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Students' Language Learning Beliefs, Proficiency, and L1-Dependence

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the relationship between stated beliefs and language proficiency, and on factors underlying those stated beliefs. 220 first-year English-major students at a university in Japan responded to Sakui & Gaies' (1999) 45-item questionnaire on language learning beliefs developed to reflect Japan's dual English language teaching curriculum (traditional vs. communicative). Factor analysis of the results found four underlying factors, two of which reflect this duality. A significant difference was found in the responses of high- and low-proficiency learners on six items, of which five were concerned with L1-dependent strategies and L1 use in the classroom. Follow-up interviews about these five items revealed that high- and low-proficiency learners interpreted similar language-learning experiences in different ways, reaching differing conclusions about the nature of language learning. This study suggests that university EFL instructors in Japan may need to directly address the issue of over-dependence on the L1.

This paper explores the language learning beliefs of students who are newly admitted to Hokkai Gakuen University, a large, competitive, four-year university in Sapporo. The beliefs of these students necessarily emerge from their experiences with secondary English education. Presently, English is a de-facto required subject for the six years of Japanese secondary education. However, a strong duality has devel-

oped in the way English is conceptualized, administrated, and taught (Sakui, 2004). The bulk of time is spent on grammar and reading skills for entrance test preparation, areas which are almost always taught by Japanese teachers using a traditional approach. To a far lesser extent, listening and oral communication skills are taught by Japanese or native-speaker teachers using a communicative approach. It is the lack of any link or consistency between these two approaches that has come to characterize English education in Japan today. Although some secondary students may be able to synthesize these incongruent learning experiences into a cohesive belief system, it is likely that many of them hold simultaneous yet contradictory beliefs about language learning.

When secondary students first enter this university's Faculty of Humanities' Department of English Language and Culture, they experience a unified EFL curriculum taught through a variety of approaches. Instructors use communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based and content-based teaching, computer-assisted teaching, and other approaches as appropriate. However, no instructors use the traditional grammar-based approach that students were exposed to in their secondary English classes.

Whether incoming students embrace or resist this change is related to their understanding of the process of language learning. Because beliefs are strongly linked to strategy use (Yang, 1999), mistaken beliefs are an indirect cause of ineffective language learning (Kuntz, in Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). Classes will be less effective for students who hold contradictory or mistaken beliefs about language learning. Therefore, it is important to know how our students conceptualize language learning (Cotterall, 1999; Wenden, 1986).

Mistaken beliefs are not only a cause of, but also a result of,

ineffective learning strategies (Horwitz, 1987) and thus they reflect to some extent the educational context in which they were formed (Truitt, in Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). The effect of context on beliefs is clear in several studies that used surveys to assess beliefs. Peacock (1999) found that Hong Kong Chinese university students had mistaken beliefs regarding the centrality of rote learning and grammar; he surmises that these beliefs were acquired due to the way that English is taught in secondary schools in China. In another study (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006), it was found that Malaysian university students learning Russian do not believe in the existence of a special ability for learning a new language because all of them grew up in a multi-lingual environment and speak more than one language; thus, unlike other groups, their beliefs about language learning center on motivation rather than on aptitude.

Because the present context is characterized by students who exhibit a wide range of language proficiency, this paper focuses on the relationship between students' stated beliefs and language proficiency.

Research questions

1. What factors underlie students' stated beliefs, and how are these factors related to English language teaching in Japanese secondary schools?
2. Do students with low English proficiency hold different stated beliefs about language learning than high-proficiency students?
3. If so, how do students account for these differences?

Stated Beliefs

Participants

Participants were 220 first-year students (in two cohorts) in the English Language and Cultures Department (day program) of this university. These students are roughly the same age, from the same area, and from similar socio-economic backgrounds. English proficiency was determined by TOEIC scores or by an in-house placement test that replicates the TOEIC test.

