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## Autonomy in foreign language learning: An exploratory analysis of Japanese learners

Miyuki U. Surma  
*Edith Cowan University*

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**AUTONOMY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: AN  
EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE LEARNERS**

**by**

**Miyuki Usuki Surma**

**(Bachelor of Arts, Master of Education)**

**Student Number 0987618**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Award of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**At the Faculty of Community Studies, Education and Social Sciences**

**Edith Cowan University**

**Date of submission: September, 2003**

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

Learner autonomy has received increased attention in the recent language teaching and learning literature. Although Holec (1981) proposed a somewhat categorical definition of learner autonomy, this concept can be viewed in various ways depending on factors such as context and culture. One may posit, for example, that learner autonomy is based on Western values and as such, is not as easily accessible in the Asian context. With such variables in mind, the purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of Japanese students' beliefs regarding foreign language learning in a particular context. This is undertaken by utilising multi-modal investigation procedures, consisting of three studies. Little's learner autonomy theory is utilised throughout this study to provide the theoretical framework.

The current research is divided into three interrelated studies. Study One attempt to identify high achievers' beliefs about effective foreign language learning strategies, teacher/learner roles, classroom expectations, self-motivation strategies, and their concept of the self as a learner. In Study One, Little's definition of learner autonomy is considered as the basic concept and used to examine whether or not the collected data in this research supports his theory. Study Two attempts to discover Japanese students' beliefs and expectations about foreign language learning in a particular context, namely, learning English in Japan. Study Three reports

the students' views on inside/outside classroom environment their journal writings.

The researcher takes the position, based on Little's theory, that learner autonomy means both awareness of self-direction and the need for collaboration. In addition, she believes that autonomous learning is not just a matter of offering freedom of time and space, but that internal flexibility should be given some consideration in the development of learner autonomy.

Based on Study One, learner autonomy is defined as learners' internal attitude for self-motivation, which leads to effective language learning. Positive self-beliefs and metacognitive awareness can be considered as keys in promoting learner autonomy. Study Two results confirmed high achievers' higher self-efficacy beliefs as compared with average students. The high achievers tended to have more confidence in their ability to learn a language successfully and showed a greater understanding for and use of metacognitive knowledge and strategies. In Study Three, low-middle English level students' beliefs were extracted from their journals and presented in detail. These showed that confidence-building and metacognitive awareness for self-reflection affected their motivation for autonomous learning.

Results suggest that teachers should not impose restrictions on their students' potential based on their external judgement of the students'



capabilities. Therefore, instead of training learners to satisfy teacher expectations, or simply giving students unbounded freedom to make decisions, learner development that promotes autonomy should be more concerned with the nature of both students' and teachers' learning as a path towards self-growth.

## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Date:

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Richard Berlach and Dr. Geoff Lummis for suggesting and commenting on my work throughout the process of this study. I express sincere thanks to Dr. Judith Rochecouste for her time, expertise and assistance in editing my paper. I would like to thank Mr. Ian Morris and Ms. Anne Mogan for their assistance and advice. I am grateful to my family for their support during the completion of this study. Finally, I wish to thank all anonymous students who agreed to participate in my research.

## **Table of Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
Abstract	i
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgement	v
List of Tables	x vi
List of Figures	xi x
List of Appendices	x x
<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background to the Research</b>	
Introduction	1
Purpose of the Research	3
Methodology	4
Significance of the Research	7
Research Questions	8
Synopsis of the Structure of the Three Studies	9

<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Literature Review</b>	
Introduction to Learner Autonomy	13
Definitions of Learner Autonomy	15
Responsibility	16
Cultural Issues Relating to Learner Autonomy	19
The Notion of Learner Training	20
Autonomous Activities in Asian Contexts	21
The Cultural Appropriateness and Existing Attempts at Promoting Learner Autonomy	22
Japanese Learners	24
Japanese-ness: Stereotypical Views	24
Non-Stereotypical Views of Japanese Learners	27
The Myth of Japanese Students' Passivity	30
Learner Beliefs for Success	32
Learner Development for Promoting Awareness	34
Promoting Psychological Awareness of Learner Autonomy	35
Political Awareness of Learner Autonomy	36
Promoting both Self-Directed and Collaborative Awareness In Learner Autonomy	37
Learner Autonomy as a Universal Goal	38
Summary	41

<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Conceptual and Theoretical Framework</b>	
Introduction	43
Little's Notion of Learner Autonomy	44
Language Learning and the Relationship to Little's Notion of Learner Autonomy	46
The Key Concept of Learner Autonomy Theory in This Study	51
The Researcher's Conceptualisation of Learner Autonomy Theory	52
The Model of Learner Development and Teacher Development Connections	54
 <b>Chapter Four</b>	 <b>56</b>
<b>Research Methodology</b>	
Introduction	56
Study One: Identifying High Achievers' Beliefs	56
Purpose of Study One	56
Research Questions	57
Target Population	58
Design and Procedure	59
Data Analysis	60
Interviews	64



Profile of Students	83
Evidence of Heterogeneous learning Style	86
Homogeneous Group: Kaori, Tsuyako, Sumiko, Aiko, Asami and Mayumi	87
Profile of Student	88
Evidence of Homogeneous Learning Style	90
Comparison of Hetrogeneous group vs. Homogeneous group	93
TOEIC Score of Two Groups	93
Learner Beliefs about Learning English	95
Heterogeneous group	95
Affective beliefs	95
Self-perceptive beliefs	96
Self-motivational beliefs	98
Cognitive beliefs	102
Social beliefs	104
Homogeneous group	104
Affective beliefs	104
Self-perceptive beliefs	105
Self-motivational beliefs	107
Cognitive beliefs	112
Social beliefs	114



From Hideo and Mayumi's reports: The Extreme Cases of Two	
Group Learners	117
Summary of Part One	123
Affective Beliefs	123
Self-Perceptive Beliefs	124
Self-Motivational Beliefs	124
Cognitive Beliefs	125
Social Beliefs	126
 <b>Part Two: What Can Successful Learners Tell Us?</b>	
<b>A Comparison of Six Learners' Beliefs</b>	<b>127</b>
Preliminary Study of Successful Learners' Beliefs:	
Learner Autonomy Seen from the Point of View of Hideo and Fumiko	127
Four Learners' Beliefs: Hiroshi, Ryoo, Naoko and Kenichi	132
Analysis of learners' Beliefs under Five Categories	134
Affective beliefs	134
Self-perceptive beliefs	135
Self-motivational beliefs	138
Cognitive beliefs	140
Social beliefs	144
Summary of Part Two	145
Discussion from the Findings of Study One: Part One and Part Two	147

Heterogeneous and Homogeneous Learners' Beliefs	147
Learner Autonomy from Successful Learners' Beliefs	148
Stereotypical Views of Japanese Learners' Passivity	149
 <b>Chapter Six</b>	 <b>151</b>
<b>Results: Study Two</b>	
<b>Low-Middle Achievers' Beliefs about Language Learning</b>	
Introduction	151
The Questionnaire Results	152
Role of the Teacher	153
Role of Feedback	155
Sense of Self-Efficacy	157
Important Strategies	161
Dimensions of Strategies-Related Behaviour	161
The Nature of Language Learning	164
Consideration of the results in Study Two and Study One	169
Effective language learning strategies	170
Teacher role	171
Self-Motivational strategies	172
Self-Efficacy Beliefs	172
Discussions of Low-middle Japanese Learners' Beliefs and Learner Autonomy	173

Scaffolding Learner Autonomy for Low-Middle Achievers	174
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Results: Study Three</b>	
<b>EFL First Year Students' Beliefs and Expectations about Language Learning through Reflective Practice</b>	
Introduction	176
Participants and Methodology	176
The Students' Reflections of Language Learning	177
The Use of Strategies	177
Past Experience	182
Learner Autonomy Constraints	185
Communicative Opportunities for English Expression	187
Reflections on Improvement in English Language Proficiency	188
Learning Expectations	190
Reflections Relating to Learning Preferences	192
Reflections on Improvement of Skills	193
A New Experience of Independent Learning: Reflections on Project Work	194
The Effectiveness of Learner Autonomy Development	200
The Effect of Journal Writing	203
The Further Effects of Project Work	203
Summary of Study Three	206

Discussion: Implications for Learner Autonomy Development	208
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Summary &amp; Discussion of Three Studies</b>	
Introduction	211
<b>Discussion of Study One</b>	<b>211</b>
Part One: Heterogeneous vs. Homogeneous Consciousness	212
Part Two: Four Learners' Beliefs	216
Study One Implications for English Language Education in Japan	217
<b>Discussion of Study Two</b>	<b>218</b>
Study Two: Low-Middle Achievers' Language Learning Beliefs	219
Effective Language Learning Strategies	219
Teacher Role	220
Self-Motivation Strategies	221
Self-Efficacy Beliefs	221
Summary of Study Two	221
<b>Discussion of Study Three</b>	<b>222</b>
Students' Journal Excerpts Findings	223
The Effects of Journal Writing	223
The Effect of Project Work and Further Implications for	
Autonomous Learning	224
<b>Discussion of the Three Studies</b>	<b>226</b>

<b>Chapter Nine</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	
Introduction	229
The Three Studies	229
A Model of Learner Autonomy	232
Conclusion	236
<b>References</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>253</b>

## List of Tables

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Table 1.1:</b> The Participants of Three Studies	7
<b>Table 1.2:</b> Defining the Studies	11
<b>Table 2.1:</b> The Key Terms of Learner Autonomy	15
<b>Table 2.2:</b> Definitions of Autonomous Learners	16
<b>Table 3.1:</b> Little's Theory of Learner Autonomy	44
<b>Table 5.1:</b> Homogeneous (Stereotypical) and Heterogeneous (Non-Stereotypical) Characteristics of Japanese Learners	82
<b>Table 5.2:</b> Heterogeneous Learners' TOEIC Achievement Profile over Time	93
<b>Table 5.3:</b> Homogeneous Learners' TOEIC Achievement Profile over Time	94
<b>Table 5.4:</b> The Comparisons of Two group Learners' Beliefs under Five Categories	115 -116

<b>Table 5.5: Four Learners' TOEIC Score Achievement and Improvement</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Table 6.1: Responses to Likert Scale Role of the Teacher Items</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Table 6.2: Responses to Ranked Role of the Teacher Items</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Table 6.3: Responses to Likert Items on Feedback</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Table 6.4: Responses to Ranked Items on Feedback</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Table 6.5: Responses to Likert Scale Self-Efficacy Items</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Table 6.6: Responses to Self-Efficacy magnitude Items</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Table 6.7: Responses to Self-Efficacy Strength Items</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Table 6.8: Responses to Strategies Items</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Table 6.9: Responses to Item 35 – dimensions of Strategies Related Behaviour</b>	<b>162</b>

<b>Table 6.10: Mean Responses for Dimensions of Strategies</b>	
Related Behaviour Items	163
<b>Table 6.11: Responses to Likert Scale Nature of Language</b>	
Learning Items	165
<b>Table 6.12: Responses to Ranked Nature of Language Learning</b>	
Items-Opportunities to Use the Language	166
<b>Table 6.13: Responses to Ranked Nature of Language Learning</b>	
Items-Effort	167
<b>Table 6.14: Responses to Ranked Nature of Language Learning</b>	
Items Overall	168



## List of Figures

	Page
<b>Figure 1.1:</b> The Organization of Three Studies	12
<b>Figure 3.1:</b> Model of Learner Development and Teacher Development Connections	54
<b>Figure 9.1:</b> A Model of Learner Autonomy	232

## **List of Appendices**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Appendices in Chapter Four</b>	
<b>Appendix 4-1: Sixteen Participants' TOEIC Results</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>Appendix 4-2: Informed Consent Form</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Appendix 4-3: Language Learners' Background / Learning Experience / Learning Environment / Learning Purpose / English Level</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Appendix 4-4: Interview Questions</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>Appendices in Chapter Five</b>	
<b>Appendix 5-1: Individual Case Analysis in Study One : Part One</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Appendix 5-2: From Hideo &amp; Mayumi's Report (Two Different Types of Learners' Beliefs)</b>	<b>313</b>
<b>Appendix 5-3: Four Learners' Beliefs in Study One: Part Two</b>	<b>326</b>

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

#### **Introduction**

In the past twenty or so years, learner autonomy has received increased attention in language learning and related teaching areas. Such an emphasis appears to be warranted given findings indicating that autonomous learners have greater success in the process of language acquisition (e.g., Benson, 2001). Holec (1981) stated that learner autonomy requires learners to take individual responsibility for their own learning, in other words, for behaviour where the learner is independently active. Within the parameters of Holec's assertion, learner responsibility can be interpreted in various ways such as the learner's capacity, ability, attitude, willingness, and rights.

Learner autonomy, as it is discussed in the literature, has several key attributes. The first is that it is based on learner empowerment. In developing such empowerment the learner's ability to work independently and have control over their learning process is emphasized. As such, autonomous learning requires the learner's active participation in their own decision-making and 'knowledge creation'. Secondly, learner autonomy is focused on authentic language learning that is, in turn, is closely related to the notion of learner-centeredness. The term 'authentic' means that learners work as much as possible in real world situations using resource materials such as those from broadcasting, newspapers, and magazines, or engaging in practical communication with people in a community.

Learner autonomy therefore emphasizes the learner's personal

involvement in the content of their own learning, rather than a transmission of knowledge from teachers.

Learner autonomy as described in the above paragraph is a Western concept and as such, its appropriateness in and efficacy for the Asian mindset is a controversial issue (Cotterall, 1998). For learners within the Asian context, the notion of learner autonomy challenges the traditional role of the teacher as initiator of knowledge, controller of that knowledge, and authority figure in the learning enterprise. Such characteristics are embedded in the very culture of Asian society, where individuality is subordinate to conformity. Asian educational traditions tend to place students in a passive role that accepts the teacher as the final authority. Therefore, one of the biggest considerations for promoting learner autonomy appears to be how such autonomy can be introduced in more group-oriented and hierarchically organised societies such as those represented by the Asian context. Chapter Two will discuss in detail the issues raised in this regard.

Whether or not the notion of learner autonomy is suitable for the Asian context requires investigation, as the notion may be little more than the expression of Western expectations. Cortazzi and Jin (1996) noted significant differences between Western and Asian interpretations of what it means to be an active learner, indicating that the Asian culture stresses covert mental activity rather than overt behavioural activity. That is to say, the final goal of learner autonomy could be considered from the viewpoint of internal mental involvement with the content rather than the point-of-view of students learning on their own. Conceivably, learner autonomy could include various interpretations and meanings that are both culturally and contextually dependent. By focusing on insights from actual learners, the term "learner autonomy" might take on new meanings.

Conceptually then, assessing the different attitudes and thought processes in learning may result in the real understanding of what learner autonomy means across various contexts. Further, such insights may have implications for the way in which language is learnt and concomitantly, how it might best be taught in each particular setting.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding of learner autonomy by analysing Japanese students' beliefs about foreign language learning in a private university in Japan. The research was undertaken by conducting three separate yet interrelated studies. Combined, the results of these studies should provide greater insight into how learner autonomy can be understood by examining learners' views in one specific Japanese context. Throughout, Little's (1996) learner autonomy theory provided the theoretical framework for the three studies. The theory itself will be outlined in Chapter Three. Suffice it to say at this point that Little identified learner autonomy as the learner's acceptance of their personal responsibility in learning. This can be interpreted as the learner's awareness of their responsibility without necessarily displaying Western referent behaviours. Further, Little emphasizes interdependence rather than independence, which can be understood as the learner's awareness of both self-directed and collaborative processes.

## Methodology

**Study One:** A sample of sixteen high achieving English major students sourced from second, third and fourth year of study in a Japanese university were interviewed in Japanese. Interviews were audio taped with the responses transcribed into English.

Study One used in-depth interview data to identify high achievers' beliefs about the use of effective foreign language learning strategies; teacher/learner roles; classroom expectations; self-motivation strategies; and, oneself as a learner. This study is necessary in order to develop an understanding of learner autonomy from successful learners' insights.

Study One aims at identifying how learner beliefs are influential in the learner's language learning. Results may show the evidence of learner autonomy from both learners' internalisation of it – attitudes and beliefs held by respondents, together with the externalisation of the concept demonstrated through learners' behaviour. The degree of learner autonomy may indicate what still needs to be targeted as the goal of learner autonomy in language education. The influence of cultural practices in teaching and learning should show that learner autonomy could be interpreted in different ways from the Western perspective. Therefore, the results of researching learner autonomy from an Eastern perspective may have direct implications for Japanese education.

In Study One, information from open-ended background questionnaires, the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) examination scores, and interview data were considered for analysis in order to determine

the beliefs high achievers hold about language learning. TOEIC is recognized and widely used in Japan as an English proficiency test. This study examined high achievers' beliefs in order to reconsider interpretations of learner autonomy. Study One's sample group was selected because of their past TOEIC results. These scores showed high improvement and achievement in their English language learning each time they undertook the TOEIC at yearly intervals from entering the university to the final year of study. It is hypothesized that language learning is influenced by learners' beliefs and as such, research in this area may lead to a better understanding of learner autonomy from a consideration of the learners' viewpoints.

**Study Two:** A sample of two hundred and ninety five, low to middle achieving university students, comprising one hundred and four English majors, eighty Law majors and one hundred and eleven Pharmacy majors in the same university were surveyed.

Study Two obtained data from low-middle achievers regarding the beliefs held about their language learning. All are enrolled in a small private university in Japan with approximately one thousand students belonging to each Faculty: Faculty of Foreign Language (FFL), Faculty of Law (FL) and Faculty of Pharmacology (FP). This study intended to elucidate the low-middle achievers' beliefs about their language learning. Questionnaire data was collected from all three faculties' students. Non-English major students are from FL and FP, whilst English major students are from FFL. All students from the combined group are identified as low-middle achievers on the results of their TOEIC, other English examination results, and oral/aural skills. Thus, their selection for the study is justifiable.

Data was obtained from each Faculty's students separately. The groups were divided into English major students (E students), Law major students (L students), and Pharmacy major students (P students). Students are identified as E, L or P students in Figure 1. Data is considered discretely as well as comparatively.

**Study Three:** Study Three's sample of twenty-nine First Year English major students of low-middle achievement were selected in order to explore low-middle achievers' insights of language learning, in both a classroom setting and external from it. Students' journal excerpts were considered in order to gain such data, and from the data to find out what may be needed for effective learning to occur. The sample group comprised the whole class taught by the researcher and as such provided easy access to students' views of language learning. The participants of Study Three were also included in the group of one hundred and four English major students of Study Two.

The participants of the three studies are summarized in Table 1.1.



**Table 1.1: The Participants of Three Studies**

Study One	16 x High achieving university students – All English majors from Second, Third and Fourth Year students
Study Two	295 x Low to middle achieving university students – 104 x English Majors, 80 x Law Majors & 111 x Pharmacy Majors First and Second Year students
Study Three	29 x First year university students low to middle achievers – All English Majors.  (The 29 participants from Study Three were taken from the 104 students in Study Two)

### **Significance of the Research**

This research is significant in that it is likely to provide insights into how a selected group of Japanese students learn the role of autonomy in the language learning process. The study is also likely to provide valuable data pertaining to the defining characteristics of learner autonomy in a Japanese university context. This will in turn provide valuable comparative data when more Western notions of learner autonomy are considered. It is also anticipated that new perspectives of learner autonomy derived from this study will have implications for pedagogical practice. In addition, it is hoped that this study can serve as a base from which future research on learners' beliefs in other contexts can be explored.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions will be addressed:

### **Study One: High Achievers**

- (1) What beliefs do high achievers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) hold about the effectiveness of their own learning strategies?
- (2) What beliefs and expectations do high achievers have about the teacher's role in helping them to learn and the use of class time?
- (3) What beliefs do high achievers have about self-motivational strategies?
- (4) What perceptions do the students have of themselves as language learners?

### **Study Two: Low-middle Achievers**

- (5) What beliefs and expectations do low-middle achievers hold regarding effective strategies, teacher role expectations, self-motivation strategies, and self-efficacy beliefs in their foreign language learning?

### **Study Three: Subsidiary Data: Students' Journals**

- (6) Journal writing and project work encouraging individual or group independent learning experiences and critical reflections of these. Topics for consideration consisted of:
  - What have you learned?
  - How well do you think you have learned it?
  - What do you think you have learned?
  - What is the best way to go about your learning?

The aim was to discover students' insights about what seems to be important to them for learner autonomy.

### **Synopsis of the Structure of the Three Studies**

This study intended to examine students' beliefs about their language learning. The data, from all three studies taken from a Japanese university context, examined student beliefs from both qualitative and quantitative points-of-view. By looking at learners in the Japanese context from different perspectives, stereotypical views of Japanese learners were subjected to critical examination. From the information gleaned about learners' beliefs, interpretations of learner autonomy can be considered. The participants in the three studies are Japanese students who have learned English in Japanese contexts and have little learning experiences in a native English-speaking environment. Study One focused on high achievers, whilst Studies Two and Three focused on low-middle achievers.

**Study One** used in-depth interview data to identify high achievers' beliefs about the use of effective foreign language learning strategies, teacher/learner roles, classroom expectations, self-motivation strategies, and oneself as a learner. This study was necessary in order to develop an understanding of learner autonomy from successful learners' insights.

**Study Two** obtained data from low-middle achievers' beliefs regarding their language learning. The participants of Study Two were chosen from all three Faculties of Foreign Language, Law, and Pharmacology, sampling around one hundred students from each faculty. The small, private university in

Japan has approximately one thousand students belonging to each faculty. The study intended to elucidate the low-middle achievers' beliefs about their learning. It was anticipated that any differences between high achievers' and low-middle achievers' beliefs would surface.

**Study Three** gathered first year English major students' views of classroom language learning and language learning that occurred outside the formal classroom. The Journal writing of students provided such data. The participants for Study Three were chosen from one of the first year English classes in order to explore low-middle achievers' insights. The respondents of this study were also part of the sample of Study Two.

Data from the three studies was then synthesized in order to gain a better understanding of learner autonomy.

A summary of the nature of the studies is represented in Table 1.2 and Figure 1.1.

**Table 1.2: Defining the Studies**

	Subjects All university students	Type of data	Data Organization	Data analysis	Time Line
Study One	16 x high achievers  Second, Third, and Fourth Year Students	Interviews	Recorded	Transcription grounded theory	1 month
Study Two	295 x low-middle achievers from 3 faculties  First and Second Year students	Questionnaires	Survey	Percentage	1 month
Study Three	29 x low-middle achievers  First Year students	Journal excerpts	Open-ended questions	Description	8 months

**Figure 1.1: The Organization of Three Studies**

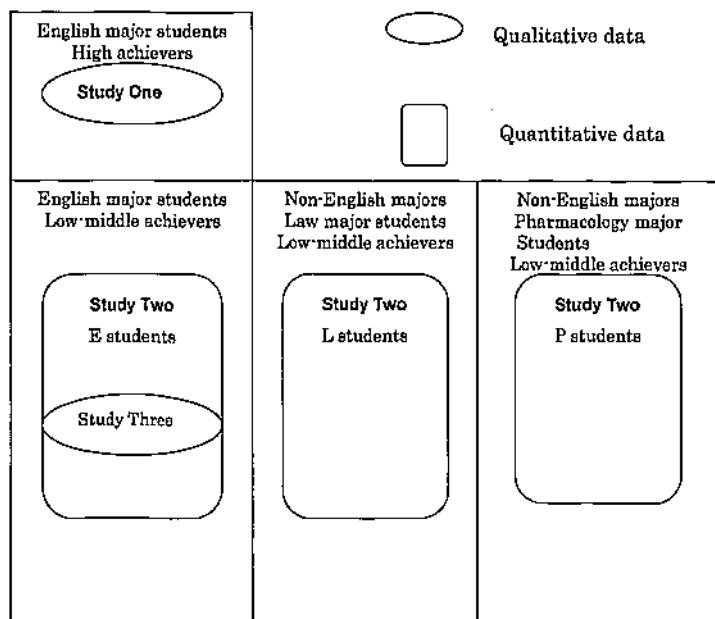


Figure 1: The above diagram shows the organization of Studies One, Two, and Three.

Study One focused on high achievers' beliefs, whilst Studies Two and Three focused on low-middle achievers' beliefs.

Study One and Study Three deals with qualitative data, while Study Two presents quantitative data.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction to Learner Autonomy**

This chapter is divided into several sections. First, definitions of learner autonomy are presented. Secondly, cultural factors are considered in relation to promoting learner autonomy. Thirdly, the notion of 'learner autonomy' for Asian contexts is considered with specific reference to Japanese learners. Fourthly, learner beliefs and learner autonomy are discussed in relation to learner awareness and acceptance of responsibility for learning. Finally, a revised definition of learner autonomy, using Little's notion of universal autonomy, is suggested.

Learner autonomy has been defined as learners taking responsibility for their own learning (Holec, 1981). Given such a definition, it could be argued that learner responsibility means that learners are aware of their role. In other words, it is the learners' internalised concept of self as learners that determines their level of autonomy, with such an awareness generally being derived in a metacognitive fashion. Wenden (1996) indicated the importance of students' metacognitive knowledge when she claimed that true learner autonomy refers to how students reflect on their learning and how they realize that they have effective learning opportunities. Such views will be considered in the Learner Training section of this chapter.

According to Benson (2001), "autonomy is a precondition for effective learning; when learners succeed in developing autonomy, they not only become better language learners but they also develop into more responsible and

critical members of the communities in which they live" (p. 1). However, the nature of the concept of autonomy is often clouded by misconceptions. Little (1995, pp. 3-4), for example, identified five misconceptions about learner autonomy:

#### Learner autonomy

- Is synonymous with self-instruction
- Is something teachers provide for their learners
- Is a single, easily described behaviour
- Is a steady state achieved by certain learners, and
- Somehow requires the teacher to relinquish all initiative and control in the classroom context.

Keeping Little's misconceptions in mind, autonomy, from a teacher's point of view, is not just a matter of offering freedom of decision-making, nor does autonomous learning necessarily mean a complete shift of instructional mode from teachers to learners. Rather, depending on the context of the classroom, there are various teaching styles or ways of promoting learner autonomy that need to be considered. According to Little (1995), the learners' acceptance of responsibility is the basis of learner autonomy, which has both socio-affective and cognitive implications. Socio-affective concerns for learner autonomy suggest that affective factors mediated via interactive social processes ought to be considered, whereas cognitive concerns suggest that autonomy may be an inborn capacity for learning.



## Definitions of Learner Autonomy

Most definitions of learner autonomy state that learners need to be independent and have both the ability and capacity to take charge of their own learning. The key terms of learner autonomy posited in Table 2.1 show the necessity for the learner to actively accept and willingly take responsibility for his/her own learning.

**Table 2.1: The Key terms of Learner Autonomy**

Taking charge of one's own learning (Holec, 1981)
An ability to decide by themselves (Boud, 1988)
Having a capacity or attitude (Dickinson, 1995)
Willingness to act independently in cooperation with others (Dam, 1995)
Willingness to accept responsibility (Little, 1995)
Being aware that human beings are social creatures (Hotho-Jackson, 1995)
Using tactics for taking control of their learning (Cotterall, 1995)
Self-regulation process (Littlewood, 1996)
Maintaining the locus of control (Pierson, 1996)
Having internal capacity of the learner (Sinclair, 1996/1997)
Recognising learners' rights (Pennycook, 1997)
Meaning of self-mastery, freedom, reflective activity (Benson & Voller, 1997)
Being able to control oneself (student) (Benson & Lor, 1998)

The above statements suggest that learner autonomy is related to the learners' internal attitude toward taking responsibility for their own learning. In other words, the researchers cited in Table 2.1, all emphasized the need for the learner to have an awareness of their own role in the overall learning process.

The characteristics of learners cited in Table 2.2 show autonomous

learners to be: a) actively engaged in the learning process; b) encouraged by the teacher/instructor to be so involved; and c) managing the learning process.

