

## **Relating the Curriculum to Regional Concerns: A Japanese Case Study 1**

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### **Abstract**

Globalisation, regionalisation, calls for various approaches to the teaching of English as an International Language (EIL) , as well as pragmatic and critical pedagogic considerations have stimulated debate in Japan about the focus of its English language curricula. This interdisciplinary case study weaves together the threads of different dynamics to create a framework for understanding the development of EIL curricula in Japanese universities. The work underway in the Communicative English Programme (CEP) at Niigata University of International and Information Studies (NUIS) will be highlighted as one example of what is currently taking place in some corners of Japanese EIL .

### **Introduction**

At the close of the Cold War, the 1990s witnessed the consolidation of three economic blocs: a European bloc (the EU), an American bloc (NAFTA), and a less-defined but significant Asian-Pacific bloc (APEC and ASEAN), in which Japan has played a pivotal role (Castles, 1999). As we enter the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, current trends lead some to believe that these regional blocs are coalescing towards some form of political integration , and rendering the traditional concept of the nation state as obsolete (Ohmae, 1995).

The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is being affected by the winds of change sweeping our globe. In his book on the history of TEFL, Howatt (1984) noted that the advances made in pedagogic approaches and curriculum designs have nearly always first been stimulated by the greater social, economic and political developments of their time.

In Japan, as a result of the events affecting the Asian Pacific region, innovations in English language education are being pursued at all levels of the education system. Work is underway at many universities, such as Asia University in Tokyo, the National University of Singapore or the De La Salle University in Manila, to create language programmes that implicitly focus on English as an International Language (EIL). In the Japanese context, these developments suggest an acceptance that the influence of Japanese as a regional language may be waning, and that more of Japan's citizens will need to acquire a greater level of proficiency in the English language , if Japan is to maintain its place as the world's second largest economy. A question for many in this national effort is how international English should be taught and if a pragmatic approach or approaches that stimulate critical thinking should guide decisions in curriculum development .

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part defines a number of important concepts, and weaves them together to create a framework for understanding the current evolution of the English language curricula at several Japanese colleges and universities. The second part of this paper examines the work underway in the Communicative English Programme (CEP) at Niigata University of International and Information Studies (NUIS) as a case study of what is taking place in schools across Japan.

## **Globalisation and Regionalisation**

The body of literature regarding these concepts is immense and a subject of constant interest for researchers of several disciplines. While space does not allow for a full treatment of the subject, the following should be sufficient for the purposes of this paper.

### ***Globalisation***

Globalisation is possibly one of the most overused buzzwords in recent memory, and opinions vary as to how to adequately define globalisation. Sifakis and Sougaris (forthcoming) view globalisation as the interrelationship of economic, political and cultural concerns between nations, which evoke words such as *freedom*, *new technologies* and *communication*. Held (1999, quoted in Castles 1999:2) defines globalisation as “...the widening, deepening and speeding up of all worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual.”

Critics of globalisation construct their definition up on the foundation of Western history: Hellenisation and then Romanisation were terms used by the Greeks and Romans to describe ( what they would interpret as ) an increased level of international political and economic integration. A common language (Greek, then Latin) was central to the goal of unifying vast numbers of people from different cultures and language groups. With English as arguably the only language that can be considered an international lingua franca (Crystal, 1997) it appears to sceptics that it is mainly America who stands to benefit most from globalisation, leaving open the question of whether globalisation should really be considered as Americanisation. According to this position, globalisation is identified as the oppressive and relentless flow of people, goods and ideas that result in the creation of larger versions of current socioeconomic rifts and the increased marginalisation of minority cultures, languages, religions and ethnic groups (Castells 1996; Hoogvelt, 1997; cited in Castles, 1999).

The definition of globalisation in this paper is built upon the A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Magazine Globalisation Index (“Globalisation,” January-February, 2002: 1), which focuses on the interpersonal, cultural, social and economic openness of a society. This in turn is often manifested by greater levels of political freedom, technological innovation, income equity, education, social welfare and taxation than what is found in societies seen as more culturally closed, politically corrupt and socially stratified. According to the A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Index (“Globalisation,” January-February, 2002: 1), globalisation is an interplay of *economic integration* (trade, foreign investment, equal income earnings for national and foreign residents), *personal contact* (international travel and tourism,

international telephone traffic), *technology* (number of Internet users, hosts and secure servers), and *political engagement* (memberships in international organizations, level of U.N. Security Council mission participation, number of foreign embassies hosted by the country). This paper adds one more condition, and states that for globalisation to truly occur, interaction should take place between the countries of different world regions (e.g., interchange with Japan and Brazil, or America and Malaysia). It will soon be explained why the interchange of countries within the same widely recognized region is believed to be different from globalisation.

It is interesting to note that the A.T. Kearney/Foreign Policy Magazine Globalisation Index consistently finds smaller countries to be far more globalised than many of the larger, more powerful nation states. For example, Singapore was considered as the world's most globalised nation in 2001, slipping only to number three behind Ireland and Switzerland in 2002. The United States, on the other hand, is in 12<sup>th</sup> place, and Japan does not even rank in the top 20 ( " Globalisation, " January-February, 2002: 1-2). Clearly, economic power alone does not lead to openness towards other cultures, and may possibly even work against it .