The English proficiency of the 2005 cohort of students ($n=99$) was assessed through the Test of English for International Communication: Institutional Program (TOEIC-IP), administered toward the end of the students' first year. This test expresses the combined reading and listening proficiency of the examinee as a numerical score in increments of 5, between 10 and 990. Although TOEIC assesses only receptive skills, it is these skills that students have practiced the most while studying English in secondary schools.

The English proficiency of the 2006 cohort of students ($n=121$) was assessed through a placement test that was administered on the first day of first-year classes. The in-house placement test consists of a commercial TOEIC practice test in which every other item has been eliminated, producing a test that can be administered within a 90-minute class period. The raw scores are re-calculated to produce an estimated TOEIC score. The previous year, Pearson correlations had found the placement test to correlate well ($.671$; $p < 0.01$; 2-tailed) with actual TOEIC scores.

Instrumentation

Uncovering student beliefs involves inferring beliefs from what

individuals say, how they intend to behave, and what they do (Pajares, 1992). However, such qualitative research is time-intensive and generally not feasible. For this reason, much research on student beliefs uses surveys, a normative approach that implies that beliefs are readily accessible and quantifiable. The survey instrument most often used is Horwitz's (1987) *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)*. Its 34 Likert-scale items assess beliefs in five areas: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivations. This paper takes the stance that, although belief statements elicited through surveys cannot be taken at face value, they do serve as practical landmarks for mapping out the unexplored territory of underlying belief systems. This paper assumes that the belief statements of low-proficiency students will be indicative of unexamined mistaken beliefs.

In the present study, stated beliefs were assessed by a 45-item survey in Japanese regarding beliefs about language learning, which will be referred to as the J-BALLI survey. The respondents mark each statement about language learning with "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", or "strongly disagree".

The J-BALLI replicates the survey used by Sakui and Gaies (1999) as closely as possible. Their survey was adapted from Horwitz's (1987) BALLI, but included various changes to reflect Japan's hidden dual English language teaching curriculum (traditional vs. communicative) (Sakui, 2004). Factor analysis of the responses in Sakui and Gaies' study found two underlying factors that reflect these competing paradigms, indicating that their belief inventory has validity in the context of English education in Japan.

At the beginning of this research project, the original Japanese

version of the Sakui and Gaies survey could not be obtained. Therefore, the English version that appeared in their paper was translated into Japanese by two graduate students who are also professional teachers of English. Japanese instructions were added, including an explanation that survey results would not affect students' grades. The J-BALLI survey also requested students who would be willing to participate in follow-up interviews to write their contact information. This Japanese version (Form 1) of the J-BALLI was administered to students in the 2005 cohort.

In the second year of this study, Sakui kindly made one of the Japanese versions of her original survey available. This version (Form 2) was matched to Form 1 by re-ordering and reversing items as necessary. Students in the cohort entering university in 2006 answered both versions of the survey.

Data collection

J-BALLI (Form 1) was administered to the cohort of 2005 on the last day of three different courses. Two of the courses were first-semester courses, and one was a second-semester course; thus, 47 students completed the survey at the middle of their first year, and 52 completed it at the end of their first year. It was explained that the results of the survey were for research purposes only and would have no impact on any course grades. The students marked their answers on mark sheets. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete, and there were no questions from the participants. Incomplete surveys were eliminated, giving a total of 99 valid surveys.

J-BALLI survey was administered to the 2006 cohort at the end of freshman guidance, before classes had begun. Form 1 and Form 2 were randomly distributed to 125 students who marked their answers

on mark sheets. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete, but there were two questions regarding item 25. Four incomplete surveys were discarded, giving a total of 121 valid surveys.

To summarize, the cohort of 2005 responded to a single version of J-BALLI in the middle of, or near the end of, their first year of university, and their English proficiency was measured by TOEIC taken near the end of their first year. In contrast, the cohort of 2006 responded to two versions of J-BALLI and took an in-house exam based on TOEIC at the beginning of their first year.