**Table 2.2: Definitions of Autonomous Learners**

Being capable of taking charge of his own learning and making all the decisions concerning the learning with which he is or wishes to be involved. (Holec, 1981)
The autonomous learners act according to their own mind and must be free not only from direction by others external to themselves but also from their own inner compulsions and rigidities. (Boud, 1988)
Having total responsibility for making and implementing all of the decisions concerned with his own learning. (Dickinson, 1988)
Willingness to take the responsibility for their own learning. Being self-confident learners; autonomous learners believe in their ability to learn and to self-direct or manage their learning. (Wenden, 1991)
Having capacity for being active and independent in the learning process, autonomous learners can identify goals, formulate their own goals; and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests. (Dickinson, 1995)
Taking active part in the social processes of learning. (Dam, 1995)
Showing a desire to learn, a robust sense of self, metacognitive capacity, management of change, independence and a capacity to negotiate. (Breen & Mann, 1997)
Autonomous learners show awareness of the aims and processes in learning and are aware of traditional pedagogical measures. (Benson, 1998)
(Being able to accept responsibility for their learning, autonomous learners constantly reflect on what they are learning, why they are learning, how they are learning, and with what degree of success. (Little, 1999)

## Responsibility

Holec's (1981) emphasis on the learners' capacity to take charge of their own learning has been accepted as a key concept of autonomy in language learning by the researchers in the field. However, the researchers cited in

Table 2.2, have expressed different understandings of the term 'responsibility'. Most of them include in their writing some of the following characteristics as suggested by Sinclair (1999):

1. making choices and taking decisions about one's own learning, such as independent study, or project work;
2. making informed decisions about one's own learning that have been specifically developed through learner training;
3. fostering responsibility developed through social and collaborative learning; and
4. building awareness of learners' rights and helping them to achieve freedom from the constraints of the existing curriculum and/or policies of their educational institutions.

(p. 309 – 329 *passim*).

Whilst Points 1 and 2 above seem to be the dominant themes in the literature, in Asian contexts, Points 3 and 4 could be offered as better starting points for incremental learner development. These points build on the strong socialization skills already in place and they lead students to be metacognitive and critical "collectively" as a way of thinking about taking more personal control (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000; Watson-Gegeo, 1988).

Synthesizing the above points, Sinclair (2000) clarified the possible descriptions of learner autonomy, specifically in the language teaching profession, as follows:

- Autonomy is a construct of capacity;
- Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of learners to take responsibility for their own learning;
- The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not

necessarily innate;

- Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal;
- There are degrees of autonomy;
- The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable;
- Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent;
- Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process, i.e., conscious reflection and decision-making;
- Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies;
- Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom;
- Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension;
- The promotion of learner autonomy has a political as well as a psychological dimension;
- Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures. (p. 7-12)

Sinclair's synthesis shows learner autonomy to be a construct of capacity and attitude, both of which appear to be socially facilitated. Therefore, learner autonomy does not mean giving over the independent learning environment to learners, but it entails an awareness of both self-direction and collaboration on the part of the teacher and the learner. The learners' responsibility does not mean learning alone but rather the learners internalising and developing an awareness of responsibility for their own learning. Wenden (1998) pointed out the need for raising the metacognitive awareness of learners' responsibility and made the explicit link between metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy. Her idea implied that autonomy refers to the learners' awareness of the learning process rather than to a particular mode of learning.

## **Cultural Issues Relating to Learner Autonomy**

The learners' metacognitive development of responsibility for their own learning in a foreign language context is important to this research because the learners who are accustomed to a teacher-centred learning environment will need to develop self-management, self-monitoring, and self-assessment skills in order to carry out effective learning. In addition, the learners would need to train themselves for learner-centred modes of learning (Benson, 2001). The researcher is mindful of the learners' cultural backgrounds in language learning and many of their experiences. Therefore, I specifically chose to investigate learner beliefs in an Asian context with specific consideration to learners' metacognitive development as autonomous learners.

Whenever autonomous learning is being investigated, the culture in which such learning occurs needs to be considered. Sociologists would agree that there is no such thing as a culture-free learning environment (Benson, 2001; Pemberton, Li, Or and Pierson, 1996). Despite such agreement, the notion of learner autonomy has been defined primarily in terms of understandings developed from the Western world. As Jones (1995) warned, there is a danger in if autonomy is a universally understood concept, since the interpretation of autonomy can depend on culture.

Most reported definitions of autonomy are associated with Western individualism, and as such might be unsuitable for other contexts (Littlewood, 1999). Cotterall (1998) for example, underscored the importance of examining cultural beliefs, stressing that one's cultural background can cause resistance to new educational roles that differ from one's own experience and background. She identified the central issue of learner autonomy development as being the

relationship between teacher and learner roles within a contextual milieu.

It has often been suggested that in collectivist societies the power gaps between teacher and learner cause the major difficulty in promoting autonomous language learning. Benson (2001) identified that "doubts about the cultural appropriateness of the goal of autonomy for Asian students have been mainly based on a view of Asian cultures as collectivist and accepting of relations of power and authority" (p. 56). Accordingly, Cotterall concluded that, "attempts to foster learner autonomy must always take account of the cultural predisposition and beliefs of the individual learners and teachers, as well as the context in which the learning is taking place" (p. 69). Little (1996) likewise warned that careful attention must always be paid to the context in which learning takes place.

### **The Notion of Learner Training**

In line with what has been presented thus far, the research literature indicates that the notion of learner autonomy can be considered from a number of perspectives. What follows is an investigation of the major schools of thought in an Asian learning environment.

Within Asia, a general approach to promoting autonomous learning seems to depend upon learners changing from being passive to active participants in their learning, as identified by researchers such as Dickinson (1987), Sinclair (2000) and Wenden (1991). For such a reorientation to occur, it may firstly be necessary to retrain the teachers as facilitators due to past and still current, traditional teaching practices, whereby the teacher is seen as the transmitter of 'knowledge'.

According to Wenden (1998), the reason for the importance of 'learner training' is that "it should enable learners to become effective agents of change within their educational context" (p. 5). She further indicated that learner training is likely to bring about major changes in the learner's role by helping language learners acquire the ability to take responsibility for their own learning processes through planning, monitoring, and evaluating, thus hopefully making them aware of metacognitive and affective factors in learning. The learner training currently occurring in Asian contexts suggests that, whilst learners hold appropriate beliefs about language learning, which may have been shaped by previous educational experiences, a consideration of those beliefs has not been taken into account in the training. Therefore, it appears that there needs to be a reorientation in the learners' thinking processes with concomitant teacher programs to facilitate such a transition.

### **Autonomous Activities in Asian Contexts**

Another approach that has been suggested for promoting learner autonomy in Asian contexts is adapting the notion of learner autonomy to the group-oriented society. Littlewood (1996) stated that Asian learners should be provided with an interpersonal environment that is imbued with mutual support and harmony. He further suggested that "reactive autonomy" (p. 136) should be supported in Asian contexts. "Reactive autonomy" is the notion that the learner regulates the activity once the learning direction has been established. This contrasts with Littlewood's view of "proactive autonomy" where the learners take charge of their own learning in action. Further, it is an established fact that many Asian societies, including Japan, value consensus

and conformity over individualism and autonomy.

There have been attempts to produce 'negotiated' versions of autonomy applicable to the Asian context generally and the Japanese context in particular (Aoki and Smith, 1999). Educators in Japan have tried to integrate autonomy with group work in an empirical fashion such as their own classroom-based action research. It is suggested that group work settings could work well with Japanese students. For example, Hart (2002); Murphey & Jacobs (2000); and Smith (1998), provided evidence of group cooperative learning, resulting in increased active involvement by Japanese students. Aoki (1999) indicated that the problems of Japanese students' passivity in accepting teachers' power and authority stems from Japanese educational influences, and therefore, she emphasizes the importance of giving students decision-making opportunities. Thus, both group activities and decision-making opportunities give students the chance to improve their active participation in the classroom. Such approaches seem to provide students with practical involvement in learner-centred activities and experiences of collaboration.

### **The Cultural Appropriateness and Existing Attempts at Promoting Learner Autonomy**

The researcher has identified cultural issues relating to learner autonomy and the existing attempts for promoting learner autonomy in Asian contexts. It is now necessary to consider the cultural influence upon learner behaviour. Existing attempts seem to have been somewhat effective, but with scant if any attention being given to cultural influences. However, previous attempts need



critical examination and new strategies need developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, giving due regard to cultural influences, if autonomy in learning is to be promoted further.

Although learner training could be the challenge for promoting learner autonomy in Asian contexts, the notion is based on assuming Asian students' passivity. First of all, misunderstandings about Asian students' passivity need to be challenged. Secondly, careful attention ought to be paid to the fact that learner training focuses on students' independent learning skills. In other words, the trainers need to change from a stereotypical viewpoint to one that encourages independent learning skills in promoting autonomy.

Small group approaches to active involvement and responsiveness in classrooms might be effective in Japan as previously discussed. However, the focus of the issue should not be a "Western versus Eastern" perspective. It is important to note, that different contexts exist even in the same culture and these should not be over-generalized. Contextual differentiation often occurs due to individual teacher differences within a culture or institution. Esch (1996) argued, "cultural differences may not be the main barrier to the promotion of the concept of autonomy in countries with a group-oriented tradition" (p. 46).

Previously, Jones (1995) raised some doubts with regard to the cultural appropriateness of autonomy, but Aoki and Smith (1999) pointed out that, "arguments against the aspirations of people and/or for the political status quo in a particular context, can easily be masked by stereotyping or arguments against cultural imperialism" (p. 23). They made their claim that, "it is important to recognize that autonomy is not an approach enforcing a particular way of learning. It is, rather, an educational goal, as Holec (1981) explicitly

states. Objections to autonomy based on students' current incapacity to learn in a wholly self-directed manner therefore lack validity in any context" (p. 21). Beebe (1998) suggested, that before underestimating or giving up on Japanese students, teachers ought to find out what the students are doing on their own with regard to their learning, and what lessons their experiences can offer to the teacher and other students. What may be needed are more in-depth investigations of students' insights about how they learn and what they believe to be their part in the process. The current research is attempting to achieve this.

A consideration of ways in which it may be possible to foster learners' self-responsible awareness to become actively involved in their own learning process needs immediate attention for the promulgation of autonomy in the learning environment. Learner autonomy does not mean that learners have to display certain behaviours but it means finding ways to strengthen learners' awareness of and commitment to their own responsibility as learners.

## **Japanese Learners**

### ***Japanese-ness: Stereotypical Views***

Within the literature, it has been frequently mentioned that Japanese learners are often said to be passive and dependent (Cheng, 2000; Claire, 1999; Doye, 1997; Dwyer & Heller-Murphey, 1996; Mori, 1991; Purdie, Douglas, and Hattie, 1996; Robbins, 1996). Typical Japanese students' behaviours have been documented in the following extracts:

(Japanese students) are accustomed to a passive and deferential role sitting quietly in classrooms where the teacher determines everything and the students' main objective is not to make mistakes. They expect to be told and to absorb, but not to try things out for themselves (Doye, 1997, p. 7).

A typical classroom scene would find: the teacher in control, giving explicit directions for every learning activity, and the students passively following those directions (Robbins, 1996, p. 179).

Learning is seen as something to be handed down by someone in authority and stored in someone's memory (Purdie, Douglas, & Hattie, 1996).

The above citations suggest that Japanese learners display a lack of engagement. Such perceived lack of engagement implied in the extracts fails to take into account other educational research findings. Explicit examples of these are shown under pertinent sub-headings.

#### Cross-cultural differences in communication style:

The Japanese are motivated to be sensitive to all the elements of conversation, to make each encounter psychologically and emotionally rewarding, reflecting rapport/dependence instead of independence or individualism (Nonaka, 1996, p. 155)

#### The teacher-learner relationship in the traditional classroom setting:

In Japan, teaching is a prestigious and respected role, the teacher-student relationship is one of polite distance, and the burden of responsibility for learning is placed on the student rather than on the

teacher (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p. 586)

**Independence is not valued:**

In Japan, there is a great distance between a teacher and a student: 'Don't step on your teacher's shadow'; keep three paces behind (Hayashi, 1997, p. 155)

The Japanese education system does not value independence nor assign creative or imaginative tasks (Hyland, 1993, in Dwyer and Heller-Murphy, 1996).

**Japanese cultural virtues:**

Students' passivity is shaped by cultural virtues such as 'silence is golden' (Nimmannit, 1998).

It is widely acknowledged in Japan that the discrete relationship between teachers and students is accentuated within a typical traditional classroom setting where teachers demonstrate their authority and students passively accept their teacher's power. Accordingly, Japanese learners tend to be perceived as accepting the teacher's authority in an unquestioning and unchallenging manner. Unless such a stereotypical view of Japanese learners is challenged, it will persist to the detriment of learner autonomy.

In the 1990s, cultural appropriateness began to be addressed, but it is only currently occurring with renewed impetus since the recent focus on culture, with its relevance to Asian students and autonomous learning (Benson, 2001), has been identified. Since the theory of autonomous learning originated in the West (based on Western individualistic values), learner autonomy is yet to be promoted to any meaningful extent in Japan. The very notion of autonomy contrasts with Asian societies, which are believed to value group-oriented

conformity (Cotterall, 1998). However, if we consider that Japanese learners have already developed some autonomy of learning, then one approach may be to retrain the teachers as facilitators, with a view to such teachers then retraining the learners about modalities of learning, constructivism and learners' roles within the overall learning process. Such may be the way to proceed in negotiating the situation of learner autonomy, in Japan.

### ***Non-Stereotypical Views of Japanese Learners***

Kubota (1999) was critical of Japanese stereotypical cultural representations such as "homogeneity", "groupism", and "lack of self-expression, creativity, and critical thinking" (p. 25). She further argued that such stereotypical representations are created based on understanding "the meaning of labels such as individualism and creativity within a specific cultural context" (p.25). She further stated that the Japanese school curriculum, "does promote creativity, original thinking and self-expression in its cultural context" (p. 23). In relation to the curriculum, Kubota emphasized that different perspectives should be respected in the different cultural milieu in which they occur. An example of the latter is that self-expression from a Western perspective may differ from self-expression from an Eastern perspective.

Purdie, Douglas and Hattie (1996), in their comparison of Japanese and Australian students, reported that there is no support for the stereotypical view of Japanese students as rote memorisers and that repetition, for a Japanese student, is linked to a conception of learning as understanding. They also found that Japanese students tended to independently grapple with understanding teachers' explanations rather than seek clarification. Another

finding was that the concept of learning was not limited to classroom experience only but was seen also as some form of broader personal fulfilment, perhaps suggesting that Japanese learners challenge themselves beyond the classroom. One example of this is that students do internalise concepts away from the formal learning areas, in order to strengthen and consolidate their understanding. Purdie, Douglas and Hattie concluded that although there were clear cultural differences in the conception of learning, no support for the stereotypical view, that Japanese students are surface learners, or are merely repeating or reproducing identical patterns of language.

This 1996 study further showed that Japanese students required significantly less social assistance than did their Australian counterparts, perhaps reflecting the cultural emphasis on personal effort as the major source of achievement. Such results contradict the stereotypical view of Japanese students' uncritical acceptance of teacher authority. As the above research showed, Japanese students were not merely passive learners. The present research will in part attempt to corroborate such evidence via the use of in-depth investigative procedures.

There are also several studies of Japanese students' expectations of seeking good relationships with teachers. McCargar (1993) examined cross-cultural differences in teacher and student role expectations. Forty-one English as Second Language (ESL) teachers and one hundred and sixty one ESL students in the USA were surveyed. McCargar reported that, "Japanese students seem to expect (all) students to have a more internal locus of control than did the other groups" (p.199). Regarding the item, "whether students should try to write down whatever the teacher said" (p. 199); the Japanese group disagreed with it, while the other groups agreed or mildly agreed. The

data also showed that the students, with the exception of the Japanese students, expected a more teacher-directed learning environment. Both these findings suggest that Japanese students are not stereotypical. McCargar's study did not provide any evidence of Japanese students' receptive attitudes.

According to Okazaki (1999), Japanese students see good teachers as those who are easy to understand, enjoyable, and good communicators. In contrast, Russian students see knowledge as the major area of importance, having high expectations of teachers, such as expecting teachers to have a high level of specialization. Russian students considered the more specialized technical aspects of teaching of the greatest importance to them deeming the social aspect of teaching irrelevant. Shimizu (1995) showed that Japanese students expect good teachers to be trustworthy, knowledgeable and kind. On the other hand, Robbins (1998) reported on Japanese teachers' expectations, indicating "Japanese teachers expressed more concern for the development of a comfortable, interpersonal relationship between students and teachers, while Western teachers focused on the academic aspects of their teaching" (p. 234). This is also supported by Sato & Murphey (1998), who found that in professional development sessions, Japanese English language teachers tended to focus on good working relationships with students rather than improving their own individual ability for teaching.

The non-stereotypical views presented above seem to be the converse of what the literature overall has tended to indicate. Both Japanese teachers and students consider building good relationships/rapport with each other and teachers do not merely expect students to defer to their authority.

According to Littlewood (2000), with regard to cultural differences in students' classroom expectations, Japanese students do not wish to be 'spoon-fed' with facts from an omniscient 'fount of knowledge'. Instead, they want to explore 'knowledge' for themselves and find their own answers. Most of all, they want to do this together with their fellow students in an atmosphere that is both convivial and supportive. It is this movement towards a constructivist approach of learning, with collaborative and authentic learning experiences, that will allow for knowledge construction, thereby facilitating autonomy.

### ***The Myth of Japanese Students' Passivity***

Higgins (1996) pointed out the basis of the distinction between the Western conception of the self (such as "ego-centric", "individualistic", "independent"), and the non-Western conception of the self (such as "socio-centric", "collectivistic", "interdependent"). In contrast, self-conceptions differ depending on the individual's past experience and expectations, both of which are influenced by previous social and educational backgrounds (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). For example, Hoffman (1995) defined the 'Japanese self' as a culmination of the Japanese educational enterprise, thus indicating that 'Japanese self' seems to be a product of educational emphasis on the value of effort. Moreover, according to Hoffman, in Japanese education effort, rather than reliance on inborn abilities, is the principal 'mirror' for self-achievement.

In Japanese society, successful learners praise themselves positively for their efforts, whilst less successful learners blame their apparent failure on



insufficient effort. In addition, the successful students gain the teacher's attention and trust, while the less successful students receive less attention and will be expected to put in greater effort. As a result, the successful learners are likely to develop positive self-beliefs, whereas the less successful learners are more likely to develop negative self-beliefs. Puchta (1999) concluded that students' negative and positive self-belief can bear an enormous influence on their success in learning.

What has been said in the last paragraph may be elucidated by referring to Attribution Theory (Barry and King, 1998). Attribution Theory deals with the teacher's perceptions of the students' performance as well as the students' perceptions of their own performance. According to the theory, the perceived causes of success and failure would influence students' motivation to expend effort as well as mediate teaching and student achievement. Barry & King noted that teachers' expectations towards their students are largely influenced by the students' passivity and were a key factor in the development of a positive self-image, or negative self-image, and concomitant self-beliefs. As such, the self-perceptions the students hold are a key focus in the present study.

Clearly then, teachers' own beliefs about learning could and do influence their learners' beliefs about learning. Aoki & Smith (1999) emphasized that

Teachers' action in the classroom and their interactions with their learners will mirror, either implicitly or explicitly, their own beliefs about learning, their views of the world, their self-views, and their attitudes towards their subject and their learners. Thus, whatever methodology teachers purport to adopt, whatever course book or syllabus they are following, what goes on in their classrooms will be influenced by their beliefs about the learning

process (p. 207).

Sato & Murphey (1998) added the importance of institutional development to individual teacher development. They concluded that

Teacher development entails both classroom and institutional development, i.e., developing a school culture where teachers collaborate, talk about instruction, share planning and preparation, try out new ideas, and promote continuous learning. For these teachers to develop their individual beliefs through trial and error experiences, which is teacher development, it is crucial that the institution of schooling in general, and each school individually, create structures that invite teachers to do so (p. 209).

Teacher's beliefs and the educational institutions' beliefs about classroom learning and teaching need to be considered so that the stereotypical view, that Japanese students are passive, may be challenged. As long as the teacher is concerned with only the students' display of active classroom behaviours, cultural differences will remain problematic for learner autonomy development. Learner autonomy needs to be understood from the learner's internal functioning perspective rather than from external evidence alone.

### **Learner Beliefs for Success**

According to Victori & Lockhart (1995), successful learners develop insightful beliefs about the language learning process. Successful learners also see themselves as initiators of their own learning and rely on their own

potential as good language learners; tending to develop a more active and autonomous attitude than less-successful learners (Victori & Lockhart, 1995). On this point, Yang (1999) reported that students' emotional reactions influence their expectations and commitments to the learning task. In line with this reasoning, Ho and Crookall (1995) suggested that learners need to learn to be self-motivated and self-disciplined in order for autonomy to develop. Ridley (1997) claimed that, "what learners believe about themselves is crucially important to their capacity for self-motivation" (p. 13). Learners' management of affective factors seems to be one of the most important strategies for language learning success.

Outside the language area, yet tangential to it, Palincsar & Klenk (1992) emphasized the importance of "the quality of thinking". They identified the importance of "the ability to engage in intentional self-regulated learning" (p. 297). Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons (1986) claimed that the self-regulation process depends not only on the students' ability to learn on their own, but also on their motivation to do so. Bandura's (1986) work supported such a claim that thought affects action and motivation. Bandura referred to the importance of "self-efficacy beliefs" seeing this as people's beliefs in their own capabilities. Self-efficacy beliefs affect people's commencement to pursue an objective, and determine how much effort they will make in that pursuit. According to Bandura, cognitive motivation is mediated by affective self-evaluation, perceived self-efficacy and personal goal setting. Those who hold a strong belief in their own efficacy motivate themselves by setting a challenging goal and by intensifying their efforts to achieve it.

A strong sense of efficacy provides the necessary staying power. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the challenges people set for themselves, with most courses of action initially shaped in thought (see also

Bandura, 1993; Corno & Mandinach, 1983; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Bandura (1993, p.118) further argued that how people see themselves affects the environment construct of their surroundings. Moreover, instead of emphasizing competitive social comparison, highlighting self-comparison builds a sense of personal efficacy. Bandura (1997) claimed that self-directed learning requires motivation as well as the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. It is because of the motivational aspect of self-directed learning that such learning encompasses a variety of interlinked, self-referential processes including self-monitoring; self-efficacy appraisal; personal goal setting; outcome expectations and affective self-incentives.

Benson and Lor (1999) indicated that learners' behaviours are based on their beliefs about language learning. Similarly, Sakui & Gaies (1999) defined learners' beliefs as the complex web of variables that learners bring to the language-learning task, such as attitudes, experiences, expectations and learning strategies. Therefore, learner beliefs are of the utmost importance when considering factors for learner autonomy development and language learning success. Learner beliefs seem to be the basis of the learner's attitude towards language learning success.

### **Learner Development for Promoting Awareness**

What has been argued is that learner beliefs are closely related to language learning success and autonomy. What learners believe about their language learning is linked to their quality of thought. Therefore, promoting learner beliefs for awareness and acceptance of responsibility may lead to successful language learning and the development of autonomy. Consequently, three levels of awareness are discussed:

- Promoting psychological awareness of learner autonomy;
- Political awareness of learner autonomy; and,
- Promoting both self-directed and collaborative awareness in learner autonomy.

### ***Promoting Psychological Awareness of Learner Autonomy***

Brookfield (1985) identified two major aspects in 'self-directedness'. One aspect is the technique of self-instruction, and the other, the internal change in consciousness. As previously noted, learner development of autonomy by learner training raises the learners' awareness of their own learning processes, through planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Wenden, 1991). In applying Wenden's process to the notion of learner training: planning-monitoring-evaluating, and applying Brookfield's concept of 'the technique of self-instruction', awareness can be developed. Such awareness is the purpose of 'the internal change in consciousness'. The focus of learner training ought therefore to be learner independence through a gradual reduction of teacher authority.

According to Benson (1998), autonomy at the technical level is concerned with "management, strategies and techniques of learning" (p. 3). At the psychological level of autonomy, "it is concerned with the inner capacity for self-direction or self-regulation of learning" (p. 3). Benson (1998) argued that autonomy is always constrained by social and institutional contexts of learning and as such, autonomous learners need to have sufficient control over the situational context of their learning.

### ***Political Awareness of Learner Autonomy***

Benson (1996) identified the concept of learner autonomy as the learners' own rights within existing educational systems, such as students being unrestricted in taking control over their learning process, and how much freedom teachers are allowed within the limited curriculum. He referred to institutional struggles whereby each 'part' of the institution is governed by restrictions both external to it and within it, such as Governmental policy; Faculty policy; rigid educational curriculum and power differences within classrooms. Such restrictions, whilst politically appropriate in Asian contexts currently, are not conducive to either teacher or learner empowerment.

Benson (1996) used the word 'control' in preference to 'responsibility' in discussing learner's rights. According to Benson, the concept of learner autonomy in language learning should not avoid issues of power and social change. He said that, "the attempts to raise issues of control will necessarily bring both learners and teachers into conflict with entrenched relations and structures of power" (p. 34).

Widdowson (1987,) indicated, "the learner really exercises autonomy only within the limits set by teacher authority" (p. 87). Pennycook (1997) also noted the need for students' empowerment, stating that "to become the author of one's world, (and) to become an autonomous language learner and user is not so much a question of learning how to learn as it is a question of learning how to struggle for cultural alternatives" (p. 45). From the perspective of the political dimension of learner autonomy, the challenge of self-realization is opposed to the limitations of the existing status quo for both teachers and students' power

differences. However it is ultimately conceived, the power difference between teacher and students cannot be denied. Thus, through becoming aware of such significant differences, all parties concerned should be able to develop further awareness of the struggle to achieve autonomy within the limitation of formal educational constraints.

### ***Promoting both Self-Directed and Collaborative Awareness in Learner Autonomy***

Rather than independence, Little (1995) considered interdependence to be the main concern for learner autonomy. Interdependence can be connected to collaborative awareness. Little emphasized the need to critically reflect on the learning process as this is connected to self-directed awareness. Such factors as self-directive and collaborative awareness are seen as being fundamental to autonomous learning. As such, Little emphasised, that learner autonomy is the matter of the learners' acceptance of responsibility rather than simply working on their own initiative.

The importance of interdependence for learner autonomy was evidenced by Dam's (1995) successful classroom practice. In the English classroom, Dam promoted effective learning through collaborative project work and critical reflection. This approach augurs with that of Carver & Dickinson (1993) who insisted that being responsible for one's own learning is more an attitude of mind than behaving in a particular way. Similarly, Remmert (1997) said that the development of autonomy is essential for learners' awareness of themselves as learners. Ridley (1997) stated that all learners are expected to achieve different degrees of autonomy, and autonomy with different degrees of

explicitness. In other words, learner autonomy is achieved differently, and demonstrated differently by each learner.

On this point, Crabbe (1996) suggested that the fostering of autonomy is not necessarily a challenge to the traditional role of teachers, nor is it necessarily incompatible with all existing practice. Similarly, van Lier (1996) argued that “a teacher cannot simply transmit the sort of skills and attitudes to learning that are required, nor can he or she train learners in the way that recruits are trained to march in step” (p. 93). Hoffman (1997) concurred, indicating that “fostering autonomy is not just a matter of learning a few techniques – it involves changing the way in which we relate to learners” (p. 7). It may be the case, therefore, that learners’ beliefs about their own learning should be subjected to a more in-depth focus, rather than investigating only particular types of independent learning procedures for planning, monitoring, and evaluating. This research will explore the salience of such a notion.

### **Learner Autonomy as a Universal Goal**

Throughout this chapter, cultural issues related to learner autonomy have been discussed. Specifically in Japan, the constraints of Japanese students’ attitudes in the classroom, and the promotion of learner autonomy are of great concern. At the 1998, Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Conference held in Japan, Dam, Little, Smith & Katsura (1998) debated whether learner autonomy is universal or culturally specific. The debate received considerable impetus, despite the fact that the subject had remained at a theoretical level up to that time and is remains a theoretical debate today.

Much of the discourse of the debate-covered problems associated with



teaching. Teachers who are worked in Japanese contexts discussed their problems and doubts about learner autonomy being implemented in practice in their classroom environments. In the exchanging of views amongst the teachers, specific reference was made to the implementation and development of learner autonomy in the Japanese context. Questions about the cultural appropriateness of learner autonomy were the main issues relating to Japanese students' stereotypical attitudes.

Given the issue of cultural suitability pertaining to learner autonomy, Little (1999) suggested a working definition of learner autonomy with a greater universal appeal than those which had previously been mooted:

In formal educational contexts, the basis of learner autonomy is acceptance of responsibility for one's own learning; the development of learner autonomy depends on the exercise of that responsibility in a never-ending effort to understand what one is learning, why one is learning, how one is learning, and with what degree of success; and the effort of learner autonomy is to remove the barriers that so easily erect themselves between formal learning and the wider environment in which the learner lives (p. 11).

Little's notion of 'universal autonomy' has been promoted on the following basis:

if the potential for autonomy is a human universal and the purpose of education is to help learners to develop tools for critical reflection, it follows as a matter of principle that learner autonomy is an appropriate pedagogical goal in all cultural settings (1999, p.15).

Whether learner autonomy is seen as being universal or culturally specific seems to be related to how the development of learner autonomy is understood.