### ***Kokusaika***

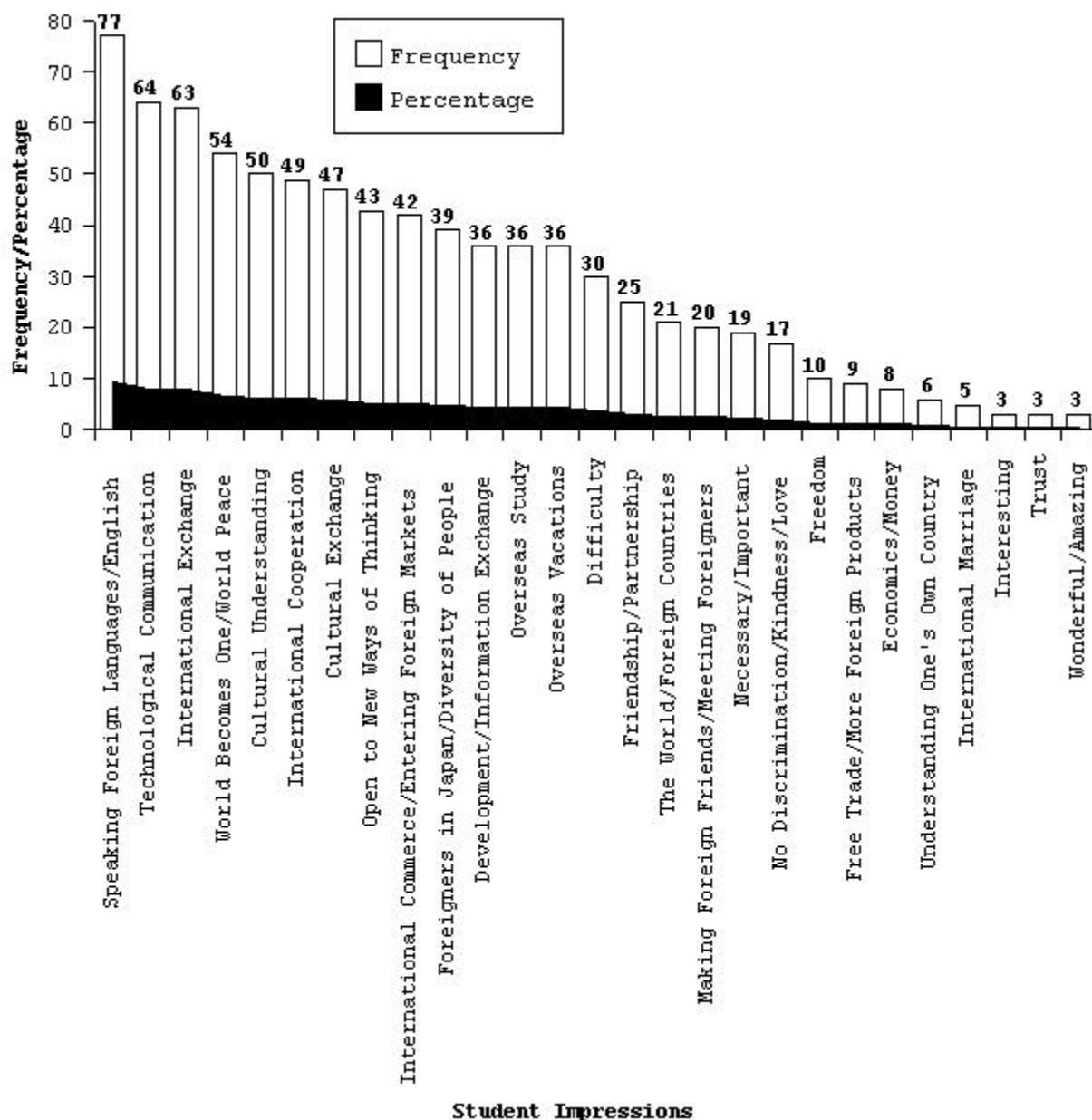
The Japanese understanding of globalisation, referred to as *kokusaika* , (literally meaning " internationalisation " ), is frequently propped up as the primary justification for the investment of significant amounts of time and money towards the study of English. *Kokusaika* began to be used with increasing regularity during the late 1970s, but like its English counterpart, there are various ways of understanding of what *kokusaika* may mean . <sup>2</sup> Mannari and Befu (1981) believe that *kokusaika* is a continuation of earlier slogans put forth by the Japanese power elite to unify the country behind a common cause. In their opinion, *bunmei kaika* (enlightened civilization) of the Meiji era, *daitoa kyoei* (the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere) of the early Showa era, *obeika* (Euro-Americanisation) following the Second World War and *kindaika* (modernization) of the 1960s, all contribute to the present day conceptualisation of *kokusaika*

Passin (1981) states that there are several frameworks for *kokusaika* , each espoused by different groups of Japanese. For one group, *kokusaika* may mean some form of westernisation or the democratisation of Japanese society, and specifically becoming more like North Americans. For another, the term seems to refer to economic expansion into other countries. Still others see Japanese internationalisation as cooperating with other countries more fully , in terms of peaceful interdependence and fostering greater cross-cultural understanding. This introspective understanding of internationalisation has been interpreted by some (Befu, 1981; Davis, 1981, Iwabuchi, 1994), as a form of inverted nationalism. As Iwabuchi (1994) states, it is "...internationalism through nationalism and nationalism through internationalism – both are strengthening the other." After introspection and language study, this form of internationalisation encourages Japanese to become "internationalists" ( *kokusaijin* ) who can disseminate correct images of Japanese culture to other world citizens, erase misunderstandings about Japan as a nation, and combat Japanese stereotypical images circulated abroad (Yoneoka, 2000).

Dougill's (1992) survey of 250 students seems to confirm these paradigms. In what he termed as the *Naruhodo the World* ("Now I Understand the World" – a one-time popular entertainment programme on Japanese TV), he concluded that his sample of Japanese students conceptualised internationalisation in terms ranging from the utopian to the introspective – findings that were nearly identical to research by Befu (1981) and Hadley (1996).

Hadley discovered that, for a majority of the Japanese in his study, *kokusaika* was seen as the antithesis of their definition of what is traditionally Japanese. In other words, no matter how ideal *kokusaika* was in the minds of the subjects, it was also seen as something "out there." Not only was *kokusaika* seen as distinct from their normal Japanese experience, it also appeared that it threatened their ill-defined understanding of what it meant to be Japanese. In effect, the more international a person becomes is proportional to the loss sustained to their Japanese Identity.