Results

The overall results of the J-BALLI survey are given in Table 1. (See Appendix.) Scoring is as follows: “4=strongly agree”, “3=agree”, “2=disagree”, and “1=strongly disagree”.

In the top eight items, with means of 3.3 or higher, the following orientations are evident: (1) English is enjoyable (Items 2, 43); (2) Spoken English is useful, both for communication and for future employment (Items 21, 17, 40); and (3) Listening and speaking practice and cultural knowledge are necessary (Items 11, 15, 5).

Item 2 “English conversation class should be enjoyable” had the highest mean (3.76) and the smallest standard deviation (0.46), indicating a unified perception. Item 6 “You should not say anything in English until you can speak it correctly” had the lowest mean (1.38). These top and bottom items reflect the students’ experiences of the communicative approach in secondary Oral English classes.

Participants disagreed with items saying that English education at school is sufficient to be able to master English (Items 3, 27). They also disagreed with statements about who is good at learning languages: although they believe that gender or major do not matter (Items

23, 16), they do believe that Japanese are not good at language learning (Item 26).

Finally, as students in the English Language and Cultures Department, they strongly disagreed (with a mean of 1.72) with Item 33 “I studied English only to pass the entrance examination.” This is in sharp contrast to Sakui and Gaies’ (1999) results in which non-major respondents strongly agreed (with a mean of 2.96).

Research Question 1

Method

Factor analysis was carried out to discover factors underlying students’ stated beliefs. The Sakui and Gaies (1999) study was replicated as closely as possible. It is somewhat questionable whether factor analysis can be reasonably done with only 220 cases. Under the most stringent “rule of ten”, the J-BALLI questionnaire of 45 items would require 450 cases, but the least stringent “significance rule” would require only 96 cases. (Garson, n.d.) Therefore, it was decided to proceed with factor analysis.

Following the Sakui and Gaies (1999) study, the dimensionality of the 45 items was analyzed using principal component analysis. Three criteria were used to determine the number of factors to rotate: evidence from the Sakui and Gaies study that that multiple factors would emerge, the scree test, and the interpretability of the factor solution. Based on the scree plot, four factors were rotated using a Varimax rotation procedure. Rotation converged in 6 iterations. The rotated solution is shown in Table 2. (See Appendix.) Three items loaded on two factors. Loadings of +/-0.35 or greater are included.

Results

Factor 1: Beliefs about a traditional orientation to learning English accounted for 7.8% of the item variance. Twelve items load on this factor, which is concerned with English as it has been traditionally taught in Japan. A traditional orientation includes a reliance on the L1 (41, 32, 20, 36, 39, 8) and a focus on reading and grammar (14, 22). Within this orientation, entrance examinations (33) ensure that language learning is linked to accuracy (37, 38) and that foreign language ability is perceived as a sign of intelligence (25). It is interesting that none of these twelve items have a mean of 3 or more which would indicate agreement; rather, eleven of these items' mean scores are distributed evenly within the range of 2. In addition, these items have an average standard deviation (s.d.) of 0.77, indicating a wide range of scores. In other words, although this factor accounts for most of the variance, there are considerable differences of opinion regarding the individual items that reflect this factor.

Factor 2: Beliefs about a contemporary (communicative) orientation to learning English accounted for 7.7% of the item variance. Ten items load on this factor, which concerns how oral English is taught in Japan. Four items deal with the rationale for a communicative orientation: Japanese feel that it is important to be able to speak English (24) because of growing internationalization (17, 40), including job opportunities (21). Two items focus on learners' active practice using resources outside the classroom (44, 15). Two items address the affective aspects of a communicative orientation: without undue worry about accuracy (6, loading negatively), learners gain confidence (4). In contrast to Factor 1, nine of these ten items have a mean of 2.9 or more, indicating strong agreement. (Item 6, loading negatively, has the lowest mean of any item.) The average s.d. for these items is only 0.64,

indicating a more homogeneous response than for the other factors.