Sinclair (2000) argued that learners are able to promote their autonomy, but that they might achieve it differently. The development of learner autonomy is the process of attaining the highest degree of autonomy. The highest degree of autonomy is indeed, a universal goal for successful language learning. For attaining such a goal, a deep understanding of what learner autonomy really means in a specific context needs to be considered. The view of learner autonomy being investigated in a culturally specific context seems to be based on the observation of learners' particular behaviours in classrooms. Within such a view, learner autonomy might be concerned with external factors only, such as learners' reactions in the class and engagement with their tasks. Here the expectation of learners' classroom behaviour might already be culturally specified. It seems that whether learner autonomy is universal or culturally specific, is largely dependent on how learner autonomy and culture are understood (Nix, 2002).

The focus ought not be on cultural differences such as Western versus Eastern perceptions of autonomous learning suitability. Different contexts exist within a given culture and these, cannot be combined into one cultural context. It is not a matter of replacing one viewpoint with another, such as moving from traditional teacher-centred classroom learning into learner-centred independent learning, but rather, it is that advantages of various classroom teaching/learning approaches should be integrated to promote greater learner autonomy. If the concept of learner autonomy is understood from the learners' viewpoints, and across cultural contexts, then, facilitating learner autonomy ought to be recognized as one of the important

goals of language education.

## Summary

With reference to the existing understanding of learner autonomy, learner responsibility is focused on the learners' independent management skills -- that is, of their own learning processes. This focus stresses the learners' active display of autonomous behaviour. Because Asian learners are typically viewed as being passive, expectations and beliefs have been earmarked change. This study has questioned stereotypical views of Asian learners, especially, Japanese learners. A new interpretation of learner autonomy is suggested which advocates the inclusion of internal viewpoints of learner responsibility. This new interpretation should lead to a deeper understanding of learner autonomy in all contexts, across all cultures, as a universal goal for successful language education.

Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy is widely accepted in language education, and it is evident from the literature that learners' own responsibilities were focused on in the process of language learning. The key strategies of planning-- monitoring -- evaluating have been focused on in current research together with the process of taking charge of one's own learning. Both have been considered as the focuses of promoting learner autonomy. It has been argued that teacher-student role changes are necessary for learner-centred classroom relationships to flourish. Thus, the notion of learner training has been given increased attention. It has also been argued that cultural influence in learners' role expectations appear to be problematic in the promotion of learner autonomy. Further, the question of whether the notion

of learner autonomy consists primarily of imposed Western values was also explored in this chapter. Finally, learners' attitudes and beliefs in language learning were considered with regard to cultural and educational influences.

It was proposed that existing definitions of learner autonomy needed to be reconsidered taking cognisance of the nature of the cultural mindset of Japanese learners, or of the specific cultural milieu. The main issue in promoting learner autonomy is not one of methods of teaching but rather, how learners perceive themselves, and in what ways they motivate themselves in their own learning. It seems that these two points are most important when considering learner autonomy in language learning. It was therefore suggested that, what was required was in-depth investigation of students' own insights into their learning. This study will examine students' beliefs in a specifically Japanese context, and may contribute to developing a deeper understanding of the concept of learner autonomy for successful language learning in wider contexts.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Introduction**

The main objective of the research is to investigate students' beliefs in language learning and to explore how a consideration of those beliefs may affect Japanese education, specifically in the field of language learning, but also in the whole continuum of learning. The research also attempts to describe how the educational experience, in a specific environment, influences students' beliefs.

Little's (1995) notion of learner autonomy provides the basic theoretical framework for this study. Little was the first to comment on interdependence within language learning and his theory of autonomy is important in the field because it presents views of learning as a collaborative process rather than as one of learning in isolation. In conducting the research, focus was given to the classroom environment and extramural experiences that impact on students' beliefs about learning. Little's theory showed a connection between, 'formal learning and living', through his proposal that formal language learning should be related to the learner's life experiences. This means that ideally, classroom learning should be organised with due consideration being given to the learner's extramural learning. Little also considered learner autonomy as the learners' awareness of personal responsibility for learning, and suggested 'interdependence' rather than independence for promoting learner autonomy. These notions will be discussed showing connections to other educational theories for the purpose of creating a model of learner development.

The key concept of learner autonomy theory in connection to the present

study is also discussed. Finally, the researcher's conceptualisation of learner autonomy is demonstrated by establishing the connections. That is, connections between the concept, the model of learner development and teacher development.

### Little's Notion of Learner Autonomy

The present study explored the ideas of Little's theory with relevance to language learning as presented in Table 3.1. The 'acceptance of responsibility' and 'interdependence' is the central focus of the current research looking at learner autonomy from learners' insights.

**Table 3.1: Little's Theory of Learner Autonomy**

Little's Notion	Ideas relational to language learning
1) naturalistic learning in connection with formal learning and living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the use of authentic resources</li> <li>• real communication</li> </ul>
2) negotiation for personal constructs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meaningful learning</li> <li>• constructivism</li> <li>• Kelly's Theory</li> </ul>
3) acceptance of responsibility is necessary for both learner and teacher selected situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• life-long learning</li> <li>• self-growth</li> <li>• integration of teacher-directed approaches and learner's self-directed learning</li> <li>• Vygotsky's Theory</li> </ul>
4) critical reflection through the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• metacognitive knowledge</li> <li>• independence</li> </ul>
6) need for both teacher autonomy and learner autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interdependence</li> <li>• collaboration</li> </ul>

Little (1996) believed that the concept of learner autonomy required the need to remove "the barriers that often exist between learning and the rest of

living" (p. 36). He further emphasized that: "the social autonomy which is necessary for successful 'naturalistic' second language acquisition" can be achieved by "the processes of negotiation" (p. 37). Such a process of negotiation may lead to "learners exploring and making explicit their personal constructs" (p. 37). One of the most important points in Little's notion is that the learner accepts responsibility for the content of his/her learning (p. 49). The learner's acceptance of responsibility means the desire to "develop a capacity to reflect critically on the learning process, evaluate the progress, and if necessary make adjustments to learning strategies" (p. 52). Such a capacity may be developed through interdependence rather than independence by recognizing "the need to take account of the learners and their personal constructs on the one hand and the teacher's special expertise on the other" (p. 49). Given such a scenario, Little saw that, "autonomy is an issue for teachers as well as learners" (p. 37).

The above concepts may be relevant to all fields of education in the sense that learning is constructed through both the teacher and learner reflective practice. For the purpose of this research, the concepts are specifically related to language education because the present research is investigating Japanese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' beliefs. Relevance for cross-curricula teaching and learning will be addressed later in the study. With regard to the present research, learners' attitudes of acceptance of responsibility were examined from learners' beliefs and reflective practice about their own language learning. Learners' awareness of both self-direction and collaboration was determined from their beliefs about the use of effective foreign language learning strategies; teacher/learner roles; classroom expectations; self-motivation strategies; and, oneself as a learner.

The next section discusses the relationship between Little's notion of

learner autonomy, and between the educational theories of Kelly, Vygotsky, and Dickinson. The work of these theorists has been selected for further discussion because Little's notion of autonomy seems to have been significantly influenced by their insights.

### **Language Learning and the Relationship to Little's Notion of Learner Autonomy**

Little (1995) suggested that formal language learning should be related to the learner's life experiences. This means that ideally, classroom learning should be organised with due consideration being given to the learner's extramural learning. In other words, classroom-learning resources should be considered in terms of their real life applications beyond the classroom. Resources designed to suit such a purpose are considered authentic learning materials. These include those produced for the purpose of mass communication: newspapers, television documentaries, magazines, and feature films. 'Traditional' resources produced for language learning purposes—such as textbooks, grammar exercises and artificial dialogue practise exercises, are not as authentic because they seem more removed from real life situations. Therefore, authentic materials are truly connected to real world situations when they provide a learning environment utilizing real life experiences, including collaboration with peers and teachers, and decision-making opportunities. Study Three involves the use of such resources in project work to enable empirical data to be collected.

Little suggested that language used for authentic communication may lead to 'naturalistic language acquisition', and therefore, using such an approach



creates experiences, which are meaningful to learners, whereby they apply learning to real life situations. This would potentially allow and encourage learners to construct knowledge for themselves. Such learning shows a constructivist orientation and equates to Kelly's 'personal construct theory' (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 27). According to Kelly, learning involves the learners' active construction of and participation in developing their own understanding of the world around them. Little (1995) took account of Kelly's theory in stating that any learning requires the learners' assimilation of new knowledge into their current existing system of constructs, or schemata. Little claimed that "in a class comprising learners from several different cultures, there may be great variation from one construct system to another...regardless of the composition of the class, however, individual experience will always ensure that no two learners have exactly the same system of constructs" (p. 19). This view was further supported by Halliday's (1979) notion that knowledge cannot be taught but rather must be constructed by the individual learner. Such a perspective is further supported by Williams and Burden (1997) who wrote that:

worthwhile learning does not entail the reception of ready-made facts, but must involve the building of new personal meanings and understanding. Language is not learned by the mere memorisation of discrete items of grammar, discourse, function or other aspects of language. Rather, learners are involved in an active process of making sense, of creating their own understanding of the world of language that surrounds them. (p. 27)

Little's emphasis on authenticity, the establishment of meaningful learning, and the learning process of engagement through learners' critical reflections, finds its basis in the theoretical viewpoint of constructivism. From

a constructivist perspective, both teaching and learning are seen as a knowledge construction. This sees the student as being central, rather than the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to a learner. Given such an understanding, the role of the teacher becomes more that of a facilitator of learning rather than a mere expositor of content. Apropos of the above point, Murphey & Sato (2000) used a metaphor to describe such educational change as "switching from transmission to construction" (p. 7). Therefore, Constructivism can play a significant role in supporting learner autonomy, seeing it as "an innate capacity" (Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 23) and the condition in which learners see and notice for themselves how the target language is constituted and functions. Autonomous learners, insisted Ridley (1997), construct knowledge for themselves.

Another point of view relating to 'personal construct' theory is that self-directed learning may be enhanced as individual learners harness opportunities for self-growth. Language learning is life-long learning, which is not achieved solely within the classroom environment, nor completed by the time the language course finishes, but rather carries over into everyday living beyond formal education. Dickinson (1987) said that self-directed learners retain responsibility for the management of their own learning, probably with an expert's help. When the learners undertake all the management without requiring help, they are said to be autonomous. According to Dickinson, "autonomy is where the learner takes responsibility for his/her learning and undertakes all of the management tasks concerned with it" (p. 15). Therefore distinguishing between "being responsible for something and carrying out courses of action arising from that responsibility" (p. 12) is considered by Dickinson the action of an autonomous learner.

In contrast to Dickinson, Little determined that learner autonomy was the acceptance of responsibility. Focusing on learning rather than teaching, the concept of learner autonomy, insisted Little, is connected with a learner's metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 2001) of self-responsibility as a learner. With specific reference to language learning, Wenden stated, "metacognitive knowledge" is "the nature of learner beliefs about language learning" (p45). Whilst metacognitive knowledge "is essential to the development and enhancement of a learner's potential for autonomy" (Wenden, p.62), it is not only a matter of managing the technical steps of learning strategies. However, as Little emphasized, is also the occurrence of learners' critical reflections of their learning process, by questioning themselves about the what, when, why, and how, of the episode. The important point of Little's notion is that learner autonomy is considered as the learners' awareness of personal responsibility, rather than as the practical management of independent learning. According to Little, that 'teacher direction' together with 'teacher's special expertise' is needed together with the learner's self-direction.

Interdependence in Little's notion is significantly influenced by Vygotsky's theory of socialization for effective language learning, which was also emphasized by Williams & Burden, (1997). Vygotsky (1978) articulated the importance of social interaction via reference to the 'Zone of Proximal Development', which is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

Moreover, Little stated that learner autonomy is not only the responsibility of learners, but teachers as well. The implication here is that in order to promote learner autonomy teachers need to be aware of the learner's viewpoints

about their learning. In recent years, the discussion on teacher autonomy has been increasing (e.g., Barfield, et. al., 2002). Barfield and nine other colleagues, all English teachers at Japanese universities, presented their working definition of teacher autonomy. They said that, "autonomy is characterised by a recognition that teaching is always contextually situated", therefore, "teacher autonomy is a continual process of inquiry into how teaching can best promote autonomous learning for learners"(p. 219). Because the development of learner autonomy may well be related to teacher awareness of, and sensitivity to it, a consideration of learner autonomy by the teacher may result in the teacher developing autonomy. This is demonstrated by teachers' reflective practice with specific regard to how to relate to their students in promoting autonomy in learning. Based on Little's notion of learner autonomy, it can be argued that a true test of teacher autonomy is the ability of teachers to display an awareness of their students' needs, and support learner autonomy within the realm of the learner's cognitive understanding.

Teachers and students need to be engaged in mutual collaboration and as such attempt to understand the nature of learning from each other's perspective. Such a view augurs well for mutual appreciation and understanding but more importantly for improved collaboration within the learning environment. So far, learner autonomy has been dealt with as a synonym of independence or self-directed learning. However, as far as Little's notion is concerned, the concept of learner autonomy should also be considered from the point of collaboration between students and teachers and between students or teachers.

The importance of 'critical reflections' and 'interdependence' for learner autonomy is also supported by Harvey and Knight's (1996, in Brockbank and McGill, 1998) quality of thought for professional development. Harvey and

Knight emphasized reflective practice, suggesting that it should “be made explicit as a tool for development” of teaching, moving from transmissive to transformational practice. ‘Transmissive practice’ refers to teachers simply adding new knowledge and information to their existing ideas, whilst transformational practice is teachers consciously engaging in reflection and continually learning for as part of ongoing professional development (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). Brockbank and McGill (1998) identified the key notion for facilitating reflective learning as being through reflective dialogue with others. Such others’ feedback is important for transformational practice. It appears that reflection of current practice is the key to development of autonomy for teachers and learners, such feedback from others is a crucial component in that reflection.

Williams & Burden's (1997) four key factors of the learning process underpin the discussion thus far, these being:

- teachers;
- learners;
- tasks and
- contexts.

According to Williams & Burden, all factors interact dynamically in the on-going learning process thus it is important to integrate the above key factors into the learning environment. In this way, they viewed learning as “the dynamic interplay” (p. 43), which emanates from interactions with others.

## **The Key Concepts of Learner Autonomy Theory in this Study**

The crucial points of Little's notion of learner autonomy already discussed

are 'acceptance of responsibility' and 'interdependence'. In the present study, 'acceptance of responsibility' and 'interdependence' will be focused on in the learners' critical reflections of how their metacognitive awareness is affected through their language learning experience.

This study will also investigate how learners reflect on language learning from the perspective of their affective, social and cognitive awareness. Affective aspects such as motivation and goal attainment awareness will be investigated. Learners' self-perceptions in relation to their self-efficacy beliefs will also be considered. The social aspects of learner beliefs will be investigated to determine how much learners are aware of their relationship with their peers, and their class teachers. Finally, cognitive aspects such as the language learning strategies the learners believe to be effective, how they perceive inside/outside classroom learning in terms of their attitude towards learning, living environments, and of their personal construct opportunities, will be obtained through a data collection of their viewpoints.

### **The Researcher's Conceptualisation of Learner Autonomy Theory**

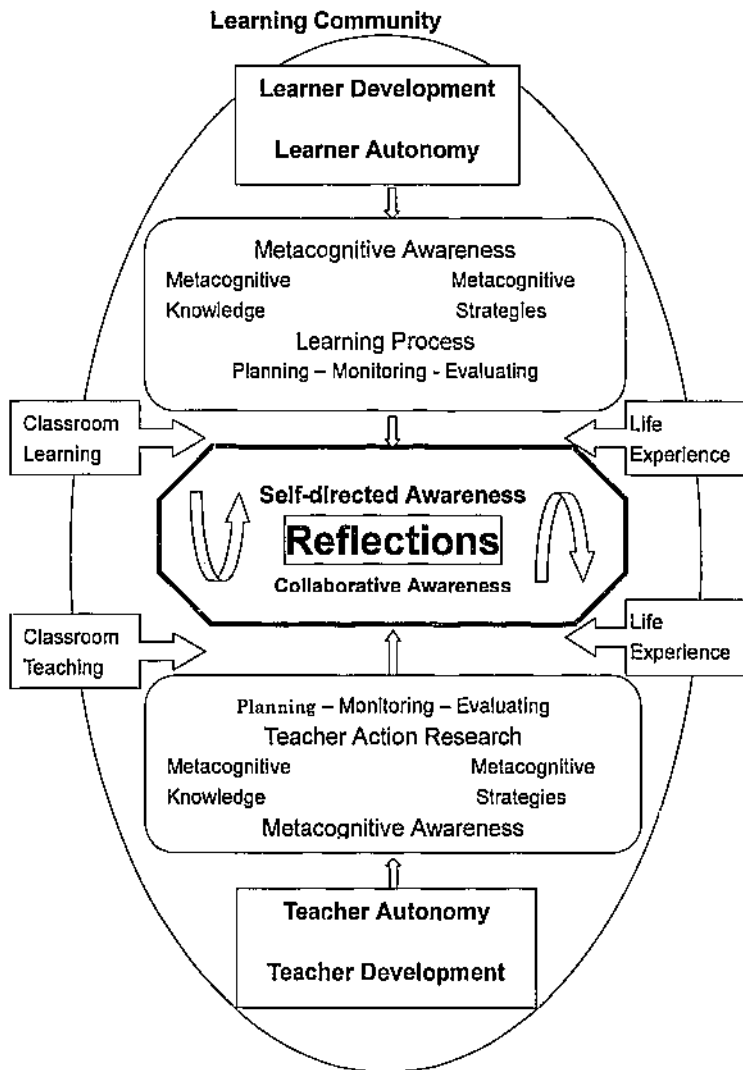
Based on the theoretical framework, it can be argued that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are probably best considered as being mutually interdependent. Such interdependent awareness might be termed collaborative awareness. Increasing learners' awareness of autonomy does not necessarily occur because of setting particular learning activities, but it might instead occur through a strengthened awareness of rudimentary existent self-responsibility and self-direction. In particular, the learner's perception of

the teacher's trust, support, and expectations, could be hugely influential with the heightening of motivation and confidence in their own learning. In addition, a reasonable expectation may be that when class members have a relationship of mutual reliance, and as a community are directing themselves towards a common goal, their motivation and stimulation as learners will be positively affected. There may be a reciprocal relationship at work here because it seems that promoting learner autonomy leads to collaborative awareness while such collaboration might in turn lead to stronger learner autonomy.

Within a class, each member's self-reflective awareness and responsibility may form crucial building blocks of awareness and establish a sense of community. Moreover, such learner development may affect the teacher's metacognitive awareness and autonomy in terms of how they relate to their students and how they reflect upon improving their own teaching. Depending upon the context, the real issue for teachers is how they can make learning more effective for their students and it is this question they should be striving to answer, and in so doing, place the focus on learning rather than on teaching, with results being measured in terms of students' learning outcomes.

The connection between learner development of autonomy and teacher professional development, discussed above, is represented by the following model (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3: Model of Learner Development and Teacher Development Connections





Of central importance (Figure 3) for both learner and teacher development is the stage of Reflecting on their own learning thus justifying its place at the core of the model. Metacognitive Awareness, Self-directed Awareness, Collaborative Awareness, and an overall sense of The Learning Community are also crucial for such development. The process of learner development and teacher development reflects Little's emphasis of interdependence rather than independence for autonomous learning. Learner autonomy should not be considered only within the classroom-learning context but should be extended to include time spent outside the classroom, that is, in the social milieu. Thus, Classroom Learning, Classroom Teaching and Life Experience need to be connected. Such connectivity between life and living is supported by Little's notion of Learner Autonomy. It has now been established that learner autonomy is both a social and cognitive construct.

The following chapter will discuss the research methodology of the current study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the current research is to gain greater insight into how learner autonomy can be understood by examining learners' views in one specific context, namely a Japanese university. The research was undertaken by conducting three separate yet interrelated studies. The qualitative and quantitative data, from all three studies, examined student beliefs about language learning. All participants of the three studies are Japanese students who have learned English in Japanese contexts and have had little learning experience in a native English-speaking environment. Study One focused on high achievers' beliefs, whilst Studies Two and Three focused on low-middle achievers' beliefs. For obtaining data, interviews were used in relation to Study One, Questionnaires in Study Two, and Student Journals in Study Three. Each study will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **Study One:**

#### **Identifying High Achievers' Beliefs**

##### ***Purpose of Study One***

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of high achievers' beliefs about foreign language learning in a particular context by conducting in-depth interview research. An investigation was made into

learners' beliefs concerning the use of effective foreign language learning strategies, teacher/learner roles, classroom expectations, self-motivation strategies and their beliefs about themselves as learners.

Study One aimed at identifying the nature and degree of influence exerted by learners' beliefs on their language learning. This study examined high achievers' beliefs in order to reconsider interpretations of learner autonomy. It is hypothesized that language learning is influenced by learner's beliefs, and, as such, research in this area may lead to a better understanding of learner autonomy from a consideration of the learners' viewpoints.

### ***Research Questions***

The following research questions were considered:

- (1) What beliefs do high achievers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) hold about the effectiveness of their own learning strategies?
- (2) What beliefs and expectations do high achievers have about the teacher's role in helping them to learn and the use of class time?
- (3) What beliefs do high achievers have about self-motivation strategies?
- (4) What perceptions do the students have of themselves as language learners?

In Study One, Little's definition of learner autonomy, the framework informing this research, was used to examine whether or not the data supports Little's theory. His theory, widely accepted as the basis of learner autonomy, is the acceptance of responsibility for one's own learning, which has both

socio-affective and cognitive implications. In Study One, learners' self-responsibility was considered as both: awareness for self-direction; as well as for collaboration based on Little's theory. How learners reflect on language learning was investigated from their points of their affective, social and cognitive awareness.

### ***Target Population***

In total, sixteen students majoring in English at a private university in Japan were chosen. These included eight from Fourth Year, four from Third Year and four from Second Year, to take part in the study. These students had been identified as high achievers who had significantly improved their TOEIC score during their time at university (see the participants' TOEIC results in Appendix 4-1). Their responses make up the descriptive case studies of learner beliefs. English major students were chosen for the sake of consistency because their university studies have focused more on English when compared with non-English major students. As such, English proficiency levels of English major students tended to be generally higher than for non-English major students. The English major students have been undertaking TOEIC examinations several times a year since entering university. The high achievers were selected based on their score improvement by comparing their present score with their first examination score. Out of approximately two hundred students in each year after first year, the top ten students, who showed both high achievement and improvement, were selected. The TOEIC examination is considered an international standard of English proficiency.

## ***Design and Procedure***

The research procedure for this study consisted of gathering retrospective self-reports of the participants' beliefs about language learning. The semi-structured, open-ended, and audio tape-recorded interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher in order to obtain the similarities and differences of the participants' beliefs in detail. Consent forms were given to all participants of Study One for reading and signing (see Appendix 4-2). Before the interviews, the participants' background experience in foreign language learning was obtained by questionnaires in order to gain information about their past English learning experiences and overseas visits (the questionnaires were presented in Appendix 4-3). The participants' background experience was obtained in order to choose the students who had learned English most of the time in Japan and had less experience staying overseas. The questions are given to each interviewee before the interview (see Appendix 4-4). Each interview took approximately one hour. Interviews were conducted in Japanese, which is the mother tongue of both the participants and the researcher. The students' TOEIC examination scores, pilot interviews in English, together with their oral test results were combined to determine their overall English proficiency. In addition, the participants' school marks of all English related subjects were obtained. From the interview data, the students' insights for self-direction were explored by comparing and contrasting key words and sentences in their responses. All data were then translated into English.

## ***Data Analysis***

Interview transcriptions were scrutinized and irrelevant information was identified and discarded. Data was classified as irrelevant if it was devoid of meaning for the purpose of analysis. Relevant responses were those, which were information rich with regard to learner beliefs about language learning. These responses were classified into eleven categories as indicated below:

- beliefs about effective learning strategies;
- motivation for language learning;
- improvement strategies for learners' own language skills;
- teacher role in making learners achieve their goals in English learning;
- the nature of classroom learning;
- self-motivational strategies;
- problem-solving strategies;
- self-management strategies;
- teacher expectations;
- self-beliefs and
- possibilities about learners' goal achievement.

When transcribing the responses, each point made by the participant was set on a separate line and assigned the descriptor that most closely matched the intended meaning of that point. The descriptor was then a label for that point. With regard to the analysis of the qualitative data, Frontman and Kunkel (1994), Glasser & Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1994) have used a similar procedure.

For the identification and categorization process, the data were compared and contrasted by categorical analysis to ensure that there were no

contradictions between the responses and the categories to which they had been assigned (Ellis, 1993; Strawderman, 1994; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991; Yacci, 1994). For validation purposes, an independent person who was working as a language teacher at the university was asked to randomly check approximately 10% of the categories and descriptors to see if he agreed with the analysis. Furthermore, to adequately represent all relevant elements of the participants' responses and in line with Little's notion of the learner's acceptance of responsibility based on socio-affective and cognitive factors, five categories emerged from the data. The five categories of learner beliefs were labelled as follows:

1. Affective beliefs
2. Self-perceptive beliefs
3. Self-motivational beliefs
4. Cognitive beliefs, and
5. Social beliefs.

For the purpose of explicit and systematic data analysis, textual elements such as sentences and phrases that seemed to express discrete ideas and meanings were grouped into several descriptors within each category. This was undertaken so that the model of learner autonomy could be derived from the empirical data analysis.

Categories and descriptors about learner beliefs relating to language learning are shown below. Bold font identifies the categories. The descriptors are shown under each category. Reverse arrows ( $\leftrightarrow$ ) signal the opposite characteristics (for example, 'positive self-image'  $\leftrightarrow$  'negative self-image'). Each category and descriptor was defined as follows:

1. Affective beliefs = Learners' wishes and feelings such as:

job related motivation; the wish to study at postgraduate level; the wish to get a certificate, or high TOEIC scores; the wish to acquire English skills; the wish to converse with others; learner's interests or enjoyment; the wish to acquire English ways of thinking (culture) and the wish to get the advantages of having English proficiency.

## 2. Self-perceptual beliefs = Learners' awareness of self-management and self-responsibility factors.

Under Self-perceptual beliefs, the following descriptors were identified and each descriptor defined for the purpose of conceptual clarification:

- self-regulation = The task of managing one's own work schedule efficiently and effectively
- self-direction= The quality of possessing an internal locus of control for directing learning
- self-encouragement = utilizing internal processes to maintain a positive outlook,
- positive self-image = displaying a reliant self-concept even in the face of disconcerting information.  $\leftrightarrow$  negative self-image = failing to display a reliant self-concept in the face of disconcerting information,
- self-trust = trusting oneself to achieve one's goal  $\leftrightarrow$  self-doubt = doubting oneself and one's abilities, and
- self-observation = observing oneself and recognizing one's true self.

## 3. Self-motivational beliefs= learners' needs and reasons for promoting their own English learning.

Under Self-motivational beliefs, the following descriptors were identified and defined as follows:



- goal awareness = setting their future goal and being aware of their own learning ↔ short term goal = setting a tentative or incremental goal and focusing on achieving it.
- weak point awareness = showing an awareness of internal deficit and developing compensating strategies in one's own learning schema.
- reflections = thinking about learners' own learning process in a serious and careful way.
- self-monitoring = watching carefully learners' own progress as to how they go about their own learning.
- initiative = learning without a need to be told what to do and having active behaviour in language learning. ↔ passive = avoiding active behaviour and having a receptive approach.
- conscious effort of continuation = making an effort to continue one's own long term learning ↔ short term effort = being aware of tentative effort to achieve one goal at the time.
- flexibility = being able to change according to the situation ↔ restriction = having a limited way of thinking and not being able to change one's own attitude in language learning.
- stronger internal locus of control = actively creating one's own insights about their learning which may be invisible to external observers ↔ weaker internal locus of control = not putting enough effort towards one's own learning.
- critical awareness = being conscious of maintaining one's academic level.
- endless possibilities = believing in their unrestricted possibilities for achievement ↔ uncertainty = being not sure about their own possibilities
- self-actualisation = being aware of English skills as a means of communication
- ↔ English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores = focusing on improving one's own English skills only.

4. Cognitive beliefs = learners' awareness of language learning strategic skills.

Under Cognitive factors, only two descriptors were identified. They were:

- classroom learning = learners' awareness of and attitudes to language learning strategies inside classroom learning, and
- effective language learning strategies = learners' awareness of effective outside classroom strategies to improve their own language learning.

5. Social beliefs = learners' expectations of teacher's role and awareness of relationship with others.

### ***Interviews***

Interviews have been selected as a data gathering tool for this study because the purpose of the research is to understand the world from the subjects' own perspectives (Kvale, 1996). The interviews enabled native language use by both the interviewer and the interviewees in order to obtain the participants' interpretation relating to their internal perspectives.