Nevertheless, the introspective definition of *kokusaika* does appear to be slowly gaining wider acceptance in Japan. *Kokusaika* /globalisation for many seems to signify the social, political and economics results of mastering English so that Japanese can then share the positive aspects of Japanese culture with the residents of neighbouring countries such as Korea, China, the Russian Far East and Southeast Asia.



**Figure 1** Japanese Mental Associations with *kokusaika* (n = 183). From Hadley (1996).

What is new in this definition, however, is that instead of learning American or British English for understanding the world, a form of English that complements Japanese thought and discourse patterns is beginning to be advocated so that the world can better understand Japan. Examples of this new, Japan-centered approach to EIL can be seen in schools such as Keio University, Kanda Gaigo College (Suzuki, 1999; Ishii, 2001), or Niigata University of International and Information Studies (Hadley, et al. 2002).

### Regionalization

It appears, however, that Japanese *kokusaika* may have less to do with globalisation, and more to do with *regionalisation*. Regionalisation, often seen as the alternative view to globalisation, states that the present three economic blocs led by America,

Europe and Japan function essentially in the same manner as the imperial powers did before the Second World War. Proponents of regionalization prefer the term *internationalisation* to globalisation (terminology which is identical to the literal translation of *kokusaika*), and highlight the fact that most of the current international trade, labour movement and investment take place on routes similar to those at the beginning of the 20th Century. Scholars ascribing to the regionalist view of global events believe that the 21st Century will see the continuance of loosely defined regional blocs designed to service the political and economic needs of powerful nation states. International understanding will certainly blossom between regions, but these blocs will also be involved in a succession of internal clashes between dissenting social, cultural and religious groups. The present conflict between the American Bloc and Islam was predicted by regionalists as early as 1993 as the next global struggle to replace the Cold War (Weiss, 1997; Hirst and Thompson, 1996; Huntington, 1993, all cited in Castles, 1999), and the Zapatista Uprising of 1994 in southern Mexico could be considered another example of indigenous peoples resisting the norms and decisions of the dominant regional political and economic culture.

Regional and global developments have in part motivated many Japanese colleges and universities to include English as International Language programmes to their present language curricula. However, the Japanese nation state, much like that of the United States, is far less globalized than countries within the Asian Pacific Region. While purporting to be globally-minded, past and present interpretations of *kokusaika* suggest that its inclusion as a guiding concept in Japanese EIL programmes will probably result in a curriculum that is regional rather than global in focus.

### **Norm-bias and Culture-bias in EIL Pedagogy**

Sifakis (2001) makes the helpful distinction between *norm-bias* and *culture-bias* in EIL pedagogy. Norm-biased instruction draws upon the native English speaker as the standard for language acquisition and production. A culture-bias focus es on the nonnative speaker's language ego and cultural identity. Norm-biased approaches start from a top-down perspective, with nonnative speakers attempting to ascend to the level of an archetypal native speaker. Culture-biased approaches begin from a bottom-up orientation, with nonnative speakers accepting their own linguistic characteristics, and establishing a standard of communicative fluency that is suitable for educated nonnative speakers of English (Sifakis, 2001: 5 - 6). Recognizing the fact that a growing majority of people in the world who use English are nonnative speakers (Crystal, 1999), Sifakis concludes that while norm-biased approaches may seem more authentic, a culture bias should be the ideal, since it reflects the reality for the majority of learners in today's world. When considering EIL from a Japanese perspective, there are concerns as to whether the language instruction should emulate the discourse used by native speakers in the American or European blocs, or if instruction shouldn't rather facilitate greater Japanese ownership of English, with the eventual goal of encouraging the emergence of a unique Japanese and/or Pan-Asian form of the English language.

However, even after more than fifty years of norm-biased English language instruction, a recent survey confirms what years of research has suggested: most Japanese continue to harbour highly ambivalent feelings about English while also recognizing its importance as an international language ("Survey" May 22, 2000).

Perhaps as a response to these long-standing attitudes toward English, influential language educators are considering the culture-biased approach as a possible alternative. In a recent interview (“Giving English Firmer Focus,” 1999: 2), Takao Suzuki, a nationally-respected Professor Emeritus from Keio University, sums up the feelings of many Japanese:

We shouldn't have to apologize for using “Japanese English.” The notion that English belongs to the Americans or the Britons is narrow-minded. English is now the language of the world.

As English continues to grow in strength as the world's lingua franca, it is expected that educators of other countries may start to claim English for their own. In places such as Japan, where many quietly feel that their culture, language and national identity are under attack from the forces of globalisation and regionalization, taking ownership of the English language could be seen as a proactive response.

### **Pragmatic and Critical Pedagogy**

Two terms that correspond to the norm-bias/culture-bias dimension are pragmatic and critical awareness in language education. These concepts refer to the cultural politics affecting EIL (Pennycook, 1994), and as such, are helpful for understanding the EIL framework in this paper.