Factor 3: Beliefs about accuracy in English language learning accounted for 6.2% of the item variance. Six items load on this factor, which is concerned with the issues of accuracy and mistakes in language learning. In this mechanistic orientation to language learning, teachers deliver linguistic knowledge to students who attempt to avoid errors. One item deals with the fossilization of early mistakes due to a lack of correction (13), and another with whether learners should be able to learn what they are taught (37). One item deals with whether some languages are easier to learn than others (28). Items address whether native speaker input is essential for language improvement (29), and whether teachers should provide explanations in Japanese (8). Learners should not guess when they don't know a word (9, loading negatively).

The mean scores of the items in Factor 3 are straddling the middle of the scale. They range from 2.33 to 2.86, above which are the mean scores of the items loading on Factor 2. With an average s.d. of 0.79, the items loading on Factor 3 evoke a "neither agree nor disagree" response.

Factor 4: Beliefs about the quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction for learning English accounted for 5.7% of the item variance, with eight items loading on this factor. One item addresses whether Japanese are good at learning foreign languages (26). One item deals with learner assessment of future ability (4) and one deals with confidence in present speaking and listening ability (18). Two items deal with the sufficiency of English education at school (3, 27). One item deals with how much time is needed to become fluent (10). Two items are concerned with the learners' satisfaction in their progress (45, 7). The mean scores for the items loading on Factor 4 are all

under 2.4, indicating disagreement. In particular, there is strong disagreement (with a mean score of less than 2) that school education is enough for reading, writing, listening and speaking skills (3, 27).

Research Question 2

Method

The second purpose of this study is to discover whether stated beliefs vary according to proficiency level. In order to create an even more compelling contrast between the high- and low-proficiency students, it was decided to divide the participants into three proficiency-level groups—high, middle, and low—and to exclude the responses of the middle group.

Although each participant has a proficiency score based on the same TOEIC scale, the measurement instruments were different. Also, due to their semester or two of university experience, the 2005 cohort had generally higher proficiency scores. In order to filter out those variables, it was decided to divide each cohort separately (see Tables 3 and 4) and then to combine the proficiency-level groups for a total of 73 participants in the High group and 72 in the Low group.

An independent samples *t*-test found that there were significant differences between the responses of the High and Low proficiency groups on six of the J-BALLI items. (See Table 5.) Levene's test found

Table 3. Grouping of 2005 cohort by TOEIC-IP scores

Group	n	Range	Mean	s.d.
High	33	490~650	555	48.95
Mid	33	425~485	457	21.10
Low	33	105~420	352	70.63
Total	99	105~650	455	97.52

Table 4. Grouping of 2006 cohort by in-house placement test scores

Group	n	Range	Mean	s.d.
High	40	445~690	522	63.04
Mid	42	365~440	403	23.89
Low	39	205~360	306	62.80
Total	121	205~690	411	99.34

Table 5. J-BALLI item means differing significantly according to proficiency

	Items (Listed in order of overall means)	High group (N=73)		Low group (N=72)		t	Sig.(2- tailed) p<0.05
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
36	To say something in English, I think of how I would say it in Japanese and then translate it into English.	2.60	0.89	2.96	0.62	2.794	0.006
32	Learning a word means learning the Japanese translation.	2.42	0.71	2.71	0.64	2.541	0.012
8	In English classes, I prefer to have my teacher provide explanations in Japanese.	2.27	0.89	2.74	0.75	3.391	0.001
41	To understand English, it must be translated into Japanese.	2.18	0.81	2.64	0.76	3.552	0.001
20	Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Japanese.	1.78	0.63	2.33	0.67	5.112	0.000
23	People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.	1.71	0.72	2.00	0.79	2.300	0.023

that the standard *t*-test and the *t*-test for unequal variances yielded comparable results. Here, the *t* value for unequal variances is reported.