Books (1997); Byram, Duffy, and Murphy-Lejeune (1996), state that there are many advantages of conducting interviews - the most advantageous being the opportunity to gather a large range of meaningful data. Other advantages include: naturalness, face-to-face contact, and assessment of non-verbal communication, and the immediacy of using follow-up questions for clarification and extension. Taking account of other researchers explorations informed the current researcher's choice to use the interview as a data-gathering tool.

Wenden (1986) conducted her interview research in the USA with

twenty-five adult ESL learners. She analysed verbal protocols by using a grounded theory methodology, and then identified five dimensions of learner beliefs about language learning in relation to the learners' learning strategies. These were "(i) the language, (ii) their proficiency in the language, (iii) the outcomes of their learning endeavours (iv) their role in the language learning process, and (v) how best to approach the task of language learning" (p. 186). Her research showed some relationships between learner beliefs and the learners' preferred strategies such as, what the learners attend to in learning, and how they evaluated the effectiveness of activities.

Benson and Lor (1998) studied sixteen participants in the Independent Learning Program at Hong Kong University, and carried out case study interviews for investigating learners' conceptions of learning. These researchers wanted to discover the relationship between the students' conceptions and their readiness for autonomous learning in the context of the researchers' own programme. Benson and Lor analysed this relationship through learner discourse about language learning and autonomy. Benson and Lor concluded that learners' willingness and capacity to engage in dialogue about their beliefs, their conceptions of language and language learning, might indicate their readiness for autonomous learning. Essentially, they indicated that listening to learners' perspectives about language learning could be one way of promoting autonomy. Interview data could show the learner's awareness of autonomy, and the interview itself would become an opportunity for raising the learner's awareness of autonomy.

Victori (1999) used interviews with think-aloud protocols for her case study of two effective and two less effective EFL writers. Her study revealed that differences in metacognitive knowledge could be distinguished between successful and less successful writers. Palfreyman (2002) used interview

research to obtain students, teachers, and administrators' perspectives at his university in Turkey as a major part of an ethnographical study. He concluded that learner autonomy is a matter of how different participants interpret the idea of autonomy and learning.

As seen from the above, studies conducted through interviews, the interviewing shown as a means of discovering native terms and meanings. Often, these may offer interpretations of the concept of autonomy (Byram, Duffy, Murphy-Lejeune, 1996). Benson and Lor (1998) considered the best approach to discover the learner's readiness for autonomy is, "to listen to learners and to pay close attention to what they say" (p.1). Interviewing is one methodology that encourages listening in order to glean learners' insights.

Grounded theory provided a theoretical framework for the analysis of the interview data. Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory whereby the exploratory analysis can provide "representational theoretical model of participants' experience" (Frontman and Kunkel, 1994, p.493). The analysis can facilitate the conceptualisation of the data into explicit and meaningful schemas and maximize the reliability and validity of the findings (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). When developing a grounded theory, there is no requirement for a hypothesis, rather, the procedure follows a "bottom-up" interpretation of a situation or event (Yacci, 1994). The procedure is grounded in data that is systematically gathered and analysed, and a theory evolves through constant comparison of variables (Cocklin, 1996; Ellis, 1993; Frontman & Kunkel, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). The comparison of meanings of sentences and words within the data is continued until internal coherence, adequate for the description of all relevant elements, is achieved (Frontman & Kunkel, 1994). In Carter's (1996) terms, "the data determines the outcome". According to

Polkinhorne (1994), "this method is appropriate to produce carefully crafted, data-based theories and models". Further, this methodology is approached "from a constructivist position", where "theoretical formations are always unfinished and retain a perspectival dimension" (p. 510). The advantages of grounded theory are well documented and include the use of the inductive process of discovery; the natural development of key experiential concepts; systematic data collection; and a reciprocal relationship between data collection, analysis and theory (Ellis, 1993; Strawderman, 1994; Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). According to Yacci (1994), grounded theory is useful for bringing to light an understanding of a situation. It has been shown that grounded theory holds significant promise for exploratory analysis (Frontman & Kunkel, 1994). As such, it is appropriate for use in the present research.

Transcriptions of the interviews were interpreted by analysing how each participant reflected on their own language learning. It is anticipated that, even though there are only sixteen high achieving participants in Study One, they may reveal different degrees of autonomy. Any such differences in beliefs will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## **Study Two:**

### **Identifying Low-Middle Achiever's Beliefs**

#### ***Purpose of Study Two***

The purpose of this study was to investigate the beliefs about language learning of low - middle level Japanese students. Data was collected from both

English major and non-English major students. Non-English major students consist of Law major and Pharmacology major students. In Study Two, quantitative data relating to the participants at a private university in Japan were examined in relation to their expectations and beliefs about their foreign language learning.

### ***Research Question***

One research question was considered:

- What beliefs and expectations do low-middle achievers hold regarding effective strategies, teacher role expectations, self-motivation strategies, and self-efficacy beliefs in their foreign language learning?

As Cotterall (1999) noted, the investigation of language learners' beliefs is useful to discover different types of behaviours in the language classroom and what characteristics are important for successful language learning. This is especially important in the Japanese context, because Japanese learners' stereotypical passive attitudes are well attested to in the literature. As such, it is necessary to investigate whether Japanese students really are passive and not autonomous learners.

### ***Target Population***

Some two hundred and ninety five, First and Second Year students from the same university participated in the study. They included two groups, those

studying an English major (104 students), and those studying a Non-English major (80 x Law students and 111 x Pharmacy students).

### ***Design***

The items of Cotterall's (1999) study formed the basis of the questionnaires and study. The method of analysis she used was implemented in the current study. The structured questionnaires and criteria are shown in Chapter Six. They were analysed descriptively by calculating percentages and mean scores, in order to build a picture of the students' perspectives about their learning.

### ***Instruments***

Cotterall's questionnaire was referred to as a basis for the instrument developed for this study. Cotterall (1999) established the questionnaire in relation with learner beliefs about language learning. She designed her questionnaires by considering her earlier work in 1995 and her 1999 study focused on the variables affecting successful Second Language Acquisition (SLA), especially in autonomous learning. Cotterall's questionnaires were designed to investigate learner beliefs in relation to six key variables, 1) the role of the teacher, 2) the role of feedback, 3) the learner's sense of self-efficacy, 4) important strategies, 5) dimensions of strategies-related behaviour, and 6) the nature of language learning.

The items of Cotterall's (1999) study formed the basis of the questionnaires in this study. The method of analysis she used was implemented in the current

study. They were analysed descriptively by calculating percentages and mean scores, in order to build a picture of the students' perspectives about their learning.

The questionnaires in the present study consisted of Cotterall's six key variables that focused on English language learning. Some of the items were changed, such as the term 'language learning' into 'English learning'. One item was irrelevant to English learning and appeared confusing and was therefore omitted. Cotterall also identified difficulties in administering an English language questionnaire to non-English speaking people. Considering such difficulties, the questionnaires of the present study were administered in the participants' native language, Japanese.

Cotterall variously used a three, five and nine point Likert-type scale in her research and although this raises questions relating to psychometric consistency, it has nevertheless been adopted in the present study for three reasons. Firstly, because in nature, the study was closely related to the present one: Cotterall's study was organised to investigate the learner beliefs as the basis of readiness for learner autonomy, and thus seen as being extremely valuable for the purposes of the present study. Secondly, like the present study, it was an investigation of learner beliefs about language learning using English learners as the sample. In Cotterall's (1999) study, the one hundred and thirty one subjects were learners of English from nineteen different countries, enrolled in three different English language courses, at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Finally, because each category under investigation was discrete, and cross-category comparisons were not intended, the instrument was satisfactory for the purpose of the current research.



## ***Data Analysis***

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Responses were obtained to questions about teacher/learner/classroom roles and the participants' beliefs about language learning. The participants' responses were calculated according to Cotterall's (1999) method for the descriptive study. In Cotterall's investigation, participants' responses were "analysed descriptively by calculating percentages and mean scores, in order to determine trends in the data about the learners' potential for autonomous language learning behaviour" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 500). In this present investigation, the same methods were used in order to determine and analyse participants' beliefs about language learning.

## ***Questionnaire Survey***

As previously discussed, interview research is advantageous in gaining meaningful in-depth data. However, questionnaire research studies have been used frequently for data collection relating to language learners' beliefs (Sakui & Gaies, 1999). Researchers have shown that learners' beliefs influence their language learning behaviour, especially the relationship between learners' beliefs and their enculturation. (Horwitz, 1987, 1999; Liu & Littlewood, 1997).

In order to utilise the most appropriate instrument for the present investigation, Cotterall's (1999) questionnaire was selected for this study. Cotterall's study explored the relationship between each factor and autonomous language learning behaviour. It was designed to identify factors for successful

language learning, in particular autonomous language learning. In Study Two, Cotterall's questionnaire was selected but the items within it were reordered by the current researcher to better suit the purpose of the study, and then translated into Japanese in order to make them easier for Japanese students to understand. For the purpose of validation, a back-translation was done from the Japanese translated version of the questionnaire into English, to make sure that the translation had not contaminated the instrument. Instead of statistical calculations, descriptive analysis by calculating percentages and mean scores was used as the data analysis in order to interpret the learner beliefs elicited.

Although one of the advantages in questionnaire research is to gain an overall view of the participants' beliefs, Sakui & Gaies (1999) identified the limitation of such an investigation. They said that:

Questionnaires consisting of closed items allow respondents to only state their beliefs and then only the beliefs which are included in the questionnaire. Well-conducted interviews allow learners to reveal beliefs which are not addressed in the questionnaire and to describe the reasons, sources, behavioural outcomes and other dimensions of their beliefs. (p. 486)

The above statement suggests that interviewing could be valuable in compensating for the disadvantages of questionnaire research. In addition, the advantageous combination of both questionnaire research and interview research could be useful in developing an understanding of learner beliefs.

Study Two intended to gain an insight into students' beliefs in one specific context as a supplementary study to Study One and the questionnaire research

allowed the quantitative views of learner beliefs to be shown. The overlapping aspects of Study One and Study Two provided a form of research triangulation. The findings are presented in Chapter Six.

### **Study Three: Low-Middle English Major Students' Beliefs**

#### ***Purpose of Study Three***

The purpose of Study Three is to explore low-middle achievers' insights about language learning, both within a classroom setting and through any extramural study undertaken. This included their reflections about developing learner autonomy through project work. The project work was assigned to students to give them opportunities for decision-making, collaboration and authentic resource use. The purpose of the project work was to promote their strategic skills, confidence and willingness through engaging in independent learning. From Study Two's findings, the low-middle achievers tended to place a high value on their own responsibility for language learning. However, they appeared to act passively and demonstrate fewer strategic methods, and showed a lack of confidence and willingness to solve their problems. Journal writing and project work settings were organised to give them reflective opportunities about their own language learning and to motivate students to engage in independent learning. In an attempt to unearth additional data not surfacing in the previous studies, a further aim of Study Three was to determine the effectiveness of journal writing and project work in the development of learner autonomy.

### ***Research Parameters***

Journal writing was used in order to discover students' insights about what seems to be important for learner autonomy. Through project work engagement, the students were encouraged to participate in individual or group independent learning experiences and then record their critical reflections on these experiences. The effectiveness of journal writing and project work for the development of learner autonomy in language learning was a further consideration of Study Three.

### ***Target Population***

Twenty-nine First Year students, all EFL majors, were chosen for Study Three. Out of approximately one hundred and seventy First Year students, one English class was selected for this study because the researcher was the teacher of English for this class and was thus directly involved in this project. A TOEIC placement test was administered at the beginning of the student's first year of university. Students' average TOEIC scores in the range of 200 to 300 points identified them as having a low-middle level of English.

### ***Design and Procedure***

Journal writings were used for two different purposes: firstly as research tools, journal extracts provided what and how students felt and thought, how they identified and used strategies in their own learning process and which ones; and secondly as learner development tools, journal writing gave students'

reflective opportunities from which they might modify future behaviours.

EFL major First Year students' reflections of classroom practice and extramural learning were identified from their journal writing. The participants were asked to write their journals in Japanese and the teacher commented on their writings. The journals were set up in such a way that the students were given many opportunities to critically reflect on their own language learning processes. This would facilitate later analysis of learner autonomy.

Journal writing was organised outside regular lessons and was collected every two weeks. Students were asked to submit their journals but knew that the journals were not formally evaluated. They were encouraged to freely write their reflections about language learning from both an inside and outside of classroom perspective. The journals were written in Japanese so that participants could express their feelings and thoughts with ease. The teacher then commented on their writings and returned the students' work during the following week. Individual journal accounts were kept regularly by students for the period of eight months. In this study, the students' journals were considered for data analysis.

### ***Data Analysis***

Journal excerpts showing students' beliefs about language learning through self-reflection are presented. The insights presented relate to their own learning, such as reflections on their past experience, constraints they currently feel they operate under in their learning, preferences and

expectations, communicative opportunities they have sought and utilised, their perception of their own improvement and their experiences arising from project work. Autonomy awareness of these students is also discussed with respect to the stereotypical views of Japanese students.

### ***Journal Excerpts***

The purpose of Study Three was to obtain students' qualitative journal extracts as "direct evidence" (Benson, 2001) of learner beliefs and attitudes. Journal excerpts were of further use to gain the students' reflections in their writing. Their descriptions showed the students' affective factors such as what constraints the students had in their own study, inside both the classroom and external to it, and what occasions they felt encouraged and/or discouraged.

For promoting autonomy, frequent journal writing opportunities gave the students time to reflect about their own learning on a regular basis. Because journal writing can also function as an instrument for self-awareness, self-analysis or self-evaluation (Matsumoto, 1996) it was from this perspective that its appropriateness for this study was determined. The students wrote their reflections about their own learning, shared them, and received teacher feedback. Such practices could be seen as encouraging students' autonomous output as well as developing their reasoning skills. It was not only the self-reflective opportunities that were advantageous, but journal writing also gave the students non-threatening opportunities to speak out and much discourse ensued when journals were collected for analysis. Thus, students' journals were used as a means of sharing reflective writing between individual student and teacher.

According to Lamb (2000), learner autonomy will be promoted, "if learners are offered the opportunity to find a voice in the processes which affect them" (p.123). Moreover, journals are useful for establishing the relationship between the teacher and the individual learners. Both teachers and learners are able to "construct a shared understanding of the language learning processes" and "this awareness is an essential foundation of learner autonomy" (Cotterall, 1995, p. 195). Further to this, Cotterall emphasized that dialogues between learners and teachers are central to the fostering of autonomy.

Journal studies are an introspective account of a second language learning experience or classroom teaching reflection (Numrich, 1996). According to Bailey (1983), journal studies allow the classroom experience to be seen as a dynamic process. Further, Matsumoto (1987) acknowledges several advantages of journal-based studies. Importantly, journal writing is process oriented and enables one to investigate diverse aspects of the classroom experience. It also enables one to discover new variables and to collect natural classroom data. Importantly, the journal enables one to investigate hidden psychological variables in second language acquisition. Finally, they are not only used as a research tool, but also for purposes of self-improvement.

Journal writing in this study was considered as the basis of exchange between the teacher and the individual student's reflections. Therefore, journal writing was a suitable instrument for collecting "direct evidence" of low-middle achievers' beliefs about language learning. Results are presented in Chapter Seven.

## **Interrelationships between the Three Studies**

Each study was organised separately by using different research methodologies, such as 'interviews', 'questionnaire surveys' and 'journal excerpts'. All three studies investigated students' insights. The results of the three studies are presented descriptively from each set of data in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The qualitative data of Study One analyses the similarities and differences of sixteen high achievers' beliefs about their language learning. Study Two presents quantitative data of low-middle achievers' beliefs. Differences between high achievers' beliefs and low-middle achievers' beliefs from both Studies One and Two are shown. Study Three's qualitative data presents twenty-nine First Year university students' journal excerpts analysing their attitudes and beliefs about their own language learning. Whilst this is a small-scale study, the three interrelated investigations, resulting in both qualitative and quantitative data of learner beliefs, may provide a deeper understanding into learner autonomy and have possible implications for wider contexts.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS: STUDY ONE

#### HIGH ACHIEVERS' BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

##### Introduction

Study One examined sixteen high achievers' beliefs about language learning via analysis of interview transcriptions. This interview data was used to identify high achievers' beliefs about the use of effective foreign language learning strategies, teacher/learner roles, classroom expectations, self-motivation strategies, and self-perceptions of learners. In terms of the overall aims of this research, that is, defining the construct under investigation and detailing the nature of learner autonomy from the language learners' insights, this component was the most important part of the overall study.

Study One consisted of two parts. Part one was an analysis of similarities and differences in beliefs of the sixteen learners. Two different styles of learning were identified, with six students exhibiting the characteristics of each style. The first style may be categorized as those who are aware that they are different from other learners and displayed individual learning styles. These were termed *heterogeneous* learners. The second group consisted of those learners with a similar learning style and attitude towards their learning, and who did not want to stand out from each other. These were termed *homogeneous* learners.

Of the sixteen participants in Study One, four learners were undifferentiated and so could not easily be placed into either group. Because of this unique difference, they became the subjects of Part Two of Study One.

The aim of Part Two was to explore further links between success and learner autonomy, particularly the four learners' internal motivations for language learning. To assist with the identification of factors, the four undifferentiated learners were compared with two outstanding learners from the private university, where this study took place. Both these learners, Hideo and Fumiko, were widely recognised by staff and students alike as being highly successful learners based on their results, attitudes to learning and learning behaviour. Hideo was also a participant in Study One (Part One) and Fumiko was a participant in recent research, which provided the stimulus and some data for this current research. Learner autonomy analysis of Hideo's and Fumiko's data enabled comparisons to be made with the data of the four undifferentiated learners. The data showed that the beliefs of the four high achieving learners indicated different degrees of success and learner autonomy.

Discussion of the findings of both parts of Study One, show how learner autonomy can be interpreted in different ways, and, furthermore, how the influence of cultural practices in teaching and learning may affect the promotion of autonomous behaviours.

## **Part One:**

### **Identification of Two Styles of Learning**

In this section, the findings from Study One are presented, that is, the discussion of the characteristics of Heterogeneous and Homogeneous learners.

In the process of comparing and contrasting the data, it was found that Heterogeneous learners' approaches to learning were positive and active, while Homogeneous learners' approaches were negative and passive (See Appendix 5.1 for details). Furthermore, learners in the Heterogeneous group displayed some non-stereotypical Japanese characteristics such as being challenging, brave and independent. On the other hand, learners in the Homogeneous group expressed a passive attitude, that is, a fear of standing out from others, and they showed rather stereotypical characteristics such as being quiet, shy and collectivist in attitude.

As 'homo- and heterogeneity' seemed to be related to stereotypical and non-stereotypical behaviour respectively, an investigation of the characteristics was undertaken. Table 5.1 summarizes stereotypical and non-stereotypical characteristics of Japanese learners. This summary is based on the literature review of Chapter Two. The descriptors are identified by acronyms and explained beneath the table.

**Table 5.1 Homogeneous (Stereotypical) and Heterogeneous (Non-Stereotypical) Characteristics of Japanese Learners**

Homogeneous Learners Stereotypical Characteristics	Descriptors
Acceptance of Teacher Authority	SATA
Unquestioning, Unchallenging, Keeping distance	
Passive	SP
Following the direction set by others, Dependent, Shy, Unconfident	
Lack of Self-Expression	SLSE
Quiet, Fear of making mistakes, Memorising by rote, Lack of creativity, Lack of critical thinking	
Groupism	SG
Harmony, Collectivist, Same as others	
Heterogeneous Learners Non-stereotypical Characteristics	Descriptors
Question of Teacher Authority	NQTA
Questioning, Challenging, Relating well	
Active	NA
Following own direction, Independent, Brave, Confident	
Self-Expression	NSE
Talkative, Acceptance of mistakes, Understanding, Creative, Critical thinking	
Individualism	NI
Personal interest, Individualist, Different from others	

SATA=Stereotypical characteristics of Acceptance of Teacher Authority

SP=Stereotypical characteristics of Passivity

SLSE=Stereotypical characteristics of Lack of Self-Expression

SG=Stereotypical characteristics of Groupism

NQTA=Non-Stereotypical characteristics of Question of Teacher Authority

NA=Non-Stereotypical characteristics of Activeness

NSE=Non-Stereotypical characteristics of Self-Expression

NI=Non-Stereotypical characteristics of Individualism

The next section further elaborates the stereotypical and non-stereotypical characteristics of Japanese learners, through the analysis of the excerpts of the interview transcriptions of the Heterogeneous and Homogenous Groups.

### ***Heterogeneous Group:***

#### ***Hideo, Kyoko, Tooru, Ichiro, Yasuhiro and Kazuko***

All six English major students of the heterogeneous group were aware that their attitudes towards learning were very much individualistic and different from other students around them. These learners appeared to view themselves positively, possessing a distinct positive self-image.

In order to consider their past language learning experiences, so that an understanding of present performance can be considered, it is important to look at these individual students' background. These Heterogeneous learners had teacher-centred lessons, which were not focused on communicative English use. Although they had experienced overseas stays, the stays were limited to a short period only, which perhaps limited their understanding. They spent most of their time learning English in Japan, yet despite such a limited English-speaking learning environment, they still displayed non-stereotypical self-beliefs.

### ***Profile of Students***

Hideo is a twenty-two-year old male, and a fourth year university student. At high school, he reported that his English lessons were very much

teacher-centred, consisting of exercises on reading comprehension, memorization of vocabulary and idioms, and various grammatical exercises. In his high school days, he had stayed four weeks in Canada, and during his university, days had a short experience of travelling on his own to Australia, America, and Mexico. In addition, on his university school excursion, he had stayed in New Zealand for a month. In his third year at university, Hideo scored the highest mark in all English subjects. In the future, he wishes to go to an English-speaking country and study at post-graduate level.

Kyoko is a twenty-one-year old female, and a fourth year student. At high school, her English lessons mainly focused on grammatical and reading exercises for passing a university entrance examination. She had been on a short trip to America and England. In addition, she had stayed in Australia for a month on her school excursion. In her third year at university, in addition to scoring the second highest mark in English reading, she scored the highest mark in all English subjects. She would like to be an English teacher in the future.

Tooru is a twenty-year-old male, and a third year student. While at high school, he had experienced a one-month home-stay trip to Australia. At high school, he had neither experience of conversational English classes, nor any contact with English native teachers. Most of his lessons were taught by the "yakudoku" method (translation from English to Japanese) by Japanese teachers of English. Despite that, he scored the highest mark in all English subjects in his second year at university. In the future, he hopes to get into a Master degree course in Japan.

Ichiroo is a twenty-year old male, and a third year student. At high school, he had reading and writing English classes, and in addition, once a week, he

had an oral communication class with an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher). He had stayed in America for a month on his school excursion, but except for this experience, he had never been overseas. During his second year at university, excluding Business English, he scored the highest mark in all English subjects. One day, he hopes to study linguistics at Master level in Japan. In addition, in the future, he wishes to get a job with an international relations company and work in under-developed countries.

Yasuhiro is a twenty-two-year old male, and a fourth year student. At high school, his English lessons were structured mainly for preparation for university entrance examinations. While at high school for two years, he had attended an English conversational school. He had been overseas several times on family trips, and had stayed in English-speaking countries for a month. He scored the highest mark in all English subjects in his third year at university. In the future, he wants to work as a travel agent in Japan.

Kazuko is a twenty-one-year old female, and a fourth year student. While at junior high school, she enjoyed her English lessons for the opportunities they provided to learn songs or have conversations with native speakers. Her English lessons at high school were also taken in order to prepare her for university entrance examinations. She had been overseas several times. On her school excursion, Kazuko had stayed in America for a month. Except for a second highest mark in the subject called "Discussion & Debate", she scored the highest mark in all of her other English subjects in her third year. She has no definite plans for her future. However, she wants to acquire native-like English language skills so she can use them overseas.

### ***Evidence of Heterogeneous Learning Style***

Non-stereotypical characteristics of these six learners within the heterogeneous group can be seen from the following verbatim excerpts of how they expressed themselves at the Study One interview (see Appendix 5.1 for excerpts from the interviews). The following evidence of how they felt about themselves provides further insight into the self-perceptions of these students. The excerpts are shown in italics, and the stereotypical descriptors, which were identified in Table 5.1, have been placed here in parentheses for being able to identify characteristics of heterogeneous learners.

#### **Hideo**

<i>A little strange (curious)</i>	(NI)
<i>An exceptional student</i>	(NI)
<i>An odd person (quite a character)</i>	(NI)
<i>My existence itself is a gag</i>	(NA)

#### **Kyoko**

<i>Strange</i>	(NI)
<i>Strong personality</i>	(NA)
<i>Annoying</i>	(NQTA)
<i>Persistent</i>	(NQTA)
<i>A difficult student</i>	(NI)
<i>An odd person</i>	(NI)

#### **Toru**

<i>Strange</i>	(NI)
<i>A very positive person</i>	(NA)
<i>I feel like I'm standing out</i>	(NI)



Ichiroo	
<i>Tough</i>	(NA)
<i>Hard for others to assimilate</i>	(NI)
<i>Sticking out</i>	(NI)
<i>Patient</i>	(NA)
Yasuhiro	
<i>A challenger</i>	(NA)
<i>Self-intoxication</i>	(NI)
<i>A juggler</i>	(NA)
<i>Conspicuous</i>	(NI)
Kazuko	
<i>Optimistic</i>	(NA)
<i>Not depressed</i>	(NA)
<i>I am unusually confident</i>	(NA)

During interviews, these learners appeared to be confident and responsive to the interviewer's questions all the time. Further, of the sixteen participants of this study, the above six learners were outstanding with regard to their improvement and achievement in TOEIC (See Appendix4.1). Their school marks in English subjects were of a high level, as were their English communication skills.

### ***Homogeneous Group:***

***Kaori, Tsuyako, Sumiko, Aiko, Asami, Mayumi***

Because of the students' awareness of their passivity and lack of desire to

stand out from the rest of the group, the following six female English major students were included into the Homogeneous group: Kaori, Tsuyako, Sumiko, Aiko, Asami, and Mayumi. These learners spoke openly about their fear of standing out from others. An examination of these students' backgrounds is valuable because they shared common aspects in their language learning experiences. Furthermore, their English lessons focused on university entrance examinations and all the learners had little experience of an English-speaking environment.

### *Profile of Students*

Kaori is a nineteen-year old student. At high school, her English lessons concentrated on grammar and reading comprehension, and once a week she had lessons with an ALT. She had never been overseas. Kaori scored the highest mark in all of her English subjects in her first year at university. In the future, she wishes to be an English teacher.

Tsuyako is a nineteen-year old, second year student. While at junior high school, she had stayed in Canada for a one-month home-stay. At high school, her English lessons revolved around reading and writing. In her first year at university, except for a "pass" in her writing class, she had scored the second highest mark in all other English subjects. She has a dream of being an interpreter, but wishes to have, at least, a job related in some way to the English language.

Sumiko is a twenty-year old, third year student. At high school, English was one of her school subjects for university entrance examinations. She had

attended English conversation courses at a city culture centre for several years. She had stayed in Australia for a month on her school excursion, but except for this experience, she had never been overseas. She scored the highest mark in all her English subjects in second year at university. She wishes to be fluent in English. Regarding her future, she had no clear objectives.

Aiko is a twenty-two-year old, fourth year student. At high school, English lessons had been very much structured and strict, and of a very demanding level. The majority of the lessons involved a large amount of memorization and vocabulary accumulation. She had been overseas several times, but only for short trips. She had stayed in Australia for a month on her university excursion. In her third year at university, in addition to gaining the second highest mark in a translation exercise subject, she scored the highest mark for the rest of her English subjects. She had already been promised a job at a bank upon graduation. She wishes to continue her English study as a hobby.

Asami is a twenty-one year old, fourth year student. During high school classes, her English lessons consisted of grammatical exercises, as well as reading comprehension (using the *yakudoku* method). On her school excursion, she had stayed in Australia for a month. As well as this experience, she had been overseas only once more, but only for a short trip. Except for one translation subject, in which she scored the second highest mark, she recorded the highest mark in all the rest of her English subjects in her third year at university. She had already secured her future employment at a company, although the job itself was not English-oriented. However, she wishes to pass EIKEN pre-level 1 and continue to learn English for her own skill improvement.

Mayumi is a twenty-two-year old, fourth year student. At high school, her English lessons concentrated on reading and writing. In addition to her school

excursion to Australia, she had stayed in America for a month. She scored the highest mark in all her English subjects in her third year at university. After graduating from university, she will probably have a job not related to English. Despite this, she wishes to continue her study because she believes that English skills will be useful for overseas trips.

### ***Evidence of Homogeneous Learning Style***

Overall, the improvement in TOEIC scores was higher than the average students. However, the Homogeneous group learners' individual English communication skills varied. For example, Sumiko, Aiko and Asami had acquired good communication skills in terms of adequately expressing themselves. On the other hand, Kaori, Tsuyako and Mayumi still had problems in the actual use of English for effective communication. Although they were serious students and committed to learning, they were sometimes hesitant to use English in class. The following excerpts show this internal ambiguity regarding their stereotypical preference but underlying non-stereotypical desire. More detailed transcriptions have been provided for this group as their presentations indicated that they preferred to develop their reasoning to a greater extent than the previous group. This may in itself, be indicative of the cognitive processes used by stereotypical learners.