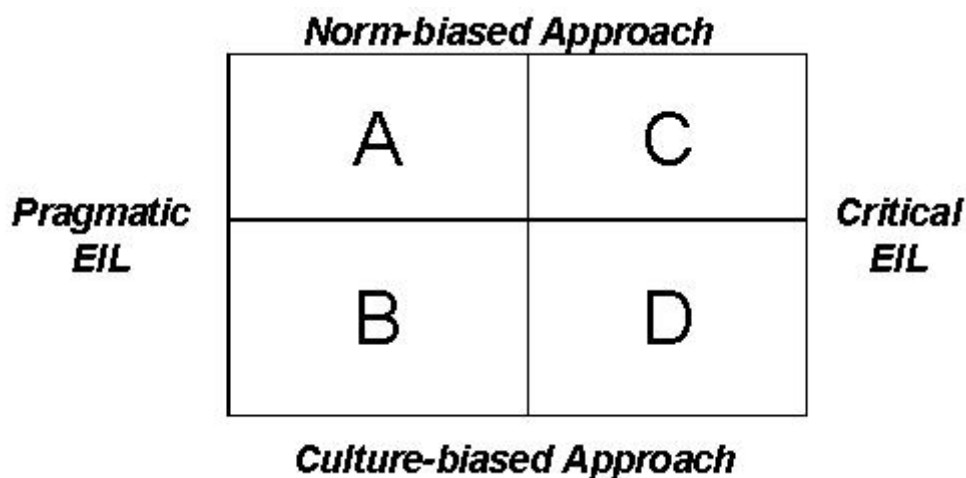
Pragmatic EIL in this paper builds on the work of Benesch (2001) and Pennycook (1994), and is defined as language education that equips learners for participation in the power structures of a regional or global society (e.g., international corporations, government bodies, import-export, overseas business trips, tourism, etc). Critical EIL, on the other hand, is modelled after Hall (2000) and Benesch (2001), and is concerned with questioning the status quo with the goal of transforming regional and global systems so that they respect the rights of the marginalized (e.g., participation in NGOs, humanitarian projects, Greenpeace, etc). Pragmatic EIL centres on the successful acquisition of status and power, while Critical EIL is engaged in analytical critique for the protection of diversity.

Japanese universities vary as to the level of importance they lend to either of these approaches to language education. For example, study materials at the English Language Programme at the International Christian University (ICU) encourage analytical thought regarding the status quo and reveal a clear preference for a critical pedagogy through their focus on bioethics, environmentalism and human rights issues (“ELP Reader”, December, 2001). The stated purpose of education at Niigata University of International and Information Studies leans toward a pragmatic stance as they educate students to become productive members of Japanese society (“Guidebook”, 2002). Suzuki's (1999) proposed EIL programme, aspects of which can be seen at Keio University, is critical with regard to American and European regional concerns, but pragmatic when focusing on Japanese regional interests.

### **Putting it Together**

A synthesis of the factors described so far can be seen in Figure Two. With globalisation or regionalization serving as the back drop, it can be seen that EIL

programmes will have different characteristics depending on the local cultural needs and sociopolitical beliefs of the curriculum designers.



**Figure Two**

For example, a programme in Quadrant A would tend to present EIL according to the norms of prototypical Anglo-American native speakers. The goal would be to prepare learners for access to power institutions. Examples of this can be seen in university preessional programmes in the United Kingdom, where learners are strongly encouraged to emulate the (arbitrary) standard set out by the course tutors (Harwood and Hadley, 2002). Quadrant B suggests an EIL programme that encourages a level of communicative fluency acceptable by a growing number of well-educated nonnative speakers of English, with the objective of creating rival norms and power structures to those traditionally defined and controlled by native speakers. What is being suggested in some Japanese and European universities would fit in this area. Quadrant C is the domain of an EIL programme teaching native speaker discourse so that learners might use their language skills to eloquently critique and reform those systems by calling upon them to be more flexible to their cultural needs. Certain ESL Literacy Programmes in the United States and Canada that are supported by community organizations can be found in this category. An EIL programme in Quadrant D represents one that uses English as a means to analyze issues such as power, equality, status, race and gender relations within the specific culture or region where EIL is being studied. For example, in South Africa, where factors such as tribal languages, dialects or gender-related “women’s language” place speakers in a position of lower prestige than the power elite, EIL is employed as a multifaceted attempt to equalize the status of speakers and subvert traditional sociolinguistic norms (“Accelerated agenda”, 2000).

It is believed that the majority of EIL programmes in Japan fall in either Quadrant A or B, with regionalism as the predominant frame of reference. The development underway at one EIL programme in Japan, the Communicative English Language Programme (CEP) at Niigata University of International and Information Studies (NUIS), will be reviewed.



## **The Communicative English Programme (CEP)**

This section provides an overview of the events leading to the creation of CEP, and a profile of the learners and their language needs. CEP's teachers and curriculum will then be considered, in relation to this paper's framework for understanding EIL.

### **Background**

Niigata University of International and Information Studies (NUIS), is located in Niigata City, which is Japan's main regional port facing China, the Russian Far East, and the two Koreas. NUIS has two departments: The Department of Information Systems, which focuses on Information Technology and Computer Science, and the Department of Information Culture, which emphasizes a liberal arts education and regional studies. CEP is part of the curriculum of the Department of Information Culture.

The original language curriculum at the Department of Information Culture was typical of what is found at many Japanese private and national universities. The English section of the language curriculum, called the American Regional Language Programme, (taught alongside Russian, Korean and Chinese language programmes), was largely uncoordinated, and lacked any common philosophy or standards for instruction. Students did not start their English language studies until six months into their first year, causing many to lose ground in terms of proficiency. Classes of over 30 students studied mainly with part-time Japanese lecturers, who taught in the Japanese language using grammar-translation as the chief method of instruction. Students sat passively in class listening to lectures about the language. After a couple of years, tests results suggested that most had forgotten what they knew about English even before the time they entered the university.

As younger faculty members entered NUIS, the language curriculum increasingly came under criticism. Although none of the full-time lecturers held degrees in language instruction (most were from disciplines in the political and social sciences), a task force was sent to Keio University, Asia University, International Christian University, among others, to study their language curricula.