Results

Students in the Low group agreed with these items significantly more often than students in the High group. It is striking that, except for item 23, the items are concerned with the use of the L1 in language learning. The greatest difference is that students in the low group believe that language learning is mostly a matter of translating from

the L1 (Item 20), whether it is the learning of vocabulary items (Item 32) or of speaking (Item 36). These students believe that translation into the L1 is the only way to confirm understanding (Item 41) and they prefer classroom explanations in the L1 (Item 8). It is likely that the lower-proficiency students hold mistaken beliefs about the place of the L1 in language learning.

Research Question 3

Follow-up interviews were conducted approximately one month after the survey. The main purpose of the follow-up interview was to probe the beliefs of High and Low students regarding the five items relating to L1 use (36, 32, 8, 41, 20) that had significantly different means depending on the student level.

Participants

The following were sought out for individual or small-group interviews: (a) students in the Low group who had agreed or strongly agreed with at least four of the five items, and (b) students in the High group who had disagreed or strongly disagreed with at least four items. Seven participants in the Low group (M=5, F=2) and nine participants in the High group (M=4, F=5) participated in individual or small group interviews four to five weeks after the survey was administered.

Method

Interviewees were given a list of the five items in English with Japanese translations from both Form 1 and Form 2. They were told that the consistency of their responses indicated clear beliefs about the L1 in English language learning. They were asked "What language

learning experiences have made you think this way?" The interviews were audio-recorded and the interviewer (the author) took notes. Participants responded mostly in Japanese; remarks appear below as translations.

Results

Structure: Students in the Low group said that because the two languages are so different, they must rely on the L1 to understand English grammatical structures. On the other hand, students in the High group claimed that there is a limit as to how much grammar can be learned when constrained by referring to L1 structures.

Classes taught in the L1: Students in the Low group feel that they need L1 support because they aren't used to classes taught in the L2 and they don't understand NSTs. The High group had mixed opinions as to whether L1 support from the teacher is needed.

Thinking in the L2: Students in the Low group believe that their thoughts are in the L1, and that L1 is "only natural" because "we are Japanese and this is Japan". In contrast, students in the High group say that "translating is unnatural and too much of a bother." Students who were required to cover large amounts of reading and writing material in high school had concluded that "avoiding the L1 is a kind of short-cut".

Experiences abroad: Two of the students in the Low group had had opportunities to use the L2 while on school trips abroad; however, they were not able to turn these into opportunities for breaking their dependence on the L1. Lacking confidence, one student spoke Japanese even when in Canada. Another student who went to Russia as a junior high school student could say very little in English, whereas the Russian children could speak quite a lot of English. This suggests that very

short or superficial study-abroad experiences may reinforce low-proficiency students' lack of confidence and seem to validate L1 dependence. In contrast, four of the participants in the High group had studied abroad in Canada and in Germany in programs from several weeks to one year in length. They enjoyed the experience of struggling to communicate: "I found that I could manage to communicate even only with one-word sentences."

Learning strategies: Students in the Low group did not refer to any particular learning strategies, but simply stated that they rely on the L1 because their proficiency is so low. Students in the High group were able to refer to specific learning experiences that led them to non-L1-dependent strategies. One student decided to imitate a fluent Taiwanese learner of Japanese who avoided his L1. Students in the High group display an independent and proactive attitude: "In high school, although I had never had a native-speaker teacher, I tried not to translate although that's what my classmates did." Additionally, these students' have realistic goals about their L1 use: "I don't need to think in the L1 as long as it's easy daily conversation."

Discussion

One purpose of this study was to examine factors underlying students' stated beliefs. Although the Sakui and Gaies (1999) study was conducted on a somewhat different population, the results of their factor analysis are strikingly similar to this one. Because this paper intended to replicate part of their study, the factor analysis included items loading weakly at 0.35 or higher. But if we re-examine both studies looking only at items that load fairly strongly at 0.50 or higher, three factors in both studies are nearly identical: (1) Beliefs about a

Table 6. Similar factors in the two studies.

