after_____

Appendix 2: Questionnaire to university students

List of questions (asked in Japanese) in the questionnaire

1. Do you like learning English? Are you good at learning English? How do you know?
2. What are your purposes of learning English?
3. What are the reasons you are (not) doing well as a language learner?
Give me an example of when you did (not) well.
Is doing (not) well up to you or someone (something) else?
4. What do you think “learning a foreign language” is? (e.g. It is memorising vocabulary. It is understanding grammar.)
5. What do you think the most important aspects of learning English are (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, something else)?
What are the reasons?
6. What do you think the most difficult aspects of learning English are (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, something else)?
What are the reasons?
7. What is your strongest aspect of English (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, something else)?
8. What do you think the best ways to learn a language are?
9. What kind of practice or effort did you use (or are you using) to improve the following aspects of your English? Please explain in detail.
 - 1) Grammar
 - 2) Reading
 - 3) Vocabulary
 - 4) Others (e.g. pronunciation, listening, speaking, writing)

Name _____

Appendix 3: Interview with students studying in the UK

Questionnaire and interview

* Your experience of English (as a learner and as a resident in an English-speaking country):

* Your major in university:

* Your age: 21-25, 26-30, above 30

1) What do you think “learning a foreign language” is? (e.g. It is memorising vocabulary. It is understanding grammar.)

2) What do you think the most **important** aspects of learning English are (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, something else)?

What are the reasons?

3) What do you think the best ways to learn a language are?

4) Are you good at learning English? How do you know?

5) What are the reasons you are doing well as a language learner?

Give me an example of when you did well.

Is doing well up to you or someone (something) else?

6) What do you think or feel about native-speaker English, compared to Japanese-English, French-English, etc.?

7) Did your **thinking** about language learning change after studying in UK?

How did it change?

8) **What kind of practice or effort** did you use (or are you using) to improve the following aspects of your English? Did your **practices** in language learning change after studying in UK? How did they change?

1 Grammar

2 Listening

3 Reading

4 Speaking

5 Writing

6 Vocabulary

7 Pronunciation

8 Others

Name _____ Tel number _____ e mail address _____

Address _____

Appendix 4: Interview with teachers of English at secondary school

Questionnaire and interview

(A) Please write your views in detail in response to each of the following questions
(You may use Japanese).

- 1) What do you think the most difficult aspects of learning English are (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, something else)?
- 2) What do you think the best ways to learn a language are?
- 3) What kinds of exposure to language best facilitate language learning?
- 4) How do you see your role in the classroom as a teacher of English?
- 5) What teaching materials do you use in addition to the textbook?
- 6) How would you define effective teaching?
- 7) What do you think the qualities of a good teacher are?
- 8) Have your views about 1) to 7) changed after the study-abroad programme? If they have changed, please explain how and why?
- 9) How will you change the way you teach after this programme?
- 10) Will your attitudes toward students change? How?
- 11) Will your views on the textbook or teaching material change? How?

(B) The following are metaphors for teachers. What would your metaphor for a teacher be? Please explain in detail how and why (You may use Japanese).

Example: doctor, architect, artist, gardener, technician, craftsman, scientist, parent, orchestra conductor, freedom fighter, movie director, sport manager, etc.

Name _____ e mail address _____

Telephone number _____

Appendix 5: Interview with professors of English

A question used in the study

What do you think about native-speaker English, compared to Japanese-English, French-English, etc.? What is your view about the concept of ‘World Englishes’?

Appendix 6: Consent letter carried out in a written form

I would like to collect data about Japanese language teachers in order to conduct a research study for my EdD programme.

I have written a questionnaire to ask you about your views about learning and teaching English. All responses will be completely confidential, and I am also happy to tell you the results of my study later. If you are happy to participate in my study, please sign your name below.

After completing the questionnaire, I would like to interview some of you in order to clarify what you wrote in the questionnaire (the time and place for the interview will be settled according to your convenience). Please choose one from the following options and circle the applicable number.

- 1) I will participate in the interview.
- 2) I will respond to your question by telephone.
- 3) I can't do either 1) or 2).

Name _____ Telephone number _____

Appendix 7: Consent letter carried out verbally

I would like to collect data about successful language learners in order to conduct a research study for my EdD programme.

I have written a questionnaire to ask you about your views about learning English. All responses will be completely confidential, and I am also happy to tell you the results of my study later. If you are happy to participate in my study, please sign your name below.

After completing the questionnaire, I would like to interview you in order to clarify what you wrote in the questionnaire (the time and place for the interview will be settled according to your convenience). Please choose one from the following options and circle the applicable number.

- 1) I will participate in the research.
- 2) I will not participate in the research.

Name _____ Telephone number _____

E mail address _____