Efforts to change an established part of a curriculum in Japanese schools typically result in fierce political battles and burnout for everyone involved. Innovations are usually stacked on top of older practices and programmes in Japan (Doyle, 1994). The task force took this approach and sidestepped any proposals to change the existing language programmes so that they could create a completely different programme – one that would be based on sound teaching practices and standards, and which would focus on International English. International English was roughly defined as English that is free from the cultural and linguistic influence of any one particular country, and which could be used to successfully communicate with other educated native or non-native speakers of English. It was implicitly accepted that in separating English from its native culture, the culture where the language was taught (in this case, Japanese culture) would have the most influence on how discourse and norms were framed. Opinions about the nature of an EIL programme varied widely within the group, with some advocating a programme that would fit in Quadrant B of the EIL Framework (see again Figure 2), while others argued for programmes that

would fit either in Quadrants B or C. A specialist in TEFL/TESL was then hired to further develop and coordinate these ideas, and the Communicative English Programme was born on April 1, 2000.

### **The Learners**

Most of the learners in CEP are Japanese first, second and third year university students, who range from 18 to 21 years of age. Most come from rural schools in Niigata Prefecture, and while most have never ventured outside Japan, they recognize the importance of English as an International Language, though it is believed that many of them also hold the same beliefs about internationalisation as found in Hadley (1996). Almost all the students entering CEP are “false beginners”, meaning that most understand very short pieces of written text, translate the meaning of some lexical items from English into Japanese, write their names in roman script, compose a few grammatically correct sentences and can answer simple questions about such topics as food or family.

The secondary education system in Japan tends to encourage classroom passivity, which means that most learners will not ask questions or volunteer answers unless specifically called up on by the teacher. Another affective feature that has been seen recently has been the appearance of more and more students described as “dyeing their hair yellow, wearing rings in their noses and crying into Kirins on the fringes of society” (Roche, 1999: 23). Finding ways to motivate this cynical and passive-resistant generation of learners has been a challenge to educators throughout Japan. Nevertheless, most of the learners who enter CEP state that they are both interested and motivated to learn English for the immediate and future needs.

### **Learner Needs**

The immediate need for all the learners is to acquire a level of basic communicative proficiency that will allow them to pass CEP, which is a required course in the Department of Information Culture’s curriculum. This is true regardless of whether students have chosen Chinese, Russian, Korean or American English as the main language that they will study during their four years at NUIS. In the latter half of the second year, a large number of learners will participate in one of the overseas study programmes that NUIS has established with universities in Russia, China, Korea and America. Students participating in these programmes discover that the English studied in CEP helps them to communicate on a basic level with others in the region, especially since most will have studied Russian, Chinese or Korean for only about a year before going overseas (Hadley et al., 2002). Students who take part in the American programme naturally find the added language instruction in CEP helpful toward their studies and social interaction overseas. The long-term goals for learners after graduation are less defined. Some appear to find ways to apply their English language studies and experiences to their lives, while others do not, as is the case in education throughout the world.

### **Teachers**

The teachers who sit on the committee that helps determine the direction of CEP are all Japanese lecturers, with the exception of the coordinator, who is American. The

Japanese lecturers, while not language teachers, are nevertheless experienced language learners who speak two or three languages with ease. In their role as academics of social or political science, they are often outspoken in their differing ideas about how CEP should develop as an EIL programme.

The instructors who actually teach the CEP classes are native speakers of English who serve as representatives of linguistic norms. However, these teachers are discouraged from teaching cultural issues in class. So far, teachers have come from South Africa, Scotland and America. In the future, NUIS hopes to recruit native speakers of English from within the region (e.g. Singapore, India or the Philippines), who could serve as representatives of Asian English norms.

### **The Curriculum**

CEP relies on the following to facilitate improved language learning: The placement of students according to their level of language proficiency, materials that complement the goals of CEP, and a system of cyclical instruction and testing.

### **Placement Test**

At the beginning of each semester, all students are given a standardized placement test to measure their levels of general language proficiency (Turner et al., 1997). Based on their scores, students are placed in one of six skill levels. These graded class levels help motivated students to feel less inhibited in class, knowing that the goals of instruction are attainable, and that they are with students who are their equals in terms of language proficiency. The placement test makes classes easier for the CEP instructors to teach. Students appear to learn more quickly, and are allowed to move to more challenging or basic levels later in the school year, based upon their progress.

### **Materials and Class Instruction**

*New Interchange: English for International Communication* (NIC) – the Student's Book as well the Video Activity Book (Richards, et al.1997) are used in the base texts for the homework, listening and speaking activities in the first year courses. However, the *Atlas 2 Video* (Wholey, 1996) materials are used for the higher proficiency levels – as upper level video materials are not yet available for the NIC series. NIC is used not only because it provides excellent teaching materials, but also because the aims of the course books are consistent with the objectives of CEP. NIC maintains that it teaches international English that is not limited to any one country, region or culture (Richards et al.,1997: i ii), and features the discourse of both native and nonnative speakers. Other texts and teaching materials that deal with Japan-specific/international issues are also used to further complement the goals of the CEP curriculum during the first year.

During the second and third years, the TALK Tools, language teaching materials developed in Japan by a German teacher of English who understands both the dynamics of regionalization and English language instruction from the viewpoint of the EU (Junge, 2000), give students far more freedom than during the first year by allowing them to select discussion topics, and take ownership both of their learning

and usage of English. Students begin to accept themselves as Japanese speakers of English, and are free to discuss issues that are primarily of interest to them. As they recognize their identity and language egos as Japanese students, they are welcomed to take ownership of the English language as their vehicle for expression. Instead of the often expressed belief of, "I am Japanese, so I can't speak English", by the end of the second year, some students begin to accept the possibility of, "I am Japanese, *and* I speak English."

Instruction during the first year of CEP centres on oral, reading and listening skills. In most classes, the emphasis is on fluency over accuracy. Instructors also pay close attention to affective factors in class, and try to keep classes active and engaging. Regular homework assignments also keep the students on-task, extrinsically motivated, and prepared for each day's lesson.