		Yonesaka	Sakui & Gaies
<i>Beliefs about a traditional orientation to learning English</i>			
41	To understand English, it must be translated into Japanese.	0.652	0.676
32	Learning a word means learning the Japanese translation.	0.639	0.585
20	Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Japanese.	0.591	0.531
36	To say something in English, I think of how I would say it in Japanese and then translate it into English.	0.535	0.634
<i>Beliefs about a contemporary (communicative) orientation to learning English</i>			
43	The longer I study English, the more enjoyable I find it.	0.621	0.630
40	I study English because it is useful to communicate with English-speaking people.	0.613	0.584
44	If I heard a foreigner of my age speaking English, I would go up to that person to practice speaking.	0.604	0.550
15	Listening to tapes and watching English programs on television are very important in learning English.	0.539	0.573
17	If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	0.500	0.560
5	It is useful to know about English-speaking countries in order to speak English.		0.536
4	I believe that someday I will speak English very well.		0.513
21	If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.		0.503
<i>Beliefs about the quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction for learning English</i>			
26	Japanese are good at learning foreign languages.	0.620	
45	I am satisfied with the English education I received.	0.574	0.645
27	In order to speak and understand English very well, English education at school is enough.	0.518	0.609
7	Considering the amount of time I have studied English, I am satisfied with my progress.	0.505	0.636
3	In order to learn to read and write English very well, English education at school is enough.		0.555

traditional (translation-based) orientation to learning English, (2) Beliefs about a contemporary (communicative) orientation to learning English, and (3) Beliefs about the quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction for learning English. (See Table 6.)

The present study confirms that Japanese students' stated beliefs about language learning are underpinned not by personal goals or by

preferences for certain learning strategies but by the two approaches to teaching English in secondary schools in Japan. As mentioned earlier, the bulk of students' secondary language education is through translation-based grammar and reading classes that are taught in the L1 by non-native speaker teachers who stress accuracy. Students also experience some oral communication classes taught in the L2 by native-speaker teachers who stress fluency. These students' beliefs are shaped by the inherently conflicting goals of these two approaches. They are also shaped by a sense of the limitations of their language education so far.

The second purpose of this study was to discover whether low-proficiency students hold different stated beliefs about language learning than do high-proficiency students in an otherwise homogeneous population. It was found that these lower-level students are quite consistent in their mistaken beliefs regarding the centrality of the L1, a finding that may be somewhat context-specific.

In a similar study, Peacock (1999) examined student and teacher beliefs in relation to each other and to language proficiency. As part of that study, he administered a slightly modified 34-item version of BALLI and a 90-minute English proficiency test (dictation, grammar, reading, and essay writing) to 155 English-major students at the end of their second year of university in Hong Kong. Peacock found that students who agreed with items 13, 6, and 14 were less proficient than those who disagreed. Responses to Item 10 also indicated that less proficient students underestimate the difficulty of learning a language. [Note: Peacock's item numbers have been modified for consistency with the present study.] The different results of the Peacock study could be due to different instrumentation or to different contexts. However, unlike the Peacock study, the results of the present study are

quite coherent, suggesting that L1-dependency is a crucial issue for learners in Japan.

Lower-proficiency level students are more dependent on L1-use strategies, but do they use the L1 because their proficiency is low (as the students in the interview insisted), or is their proficiency low because they use the L1?

Wen and Johnson (1997) created a hypothetical model of learner achievement in which “the variables affecting language learning outcomes function together as a system” (p.28). To test the model, a questionnaire examining 16 learner variables such as sex, previous language learning, motivation, beliefs, and strategies was administered to 242 second-year English majors in Nanjing and Shanghai. Of the six variables found to directly affect language achievement, one was “strategies for avoiding the L1”. Furthermore, “strategies for avoiding the L1” were directly affected by another variable, the belief that it is necessary to avoid the L1. This was the strongest direct effect within the model as a whole. The authors note that L1 use is a cause of low proficiency, not the other way around.