**Kaori**

*If I were stricter with myself, I would improve more. Once I improved, I would see my potential. If I did a little more, I would see it. (SP)*

*I think of myself as not as a hard worker, as others think of me. I worry before tests, and worry how others will do on tests. (SG)*

Tsuyako

*I think of myself as a normal student, not so bad, but not so smart either, just the same as people around me. (SG)*

*I am a little passive. As I don't have enough ability, I can't say what I want to say. (SP)*

Sumiko

*I have a feeling of not wanting to stick out. When I stand out a little from others, people around me look at me as to they would like to avoid me. Even when I consciously try not to stand out, I am told that I am a serious student. (SG)*

Aiko

*What can I say, I feel shy in front of my classmates, because they are the same age as I am. (SG) It would be no problem if I could speak English perfectly, but my English is not perfect at all. (SLSE) I feel shy when my class members see me trying hard. (SP)*

Asami

*I believe that my teachers think of me as an average student. (SA)*

*I think that in class I ask questions quite often, and may be too often. So, to avoid embarrassment, I ask teachers more, after lessons. I don't want anyone to think about me, as a pushy person. (SG)*

*I have lots of things in my mind, but I can express only 20% of what I think in English. Because of this, I feel very frustrated. (SLSE)*

*My conversational class teacher might think that I am not so good. Also, I did not have such good rapport with him. (SA)*

Mayumi

*I don't stand out. I don't make a strong impression on people. (SG) I'm a quiet person. My teachers might not notice me. Although my school marks are good, I don't contribute much in class. (SLSE)*

*I feel like I should not do anything wrong, I feel like I should not speak out too much, I worry about making mistakes. (SLSE)*

As can be seen from the students' interviews, all six learners indicated that they were uncomfortable with their passive behaviour, and wished to be more active in the class. Compared with the Heterogeneous group, these learners were less talkative and less confident. For example, Kaori kept silent for a while before replying to each interview question, and then, she replied quietly with only a few short sentences. Mayumi was close to crying during the interview, which may have been due to her lack of confidence. There seemed to be a clear gap between what she wanted to say and what she could not say in class. Moreover, Mayumi, as well as Kaori, was often very quiet. This may indicate that for both girls, their basic communicative skills, as well as their characters, somehow influenced their behaviour in English classes.

The next section compares the TOEIC scores of each student of the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous group, and, in order to further investigate the differences in beliefs, analyses each group's learner beliefs categorizing them into Affective, Self-perceptive, Self-motivational, Cognitive, and Social beliefs. These represent the categories developed and discussed in Chapter Four. From the interview transcriptions, each of the participants' responses, pertaining to Little's (1995) notion of learner autonomy, was categorized. A descriptor was attached to each discrete aspect of learner autonomy revealed by the participants. After translating the responses into English, the responses and their corresponding autonomy descriptors were collated and placed into the five

broad categories.

## Comparison of Heterogeneous Group vs. Homogeneous Group

### *TOEIC Score of Two Groups*

The twelve learners' TOEIC results are shown in Table 5.2 and 5.3. The Heterogeneous group's achievement profile tended to be higher than for those in the Homogeneous group.

**Table 5.2: Heterogeneous Learners' TOEIC Achievement Profile over Time**

learner	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year
Hideo	480	615	775	910*
Kyoko	445	460	675	795*
Tooru	365	585	680*	760
Ichiroo	275	455	530*	655
Yasuhiro	520	670	745	825*
Kazuko	335	490	640	685*
Mean score	Mean 403.3	Mean 545.8	Mean 674.2	Mean 771.7
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
Improvement		(B)-(A)=+142.5	(C)-(B)=+128.4	(D)-(C)=+97.5

(\*TOEIC score at the time the interview was conducted)

**Table 5.3: Homogeneous Learners' TOEIC Achievement Profile over Time**

learner	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year
Kaori	320	575*	545	No record
Tsuyako	270	470*	490	No record
Sumiko	385	565	700*	680
Aiko	430	610	635	720*
Asami	330	490	520	655*
Mayumi	385	520	735	670*
Mean score	Mean 353.3 (A)	Mean 538.3 (B)	Mean 604.2 (C)	Mean 681.3 (D)
Improvement		(B)-(A)=+185.0	(C)-(B)=+65.9	(D)-(C)=+77.1

(\* TOEIC score at the time the interview was conducted)

The TOEIC results in the above tables show that at the commencement of their university education the Heterogeneous group learners' mean score was 403.3 and it was 50 points higher than the Homogeneous learners' mean score of 353.3. The mean score of the Heterogeneous group improved by 142.5 points in their second year (B)–(A), and by 128.4 in their third year (C)–(B). On the other hand, the mean score of the Homogeneous group improved by 185.0 points in their second year (B)–(A). This improvement was greater than the Heterogeneous group. However, the mean score for the Homogeneous group in the third year improved by only 65.9 points (C)–(B). Considering the score improvement from the time when students entered university (A), the Heterogeneous group improved by 270.9 points over two year period (C)–(A). This improvement was 20.0 points greater than the 250.9 points improvement of the Homogeneous group. The mean achievement in the third year for the Heterogeneous group was 674.2 points, 70.0 points higher than the scores in the Heterogeneous group. In summary, the Heterogeneous learners' achievement



and improvement was consistently higher than that of the Homogeneous learners with the exception of the Homogeneous learners' improvement between their first and second year scores.

### ***Learner Beliefs about Learning English***

From the analysis of the interview transcriptions, learner beliefs for the two groups were compared and described under the five categories discussed earlier: Affective, Self-perceptive, Self-motivational, Cognitive, and Social beliefs (see Appendix 5.1 for details of individual learner cases).

Below, the Heterogeneous group learners' beliefs are described, followed by the Homogeneous group learners' beliefs. Under each category, the descriptors are underlined. Where two descriptors appear which have opposite characteristics, these have been indicated by the inclusion of arrows. This symbol  $\leftrightarrow$  shows that the learners in the group demonstrated both characteristics. This is first encountered under the subheading "positive/negative self-image beliefs" and in some of the subsequent subheadings.

#### ***Heterogeneous group***

##### ***Affective beliefs***

The Heterogeneous learners seemed to be aware of their own future career endeavours. They tended to consider English skills as the one of the most

important tools for their career establishment. As such, they believed that English acquisition was necessary to reach the final goal of a desired job. Other common aspects of the Heterogeneous learners included their interests in and enjoyment of English learning. They were strongly motivated to acquire English and enjoyed learning in their own ways.

### ***Self-perceptive beliefs***

Self-perceptions were investigated in terms of the six characteristics discussed below, with positivity being a key indicator of heterogeneity. Despite the fact that the Heterogeneous learners were positive about themselves, they seemed to feel that somehow they were different from others (See p.86 – 87 in this chapter as well as Appendix 5.1). With reference to teacher expectations, all Heterogeneous learners tended to believe that their teachers thought of them as being very individual and therefore as standing out from other students. This recognition stemmed from the students' active behaviour and their teachers' positive reinforcement of them. They seemed to feel that their teachers recognized their hard work.

### **self-regulation**

The Heterogeneous learners appeared to regulate themselves effectively. They seemed to have clear ideas about which matters ought to be given priority over others. They also tried to use their time wisely.

### **self-direction**

Pacing their own learning and doing things their own way were very much strong characteristics of the Heterogeneous learners. They were very much aware of their own responsibility in the learning process. Hideo saw it as a

matter of mental strength or willpower not to get depressed at his failures. Kyoko was always aware that she should not wait for something to be given to her by the teacher but that she should try to learn independently. Toru tried to maintain an independent approach and exhibited his own style of learning. Ichiroo also persevered in his chosen strategies even if others suggested a contrary approach. Yasuhiro was not ashamed of making mistakes and tried a variety of approaches in order to achieve. Kazuko utilized whatever strategy she thought had pragmatic value.

#### self-encouragement

The Heterogeneous learners told themselves that they should make effective use of their experiences of failure. In this way, they seemed to try to encourage themselves to do more, instead of regretting any unsatisfactory results scored in the past.

#### positive self-image

The group felt that they were different from others. Although they thought of themselves as being different, they nevertheless were positive about this difference. All the Heterogeneous learners appeared to have a positive self-image in every aspect and tended to show a high degree of self-confidence.

#### self-trust

These learners also trusted themselves that they were able to promote their own language learning. They tended to believe that they could do something if they wanted to do it. This self-trust seemed to create an internal power for self-driven learning.

#### self-observation

Through their English learning experiences, Hideo, Kyoko and Toru felt

that they had increased their awareness of Japanese sensibilities, language and culture. Hideo realized that he had a Japanese mind and wanted to keep his "Japaneseness". Kyoko could think more about Japan through her English learning experience. Similarly, Tooru became aware of some of the unique Japanese ways of doing various things.

### ***Self-motivational beliefs***

This group seemed to focus on the communicative use of English as well as their own improvement in proficiency. Their consciousness was not directed towards English acquisition itself but to using it for some particular purpose. With regard to TOEIC or other tests, these students considered the tests to be a means of monitoring their own improvement. In this regard, they would set target test scores as a series of small progress-checking milestones, but not as their final goal. They were open-minded and flexible in their thinking. They controlled themselves well and enjoyed both learning English and their social life with their friends at university. The group members most definitely had a long-term view of their language learning. The descriptors below, first discussed in Chapter Four, give further insight into their self-motivational characteristics.

### **goal awareness**

The members of the Heterogeneous group showed consensus in being clearly aware of their future goals. They asked themselves "why am I learning and what do I wish to achieve from it?" They tried to ensure they got the chance to follow their chosen direction through the processes developed in learning. This metacognitive awareness of self-monitoring seemed to be one of

the prominent features of the non-stereotypical group.

#### weak-point awareness

All the learners appeared to be aware of their weak-points. They seemed to be aware of the need to remedy these points, in order to progress their learning. Hideo sometimes felt neglectful, and was aware that this was his weakness. Kyoko concentrated on some aspects of English proficiency only and missed other parts. Tooru was not able to make progress in his TOEIC scores as he expected, but told himself that he should not get de-motivated in his study. Ichiroo felt that he could not catch up with the speed of spoken English. To improve his ability, he thought he needed learning opportunities to talk with native speakers more often. Yasuhiro saw himself, as a timid person who was afraid of losing his English proficiency and that was the reason why he should continue to learn English. Kazuko thought that it was not enough to be able to talk with native speakers, and felt she needed to study the finer details of the language thoroughly by reading and learning grammar.

#### reflections

The group members all reviewed their learning process in various ways. Hideo saw that his learning changed after deliberately setting his goals. Kyoko frequently reminded herself about why she was interested in English communication. Tooru had positive experiences about individual class work. Ichiroo felt that he needed to concentrate on listening, because in the past he had spent most of his time on reading and writing. Yasuhiro had a difficult time because of his family problems and his search for subsequent employment. However, he put his greatest effort into learning English and succeeded in overcoming all his difficulties. Kazuko was able to measure her learning needs and ability by reflecting on experiences of support from one of her teachers.

### self-monitoring

Hideo, Kyoko and Yasuhiro sought to take opportunities to monitor and extend their learning skills. They did this by various strategies such as talking with English native speakers, E-mailing in English, checking TOEIC scores, getting teachers' feedback, and learning from their mistakes. Such opportunities provided them with effective strategies for further improvement. Toru, Ichiroo and Kazuko monitored which study techniques and language components were more effective, and questioned themselves regarding the reasons for their own improvement.

### initiative

All six learners demonstrated initiative. Hideo liked to take on leadership roles; Kyoko gave thought to her work beyond what was expected; and Toru preferred to do something that interested him rather than doing the prescribed work set by his teacher. Ichiroo thought that class work was important, but felt that it was not enough for him to improve his language skills quickly. Yasuhiro expressed his active behaviour in the class. He claimed that he used the class as a learning opportunity. Kazuko took the initiative of indicating to her teachers the particular type of class work or materials that she preferred, which she believed would be good for her learning.

### conscious effort of continuation

All six learners also possessed life-long perspectives with regard to their language learning. These perspectives inspired them to improve their language levels continuously.

### flexibility

Flexibility in thought was a further distinguishing characteristic of the

Heterogeneous learners. Hideo kept a balance between enjoyment and study as well as managing to involve himself in various activities such as his sports club and watching movies. Yasuhiro was similar in this regard in that he tried to use his independent time wisely not only for his English learning but also for his hobbies. Kyoko, Kazuko, Tooru and Ichiroo tried to change their thinking and the methods they used when their learning was not proving to be effective.

#### stronger internal locus of control

All the students in this group seemed to be strongly aware of their active involvement in learning English in their everyday life. Hideo talked positively about his learning opportunities. Kyoko was aware that everyone counted on her to ask questions. Tooru was actively seeking opportunities to learn English and thought about how to use English in his daily life. Ichiroo and Kazuko wanted to push harder with more challenging work.

#### critical awareness

Another salient characteristic of these learners was that they tried to analyse their learning with critical objectivity. Hideo urged himself to do his best at all times because he knew that occasionally his results were not good. Kyoko, Tooru, Yasuhiro, and Kazuko believed that they must continuously strive to maintain their English proficiency levels; otherwise, their English levels would suffer. Ichiroo was once mortified at not being able to cope with a real communicative situation. Consequently, he realized the need to study harder.

#### endless possibilities

All the learners tended to believe they had the potential to achieve whatever they wished in not only their language learning but also in other aspects of their life. Hideo and Kyoko mentioned "motivation" and "effort" as

successful aspects in improvement. Ichiroo and Kazuko also used the notion of "effort" to indicate the possibilities for improving their language skills. Toru and Yasuhiro believed that anything was possible as long as they focused on what they wanted.

### self-actualisation

All the learners seemed to think that learning English was for the purpose of better communication, so they focused on trying to build high-level communicative skills in English. This seemed to reflect their awareness of and wish for self-actualisation as human beings, that is, to make their own worlds bigger and to maximise their potential in life. In this respect, their learning was a lifetime commitment. Therefore, learning English connected them to their actual future goals. Both Ichiroo and Kazuko used looking for someone superior to themselves as a strategy of motivating themselves. With this strategy, they were able to see which particular points they needed to work on to improve their overall ability. This seemed to be an effective and purposeful metacognitive strategy for them.

### ***Cognitive beliefs***

All six learners in this group seemed to consider classroom learning to be a part of their own learning process. The Heterogeneous learners seemed to be aware of self-responsibility for their active involvement in English learning. For effective language learning strategies, the learners in this group tried to create as many English learning opportunities as possible. The descriptors below provide further insight into interpreting this category.



### classroom learning

The learners used their classes to obtain the sort of information, which could be then practiced in a less formal environment or build up their basic skills. The group members wished to have tasks that are more challenging and stimulating activities, rather than simply being given prescriptive materials. Toru felt that the present class lesson structure actually interrupted his own learning. Therefore, he had been working by himself without connecting his self-study to his classroom learning, although he wished that lessons would be more meaningful for him. Toru was therefore an exception in that he did not see his classroom learning as important for establishing his basic skills. The other five learners connected their in-class and extramural learning by previewing and reviewing all lessons. In addition, they tried to concentrate during their lessons to ensure that they acquired the greatest benefit.

### effective language learning strategies

Using authentic materials, all the Heterogeneous learners created English study opportunities for themselves. Hideo, Yashuhiro, and Ichiroo continued listening practice everyday over a long period. Kyoko tried to manufacture opportunities for self-expression, while Kazuko did extensive reading practice. Toru actively thought in English while engaging in daily activities. Therefore, opportunities for authentic input, which utilized their listening skills, seemed to be important for the group.

### ***Social beliefs***

The Heterogeneous group seemed to be aware of their own responsibility as learners. All tended to believe that the key to learning was not the help from the teacher alone, but what they learnt themselves. Therefore, they considered the teacher's key role to be that of a facilitator or supporter. They expected teachers to present useful ideas, advice and encouragement and provide support. They also believed that other students admired their attitudes and that this learning was firmly supported by both teachers and other students' expectations of them. The Heterogeneous learners also considered that the relationship of trust between the teacher and learner, and between the learner and learner was important. In this respect, they seemed to be aware of the need for both self-direction and collaboration.

### ***Homogeneous group***

#### ***Affective beliefs***

The Homogeneous learners appeared to like English and were interested in learning the language and about the cultures that it represented. However, without any clear objectives for themselves, they merely seemed to feel admiration for English proficiency and perceived some advantages in gaining further language skills for gaining potential employment. Unlike being different from the Heterogeneous learners, these learners seemed not to have a clear awareness about their future career. In addition, their acquisition of English seemed to be suffering, because of the perceived gap between their present skill levels and admired proficiency levels.

### ***Self-perceptive beliefs***

This group had gained high marks in English tests through considerable effort. These Homogeneous learners were, in fact, very autonomous in terms of gaining high marks. However, they seemed to be struggling with the realisation that they could not use the skills and strategies, which they had gained and utilised for past examinations. For their lecture-type lessons, they felt that they would therefore have to make a very good impression on their teachers. In fact, these students rarely failed to do what was required of them. They would preview and review the lessons. In their conversation classes, they felt that their teachers did not pay attention to them, even though they would try hard. However, they reproved themselves, for not achieving. All these learners seemed to have ambiguous feelings about their learning. In addition, their perceptions seemed to be inconsistent with their actual behaviours.

Regarding teachers' expectations towards them, most of the Homogeneous learners felt that they were recognized as serious students in lecture-type classes. This was because they were working properly by reviewing and previewing the lessons and they rarely failed to do their homework. Tsuyako and Asami felt that their teachers regarded them as average students. However, in conversation classes, they thought that they were not well regarded. They tended to believe that teachers thought of them as quiet students, or at worst, that they were unnoticed by teachers. Depending on her relationship with teachers and on the nature of classroom tasks, Aiko especially, said that she was recognized as both a motivated student and not a good student. In short, Homogenous learners seemed to feel that they were recognized differently depending upon the teacher and the class.

### self-regulation

The entire Homogeneous group utilised self-regulatory strategies for the purpose of improving their TOEIC scores and improving in their English subjects generally. These processes consisted of strategies such as not watching TV, revising their work regularly and concentrating on completing necessary work on time.

### self-direction

All the learners seemed to be aware of self-responsibility for their learning. For example, Tsuyako and Mayumi felt that it was their own fault if their results were not good enough. Kaori and Asami were of the opinion that they needed to put in more effort into learning than they were at present. Sumiko had a 'self-directive' attitude, and Aiko, in contrast, sought more challenging learning opportunities.

### self-encouragement

These students tried to get rid of negative feelings about their learning by engaging strategies such as previewing and reviewing their classes, or practicing for examinations. They forced themselves to work harder and (with the exception of Aiko) reproved themselves for their current insufficient effort, despite their professed serious attitude. However, Aiko admitted to being satisfied, when she could understand something and encouraged herself to learn more English.

### positive self-image ↔ negative self-image

Tsuyako and Kaori seemed to be dissatisfied with their present attitude. They felt that they should be stricter with themselves. Sumiko was aware of her attitude and was careful about not standing out from other students. From one perspective, she had a positive feeling about herself. However, from

another perspective, she did not like to be perceived as being overly interactive. Aiko, Asami and Mayumi showed both positive and negative self-images. Aiko saw herself as an active learner, but she pretended to be a passive learner in some situations. Asami and Mayumi shared similar negative feelings about themselves which resembled those of Tsuyako and Kaori. Asami did not want to appear to be a pushy person. Also, both Asami and Mayumi appeared to be frustrated with their speaking skills, yet despite these feelings, they had positive feelings about their potential for improvement.

#### self-trust ↔ self-doubt

Kaori and Tsuyako seemed not to trust themselves and were uncertain about their potential. Sumiko did not mention her beliefs about her capacity to succeed. Aiko and Asami trusted themselves to achieve their potential. Mayumi also wished to achieve her potential. However, she felt that her present level of achievement was not good enough because she was not making enough effort in her study.

#### self-observation

All six Homogeneous learners were able to monitor both the negative as well as positive aspects of their performance, that is to say, they displayed insight into their level of performance. In fact, they seemed to be extremely conscious about their skills and the opinions of others. They seemed to be strongly aware of how they were evaluated by other people around them.

#### ***Self-motivational beliefs***

Although the Homogeneous group of students made every effort at

self-motivation, they seemed to be dissatisfied with themselves, feeling that their achievement was still not good enough. They seemed to have no clear purpose for learning, although some of them admired and vaguely aspired to native-like English pronunciation. Usually they saw the teacher as a leader/advisor from whom they obtained direction. They were serious, earnest students who never failed to do their assignments. They tended to get positive recognition from teachers in lecture type lessons, but they were quiet and passive in conversational classes, focusing on their own English proficiency improvement rather than on communication with others.

#### weak point awareness

Asami explained that she analysed her weak points to get ideas of what and how to improve. However, the other five learners only made negative comments about their skills and showed dissatisfaction with their current situation. Kaori felt that she did not possess adequate English skills and that her ways of learning were useless. Sumiko believed that the time she spent listening to English was nowhere near enough. Tsuyako thought that her speaking practices with Japanese partners were not effective. Aiko felt that she had problems expressing herself freely, and Mayumi thought that she knew what she needed to do but could not do it.

#### reflections

All of these students reflected on experiences and asked themselves why they had become involved in learning English. They all seemed to have had good experiences that provided them with the motivation for their present study.

### self-monitoring

TOEIC scores provided the main impetus for this group of learners to strive for higher-level achievement and overall improvement. They were all focused on their scores. Kaori compared herself with others but seemed to have no strategies to rectify her perceived shortcomings and just became depressed. On the other hand, Tsuyako would see what she had to do next, how she had to do it, and why. In exhibiting a deliberate speech delay, Sumiko demonstrating a degree of metacognitive ability. She was also concentrating on improving her listening skills at the time of this research. Aiko was also conscious of her listening skills and tried to use her listening comprehension skills in her day-to-day life. She also felt that she was not studying enough. Asami had been conscientiously listening to an English radio program in order to improve her listening and comprehension skills. When she felt depressed about her language and speaking skills, she would stop studying and take a short break. Mayumi discovered an effective strategy when she was a third year student. Through listening to the tape and writing what she could hear, she found she could improve her language skills greatly. This strategy connected her general learning to speaking skills through self-directed learning.

### initiative ↔ passive

Kaori was a serious student who worked hard. She did whatever was needed for lesson preparation and review. However, she was very passive in class, always waiting for someone else's leadership. Tsuyako felt that she was required to be compliant and passive in class. Sumiko, believed in her possibilities to improve her English skills and stated that all lessons were useful learning opportunities. Aiko stressed that it is the students' responsibility as well as the teacher's in facilitating effective learning. She actually wanted more challenging and difficult work. Asami had a clear idea of

the sorts of classes that were effective for her learning. She preferred to have explicit checks on her progress, rather than just being left alone to complete her work. Thus, she did not believe that student-centred freedom was conducive to effective learning. Mayumi like Kaori, was a hard worker who always did the prescribed work correctly. She admitted that this constituted a passive way of learning, but also felt it to be the most suitable way for her. In this group, half of the learners felt that with regard to their own learning, they took some initiative and the other half felt they were passive and did not display much initiative. Overall, though, this entire group seemed to be aware that they were responsible for their own learning in different ways.

conscious effort of continuation ↔ short-term effort

Kaori had a very limited perspective of learning English. During her interview, she said that she realized she had never thought about what it really meant to learn English. She had been, until that time, concentrating solely on learning what was required for each test. Tsuyako did not mention anything about what it meant to learn English, while Sumiko, Aiko, Asami and Mayumi were aware of their continual conscious effort. Sumiko saw her learning as a long-term process. She had told herself not to expect good results straight away. Her beliefs were based on the need for continuous effort. The other three learners had already chosen careers that had no requirements for English. However, they wished to continue learning English at their own pace.

flexibility ↔ restriction

Kaori, Tsuyako, and Mayumi seemed to have very restricted beliefs about their learning. Kaori appeared to be afraid to change her strategies even though she felt they were not very effective. Tsuyako believed that English needed to be learnt with American pronunciation. Mayumi thought that she must speak properly without mistakes in order to make her English



understandable. These beliefs seemed to prevent Tsuyako's and Mayumi's further improvement. On the other hand, the other three learners showed some flexibility as to what is, or is not effective, making them more motivated and their learning experiences more positive.

strong internal locus of control ↔ weaker internal locus of control

Kaori and Tsuyako were similar in that they did not think they had a sufficiently developed locus of control to advance their own learning. They felt dissatisfied and lacked confidence. Sumiko, Aiko, Asami and Mayumi were positive about themselves in that they felt they were doing their best. They were always aware of English in their daily lives. Both Asami and Mayumi had been thinking that, although they were trying hard, they were not involving themselves in a sufficiently interactive fashion in their lessons.

critical awareness

Kaori and Tsuyako knew that an awareness of English in their daily life was important for them to keep up their level of proficiency. They also felt that being actively involved in learning made a difference. Sumiko and Aiko were afraid that their English level would deteriorate if they stopped their present method of learning. Asami and Mayumi had nothing to say about critical awareness.

endless possibilities ↔ uncertainty

Sumiko and Aiko believed that they would achieve what they wanted so long as they continued to make an effort. Kaori thought that her strategies were not effective, but she did not have the confidence to change them and thus she feared she would not achieve what she had set out to do. Tsuyako made no comment relating to this descriptor. Asami believed that people with greater language skill than her were once at the same level that she is at now.

Therefore, she thought that it should be possible for her to improve. However, at the same time, she had doubts that she could even retain her current level of proficiency. Mayumi wished to maintain her current level, but this was not a strongly held desire.

#### goal awareness

Kaori wished to be a teacher so she was aware that she should learn English more comprehensively, whereas Tsuyako, Asami, and Mayumi were focused on the goal of achieving high TOEIC scores and doing well in other tests. Sumiko and Aiko did not mention any particular goals.

#### English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

All six Homogeneous learners seemed to be accurately aware of their own skills vis-à-vis test scores. However, they all appeared to lack ideas about language as a tool for communicative use. Grammatical knowledge, proper pronunciation and vocabulary skills were thought of in terms of being measurable skills rather than having communicative qualities and purposes. Ironically, this preoccupation with perfection and the development of skills seemed to be one of the primary causes blocking their improvement.

#### ***Cognitive beliefs***

All six Homogeneous learners seemed to be aware of the importance of having an interactive active attitude in the class. They also considered their classroom learning to be directly related to out-of-class learning. However, these learners' actual attitudes in class appeared to be passive in terms of responding to questions and asking questions. For effective language learning strategies to be activated, the Homogeneous learners seemed to be aware of the

need for authentic input and appreciated the importance of getting opportunities to listen to English in their daily lives.

#### classroom learning

Challenging tasks were something these learners wished for in the classroom activities. They seemed to be aware of the importance of active involvement in their English learning. This may suggest that the learners in the Homogeneous group seemed to have a similar awareness regarding ways of learning, as did the learners in the Heterogeneous group. However, the difference was in the Homogeneous group's actual attitude in class. If the class consisted of motivated students of various ages, for example, learners would exhibit greater preparedness to participate. Their attitude would change when a different classroom atmosphere was established. Because they were motivated to learn English, they wished that they could behave more actively and use opportunities more effectively. Furthermore, instead of adjusting their attitudes to make better use of classroom learning, the Homogeneous learners stressed their own needs and preferences. In other words, they were more preoccupied with specifically individual needs rather than exhibiting a spirit of interactive or co-operative learning.

#### effective language learning strategies

All learners seemed to be consciously aware of the need for English input into their daily lives. They thought that authentic materials were important to better understand English, especially as mediated through listening practice, in order to improve their general comprehension or understanding.

### ***Social beliefs***

The six Homogeneous learners seemed to expect the teacher to act as a helper or advisor, looking to the teacher to direct them by using his/her comparatively rich experience and expertise. They felt that what the teacher expected from them differed according to the nature of the classroom lesson, which had been taught, and the nature of any relationships, which existed. That is, teachers in lecture-type lessons or particular teachers regarded them as good students. Conversely, they felt that teachers in conversational lessons regarded them as average students or did not even know them. Tsuyako considered that a relationship based on equality between teacher and learner was important. The other learners in this group, however, seemed not to have any awareness of a collaborative context in their classroom learning. Rather than looking for collaboration in the classroom, they put more pressure on themselves as individual learners.