Because a wave of apathy and world-weariness has swept through the current generation of Japan's college aged students, high dropout and absentee rates are becoming common in universities nationwide (McVeigh, 2001; Burden, 2002). To combat these trends at NUIS, regular attendance and a system that awards participation are included as part of the students' instructional training. Students are expected to come to every class on time and actively participate in classroom activities. When they do so, they receive points in the form of plastic tokens. Students bring these participation points to the instructor later at the end of each class, who records the amount they have earned that day. Participation makes for a significant part of the learners' grade. Students who have come to class late but have absolutely no points are counted as absent, and students with more than 20% total absences fail the course.

This approach to attendance and participation has its critics, who accuse it of being oppressive and Pavlovian in nature. However, this strategy consistently works in modifying the passive behaviour and learned helplessness that many have acquired during their secondary education days. The points system also provides a means for students to see, some for the first time, that their attendance and participation are noticed, rewarded, and that their actions visibly count towards their grade.

It should be mentioned that this system is not used in the second and third year. By this time, students are older, more mature, and usually able to participate in class without extrinsic rewards. Regular attendance, however, is important in all courses.

### **Cycles and Testing**

Three-week lesson cycles are an important part of the programme, and are similar in function to the class cycles found in language study programmes elsewhere in the world. Students regularly consult the CEP Website (see Figure 3) to find out about homework assignments and lesson plans before coming to class. There are four cycles during the first semester and four during the second semester. During each cycle for the first year learners, students complete two chapters from the core textbook, and learn to discuss Japan-specific issues.

The second and third year courses also follow a cycle system, but the structure is freer than the rigorous training of the first year. From the clear expectations which have

been set during the first year, students able to handle greater freedom for personal expression and language ego formation in the course of the second and third year of instruction .

**Unit 9**

Topics	What to say
Unusual Services	talking about the things you need to have done
Recommendations	asking for advice or suggestions
Self-improvement	giving advice or suggestions

**Unit 10**

Topics	What to say
Historic Events	talking about historic events
Historic People	giving opinions about the future
Biography	
The Future	

CEP 2A	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Teacher	Instructor A	Instructor A	Coordinator	Instructor B	Instructor B
Week 1 October 1st	Check Homework Ex 1a p 54 Ex 3a p 55 <b>(NIC Unit 9)</b>	Check Homework Ex 9a p 57 <b>(NIC Unit 9)</b>	Reading Quiz Ex 13 p 59 <b>(NIC Unit 9)</b>	Check Homework Before you watch <b>(AV1 Unit 9)</b>	No Homework
	Classwork Ex 2 p 54 Ex 1b p 54 Ex 5 p 55 Ex 6 p 56 <b>(NIC Unit 9)</b>	Classwork Ex 8 p 57 Ex 7 p 56 Ex 11 p 58 <b>(NIC Unit 9)</b>	Classwork <b>SRA &amp; JR</b>	Classwork As you watch <b>(AV1 Unit 9)</b>	Classwork <b>(IC9)</b>
Week 2 October 8th	Check Homework Ex 3a p 61 <b>(NIC Unit 10)</b>	Check Homework Ex 5a p 62 Ex 9 p 63 <b>(NIC Unit 10)</b>	Reading Quiz Ex 13 p 65 <b>(NIC Unit 10)</b>	Check Homework Before you watch <b>(AV1 Unit 10)</b>	No Homework
	Classwork Ex 2 p 60 Ex 1 p 60 Ex 6 p 62 Ex 3b p 61 <b>(NIC Unit 10)</b>	Classwork Ex 8 p 63 Ex 10 p 64 Ex 11 p 64 <b>(NIC Unit 10)</b>	Classwork <b>SRA &amp; JR</b>	Classwork As you watch <b>(AV1 Unit 10)</b>	Classwork <b>(IC10)</b>
Week 3 October 15th	Listening Test	Review	<b>SRA</b>	Speaking Test	Speaking Test