Fan (1999) also examined the inter-relationships among the motivations, beliefs, strategies, and proficiency of 529 first-year students from 7 faculties of a university in Hong Kong. It was found that L1-reliant beliefs and L1-reliant strategies correlated with each other, and that both correlated negatively with proficiency. In other words, students who strongly believe that they need to use the L1 do in fact use strategies that rely on the L1, which does not lead to increased proficiency. Fan comments that teachers and curriculum designers need to consider at what stage students need to be explicitly encouraged to use more English.

The third purpose of this study was to understand how high- and

low-proficiency students account for differences in their beliefs regarding the L1. It was found that students interpreted similar language-learning experiences in different ways and came to opposite conclusions. This suggests that students need their teachers' guidance in making sense of their classroom language-learning experiences.

Conclusion

This study confirmed that factors underlying Japanese university students' beliefs about language learning are related to a secondary curriculum that involves a traditional, translation-based orientation and a contemporary, communicative orientation. It also found that lower-proficiency students believe that translation is more central to language learning than do high-proficiency students. This mistaken belief is coherent and vivid, strongly coloring students' interpretation of language-learning events.

Although small-scale highly contextualized studies such as these may be disparaged for not being applicable to other populations, paradoxically, they are valuable because they can inform the educators working within that specific context. This study suggests that the Department of English Language and Culture needs to consider how to lessen students' "L1 dependence" in a systematic way.

First, there are a few effective, but many ineffective, uses of the L1 in language teaching (Atkinson, 1993). Our language program would profit from discussion, action research, and policy development in this area.

Second, our newly-entering lower-proficiency students need to be made aware of mistaken beliefs so that they can adjust to and benefit more from their university language learning experiences. Although it

has been argued that more research and a stronger theoretical base are needed before attempting to change learner beliefs about language learning (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005), it is also argued (Wenden, 1986) that teachers should employ activities that lead poorly performing students to uncover the mistaken beliefs that prevent them from becoming more independent and effective language learners. Such activities should demonstrate ineffective L1 uses and offer alternative strategies, followed by adequate time for reflection (Peacock, 1999).

Third, faculty members should strive, little by little, to incorporate the judicious and appropriate use of English-language materials across all subject areas.

Finally, encouraging and celebrating the multi-lingualism of all faculty members will help us be better role models for our students.

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Appendix

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (n=220)

Item	Min.	Max.	Mean	s.d.
2 English conversation class should be enjoyable.	1	4	3.76	0.46
11 In learning English it is important to repeat and practice a lot.	1	4	3.56	0.61
15 Listening to tapes and watching English programs on television are very important in learning English.	1	4	3.48	0.56
17 If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	1	4	3.47	0.67
21 If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.	1	4	3.41	0.61
5 It is useful to know about English-speaking countries in order to speak English.	2	4	3.40	0.58
40 I study English because it is useful to communicate with English-speaking people.	2	4	3.37	0.63
43 The longer I study English, the more enjoyable I find it.	1	4	3.30	0.70
1 It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	1	4	3.14	0.65
4 I believe that someday I will speak English very well.	1	4	3.11	0.72
31 Speaking and listening to English are more useful than reading and writing English.	1	4	3.11	0.59
35 I make mistakes because I do not study enough.	1	4	3.04	0.75
24 Japanese think it is important to speak English.	1	4	3.00	0.75
39 If my teacher is a native English speaker, he/she should be able to speak Japanese when necessary.	1	4	2.97	0.78
44 If I heard a foreigner of my age speaking English, I would go up to that person to practice speaking.	1	4	2.95	0.74
28 Some languages are easier to learn than others.	1	4	2.86	0.78
19 Learning English is different from learning other subjects.	1	4	2.79	0.68
36 To say something in English, I think of how I would say it in Japanese and then translate it into English.	1	4	2.78	0.78
12 I would feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other Japanese students.	1	4	2.75	0.79