The comparisons between the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous groups are summarized below in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4: The Comparisons of Two group Learners' Beliefs under Five Categories**

<b>(1) Affective beliefs</b>	
<b>Heterogeneous group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● having job-related motivation</li> <li>● seeing English skills as tools</li> <li>● enjoying and having interest in their learning</li> <li>● being strongly motivated to acquire English</li> </ul>	<b>Homogeneous group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● having no clear objectives</li> <li>● being interested in English for cultural understanding rather than using skills for their future career</li> <li>● having admiration for, or placing value on the advantages of English acquisition</li> </ul>
<b>(2) Self-perceptive beliefs</b>	
<b>Heterogeneous group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● being positive and displaying a belief in self.</li> <li>● being aware of self-regulation, self-direction, self-encouragement, positive self-image, self-trust</li> </ul>	<b>Homogeneous group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● gaining high marks in English tests through considerable effort</li> <li>● being aware of both positive and negative self-image, self-trust and doubt</li> <li>● feeling that they make a very good impression on their teachers for the lecture-type lessons</li> <li>● having ambiguous feelings about their learning.</li> <li>● being inconsistent with their actual behaviour.</li> </ul>
<u><b>Teacher expectation towards the learner</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● teachers thought of them as different from other students.</li> <li>● teachers' positive expectation towards them</li> </ul>	<u><b>Teacher expectation towards the learner</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● being recognized as serious students in lecture-type classes.</li> <li>● Teachers thought of them as quiet students, or at worst they were unnoticed by teachers.</li> <li>● Being recognized differently depending on the teacher and the class.</li> </ul>

Table continues.

Table continued.

<p><b>(3) Self-motivational beliefs</b></p> <p><b>Heterogeneous group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● focusing on the communicative use of English as well as their own proficiency improvement.</li> <li>● setting target test scores as a series of small progress-checking milestones.</li> <li>● being open-minded and possessing a flexible way of thinking.</li> <li>● being good at controlling themselves.</li> <li>● enjoying both learning English and their social life.</li> <li>● having a long-term view for their language learning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Homogeneous Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● having no clear purpose for learning.</li> <li>● seeing the teacher as a leader/advisor and from whom they obtained necessary skills and direction for further learning</li> <li>● being serious, earnest students who never fail to do their given assignments.</li> <li>● gaining positive recognition from teachers in lecture-type lessons but</li> <li>● being quiet and passive in conversational classes.</li> <li>● focusing on their own English proficiency improvement rather than on communication with others.</li> <li>● Having passive, short term effort, restrictedness, insufficient internal energy, -- uncertainty about skills application</li> </ul>
<p><b>(4) Cognitive beliefs</b></p> <p><b>Heterogeneous group</b></p> <p><u>Classroom learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● being aware of the classroom as a part of their learning process</li> <li>● being aware of learners' active involvement needs</li> <li>● being aware of self-responsibility</li> <li>● being aware of English-use needs</li> </ul> <p><u>effective language learning strategies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● creating an environment to support English language opportunities</li> <li>● being aware of authentic input</li> <li>● externally embellishing classroom learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Homogeneous group</b></p> <p><u>Classroom learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● being aware of the classroom as an important opportunity for their English learning</li> <li>● being aware of challenging and active-involvement needs but not following through</li> <li>● emphasising their own needs</li> </ul> <p><u>effective language learning strategies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● being aware of English learning</li> <li>● being aware of authentic input</li> </ul>
<p><b>(5) Social beliefs</b></p> <p><b>Heterogeneous Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● being aware of self-responsibility as a learner</li> <li>● considering teacher role as a facilitator or a supporter</li> <li>● being cognizant of developing positive relationships between teacher and students and amongst students</li> <li>● being aware of collaborative needs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Homogeneous Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● having different attitude and behaviour referent to teacher-expectation and type of class involvement</li> <li>● considering teachers' role as a helper and an adviser</li> <li>● being aware of the teachers' understanding of their needs</li> <li>● being aware of peer pressure for conformity rather than facilitating interactivenss</li> </ul>

To further illustrate the differences in learner beliefs between the two groups, data from two participants, Hideo (Heterogeneous) and Mayumi (Homogeneous), are discussed in the following section. Hideo and Mayumi's cases are reported in order to show the clear differences between the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous learner beliefs.

***From Hideo and Mayumi's reports:  
The extreme cases of two group learners***

When the interviews were conducted, both Hideo and Mayumi were fourth year students. Both learners had good marks in all English subjects. Hideo had improved by 430 points in his TOEIC score since he entered university, recently scoring 910 points, while Mayumi had improved by 350 points, recently scoring 735 points. Hideo was well known at university because his involvement in the learning process was impressive compared with other students and impressive in the eyes of many teachers. On the other hand, Mayumi was not noticeable, mainly because of her quiet character (see Appendix 5-1 for details). The different beliefs and awareness levels of the above learners were clearly seen from Hideo's and Mayumi's replies to the interview questions (see Appendix 5-2). The differences in each learner's attitudes to their language learning are discussed below, where their respective responses to prepared interview questions are summarized.

1. In what ways do you believe you can improve your language skills?

Hideo

Hideo believed that suitable strategies were the secret of success. In his case, the key to learning was an exposure to an English-speaking environment. He thought that the best strategies were discovered through learning. In terms of self-motivational strategies, Hideo used his dreams and goals to activate behaviours.

Mayumi

Mayumi tried to create a good environment for learning by, for example, choosing to study in the library. She tried to regulate herself by having breaks and by continually setting herself short-term goals for getting good marks in tests.

2. What are your reasons for studying English?

Hideo

Hideo's reason for learning English was that he wanted to be accepted for postgraduate studies at an overseas university. For this reason, he believed that he had to use English everyday.

Mayumi

Mayumi's reason for learning English was for her own interests. She was interested in English speaking cultures and customs, travelling, listening to English songs and watching English speaking movies.



3. What in your opinion, should successful students do, and how should they behave inside and outside the classroom?

Hideo

Hideo believed that finding strategies suitable to the individual, strong motivation, and the continuation of effort would lead to success.

Mayumi

Mayumi believed that an active attitude, confidence and self-responsibility were necessary factors for success.

4. What should be the role of the teacher so that you can achieve your goal of learning English?

Hideo

For Hideo, the teachers' and other students' trust was most important. He thought that teachers' roles could be different depending on the relationship with the student. He expected teachers to encourage and support him.

Mayumi

Mayumi expected teachers to create a good class atmosphere. She wanted teachers to lead her in the right directions, but she did not desire any special attention. She wanted to learn in an environment free from worry and fear.

5. How should language class time be used to achieve your goal of learning English?

Hideo

Hideo wanted his class to stimulate him. He expected classroom learning to be a place for activities such as discussions, debates, or presentations, because

these kinds of skills were difficult to acquire individually.

Mayumi

Mayumi wished to have a comfortable classroom atmosphere. She thought that it would be easier for her to learn with people similar to herself, that is, who was quiet and shy. She expected her teachers to lead her and she expected to learn from their rich experiences.

6. Have you developed any ways of motivating yourself to learn English?

Hideo

By setting objectives and goals for himself, Hideo always tried to be aware of why he was learning. This suggested a strong self-motivational strategy.

Mayumi

Through effort and memorization strategies, Mayumi believed that she would improve her English, as she was very concerned about her own skills and scores. However, despite her wish to improve her speaking skills, she had problems doing so. These problems seemed to be internal barriers that prevented her from focusing on short-term goals.

7. When you have difficulties and problems achieving your goal, how do you try to solve them?

Hideo

Hideo's strategies consisted of reflecting on his attitude and goals, and seeking advice from others.

Mayumi

Mayumi's strategies consisted of self-monitoring through checking her skills, by

way of TOEIC or other tests. In addition, Mayumi tried to get stimulation from watching movies. This strategy was also a way of enjoying one of her favourite things in English. Another strategy for getting stimulation was observing other students who were studying hard.

8. Many times students have difficulty studying on their own at home because there are other more interesting things they would rather do such as watching television or going out with friends. What strategies do you use for motivating yourself to complete your work under these circumstances? What do you do if you are trying to achieve a certain goal?

Hideo

Hideo reflected on his dream and goal. In addition, he thought about his parents, friends, and teachers who helped and supported him along the way. This inspired him to continue to achieve what he wished.

Mayumi

Mayumi concentrated on her study, as she wanted to choose a place where she had no interruptions and which was comfortable, to better allow her to study.

9. What do you believe your teachers' expectations are of you? Why do you think so?

Hideo

Hideo believed in the power of teachers' positive recognition of his conscientious effort. He described himself as a hardworking, enthusiastic person and as one who could be relied on.

Mayumi

Mayumi believed in both positive and negative feedback from her teachers, because she was serious in terms of doing her work properly and so saw both forms of feedback as valuable. On the other hand, she was quiet, passive and unresponsive and believed that this was viewed negatively by some teachers.

10. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner? Please describe in ten sentences how you see yourself in terms of being a Japanese learner studying English. Start with "I am a..."

Hideo

Hideo believed himself to be a capable learner. However, he still wished to achieve more, and he was aware of the required strategies to realize his wish. He accepted making mistakes. He also encouraged himself and sought more opportunities to interact with other people.

Mayumi

Mayumi admitted that she made an effort, because she wished to be able to speak English, however, she was negative about her ability to improve her skills.

Compared with Hideo's flexible thinking and positive attitude, Mayumi demonstrated limited beliefs that acted as barriers to her learning and active engagement. Shyness, fear of making mistakes, perfectionism, lack of confidence, and excessive concern for others' opinions are consistent with the stereotypical Japanese learners' passivity. At the same time, Mayumi seemed to feel frustration with her language learning because her English acquisition skills and strategies seemed useless for effective communication.

## **Summary of Part One**

The aim of Study One was to gain insights of high achievers' beliefs about language learning. Sixteen participants were selected for Study One. Through interview transcription analysis, twelve learners' beliefs were clearly identified as representing either stereotypical or non-stereotypical characteristics of Japanese learners. Six learners were termed a Heterogeneous group of learners because of their non-stereotypical consciousness. Another six learners were labelled as a Homogeneous group of learners because of their broadly stereotypical attitudes. Heterogeneous and Homogeneous group learners' beliefs were compared and discussed in Study One: Part One. The following five categories of comparisons summarize the differences between the two groups.

### ***Affective Beliefs***

In terms of affective beliefs, the main difference between the two groups of learners seemed to be one of goal awareness. The Heterogeneous group learners had a clear goal for learning English, and this goal was related to their self-actualisation in life generally. Their English learning was, therefore, just a means of accessing the achievement of their final goal. On the other hand, the Homogeneous learners seemed to be interested in learning English and better appreciating the cultures in which this language was spoken. They liked studying English and they admired fluent English speakers. In this respect, their goal was the acquisition of English proficiency as an end in itself.

### ***Self-Perceptive Beliefs***

The Heterogeneous learners were positive about themselves. They believed in their potential. They also felt that their teachers had high expectations of them. Their teachers' high expectations further supported their confidence building. They were aware of and utilized the metacognitive strategies of self-regulation, self-direction and self-motivation. They always reflected on what they were doing, why they were doing it, and where it was taking them. The Homogeneous group, however, was very different in terms of self-image and self-trust. They seemed to have ambiguous, almost dichotomous feelings of both positive and negative self-image. They were very conscious and sensitive about others' opinions. Although they wished to acquire native-like fluency, they seemed to take a passive attitude in their conversational classes. They were recognized as good students in their lecture-type lessons, whereas they were not recognized in the same way in their conversational classes. Thus, their self-image received conflicting positive and negative reinforcement from their teachers.

### ***Self-Motivational Beliefs***

The Heterogeneous and Homogeneous groups tended to hold differing views about learning. The Heterogeneous group was aware of English as a means of communication and a matter of life-long learning. Conversely, the Homogeneous learners seemed only to focus on their skill improvement rather than learning for communicative use. The Homogeneous group displayed an acute concern for perfection. As a result, they doubted that it would be possible for them to acquire their desired skills. In fact, they seemed to have

not enough drive for learning English. Such contradictions between their thinking and their actions seem to be one of the defining characteristics of the Homogeneous group. The Heterogeneous group of learners was active and confident. One of their major characteristics was their flexibility. In addition, they had a strong, critical awareness that they needed to continue their present effort to maintain their English proficiency level. Through this attitude, they seemed to have sufficient internal drive to motivate themselves towards their goal.

### ***Cognitive Beliefs***

In classroom learning, the Heterogeneous learners were recognized as active students, while the Homogeneous learners were seen as serious students. The Heterogeneous learners stood out from others, but they themselves, their teachers and other students had a positive acceptance of their characters. The Homogeneous group, on the other hand, consciously tried to avoid standing out. They were recognized as normal students, and in fact, they behaved like that. The Heterogeneous group members were aware of themselves as class members, and sought to create a good relationship with teachers and fellow classmates. They wanted a good class atmosphere to promote effective classroom learning. The Homogeneous group was highly conscious of their own English skills and how others thought about them. They seemed to lack awareness about the strategies, which existed in the classroom.

As for effective learning strategies, both groups believed that authentic input was very important, in particular, with regard to listening practice. In addition, separate strategies for learning both inside and outside the classroom

were considered important in making learning more effective. In this respect, both groups of learners were strongly aware of the totality of their learning process incorporating both the classroom and the world beyond it.

### ***Social Beliefs***

Learners in both groups were aware of their own responsibility as learners. They were all self-directed in their study. The Heterogeneous group believed that the teacher's role should be as a facilitator or supporter, where the students were responsible for learning but needed the teachers' support or assistance. The Homogeneous group felt the need for teacher direction and understanding. The Heterogeneous group also seemed to be more aware of the need for a good relationship with other students, while the Homogeneous group focused on the tacit relationship among students.

In summary, in Study One: Part One, sixteen English language learners were selected on the basis of being high achievers through analysis of their TOEIC results. All sixteen students were interviewed regarding their learning habits and attitudes and from this data, Heterogeneous or Homogeneous learner profiles were identified by a number of referent characteristics. Twelve of the students were immediately categorised as being either Heterogeneous or Homogeneous learners and formed two groups of six. However, four students could not be immediately categorised and this needed further investigation. Study One: Part Two below details this investigation and includes brief case studies of the learners, highlighting the degrees of learner autonomy and successful learning practice.



**Part Two:**  
**What Can Successful Learners Tell Us?**  
**A Comparison of Six Learners' Beliefs**

In this section, six successful learners' beliefs are presented. One, Hideo, was selected from Study One: Part One based on his TOEIC results, attitudes to learning and learning behaviours. The second, Fumiko, was selected based on prior research (Usuki, 2002), which provided the impetus for the current research. Learner autonomy analysis of these two students provided data for comparison with that of the four students who were now the subjects of Part Two. The data showed that the beliefs of the four learners indicated different degrees of success and learner autonomy.

**Preliminary Study of Successful Learners' Beliefs:**  
**Learner Autonomy Seen from**  
**the Point of View of Hideo and Fumiko**

Below are extracts from interviews conducted with the two university students, Fumiko and Hideo, who are both very successful Japanese learners of English. Importantly, both managed to acquire a high level of English proficiency while remaining in Japan. Not only did they achieve high TOEIC test scores, but also both students gained sufficient English skills to be able to express themselves well. Their experiences are therefore of special interest and their responses about language learning demonstrate a high degree of learner independence.

Retrospective interviews were organised regarding the students'

perspectives of their own English learning. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, then analysed by focusing on what the learners thought about their own learning in order to clarify various aspects of learner autonomy. The interviews were carried out in Japanese and translated into English by the author.

Fumiko was a fourth year student majoring in English when she was interviewed in 1999. She started learning English at junior high school in Japan, and had no overseas study experience except for a four-week school excursion in New Zealand. Since Fumiko entered the university, her TOEIC score improved 375 points to surpass 900 points.

Hideo was a fourth year student when he was interviewed in the middle of 2000. As with Fumiko, he learned English at junior high school and high school. He had a one-month home-stay experience in Canada during his high school days. Other than that, his English learning was completely in Japan. Hideo also achieved a score of more than 900 points in TOEIC (having improved it by 430 points over 3 years).

Considering the remarkable improvement of test scores, both Fumiko's and Hideo's learning experiences are of interest. Extracts from interviews in which they explain their learning strategies and orientations are indicated below. These opinions seem to suggest that these learners' success is due to a kind of specifically constructed learner autonomy.

#### Goal setting:

Both students expressed feelings of frustration experienced while learning English without any clear objectives. They reported an improvement in their attitudes and performances once they had established clear goals. (The student

quotes are in italics with non-sequential ones starting on separate lines.)

*I had a feeling English learning would be endless. Even if I studied hard, I couldn't be a native speaker. English is still my second language. So, I thought that I had to decide my goal for using my English skills, my purpose for study and my intended use of English. Otherwise, my learning would have no aim. I felt I had been groping blindly in the dark for a long time. At that time, I really suffered. I was studying but didn't have a vision. I didn't have a final point of achievement. I just attended the lessons and blindly studied hard to digest given work.* (Fumiko)

*I had problems that sheer effort could not overcome. I reflected on my basic reason why I was learning English and looked at my goal again. I tried to get rid of my unmotivated feeling.*

*Before I had a visible goal, I was just trying to improve my English in a haphazard manner.* (Hideo)

#### Self-trust:

Successful Japanese learners of English display strong beliefs in their learning abilities. They are not overly concerned about their peers' opinions and are not afraid of 'standing out'.

*What I had to do was to believe in myself alone. Only I know what I need to do. It does not matter what others think of me.* (Fumiko)

*I feel that each day is struggle. By myself I make progress. I would like to stand out as someone different. We can do whatever we want if we have motivation. Really, we are a conglomeration of possibilities.* (Hideo)

Making use of the environment:

Learners skilfully use the available environment and attempt to create 'their own' English world. They have a critical awareness of their own learning needs and a flexible way of thinking.

*I tried to think positively and make my environment as meaningful as possible. I have done my best whenever I could. I wanted to make full use of my opportunities.* (Fumiko)

*I take opportunities to be in contact with the English language as much as possible. I make my own environment artificially like an English speaking country. We can do various things for English learning. The most important thing is how well we can use the resources around us.* (Hideo)

Learner responsibility in the class:

Although good learners expect and need a teacher's understanding, they are aware of both the teacher's and students' responsibility for making lessons useful. They see teacher – student collaboration as an essential prerequisite of a foreign language class.

*We should seriously set a purpose for ourselves and learn in order to achieve it. Lessons should be done by cooperation between teachers and students. Poor lessons are ones that don't let us think anything because they are just one-way traffic from the teacher to the students.* (Fumiko)

*Not only does a teacher give something to the students, but also the teacher can learn from the students. It is best if we have a give and take relationship. Ideal classes are when the students are responsible for doing something. So, I think that both the teacher and the students are responsible for the class. A relationship of trust needs to be built firmly between teachers and students.*

(Hideo)

Student initiatives and teacher role expectations:

Both of these participants agree that it is the learners' responsibility to take the initiative for their own learning. At the same time, they mention that they need their teachers' advice and wish to benefit from their teachers' experiences. Both learners expect their teachers to provide mental support to aid the students' learning. In this sense, both learners expect their teachers not just to help them, but also to take a far more important role in giving psychological support and engendering trust.

*The teacher's role is to advise learners. Learners have to achieve self-actualisation by themselves. Teachers can help by using their experience in various ways.* (Fumiko)

*The teacher's role is to lead their students in better directions, not only to teach us but to give us mental support. Whether we can achieve our goal or not, it is up to us. Teachers can help us to keep our motivation, make us aware of ourselves, and our possibilities.* (Hideo)

Fumiko and Hideo's comments display some important features of learner autonomy. Hideo and Fumiko connected their English learning to the aim of gaining future employment. As a result, their English learning had become closely linked with their future goals and was therefore meaningful to them. They were self-directed and aware of their own responsibility for language learning. They believed that only they themselves could initiate and maintain their own language skills. With this aim in mind, they created language strategies, which were easily available to them in their daily life in a Japanese

environment. Part of the common daily learning strategy included both input and output opportunities. Input opportunities included use of authentic materials such as English newspapers, magazines and radio. Output opportunities indicated were the use of English for communication in real-life situations. Other important strategies indicated were the memorization of vocabulary and expressions and previewing/reviewing each lesson. Interestingly, both learners said that it was also important to read Japanese newspapers every day to ensure they have background knowledge and information. In this sense, they seemed to have a metacognitive awareness in relation to English learning itself.

#### **Four Learners' Beliefs: Hiroshi, Ryoo, Naoko and Kenichi**

Hideo and Fumiko's cases were considered those of very successful autonomous learners. The following four learners, Hiroshi, Ryoo, Naoko, and Kenichi showed their similar awareness of self-responsibility, although they did not achieve same degree of success and learner autonomy as Hideo and Fumiko.

Hiroshi was a third year student when he was interviewed. He could be considered as one of the more successful learners at the university. He had improved his English skills considerably in both TOEIC scores and actual proficiency level.

Ryoo was a second year student when he was interviewed. He was one of the best students in the second year at the university, although generally second year students' levels of English were not so high. Ryoo's proficiency

level and rate of improvement in TOEIC scores were lower than the third or fourth year participants of this study. Looking at his TOEIC result one year on from this interview, however, Ryoo had improved his score considerably. From this interview, it was possible to see some of the reasons for his success.

Like Ryoo, Naoko was a second year student when she was interviewed. Naoko at first refused to be interviewed because she thought that she was not trying hard enough with her learning, but later she agreed to talk about her thoughts. She was motivated to learn English but had problems with the selfmanagement required at university. She seemed to have a gap between what she thought she needed to do and what she actually did. Although she had improved her TOEIC scores since entering university, she had not been able to make good progress since the time of the interview and the reasons for this lack of progress could be seen in the interview analysis, which is presented below.

Kenichi was a fourth year student when he was interviewed. When he was a first year student, his TOEIC score was in the 200s. Since then, he had been able to raise his score into the 600s. He was not an outstanding student, and was not recognized widely in the university. He was simply an average student.

In the next section, firstly, the four learners' TOEIC score records are shown in Table 5.5, and secondly, the four learners' belief are described using the five categories previously employed to compare the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous learners' beliefs.

**Table 5.5: Four Learners' TOEIC Score Achievement and Improvement**

learners	1st year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	improvement since 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Hiroshi	300	470	635*	765	465
Ryoo	325	575*	680		355
Naoko	315	510*	480		165
Kennichi	280	450	565	605*	325

(\* TOEIC score at the time the interviews was conducted)

Hiroshi's improvement was the greatest amongst the sixteen participants in Study One. He seemed to have increased his confidence in communication skills as well. Ryoo, similar to Hiroshi, had also improved his English skills rapidly. Naoko, on the other hand, seemed to have problems improving her skills further. Kenichi's TOEIC score was low in his first year. Although he was able to lift this score to more than 600 in his fourth year, Kennichi's overall English skill improvement seemed to be not as great as Hiroshi or Ryoo.

### ***Analysis of Learners' Beliefs under Five Categories***

#### ***Affective Beliefs***

Hiroshi wanted to be a teacher. His desire was very strong. He liked meeting and communicating with people and learning English provided the opportunity for him to do so. Like Kyoko (in Part One in this chapter), he hoped to give his future students ideas for enjoying and seeing the advantages of learning English. He wanted to show how good it was for people if they could communicate in English. Hiroshi's motivation seemed to go beyond his



own career seeking to contribute to Japanese education as well.

Ryoo focused on both English skill improvement and his TOEIC scores. He believed that there was equivalence between getting good marks on tests and trying to improve his English skills. He had been using exercise books repeatedly for listening and reading practice. He thought that listening and reading were an important part of gaining speaking skills. He had a conscious desire to improve his reading skills as well, and in the future, he wanted to be a translator or get another English language related job.

Naoko also desired to be an English teacher. She was interested in English native speakers and wanted to acquire native-like English skills. Rather than studying JUKEN EIGO (English for examination purposes), she preferred to study English for her own interest.

Kenichi had strong affective motivation. He was especially pleased with himself when he used English and he had a general desire to communicate with various people. He enjoyed learning English very much, but despite wishing to have an English-related job in the future, his desire was not very strong.

***Self-Perceptive Beliefs*** (the excerpts of four learners in each descriptor are shown in Appendix 5-3).

Hiroshi took whichever direction he thought was right or good, and what was necessary and unnecessary for improving his English by himself. He felt confidence in what he had done so far. He knew that according to his past experience, his efforts were always rewarded. He believed his way of thinking was right and was able to motivate himself. As well as showing such flexibility

and self-trust, he had never failed to complete his set work and showed that he was conscientious as well.

Regarding teacher expectations towards him, Hiroshi believed that teachers thought of him as a serious student because he always did his set assignments. He also thought that he sometimes disappointed teachers when he could not improve his proficiency level. He believed that he should learn something from each teacher's best points. If he did not like teachers, he could not respect their lessons. He thought that it was important to look for a teacher's good points and to make positive efforts to benefit from them.

Ryoo believed that he had good concentration skills and rated himself highly in this regard because he could concentrate well on whatever he had to do. He thought that he was uniquely himself and nobody else, and in this way, he was an independent person who learnt at his own pace without caring too much, about what others were doing. He sometimes felt lazy and admonished himself that he had not used his time effectively. Others said that he studied hard, but he did not think he did enough. He was spurred on when he compared himself with someone better than himself. He did whatever he could and believed that his potential depended on how hard he worked. He reflected that he had not failed so far, so he would carry on studying in the same way that he had been doing. While he remained in Japan, Ryoo thought he had to do whatever possible to advance his studies and if he got chances to practice English, he wanted to use such chances effectively. Ultimately, he wished to be like a native speaker.

Regarding teacher expectations of him, Ryoo believed that teachers thought of him as a hardworking person. He had had friendly relationships with his previous Japanese teacher and native English teachers. He believed

that he would improve if he did his best.

Naoko thought that she was not strict enough with herself. Although she evaluated herself as not doing enough, others told her she was doing well. She had a strong motivation to study English and also thought critically of the present education system, but thought she should have studied more than she did at present. Naoko thought that if she worked harder, more possibilities would open up for her. As long as she always thought about her goal and did not give up, she felt it was a real possibility. She wished to speak fluently but believed she lacked sufficient grammatical knowledge to do so. She also thought that she needed to know about the culture in order to learn the language. She felt that she had also to listen to the radio conscientiously, and in this way, she would gain ideas about how to improve her skills.

Regarding teacher expectations towards her, Naoko believed that different teachers had different expectations. For example, one teacher seemed to be unaware of anything about her, and Naoko did not have as good as contact with this teacher as she did with other teachers. On the other hand, another teacher seemed to regard her as a motivated student, but since she had not been spending much time on her studies, she felt that this teacher thought she was under performing.

Kenichi gave himself rewards after completing something. He set small goals for himself each time as a means of encouragement, because he did not want to defeat himself with impossible targets. He thought that if he did not improve, he was at fault for not making enough effort, which was the same thinking as displayed by Kyoko and discussed in Part One. Kenichi enjoyed himself when he could use English and he put a lot of energy into his favourite things. He was positive about himself in that he enjoyed his English learning,

but at the same time, felt that so far he had not been learning English properly. Like the other participants, Kenichi thought that whatever he was able to achieve depended on his effort and motivation.

Regarding teacher expectations towards him, Kenichi was aware that he had differing attitudes towards his favourite and non-favourite teachers. He felt happy if teachers recognized him and had high expectations of him, and believed he could motivate himself to respond to such high expectations.

***Self-Motivational Beliefs*** (the excerpts of four learners in each descriptor are shown in Appendix 5-3).

Hiroshi's English learning was strongly influenced by his feeling of enjoyment, as he believed that his interests and enjoyment were very important. Hiroshi looked to his strong points and tried to sustain them, and in turn, his consciousness raised his motivation. He reflected on his goal and told himself that he had to work to achieve his goal. He valued having a goal above anything else. He sometimes felt fear as to whether or not he could realize his goal, and this fear always forced him to study. Presently, he listened to his teachers' advice. He believed that it was important to keep a link between his interests and English and to continue to work patiently towards small targets. Hiroshi's learning was not always a smooth process and he experienced 'slumps' in his learning. When faced with such situations, he went and talked with someone. He did not expect anyone to provide solutions, but he felt better after talking through his problems. He thought that he needed to do something beyond the ordinary. For example, Hiroshi had not put an antenna on his TV, because he liked TV and knew that he would waste time watching it if given the

chance to do so. He pushed himself to make time to study. He believed that ideally he wanted to have time for both recreation and study as he thought both of these activities were important, so he tried to do homework and extra study before going out to enjoy himself. He did not formally plan, but tried to use his time wisely by working regularly and doing required assignments on time.

Ryoo tried to use English to keep in touch with his favourite things such as sports, newspapers, or watching TV. When he was depressed, he could not talk with people and instead he retreated into himself. When this happened, he tried to do more study in order to forget that he felt depressed. He often got frustrated when he could not express himself in English, although ideas for how to do so sometimes only came to him later. As part of his coping strategy, he went to someone whom he trusted. He also believed he could always overcome his problems. Ryoo did not watch very much TV either, and he chose which TV programs he would watch. He tried to complete his required work either before going out or immediately after returning home.