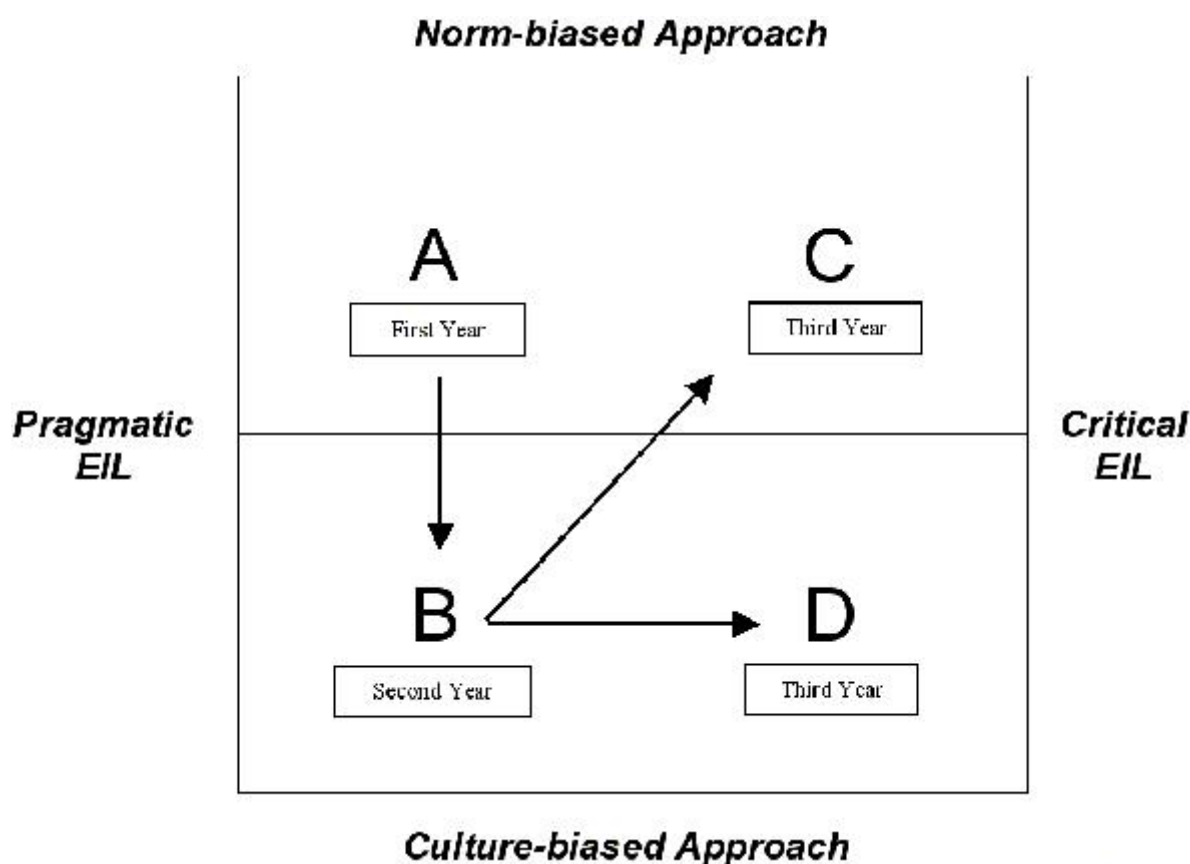
**Figure Three**

During the third week of each cycle, all students are given a battery of listening and oral proficiency tests. Reading and vocabulary tests are also given two times during the first two weeks of each cycle. The results are kept on a shared database, and

students who are having problems are contacted immediately. The whole process is systematic, semi-intensive and believed to be academically sound. Presently, in-house research suggests that students, administrators, instructors and most of the faculty at NUIS are happy with the programme (Hadley, 2002).

### **CEP and the EIL Framework**

Nevertheless, a consensus has yet to be reached on the final form of CEP. As stated earlier, some faculty would like CEP to find its home in the B or C quadrants of the EIL framework. Instructors are more comfortable with an A quadrant programme, while some of the learners have suggested that they would prefer the results of a programme in quadrant D, as it fits with their late adolescent need to distance themselves temporarily from the status quo of Japanese culture, and seek their own identity. In order to respect the cacophony of agendas of the stakeholders in CEP, the coordinator has designed an active progression in the programme's curriculum. The hope is that at least some of the desires of each group can be satisfied (Figure 4).

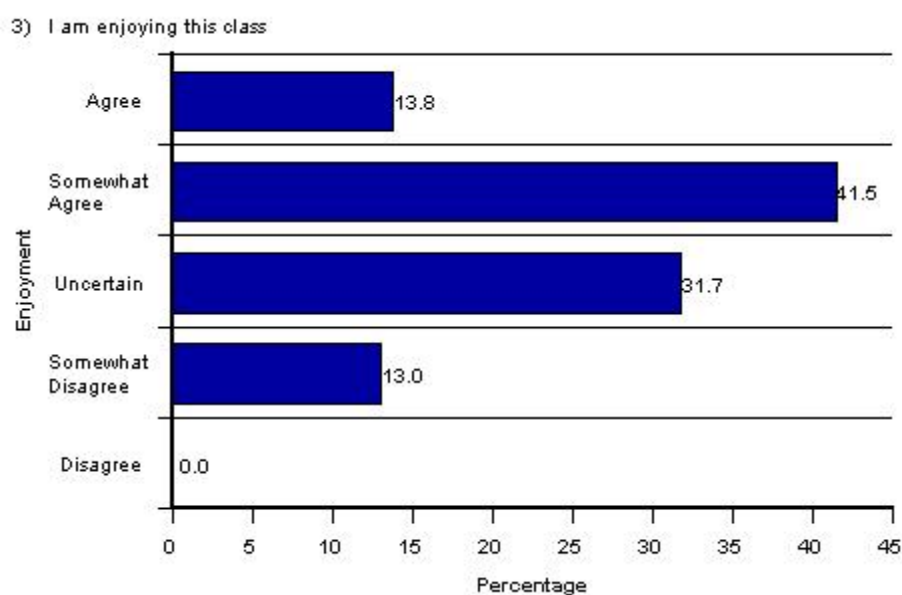


**Figure Four**

With the understanding that regionalism serves as the cornerstone for the curriculum, during the first year, CEP starts out as a pragmatic EIL programme that reinforces native speaker norms as portrayed by the instructors and the characters in the NIC course books. <sup>3</sup> This decision is defensible because the learners are still relatively young and have had few if any international experiences. The first year students also tend to have considerably different levels of motivation as they enter CEP, and relatively few at the beginning of the year express any interest in meeting non-

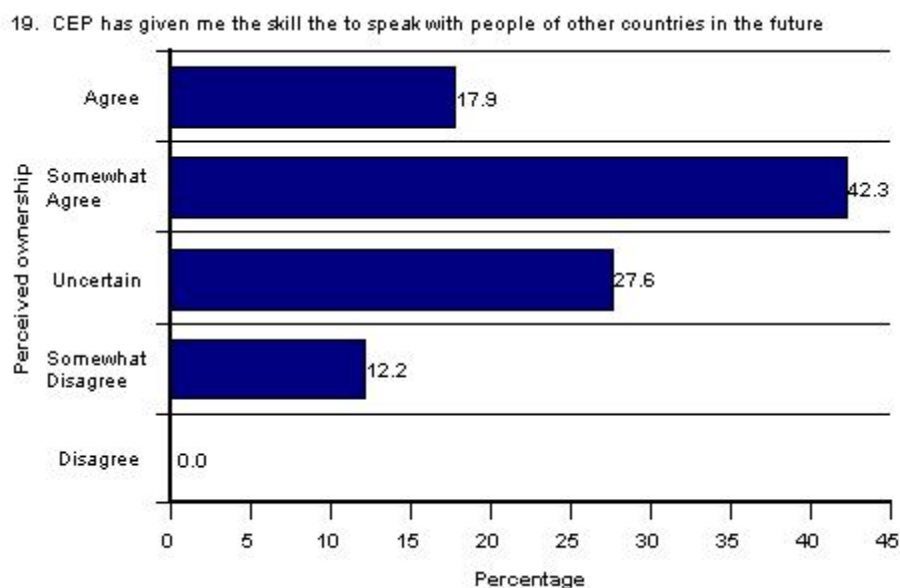
Japanese overseas or gaining new cultural experiences outside of Japan. A norm-biased approach at least simulates what these inexperienced learners might expect in a language course. Norm-biased materials are abundant and are easier for the instructors to teach, and since most of the learners start CEP as false beginners with a low level of communicative fluency, the linguistic norms of the instructors and a systematic course of study expose the learners to basic vocabulary and communicative language skills.