34	I can improve my English by speaking English with my classmates.	1	4	2.74	0.74
38	I want my teacher to correct all my mistakes.	1	4	2.72	0.75
9	It is OK to guess if you do not know a word in English.	1	4	2.70	0.74
13	If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard for you to get rid of them later on.	1	4	2.57	0.76
22	It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	1	4	2.57	0.82
32	Learning a word means learning the Japanese translation.	1	4	2.57	0.69
25	People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	1	4	2.53	0.84
8	In English classes, I prefer to have my teacher provide explanations in Japanese.	1	4	2.50	0.84
30	Some people are born with a special ability which is useful for learning English.	1	4	2.45	0.85
41	To understand English, it must be translated into Japanese.	1	4	2.43	0.76
29	You can learn to improve your English only from native speakers of English.	1	4	2.42	0.84
42	It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	1	4	2.36	0.73
18	It is easier to speak English than to understand it.	1	4	2.35	0.78
37	I should be able to learn everything I am taught.	1	4	2.33	0.80
7	Considering the amount of time I have studied English, I am satisfied with my progress.	1	4	2.20	0.83
10	If a person studies English by himself for 1 hour a day, he will be fluent in English in 5 years.	1	4	2.20	0.75
14	Learning English is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules.	1	4	2.18	0.70
45	I am satisfied with the English education I received.	1	4	2.09	0.80
26	Japanese are good at learning foreign languages.	1	4	2.04	0.63
20	Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from Japanese.	1	4	2.01	0.67
16	Girls are better than boys at learning English.	1	4	1.90	0.73
3	In order to learn to read and write English very well, English education at school is enough.	1	4	1.85	0.65
23	People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.	1	4	1.85	0.74
33	I am studying (studied) English only to pass the entrance examination.	1	4	1.72	0.82
27	In order to speak and understand English very well, English education at school is enough.	1	4	1.68	0.63
6	You should not say anything in English until you can speak it correctly.	1	4	1.38	0.54

Table 2. Four-factor solution for English-learning beliefs

Items	Factor loadings			
	F1	F2	F3	F4
<i>Factor 1: Beliefs about a traditional orientation to learning English.</i>				
41	0.652			
32	0.639			
20	0.591			
36	0.535			
39	0.444			
14	0.432			
33	0.428			
38	0.427			
8	0.393		0.410	
25	0.387			
37	0.379		0.556	
22	0.366			
<i>Factor 2: Beliefs about a contemporary (communicative) orientation to learning English</i>				
43		0.621		
40		0.613		
44		0.604		
15		0.539		
17		0.500		

21	If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.	0.489
4	I believe that someday I will speak English very well.	0.399
2	English conversation class should be enjoyable.	0.368
24	Japanese think it is important to speak English.	0.350
6	You should not say anything in English until you can speak it correctly.	-0.392
	<i>Factor 3: Beliefs about accuracy in English language learning</i>	
13	If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard for you to get rid of them later on.	0.643
29	You can learn to improve your English only from native speakers of English.	0.539
28	Some languages are easier to learn than others.	0.435
9	It is OK to guess if you do not know a word in English.	-0.385
	<i>Factor 4: Beliefs about the quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction for learning English</i>	
26	Japanese are good at learning foreign languages.	0.620
45	I am satisfied with the English education I received.	0.574
27	In order to speak and understand English very well, English education at school is enough.	0.518
7	Considering the amount of time I have studied English, I am satisfied with my progress.	0.505
3	In order to learn to read and write English very well, English education at school is enough.	0.398
18	It is easier to speak English than to understand it.	0.394
10	If a person studies English by himself for 1 hour a day, he will be fluent in English in 5 years.	0.352