Naoko was not competing to better anyone in the class. She thought she was keeping to her own pace, but sometimes worried about how others were doing. In her view however, this had a positive effect on her. Naoko thought it was not good to continue to study the way she was, and should therefore change something. She felt that there was a difference between her TOEIC scores and her actual skills. She believed, however, that it was up to her to improve through her own effort. Naoko told herself that she should not give up because once she eased off, her level of English would fall and therefore she should strive for continuous effort. She thought that she should sometimes have time to enjoy herself, and accepted her friends' invitations to go out. However, when she had particular work to do, she would refuse such invitations. Except for her few favourite T.V. programmes, Naoko did not watch TV very often. She did

not have an overall study plan and simply did what she needed to do each day. If she could remain at her current level, she would like to get EIKEN JUN 1 level and a TOEIC score of 800 during her second year. She thought that she would not be able to compare her English improvement with anybody else.

Kenichi suggested the importance of preparation for, and review of, English lessons. He also tried to use what he had learnt. Outside the classroom, he sometimes talked to himself in English. He emphasized his enjoyment of learning and felt happy when he saw his progress and improvement, which he monitored by checking TOEIC scores. He was not only optimistic about his learning, but he was also flexible and eager to try different approaches to learning. When he had problems, he did not give up but tried to change his perspective or find some other way of studying. He did not find learning English to be a chore or hard work, but rather, he enjoyed his studies. He thought that he had to do something useful, whatever the environment.

### ***Cognitive Beliefs***

#### ***Classroom learning***

Hiroshi valued his classroom learning opportunities. He thought that he should listen to teachers and absorb valuable information from them. He also thought that it was important to connect his in-class learning and his out-of-class learning by following up unknown words introduced in lessons, researching new vocabulary brought to lessons, asking questions, and of course, previewing and reviewing lesson material. He believed that lessons were good chances for learning English and he should make the most effective use of them.

Beyond the actual lesson, he thought that students needed to do their homework thoroughly and work with other materials as well. Hiroshi expected to gain new knowledge from his classroom learning and he did not like to waste his time doing meaningless activities. In conversational classes, he expected to be able to practice talking on given topics. Finally, he believed that for a lesson to proceed effectively, the learners had to feel motivated and have a sense of enjoyment in learning.

Ryoo believed that merely listening to lectures was not enough, and that in order to improve, he needed to do other work on his own. He always prepared for the lessons and paid attention to what he needed to know. He believed that the connection between what he did outside the classroom and what he learned inside classroom was important for his English skill improvement. In his opinion, self-directed awareness was crucial for the learner. Interestingly, Ryoo also sought to complement this self-directed awareness through being motivated by others in the classroom, which explained his having both a competitive and co-operative attitude toward his classmates.

Naoko thought that students should be aware that, like teachers, they have responsibility for the lessons. For her, lessons seemed to be a place for checking and solving her problems. She felt strongly that students were obliged to prepare for the lessons, and that teachers should not put up barriers between themselves and students. This meant that teachers should make lessons enjoyable and set the pace according to the students' needs as well as the teacher's desire. She felt that homework was necessary and that she could check her knowledge by previewing the lessons.

Kenichi said that students needed to take their interest and enjoyment into the lesson, whereas teachers should provide direction and stimulate the

students toward effective learning. Kenichi believed that English acquisition was a matter of the students' awareness to use learning opportunities as much as possible. For example, he maintained that it was important to try to use English expressions outside classroom once students had learnt them. In addition, he insisted that following lessons, students should review whether they understood the contents of the lessons.

### ***Effective learning strategies***

Hiroshi thought that he needed to develop his listening skills by using tapes or CDs, and he thought that he needed to build up his vocabulary and his ability to predict the meaning of unknown words. Consequently, he believed that vocabulary and listening skills were crucial to the improvement of his English ability because he would not be able to pick up unknown words in comprehension exercises if he did not have enough vocabulary. Further, before being able to converse in English, he believed that he would have to be able to listen and understand the language. He had been conscientiously following his teachers' instructions, and he needed to do work on his own. For example, during his summer holidays, he listened to CNN English tapes and he believed that he should continue to do so.

Ryoo liked only English among the subjects that he studied at school. He got top marks in English during high school and started thinking then that he could be good at English. Ryoo also said that an active attitude was vital and students should not worry about making mistakes or going to the teacher's office to ask questions. He believed that it was important to listen to lessons with full attention. He reflected that the reasons where he had been able to



improve his English skills included previewing the lessons properly and completing extra exercise books outside the classroom. He thought that his private study and his curricular lessons connected with each other.

Naoko emphasized the importance of students' motivation and responsibility such as doing previews and the basics, getting actively involved in lessons and asking questions when they were unsure of something. Apart from attending lessons, she suggested reading books or listening to good programs in English. She believed that students should use English learning facilities actively and that they needed to be surrounded by an English-speaking environment. She thought it was important to get away from the Japanese environment sometimes. In this way of thinking, she believed in creating an English-speaking environment and using whatever useful things might be around people. She actually bought radio program texts and recorded the program in order to work on them in conjunction. She thought that it was better to make time for self-study in TOEIC or similar, or to make E-mail friends. She seemed to know what she should have done and what was likely to be useful, but she still had problems carrying out what she had determined was best. There was a clear gap between what she wanted to be doing and what she actually was doing. In this respect, she was similar to Tsuyako (Homogeneous learner) in Part One. She believed that successful learners had an active attitude in the class such as expressing their opinions clearly, while not worrying about making mistakes. Outside the classroom, previewing and reviewing were important for remembering the main points, so too were the underlining of key points and saying out aloud the more useful expressions. She believed that keeping a connection between what was learned inside and outside the classroom was important, as was doing work other than that which was assigned.

Kenichi believed that it was important to use English without worrying about the mistakes he made and was aware of the need for active self-involvement by students. In addition, he mentioned the strategy of taking notes of phrases and expressions that were meaningful to him, as Kazuko had indicated earlier in Part One, she also liked to use such strategies of note-taking. In addition, Kenichi monitored his skill improvement through his TOEIC scores, conversational practices of reading comprehension exercises. Kenichi felt that he liked learning English and such a feeling of enjoyment was important for him to keep going.

### ***Social Beliefs***

Hiroshi expected teachers to suggest what was good for him to learn, instead of just teaching him everything. If he believed something was worthwhile, it was important to do it. In his view, if teachers were too remote from their students, it was as if there was no relationship with them. His ideal teacher-student relationship was a friendly one and Hiroshi expected to have this rapport with his teachers. This was a further demonstration of his metacognitive awareness in providing the reasons why students learn English and how they motivate themselves.

Ryoo thought he knew his proficiency level very well. He wanted his teachers to set up tasks according to students' levels. He expected teachers to teach only those things which he did not already know. He thought that the exercise of simultaneously listening and speaking aloud as his teacher taught him was effective. His teacher also told him that good TOEIC scores were

important when trying to obtain employment. He was very strongly influenced by teachers in his thinking and learning methods. When he met native English teachers, he tried to talk with them although initially he was afraid to do so.

Naoko wanted to be a teacher and one day would facilitate learning so that her students could find out how enjoyable it was to learn English. She wanted to help others get rid of their boredom, which arose from JUKEN EIGO (studying English for the purpose of passing the entrance examination). To do this, she believed that teachers needed to recognize, accept and enhance students' motivation and advise them how to solve their problems. She thought that teachers needed to be both strict and kind and have a good teaching manner and method. Conversely, she did not like teachers who erected barriers between themselves and their students.

Kenichi emphasized the importance of students' involvement in their own learning. He thought that students should be interested in their lessons. Teachers could suggest the important points and facilitate students' learning, but ultimately what was learnt remained the responsibility of the student. He believed, like Kazuko in Part One, which being forced by a teacher to do what students perceived, as meaningless homework was not an effective learning method at all.

## Summary of Part Two

All four learners were self-directed and motivated. In particular, Hiroshi was one of the most outstanding third year students at the university. He had

a very similar attitude and beliefs to Hideo and Fumiko. For example, he had a strong, clear goal in his mind and he had self-trust regarding his potential. He liked communicating with people and saw English as one means of gaining opportunities to do so. He had his own learning strategies and a metacognitive awareness of these strategies. In addition, he was consistent in his approach towards his teachers and classroom activities which he considered part of his learning process. His positiveness and sincerity provided the drive for him to make progress.

Ryoo was also a successful learner. He had a very strong motivation towards learning English and he was very positive about his potential. However, he was still concentrating on his own skill improvement rather than on communicative enjoyment. Therefore, in this respect, his flexibility and communicative strategies were still insufficiently developed in comparison with the above three learners, Hideo, Fumiko and Hiroshi. One of the reasons for this might have been his limited experience in English. At the time he was interviewed, he had never been overseas and consequently had only limited experience of communications using English. Apart from this point, Ryoo seemed to have similar beliefs to the above three learners.

In contrast, Kenichi had no clear objectives associated with his learning although he enjoyed it and was highly motivated to learn. Without a clear objective, he did not have a strong wish to improve his English skills, which made his learning ineffective because he had no particular goal to accomplish. In addition, he had a different attitude towards his favourite and non-favourite classes and teachers. These factors limited his current and future achievement and improvement.

Meanwhile, Naoko's main problem was the gap between her thought and action. In addition, although she was a reflective person, her negative self-image and self-doubt seemed to be barriers to her effective learning. These same problems, the gap between thought and action and a negative self-image and self-doubt, also appeared in Kenichi's data.

Considering those aspects which were common to both Kenichi and Naoko, it was apparent that their metacognitive awareness of learning English and self-knowledge should be promoted to help them identify why they were learning, how they conducted that learning and the progress they were making. In addition, their teachers' support, suggestions, and encouragement might have helped with their confidence building and assisted them to create clear objectives for their learning.

## **Discussion from the Findings of Study One: Part One and Part Two**

### ***Heterogeneous and Homogeneous Learners' Beliefs***

The Study One data revealed that high achievers' beliefs could be divided into two types: Heterogeneous and Homogeneous. In comparing both groups of learners, it was seen that the Heterogeneous-type learners' beliefs were seen to be more effective and should be promoted to all students for successful language learning. Therefore, the goal of fostering learner autonomy in language education should aim at engendering and encouraging Heterogeneous-type learners' beliefs. Homogeneous-type learners' beliefs, such as low confidence,

being afraid of standing out, perfectionism, and the contradictory behaviour of wanting to be communicative but not displaying any such desire were seen as not being conducive to language learning. These behaviours are arguably a product of Japanese educational influences upon the students.

Although there were different degrees of autonomous attitudes, learners in Study One were aware of their own responsibility as learners. All of them were self-directed. From the different beliefs and behaviours amongst the sixteen participants presented in the data, the students' innermost thoughts deliver clear evidence that 'typical' passive attitudes attributed to Japanese students are not a true reflection of the students' real attitudes.

From the findings in Study One, learner autonomy is now considered from the standpoint of successful learners' beliefs. Then, Japanese stereotypical passivity is discussed in relation to Japanese educational influence on learner beliefs.

### ***Learner Autonomy from Successful Learners' Beliefs***

All sixteen participants' beliefs showed evidence that there are different degrees of learner autonomy. Each learner's beliefs revealed his or her autonomous attitudes as developmental rather than static. Successful learners accept the responsibility of creating their own learning environment in their own situation. The ability to create a personal learning environment is of particular importance for foreign learners of English who acquire English in their own countries, away from an English-speaking environment.

Successful learners think positively, they are flexibly and are not compromised by personal difficulties. They focus on their language learning as communicating and expressing ideas and thus accept the imperfection of their own skills. Their awareness of the need for collaboration with others seems particularly to be one of the crucial factors contributing to their success. Their awareness of collaboration, as well as self-direction, supports Little's (1995) suggestion of interdependence for learner autonomy. Their individual effort and sense of responsibility are strong for both their in-class and private learning. They are self-reflective, confident, goal-oriented, and appreciative of their increased knowledge and improvement. In order to motivate themselves, they reflect on why they learn English and what they need to do to succeed further. Learners' reflective self-questioning might be a key to making learning meaningful. This awareness supports Little's (1995) notion of the importance of critical reflection. Furthermore, confidence and personal trust powerful tools for these learners. Such positive beliefs towards self can be built through psychological support from others as well as through the learners' own efforts. Thus, it seems that learner autonomy development is not a matter of solitary self-instructional skills, but of the learner's active search for and engagement with internal and external resources (Norton 2000), in their language learning. Their responsibility does not mean their management of learning alone but also an awareness of responsibility for their own learning that concerns them deeply, and in one sense, presupposes management of their learning.

### ***Stereotypical Views of Japanese Learners' Passivity***

The Homogeneous learners' beliefs showed that the constraints they operated under were influenced by their past educational experience. Their

attitude of shyness, fear of making mistakes, perfectionism, lack of confidence, as well as excessive concern regarding the opinions of others are, in fact, widely believed to constitute Japanese students' behavioural passivity. The students, however, perceive their own personality to be a source of frustration and an obstacle in language learning in addition to the above factors and desperately want to change. Their frustration is compounded because they all succeeded in their English university entrance examinations, yet somehow feel 'false' when speaking English. The skills and strategies they gained and used successfully to pass tests in the past seem useless to them now. The Homogeneous learners show contradictory feelings about being passive due to peer pressure, teacher pressure, or lack of confidence and flexibility, despite their stated desire to be otherwise. They seem to struggle with the conflict between their attained skills from past learning experiences and the need for better communicative skills and better experiences where they could develop the latter skills. In addition, their strong pre-occupation with 'native' English hinders their learning for communication. Their beliefs may be interpreted to show that they are not intrinsically passive, but have attained such beliefs from the influence of their past Japanese educational experience.

The following chapter will discuss low-middle achievers' beliefs about language learning as evidenced from questionnaire data.



**CHAPTER SIX**  
**RESULTS: STUDY TWO**  
**LOW-MIDDLE ACHIEVERS' BELIEFS**  
**ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING**

**Introduction**

Study Two, considers obtaining data from low-middle achievers regarding the beliefs they held about their language learning. The participants of Study Two were chosen from a small, private university in Japan that has approximately one thousand students belonging to each of the three Faculties: Faculty of Foreign Language; Faculty of Law; and Faculty of Pharmacology. The sample size was 295 students consisting of 104 English majors, 80 Law majors and 111 Pharmacology majors. Subjects were asked to respond to a questionnaire for which no time constraints were imposed. It was anticipated that differences between high achievers' beliefs (reported in study one) and low-middle achievers' beliefs would be readily identifiable.

From research undertaken in 1995 and study of other SLA (Second language Acquisition) research, Cotterall developed questionnaire items from which she identified six key variables about learner beliefs. The questionnaire items for Study Two were drawn from those identified in a later study by Cotterall (1999) of a number of successful SLA learners' beliefs related to learner autonomy. This study utilised Cotterall's (1999) methods of analysis which identified items under six categories, namely: 1) the role of the teacher; 2) the role of feedback; 3) the learner's sense of self-efficacy; 4) the utilization of important strategies; 5) dimensions of strategies-related behaviour; and 6) the nature of language learning. Cotterall's analytical method of pairing

contiguous question responses was also employed. For example, participants' Likert-type responses 5 and 4 (strongly agree and agree) were grouped together as were their responses 2 and 1 responses (disagree and strongly disagree) "in order to allow generalizations to be made about overall trends in subjects' responses" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 500). Students who did not respond to the questions were not considered for the analysis.

### **The Questionnaire Results**

A questionnaire was administered and data was obtained from each Faculty's students separately. This was undertaken to allow a comparison of English major students (E students), Law major students (L students), and Pharmacy major students (P students) to be undertaken. Thus, students are identified by E, L or P nomenclature. Data were considered discretely, as well as comparatively, with reference being made back to Cotterall's data. Cotterall utilized a total of 92 questions across the six dimensions identified earlier. Data were collected in relation to each of the six dimensions and reported. Responses to questions are presented under relevant subheadings and reported as: Tables 6.1 to 6.14. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 relate to students' beliefs about the teacher's role (Dimension 1), whilst Tables 6.3 and 6.4 relate to teacher feedback (Dimension 2). Table 6.5 to 6.8 relate to self-efficacy beliefs (Dimension 3) with Table 6.8 also indicating the utilization of important strategies (Dimension 4). Tables 6.9 and 6.10 represent students' learning strategies-related behaviour (Dimension 5) and the remaining four tables, 6.11 to 6.14, present the students' beliefs about successful language learning practice (Dimension 6).

## *Role of the Teacher*

The items in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 included under the "role of the teacher" were defined as "the functions and attributes of the language teacher" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 500). The participants in Study Two indicated the belief that the teacher's role as a facilitator was very important. However, when compared with Cotterall's (1999) response data, the participants in Study Two showed low expectations for their teacher's help (Table 6.1). In addition, the participants in Study Two expected teachers' expertise at teaching language, rather than their ability for showing students how to learn. This is explored further in what follows (Table 6.1 and 6.2).

**Table 6.1: Responses to Likert Scale role of the teacher items (expressed as percentage of total population). N=295 (English: N=104, Law: N=80, Pharmacy: N=111)**

	English major		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall data	
	5 + 4 (%)	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1
1. tell me what to do	30.2	26.8	40.1	26.3	45	32.4	66.8	20.7
2. help me learn effectively	83.6	1.7	61.3	2.5	88.3	7.2	97.6	0.7
3. tell me what progress I am making	55.2	12	53.8	11.3	53.2	15.3	83.6	4.6
4. say what my difficulties are	56.9	12.1	61.3	12.6	62.2	10.8	66.1	16.2
5. create opportunities for me to practise	46.5	15.5	48.8	18.8	51.3	26.1	79	10.8
6. decide how long I spend on activities	14.7	58.6	8.8	57.6	12.6	51.3	26.1	50.7
7. explain why we re doing an activity	19	45.7	26.3	43.8	26.1	45	67.7	15.4
8. set my learning goals	18.9	56	27.6	51.3	27.9	50.4	30.8	48.4
9. give me regular tests	21.6	42.2	17.6	46.3	17.1	49.5	56.5	22.8
10. offer to help me	50.9	9.5	47.5	21.3	67.6	9.9	80.9	3.8

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

Table 6.2

Responses to ranked role of the teacher items (expressed as percentage of total population)

	English			Law			Pharmacy			Cotterall		
I believe the teacher should be an expert at...	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1
11. teaching language	53.5	33.6	2.6	50	42.5	7.5	53.2	40.5	6.3	31.5	48	20.5
12. learning languages	36.2	44.8	8.6	28.8	56.8	12.5	31.5	53.2	15.3	11.8	27.5	60.6
13. showing students how to learn	52.6	28.4	8.6	41.3	48.8	10	51.4	38.7	9.9	58.3	25.2	16.5

3 = most Important, 2 = next most Important, 1 = least Important; 3, 2 and 1 results from the participants' rank ordering of three teacher attributes (Cotterall, 1999, p. 501)

Table 6.1 shows that a high proportion of the participants held the view that the teacher's primary role is one of "helping learners learn effectively" (item 2). When compared with Cotterall's (1999) response data (97.6%), the participants in Study Two did not rate this category as highly (English major=E 83.6%; Law major=L 91.3%; Pharmacy major=P 88.3%), however they still demonstrated the belief that the teacher's role as a facilitator was very important. Results similar to those of Cotterall were found regarding the notion that "the teacher should decide how long learners spend on activities" (item 6), (Cotterall = 50.7%; E=58.6%, L=57.6%, P=51.3%), and that "the teacher should set learners' goals" (item 8), (Cotterall = 48.4%; E=56.0%, L=51.3%, P=50.4%).

Whilst the above responses were similar to those obtained by Cotterall (1999), the responses to the following items showed different trends. Approximately half of the participants showed high expectations or support for the following teacher roles such as "telling learners what progress they are making" (item 3) (E=55.2%; L=53.8%; P=53.2%), "offering them help" (item 10) (E=50.9%; L=48.8%; P=51.3%), and "saying what learners' difficulties are" (item 4) (E=56.9%; L=51.3%, P=62.2%). Regarding the following three items, the

participants showed low expectations for: "explaining why they are doing an activity" (item 7) (E=19.0%, L=26.3%, P=26.1%), "telling them what to do" (item 1) (E=30.2%, L=40.1%, P=45.0%), and "giving learners regular tests" (item 9) (E=21.6%, L=17.7%, P=17.1%). In contrast, the participants in Cotterall's study responded positively to: item 3 (83.6%), item 10 (86.9%), and item 4 (65.1%). More than half of the participants in Cotterall's study showed further high expectations in the same category of teacher's role items, agreeing to the following: item 7 (67.7%), item 1 (66.8%), and item 9 (56.5%).

Table 6.2 indicates the participants' belief that teachers should exhibit their expertise in teaching language (item 11) (E=53.5%, L=50.0%, P=53.2%) which was stronger than the belief that teachers should demonstrate an ability for showing students how to learn (item 13) (E=52.6%, L=41.3%, P=51.4%) or at learning languages (item 12) (E=36.2%, L=28.8%, P=31.5%). In Cotterall's data, the students considered that teachers should have expertise in showing them how to learn (item 13) (58.3%) rather than at teaching language (item 11) (31.5%) or at learning languages (item 12) (11.8%).

### ***Role of Feedback***

The items in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 included under the "role of feedback" were concerned with "the source and functions of feedback in language learning" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 501). The participants in Study Two showed their expectations about their own ability to know how to learn rather than relying on the teacher's feedback on their learning (Table 6.3 and 6.4).

Table 6.3

Responses to Likert items on feedback (expressed as percentage of total population)

	English			Law			Pharmacy			Cotterall		
I believe that...	5 + 4 (%)			2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1		5 + 4	2 + 1	
14. The teacher knows best how well I am learning	35.3			16.4	48.8	20	46.8	17.1		53.1	20	
15. I know best how well I am learning	76.7			0.9	90	0	86.5	1.8		46.6	19.1	

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

Table 6.4

Responses to ranked items on feedback (expressed as percentage of total population)

	English			Law			Pharmacy			Cotterall		
I believe feedback on my language learning...	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1
16. that I give myself helps me most	43.1	39.7	6	46.3	51.3	2.5	55.9	36.9	7.2	20.1	24.8	55
17. from the teacher helps me most	17.2	59.5	12	17.5	66.3	16.3	15.3	46.9	19.8	63.1	26.9	10
18. from other people helps me most	6	58.6	24	10	56.3	33.8	5.4	47.8	46.9	16.3	49.6	34.1

3 = most important, 2 = next most important, 1 = least important

Table 6.3 shows that the majority of the participants (E=76.7%, L=90.0%, P=86.5%) had expectations about their own ability to "know best how well they were learning" (item 15) rather than relying on the teacher's assessment (item 14) (E=35.5%, L=48.8%, P=46.8%). In Table 6.4, the participants in Study Two also valued the "self-generated feedback" (item 16) (Cotterall, 1999, pp. 501) more highly (E=43.1%, L=46.8%, P=55.9%) than "feedback from the teacher" (item 17) (E=17.2%, L=17.5%, P=15.3%).

### ***Sense of Self-Efficacy***

The items in Tables 6.5 to 6.8 included under "sense of self-efficacy" were defined as "the learners' confidence in their overall ability to learn a language, as well as their ability to achieve more specific language goals" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 502). Students generally indicated that self-efficacy was an important factor in autonomous language learning. Results indicate, however, that those involved in Cotterall's study showed a higher level of self-efficacy (Table 6.5). It was also found that regardless of discipline area, Cotterall's cohort achieved generally higher self-efficacy results (Table 6.6 and 6.7). Confidence in using strategies successfully were somewhat undifferentiated by discipline area and generally lower than for Cotterall's data set. This is explored further in what follows.

Table 6.5 reveals that a minority of the participants in Study Two considered themselves "above average at language learning" (item 20) (E=7.7%, L=7.5%, P=6.3%) or "average at language learning" (item 19) (E=28.4%, L=25.0%, P=32.4%). This result shows that approximately 70% of the participants believed themselves to be below average.

More than half of the participants in Study Two believed that "having their work evaluated by others was helpful" (item 22) (E=63.8%, L=62.6%, P=61.2%). Fewer participants believed that "having their work evaluated by others was scary" (item 21) (E=36.2%, L=41.8%, 28.8%).

**Table 6.5**

**Responses to Likert Scale self-efficacy items (expressed as percentage of total population)**

	English		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall	
I believe that...	5 + 4 (%)	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1
19. I am average at language learning	28.4	20.7	25	33.6	32.4	26.1	53.8	25.4
20. I am above average at language learning	7.7	48.2	7.5	55.1	6.3	58.5	29.2	31.4
21. having my work evaluated by others is scary	36.2	37.1	41.3	35.1	28.8	34.2	22.4	48
22. having my work evaluated by others is helpful	63.8	7.7	62.6	12.5	61.2	8.1	84.7	3.8

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

From Table 6.6, the majority of the participants showed less confidence in their ability "to write accurately in English" (item 24) (E=82.7%, L=88.7%, P=88.3%) and "to find an effective way to learn English" (item 26) (E=71.2%, L=77.5%, P=80.2%). More than half of the participants did not believe in their ability "to get the score they were trying for in their next test" (item 25) (E=69.2%, L=71.2%, P=73.9%). Approximately, half of English major students believed in their ability "to learn a language successfully" (item 23), while a minority of non-English major students expressed belief in their own ability (item 23) (E=55.8%, L=27.5%, P=36.9%). Overall, the participants tended to show extremely low confidence in their ability.



**Table 6.6****Responses to self-efficacy magnitude items (expressed as percentage of total population)**

	English		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
23. Do you believe you have the ability to learn a language successfully?	55.8	44.2	27.5	72.5	36.9	63.1	37.6	62.4
24. Do you believe you have the ability to write accurately in English?	17.3	82.7	11.3	88.7	11.7	88.3	42.3	57.7
25. Do you believe you have the ability to get the score you are trying for in your next English test?	30.8	69.2	28.8	71.2	26.1	73.9	75.9	24
26. Do you believe you know how to find an effective way to learn English?	28.8	71.2	22.5	77.5	19.8	80.2	68.2	31.8

Table 6.7 also shows a low sense of self-efficacy among the participants. When compared to those students in Cotterall's (1999) study and considering the mean scores for each item, the tendency was the same as for Cotterall's data: the participants' confidence was highest on "ability to learn a language successfully" (item 27) ( $E=4.84$ ,  $L=3.83$ ,  $P=4.35$ , Cotterall=6.68), and lowest on "ability to write accurately in English" (item 28) ( $E=2.53$ ,  $L=3.38$ ,  $P=3.8$ , Cotterall=5.39). However, the participants in this study tended to view themselves less positively in all items when compared with those in Cotterall's study.

**Table 6.7****Responses to self-efficacy strength items (expressed as percentage of total population)**

	English	Law	Pharmacy	Cotterall
	means	means	means	means
27. have the ability to learn a language successfully?	4.84	3.83	4.35	6.68
28. have the ability to write accurately in English?	2.53	3.38	3.8	5.39
29. have the ability to get the score you are trying for in your next English test?	4.09	3.93	4.15	6.16
30. know how to find an effective way to learn English?	4.2	3.64	3.96	6.04

The next variable was that of the learners' confidence in their own ability to learn a language. Table 6.8 details learners' confidence in their ability to learn a language successfully. In items 31 to 38, the participants in this study scored around 30% for the combined score 5 'strongly agree' and score 4 'agree', which is much lower than Cotterall's (1999) results. Excepting the items "I know how to check my work for mistakes" (item 32) (Cotterall=31.5%) and "I know how to measure my progress" (item 38) (Cotterall=43.5%), the responses in Cotterall's data showed more than 60% positive agreement with the rest of the items.

**Table 6.8**  
**Responses to strategies items (expressed as percentage of total population)**

	English		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall	
I know how to...	5 + 4 (%)	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1
31. find my own ways of practising	32.8	18.9	31.1	30.1	36	23.4	67	9.1
32. check my work for mistakes	34.4	19	28.8	32.5	44.1	28.8	31.5	36.9
33. explain why I need English	37.9	11.2	30.1	26.3	45	15.3	79.3	8.3
34. identify my strengths and weaknesses	42.2	12	33.8	23.8	31.5	25.2	73.3	9.9
35. ask for help when I need it	35.4	25.9	30	21.3	26.1	26.1	86.2	6.9
36. set my own learning goals	37	16.4	30.1	17.5	39.6	21.6	66.4	12.9
37. plan my learning	31.9	24.1	31.3	22.5	36.9	21.6	67.9	9.9
38. measure my progress	24.2	23.3	18.8	31.3	19.8	33.3	43.5	17.5

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

The results of Tables 6.5 to 6.8 show that the participants in this study hold considerably lower self-efficacy beliefs regarding their own language learning ability than the participants in Cotterall's study.