By the end of the first year, research suggests that some progress can be made with the student's attitude towards English. The results of a student survey administered at the end of the 2002 academic year suggested that a majority of learners enjoyed the lessons, and felt that the programme helped them to improve in English (Figure 5).



**Figure 5** Student Attitudes toward Language Instruction in CEP (n=123).

Although many of them also felt uncertain about the level of comfort in class or whether they would actually pass the course, this is seen as a positive sign that an adequate level of academic “pressure” was maintained, which kept the students from becoming complacent with their progress. Other encouraging data indicated that students had greater confidence in their ability to communicate in English with non-Japanese (Figure 6).



**Figure 6** Student Attitudes towards English after one year in CEP (n=123).

However, the survey also revealed that the year of intensive study in CEP had done little to motivate the majority of learners into actually wanting to go abroad and experience other cultures, or to consider making friends with people their own age using English. Most learners appeared to be very satisfied with the level of English attained in the first year, but uninterested in continuing for a second year of CEP, which is offered as an elective course. The first year of CEP is designed to give learners a basic level of proficiency, and it appears that this course offers learners what they want. And yet, a core group of about 40 learners out of the 123 surveyed showed interest in continuing their studies of International English. The complete questionnaire and resulting data can be found in Appendix One and Appendix Two.

Crosstabulating the survey data revealed that the core group of students who do take CEP in the second year also represent those who plan to travel overseas in one of the programmes offered by NUIS. For that reason, during the first semester of the second year, the materials and method of instruction, while still pragmatic, nevertheless shift towards a culture-biased approach. Learners begin to study how to express themselves as they wish, and speak about issues that are of interest to them in English. They are also encouraged to learn how to discuss Japanese cultural issues, which may be of interest to any friends they may make overseas. This also complements the interests of influential faculty members, who would like to see learners representing the positive aspects of Japanese life and culture (aspects which are often missing in overseas media reports about Japan).

Upon their return from overseas study, the curriculum in CEP opens up further to allow students to take their language study into any direction they choose. A few still feel comfortable with the Quadrant B parameters. Some begin to move towards concerns of Quadrant C, in that they become far more judicious in their acceptance of cultural ideas and beliefs from the countries they have visited, and although they still lack the fluency or opportunity to become involved in the reformation of overseas institutions, some become nominally involved in NGOs or international human rights organizations. The majority, however, seem to move towards the “D” quadrant, making the English they have acquired as part of their own subculture. It has been



observed that some start composing music or poems in English about their angst and disillusionment with their position in Japanese society. Some fuse English to their own personal hobbies or interests, while others maintain English as an alternative language for saying things they would not feel comfortable expressing in Japanese.

In the future, the coordinator would like to see students in CEP have the opportunity to study English in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, or the Philippines. In these venues, learners would have opportunities to use English for communication with other Asians in the region. This would complement the wider plans not only of the university, but also would reflect the dreams of influential thinkers and policy leaders in Japan.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to show how globalisation, regionalization, norm-biased and culture-biased approaches to teaching EIL, as well as pragmatic and critical pedagogic concerns, come together to form a helpful framework for understanding the formation of language programmes that teach English as an International Language in Japan. Although it is the world's second largest economy, and involved in the pursuit of internationalisation (*kokusaika*) for over 20 years, Japan is still has a long way to go before it can be recognized as an internationalized society. A study of the concepts that Japanese associate with globalisation (*kokusaika*) suggests that Japan may actually have regional instead of global aims in mind. This affects the aim of university programmes seeking to teach English as an International Language. Other concerns, such as the implicit rejection of norm-based English language education in Japan, have contributed to the desire on the part of influential Japanese educators to seek for a culture-biased approach in EIL programmes. Such an approach might encourage greater Japanese ownership of English, and the eventual formation of a uniquely Japanese form of the English language. The creation and structure of one EIL programme in Japan, the Communicative English Language Programme at Niigata University of International and Information Studies, was provided as a case study that demonstrated how these dynamics affect the development and direction of the language curriculum.

While it is far from uncertain if Japan's citizens can overcome their apprehensions and accept English as part of their national identity, language teachers in Japan should attempt to relate their language instruction with an eye on the developments in Japan and the region. Time will tell if Japan's regional plans will have any lasting effect on the way English is taught in the country, but seeking to encourage learners to critically express their views should be seen as a positive step forward. By seeking to engage others in open dialog, Japanese learners will begin to take an active role as members of a regional as well as global community.

## **Notes**

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the RELC 37 th Annual International Seminar, Singapore.

2 An exact translation for globalisation, *gur o buruka*, does exist in Japanese, but the older term, *kokusaika*, is used far more often. While there may be a clear distinction

between the two terms, for the average Japanese, they are virtually identical in meaning (Iwabuchi , 1994).

3 Since the emphasis of the Department of Information Culture's language curriculum focuses primarily on China, Russia and South Korea, the backdrop could even be considered sub-regional.

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**Appendix One** [click here](#)

**Appendix Two** [click here](#)

## **Biodata**

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