### ***Important Strategies***

The items in Table 6.8 also related to learner beliefs about "important strategies", which were defined as "the knowledge of a number of strategies considered important in successful learning, and especially for autonomous language learning" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 503). The items in Table 6.8 reflect an insufficient knowledge of successful learning strategies. The students' positive responses to all items were lower than 50%.

The lowest scores were for item 38 "knowing how to measure their progress" (E=24.2%, L=18.8%, P=19.8%, Cotterall=43.5%). Compared with Cotterall's results, the subjects in this study responded with far less agreement in most items. The level of positive response was much lower as shown by the following results: "knowing how to find my own ways of practicing" (item 31) (E=32.8%, L=31.1%, P=36.0%, Cotterall=67.0%), "knowing how to explain why I need English" (item 33) (E=37.9, L=30.1, P=45.0%, Cotterall=79.3%), "knowing how to identify my strengths and weaknesses" (item 34) (E=42.2%, L=33.8%, P=31.5%, Cotterall=73.3%), "knowing how to ask for help when I need it" (item 35) (E=35.4, L=30.0%, P=26.1, Cotterall=86.2%), "knowing how to set my own learning goal" (item 36) (E=37.0%, L=30.1%, P=39.6%, Cotterall=66.4%), and "knowing how to plan my learning" (item 37) (E=31.9%, L=31.3%, P=36.9, Cotterall=67.9%).

### ***Dimensions of Strategies-Related Behaviour***

The items in Tables 6.9 and 6.10 presented "dimensions of strategies-related behaviour", which were defined as "subjects' knowledge, confidence, willingness to adopt and acceptance of responsibility for eight language learning strategies"

(Cotterall, 1999, p. 504). The results indicated that the Study Two participants' lack confidence, willingness, and acceptance of responsibility for asking in help. In contrast, the majority of the participants in Cotterall's study showed greater confidence, willingness and acceptance of responsibility for asking for assistance (Table 6.9 and 6.10).

**Table 6.9**

**Responses to Item 35-dimensions of strategies-related behaviour (expressed as percentage of total population)**

	English		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall	
Ask for help...	5 + 4 (%)	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1
39. I am confident about...	19.8	37.1	23.8	38.8	23.4	34.2	77	9.1
40. I am willing to...	24.1	40.7	21.3	52.5	28.8	43.2	88.4	3
41. I accept responsibility for...	29.3	21.5	30.1	25	32.4	25.2	89.2	3.8

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

Table 6.10

Mean responses for dimensions of strategies-related behaviour items

	English	Law	Pharmacy	Cotterall
Items: find my own ways of practising	means	means	means	means
42. I know how to	2.88	2.9	3.12	3.63
43. I am confident about	2.81	2.8	2.99	3.42
44. I am willing to	2.84	2.75	3.13	4.23
45. I accept responsibility for	2.83	2.95	3.06	4.24
Item: check my work for mistakes				
46. I know how to	2.83	2.9	3.12	2.92
47. I am confident about	2.56	2.76	3.03	2.8
48. I am willing to	2.68	2.76	3.21	4.04
49. I accept responsibility for	2.77	2.99	3.19	3.85
Item: explain why I need English				
50. I know how to	3.07	2.96	3.36	3.88
51. I am confident about	3.16	2.71	3.05	3.74
52. I am willing to	2.16	2.26	2.59	3.15
53. I accept responsibility for	2.83	2.49	2.85	3.09
Item: identify my strengths and weakness				
54. I know how to	3.13	2.96	3.1	3.91
55. I am confident about	3.01	3.01	3.15	3.69
56. I am willing to	2.61	2.6	2.76	4.21
57. I accept responsibility for	2.71	2.9	2.95	4.24
Item: ask for help when I need it				
58. I know how to	2.78	3.06	2.98	4
59. I am confident about	2.37	2.83	2.86	3.88
60. I am willing to	2.43	2.56	2.78	4.22
61. I accept responsibility for	2.78	3.04	3.08	4.23
Item: set my own learning goals				
62. I know how to	2.94	3.09	3.18	3.61
63. I am confident about	2.87	2.76	3.04	3.88
64. I am willing to	2.62	2.55	2.97	4.22
65. I accept responsibility for	2.71	2.84	3	4.23
Item: plan my learning				
66. I know how to	2.76	3.05	3.14	3.7
67. I am confident about	2.62	2.8	2.99	3.52
68. I am willing to	2.51	2.46	2.94	3.97
69. I accept responsibility for	2.74	2.76	3.04	4.01
Item: measure my progress				
70. I know how to	2.7	2.83	2.78	3.32
71. I am confident about	2.44	2.01	2.54	3.55
72. I am willing to	2.45	2.31	2.61	4.07
73. I accept responsibility for	2.6	2.65	2.81	4.26

Tables 6.9 and 6.10 include "(a) learners' knowledge of each strategy, (b) their confidence to adopt it, (c) willingness to adopt it and (d) acceptance of responsibility for adopting it" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 504). Table 6.9 shows that a minority of the participants reported that they "were confident about asking for help" (item 39) (E=19.8%, L=21.3%, P=28.8%), "were willing to ask for help" (item 40) (E=24.1%, L=21.3%, P=28.8%), and "accepted responsibility for asking for help" (item 41) (E=29.3%, L=30.1%, P=32.4%). Approximately half of the participants indicated their unwillingness to ask for help (item 41) (E=40.7%, L=52.5%, P=43.2%). In contrast, the majority of the participants in Cotterall's study showed greater confidence (item 39) (77.0%), willingness (item 40) (88.4%), and acceptance of responsibility (item 41) (89.2%) in asking for assistance.

Table 6.10 shows the mean response for each item relating to personal practice. This table presents a comparison of the subjects' beliefs about the four dimensions of strategies-related behaviour. Overall, the mean scores for all items were consistently lower (around or below 3.0) than those obtained in Cotterall's study. This result also shows a dearth of strategic knowledge (item 42, 46, 54, 58, 62, 66, 70), confidence (item 43, 47, 55, 59, 63, 67, 71) and willingness (item 44, 48, 56, 60, 64, 68, 72) combined with less acceptance of responsibility (item 45, 49, 57, 61, 65, 69, 73), concerning strategies-related behaviour.

### ***The Nature of Language Learning***

The items in Tables 6.11 and 6.14 included under "the nature of language learning" were defined as "beliefs about variables which contribute to successful

language learning" (Cotterall, 1999, p. 505). The participants in Study Two generally believed that making mistakes in language learning is a natural part of learning (Table 6.11). In addition, the participants believed that all people learn languages differently, and language learning is a time consuming matter (Table 6.11). The participants in Study Two demonstrated their responsibility for finding opportunities to use the language rather than being provided with opportunities by their teachers or classmates. They also valued their own effort for successful language learning. These results showed the similar tendency to Cotterall's data (Table 6.11, 6.12, 6.13 and 6.14).

**Table 6.11**

**Responses to Likert scale nature of language learning items (expressed as percentage of total population)**

	English		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall	
I believe that...	5 + 4 (%)	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1
74. I can communicate in English without knowing the rules	29.3	44.9	21.3	67.6	29.7	57.6	17.5	57.2
75. I need to know language rules before I can communicate in English	33.7	42.2	37.6	37.6	32.4	46.8	53	32.2
76. all people learn languages in the same way	25	40.5	32.6	37.5	24.3	46.8	4.5	87.5
77. making mistakes is harmful in language learning	2.6	83.6	2.5	37.6	6.3	87.4	12.1	80.1
78. making mistakes is a natural part of learning	83.9	3.4	86.3	6.3	92.8	4.5	96.1	3.1
79. it is possible to learn a language in a short time	25	49.2	27.5	42.5	25.2	48.6	22.1	66.4
80. language learning takes a long time	63.8	10.3	62.6	16.3	36.4	11.7	32.4	7.6

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

Table 6.12 indicates the participants' understanding of the nature of language learning by their ranking of certain variables. The participants believed that they "should find their own opportunities to use the language" (item

82). Fewer participants expected that such opportunities should be provided by either the teacher (item 83) or their classmates (item 81).

**Table 6.12**

**Responses to ranked nature of language learning Items-Opportunities to use the language (expressed as percentage of total population)**

I believe that...	English		Law		Pharmacy		Cotterall	
	5+4 (%)	2 + 1	5 + 4	2 + 1	5 + 4	2+1	5 + 4	2 + 1
81. Opportunities to use the language should be provided by my classmates	30.2	51	13.8	40	11.7	41.4	5.4	51.9
82. I should find my own opportunities to use the language	75	3.4	70	6.3	68.4	11.7	76.7	9.3
83. Opportunities to use the language should be provided by the teacher	25.9	35.4	21.3	37.6	19.8	43.2	17.8	37.9

5+4 & 1+2 = results from a collapsing of these two semantic differential categories in order to add potency to trends.

Table 6.13 presents the participants' beliefs in respect of four variables of effort for success in language learning (Cotterall, 1998, p. 506). The most popularly held belief was that "learners' own efforts outside the classroom is the most important variable" (item 84) (E=45.7%, L=36.3%, P=45.1%). However, fewer than half of the participants in each faculty responded positively to the items in relation to inside classroom learning (item 85, 86, 87).



Table 6.13

Responses to ranked nature of language learning items-Effort (expressed as percentage of total population)

I believe my language learning success depend on...	English				Law				Pharmacy				Cotterall			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
84. What I do outside the classroom	45.7	31	8.6	4.3	36.3	42.5	17.5	2.5	45.1	41.4	6.3	6.3	65.6	18.7	10.1	5.5
85. What I do in the classroom	28.5	44	11.2	6	11.3	58.8	20	8.8	16.2	37.8	30.6	14.4	22.6	52.3	23.4	1.6
86. What my classmate do in the classroom	4.3	17.2	34.5	33.6	6.3	18.8	41.3	31.3	2.7	14.4	43.2	38.7	1.6	4	17.6	76.8
87. What the teacher does in the classroom	12.1	26.7	36.2	14.7	11.3	30	41.3	16	9.9	16.9	32.4	18.9	13.3	26.6	a	11.7

4, Most important; 2, next most important; 3, next most important; 4, least important

Table 6.14 presents the participants' overall reflections on five variables in their language learning success. They believed that "their own effort" (item 92) was the most important variable (E=79.3%, L=61.3%, P=69.4%), the second most important variable was "opportunities to use the language" (item 89) (E=71.6%, L=50.0%, P=55.0%), and thirdly ranked was "practice" (item 90) (E=65.6%, L=35.0%, P=48.7%). The results showed the same tendency regardless of the students' major area of study. However, the English major students show a higher rate of agreement with all propositions than the non-English major students in Table 6.14. Feedback (item 88) and the language teacher (item 91) were ranked by students as being less important

than the first three items mentioned (item 89, 90, 92).

**Table 6.14**

**Responses to ranked nature of language learning Items-Overall** (expressed as percentage of total population)

	English				Law				Pharmacy				Cotterall			
...plays an important role in successful language learning	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
88. Feedback ...	34.5	43.1	9.5	1.7	22.5	55	16.3	1.3	34.2	42.3	18	4.5	13.3	16.4	33.6	36.7
89. Opportunities to use the language	71.6	15.5	1.7	0.9	50	36.3	10	2.5	55	33.3	8.1	2.7	49.2	20.3	21.1	9.4
90. Practice...	65.6	21.6	1.7	0.9	35	46.3	15	2.5	48.7	39.6	8.1	2.7	67.2	20.3	9.3	3.1
91. The language teacher ...	31.9	45.7	10.3	1.7	17.5	52.5	23.8	5	26.1	48.7	19.8	4.5	15.4	18.6	26.3	39.5
92. my own effort...	79.3	10.3	0	0	61.3	27.5	8.8	1.3	69.4	25.2	1.8	2.7	61.2	21.7	7.7	9.3

4, Most important; 2, next most important; 3, next most important; 4, least important

The majority of the participants believed that "making mistakes in language learning was a natural part of learning" (item 78) (E=83.9%, L=86.3%, P=92.8%, Cotterall=96.1), and that "language learning took a long time" (item 80) (E=63.8%, 62.6%, P=66.4%, Cotterall=82.4%). Item 75 "I need to know language rules before I can communicate in English" was spread between negatively held (E=42.2%, L=37.6%, P=46.8%) and positively held (E=33.7%, L=37.6%, P=32.4%) beliefs. The remaining items (74, 76, 79) received negative responses. It would

seem from the results of the three items above, the participants did not believe that language rules are important for the acquisition of English communication skills. Further, the participants believed that all people learn languages differently, and language learning is a time consuming matter.

### **Consideration of the results in Study Two and Study One**

Overall, the participants in each faculty had similar responses to all questionnaire items. These results confirmed the participants' belief tendency in this particular university setting. Japanese learners' beliefs in this context showed clear differences when compared with Cotterall's contextual findings in Cotterall's context.

Whilst Cotterall utilized six categories for identifying aspects of learners' beliefs and learner autonomy, the research question at the centre of Study Two utilizes four aspects to discuss low-middle achievers' beliefs about language learning. This reduction has been achieved by conflating Cotterall's the "role of the teacher" and "the role of feedback" categories into one category, namely teacher role expectations. In addition, Cotterall's categories of "important strategies" and "dimensions of strategies related behaviour" have been conflated into the category of self-motivation strategies. Furthermore, these four categories closely correlate with those employed in Study One to establish high achievers' beliefs about language learning. Thus, the following section discusses the beliefs and expectations that low-middle achievers hold regarding, effective strategies, teacher role expectations, self-motivation strategies, and self-efficacy beliefs in their foreign language learning, and compares these beliefs with those of the high achievers in Study One.

## ***Effective Language Learning Strategies***

The results of this study indicate that the majority of the participants tended to value learning autonomy. They seemed to accept that making mistakes and a long-term commitment is necessary in language learning. Their awareness appeared to contradict some typical views of Japanese learners such as a fondness for rote learning and a few of making mistakes.

Their performance for autonomy was confirmed by their responses as given in Tables 6.12, 6.13 and 6.14. The participants believed that finding language-learning opportunities was their own responsibility rather than expecting these to be provided by others. Accordingly, they reported that the most important variable for language learning success is their own effort outside the classroom, the second most important variable being opportunities to use the language, and the third being practise. In contrast, variables stemming from persons other than themselves such as feedback or the language teacher were considered less important than the above three factors.

In Study One, the sixteen high achievers were aware of the totality of their learning process, which incorporated both the classroom and the world beyond. This awareness was seen in both the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous groups. In other words, their language learning did not solely exist in the classroom; rather the classroom was part of the overall process. In addition, these high achieving learners did not see themselves existing in isolation in this language learning process; they saw themselves as being connected with fellow students, teachers and others outside of the classroom. This awareness of the totality of the language learning process was arguably the distinguishing feature between high and low-middle achievers.

### ***Teacher Role***

The majority of the participants considered the teacher's role to be that of a facilitator for effective language learning. However, they showed low expectations of needing teachers' help in providing actual learning strategies for how to learn. The participants tended to expect the teacher to demonstrate expertise at teaching language rather than possessing the ability to show students how to learn or an ability to learn languages themselves. The majority of the participants relied on their own ability to know how well they were learning rather than relying on teacher feedback. The results showed that the participants were aware of responsibility for their own learning, and accepted the teacher as a facilitator. However, they did not tend to seek the teacher's help or feedback and seemed to keep a distance between themselves and their teachers.

Comparing the beliefs of low-middle achievers in Study Two with the beliefs of high achievers in Study One, the Heterogeneous learners seemed to believe the teacher's role to be that of a facilitator or supporter. These learners appeared to be aware of the need for self-direction in managing their own learning and for needing teachers' support or assistance on occasions. In classroom learning, the Heterogeneous learners tended to create a good relationship with teachers and fellow classmates. The Homogeneous learners, on the other hand, while still looking to teachers for feedback and support, felt the need for teachers' direction and understanding more than the Heterogeneous group and were thus less proactive in building relationships. In all instances of the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous learners, the difference between low-middle and high achievers regarding the teacher's role seemed to be the desire for and willingness to seek

the teacher's feedback and support.

### ***Self-Motivation Strategies***

Overall, the participants' responses reflected an insufficient strategic knowledge of autonomous language learning. In all items related to knowing how to learn, less than 50% of participants in all faculties claimed possession of this knowledge. These results showed that regarding strategies to manage their own learning process, the participants lacked knowledge of these strategies, had no confidence in them, displayed no willingness to use them and failed to take responsibility for the neglect of such strategies by not seeking help. As the findings of Study One showed, successful learners displayed all characteristics that related to their own learning processes. In addition, successful learners appear to have developed strategic skills and a metacognitive awareness of effective language learning. Thus, one of the significant differences between high and low-middle achievers is possibly the use of metacognitive strategies regarding the conduct of autonomous learning and motivation strategies with such strategies providing means of coping with their difficulties.

### ***Self-Efficacy Beliefs***

The participants in this study showed relatively low self-efficacy beliefs as to their own language learning ability. Approximately 70% of participants believed themselves to be below average. Only half of the English major

students believed in "their ability to learn a language successfully". The minority of non-English major students held positive beliefs as to the same ability. Considering the above results, the participants tended to show an extremely low confidence in their ability. From successful learners' beliefs identified in Study One, positive self-image and self-trust of their own ability, were the most significant elements in their beliefs about self. In contrast, low-middle achievers' negative self-image and doubts as to their own ability might hinder their further progress in language learning. Moreover, the low self-efficacy beliefs might lead to the use of poor motivational strategies or no strategies at all. The results in Study Two suggest that strong support should be provided to build their strategic knowledge, confidence and willingness to undertake new activities.

### **Discussions of Low-middle Japanese Learners' Beliefs and Learner Autonomy**

The following findings from Study Two relating to low-middle achievers' beliefs about learner autonomy are summarized below:

These learners:

- are aware of their responsibility for their own learning.
- expect the teacher to act as a facilitator, helping students to learn the language effectively.
- tend to lack strategic knowledge for autonomous language learning. Also, they have less willingness to use and confidence in using motivation strategies.
- tend not to expect the teacher's help or feedback.
- show a lack of confidence in their own ability to learn the language.

- seem to have negative self-images. Their self-efficacy beliefs tend to be low.

In short, low-middle achievers tend to accept responsibility for learning, but not to expect their teacher's help in providing a method of learning. This tendency to plough a lone furrow seems to draw them into helpless situations, which might affect their motivation to learn. Instead of actively seeking help to solve their problems, they tend to keep a distance from teachers. They place a high value on their own responsibility for language learning, but despite this, they act passively in class and utilise fewer strategic techniques. This contradiction between concept and behaviour might and in understanding Japanese learners' perceived passivity vis-à-vis actual awareness of their own responsibility to in acquiring knowledge.

### **Scaffolding Learner Autonomy for Low-Middle Achievers**

Given the above, it is imperative to establish a means of promoting low-middle achievers' autonomy and consider how this can be implemented to help them towards successful language learning. Because most of the students in this study are low-middle achievers, high achievers must be considered as exceptional students. The Heterogeneous group learners in Study One especially were able to develop their positive beliefs and attitudes through learning experiences built up over a long period. All their cultural and educational experiences combined to influence their beliefs positively. Similarly, most of the low-middle achievers' beliefs might have been constructed in the same gradual and incremental way, but with negative outcomes because of feedback. Using this as a starting point, the following could be considered four key points



for positively accentuating learner development in low-middle achievers. The learners need to develop (1) greater confidence as learners, (2) a willingness to attempt new learning strategies, (3) a positive self-acceptance and, (4) the ability to self-motivate by various learning strategies.

In order to promote students' autonomous internal attitudes and external behaviours, the following aspects ought to be included in learner autonomy development:

- Providing confidence-building opportunities to develop positive self-belief,
- Providing reflective opportunities to assist with developing motivation strategies,
- Supporting self-direction and collaboration in the learning environment, and,
- Encouraging willingness in learners to ask for help, to ask questions and to request feedback.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **RESULTS: STUDY THREE**

#### **EFL FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' BELIEFS AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

##### **Introduction**

This study was undertaken in order to discover low-middle achievers' beliefs and expectations about autonomous language learning through their own reflective processes. Data was collected using the technique of journal writing. In this section, firstly, the students' reflections of their own learning are presented from their journal excerpts. Secondly, their reactions to set project work are addressed. Thirdly, the effectiveness of journal writing and the setting of project work for learner autonomy development are discussed.

##### **Participants and Methodology**

Study Three gathered data from English major students regarding their views of both classroom language learning and language learning that occurred outside the formal classroom. The participants for Study Three were chosen from one of the first year English classes in order to discover low-middle achievers' language learning insights.

Twenty nine first year students at a private university in Japan, who participated in Study Two, were asked to write about their past language learning

experience at the beginning of their course. These students were selected by convenience sampling as they consisted of the class currently being taught by the researcher. According to their pre-course test results, the students were placed in the low-middle level class of English (200 - 300 TOEIC scores). All of the students had graduated from Japanese high schools and none of them had experienced studying overseas. They shared a common history in that one of their school subjects (being English) was taught by Japanese teachers. Experience in English learning had focused on grammar and translation. Although some had occasional ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) classes, most of the students had practically no contact with native speakers of English. They had little experience of English learning as a means of communication.

### **The Students' Reflections of Language Learning**

The journals were an opportunity for students to express their feelings about the progress of their own language learning during the course of study in which they were involved. Some of these descriptions are presented in the discussion below. This discussion of the students' journals is related to the students' awareness of learner autonomy factors and the apparent contradictions regarding Japanese learners' passivity in their language classroom behaviour.

### ***The Use of Strategies***

The teacher set the journal topics. Using Little's (1995) notion of critical reflections, what, how and why questions were asked for promoting the students' reflective practices, for example:

Topics:

What have you done?

How well do you think you have done it?

What do you think you have learned?

What is the best way to go about your learning? And

Why do you think so?

The journals were analysed by extracting events, which appeared to be significant in producing a pattern of learning strategies. The strategies seemed to fall into three categories as indicated in the summary below:

**Making connections between inside/outside classroom learning:**

- previewing techniques such as trying to understand or reciting the textbook, checking unknown words.
- reviewing vocabulary, and grammar.
- completing homework properly and regularly.
- listening to CDs & tapes.

**Active involvement during classroom learning:**

- concentrating on the teacher's comments.
- listening for key points.

**Engaging in own independent work:**

- watching movies and videos.
- listening to music.
- conversing with native speaking English teachers.
- reading English books.
- listening to English stories.
- making word-notebooks.

- translating passages into Japanese.
- completing practice exercises in exercise books.

What follows is an expansion of the summary points indicated as above. This was undertaken in order to provide detail relating to learner autonomy and to substantiate points by referring to student vignettes.

According to their journals, many students employed various learning activities outside the classroom by themselves, which included activities such as listening to the radio and cassette tapes. The students saw such practices, as constituting communicative strategies, which facilitated input deemed necessary for developing production that is more accurate. They tended to believe that they could improve their skills practising English by themselves. This focus on listening tended to reflect the students' preoccupation with input strategies, which was also reflected in the classroom procedures. Students mostly wished to focus on listening, some even wished explanations to be given in Japanese whilst others wished to listen to English native pronunciation. The students' language learning views are further explored below in an attempt to elucidate students' views and represent their own voices. Journal extracts appear in italics.

After entering university, most of the students were motivated to learn English in their own way. Some students also realised that outside classroom learning made lessons more enjoyable and effective as the extract shows below:

*When I preview the lesson, I enjoy the lesson and it makes me able to do twice the amount. Consequently, I can make (better) progress in my English. (Yoshie)*

Many students were aware of their need for listening practice. For example, Yoshie tried to learn English by focusing on pronunciation. Yuki

listened to tapes and wrote down what she heard. Similarly, Ryuusuke undertook dictation for listening skill improvement. Miki listened to CDs or tapes for shadowing practice. Kazuhiko listened to tapes before going to bed everyday. Tomoko tried to familiarize herself with the speech of native speaking English teachers by focusing on the key points of the contents, and Shinji and Shingo focused on understanding what the teacher said.

As for their independent work, some students set their own learning schedules according to their interests. Shizue read English comics and watched movies; in fact, many students mentioned watching movies and videos. Yuka listened to her favourite stories in English everyday on the bus or train on her way to school. In addition, most students indicated a desire to communicate in English. For the purpose of skill improvement, they seemed to focus on listening to "authentic" English inside and outside the classroom.

In spite of using communicative strategies, there was also a strong preference for learning through traditional strategies. Many students mentioned the importance of grammar and vocabulary learning. Although this involved rote learning such as repetition or memorization work, the students' awareness was focused on understanding new vocabulary and making use of it in practical situations. For example, Tomoko said that she repeatedly wrote down words:

*I write down repeatedly in a notebook unknown words I want to remember. Today, there was the same word which I had written down before and should have remembered, but I couldn't recall it. Truly, I realized that it is better to remember the words by writing them repeatedly-*

Keiko and Miki indicated a similar awareness to Tomoko in the use of

memorization strategies. Shingo said that he made it his objective to remember ten words per week. Ryuusuke memorized and translated sample sentences. He believed that he could memorize all new words in the sentence at the same time. Shinji tried to remember words and sentences until he could understand their meaning.

Other independent learning strategies included the following:

Ryuusuke and Tetsuya practiced reading sentences aloud. Ryuusuke did exercises for EIKEN (recognized as one of the English examinations in Japan) tests in addition to his university studies. Yuki believed that translation work is effective, as can be evidenced in the following vignette:

*What I have done to improve my skills is to translate long sentences from my imagination. I believe that if I repeat such practices, I will be able to improve.*

Through the methods outlined above, the students wanted to improve their communicative skills. To do this, they seemed to be focusing on authentic English input, rather than on their own output. That is to say, their focus was on listening strategies rather than on their production skills. Students were also aware of traditional strategies such as grammar exercises, memorization work, or translations, which seemed to be a carry-over influence from their past test-oriented educational experience. In addition, they had a desire to get good TOEIC scores or to pass EIKEN tests. This would influence their school curriculum as well as their future employment aspirations.

The data clearly illustrated that the students were actively motivated to improve practical language skills in their own individual ways. However, they seemed to focus on traditional strategies, which they had learned in the past, and

still needed to develop suitable and effective learning strategies for their communication skill improvement.

### ***Past Experience***

Experiences are important to consider because they form the antecedents of future learning strategies. A series of questions was created using Little's profile structure. These were aimed at extracting past experiences as well as providing opportunity for the students to engage in reflective thinking related to the use of learning strategies. Opportunity was also provided for students to consider why they choose to learn English. Direct student responses are examined in an attempt to provide insight into the process in which the students were engaged.

#### Topics:

What sort of English learning did you experience in your high school days?

Why do you learn English?

Most of the students experienced English learning for passing university entrance examinations. Although they had an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) teacher in their school, they did not seem to have too much contact with the teacher. Japanese teachers of English had taught most of the students. Their lessons were, in most cases, translation and memorization work. Apart from one student in the class, none of the other students had experienced much conversational practice.

The journal responses to the above questions are illuminating. Yuka did not understand the meaning of her classroom work at high school. In her



journal, she wrote:

*My high school English classes were for the purpose of university entrance examinations. In the class, we had to translate long sentences from the textbook. I didn't understand what my teacher expected from such work. In my 1st and 2nd year, I learned new grammar and sentence structures, but we didn't learn pronunciation. Also, my teacher did not explain why the grammar is used in certain ways. So, I could not understand the grammar clearly and exactly. The reason why I wanted to learn English is that I like movies. I think that I admire other worlds. I am not sure what I am interested in, but I would like to know various things.*

Atsuyo also wrote of similar experiences in her high school English class. For the tests, she needed only to remember the Japanese translated sentences. Ai wrote of her negative feelings about her English learning at high school, stating:

*I hated my English lessons at high school. We just used to repeat our textbook translation and do memorization work. I thought, what is the point in remembering sentences translated from Japanese? So, it was boring. I started to become interested in English because of my overseas home-stay experience. When I felt enjoyment conversing with people, I wanted to talk more.*

Kana wrote about her learning passivity:

*I concentrated on reading and grammar exercises. I was not active enough, maybe. I accepted my own passive attitude. I could count on teachers'*

*explanations; I just waited and received them.*

Although Yuki also wrote that her high school English learning experience was similar to that of the above students, she felt that she needed to review the basic knowledge, which she gained during high school. Because Yuki did not have speaking and listening practice in her high school English classes, she thought that she needed to put extra effort into improving these skills in order to be able to understand her favourite movies and tapes. In addition, she believed that reviewing basic words and idioms was also important, as this strengthened her grasp of the language.

Ai became interested in English when she was in Year six at primary school. She started learning English at a private school and she enjoyed this learning experience. She wished to be able to speak English fluently because English skills were important for her future. However, she had to admit the fact that she was not able to speak English to her satisfaction even after learning it for seven years. She thought the reason was that she did not need English for daily life and so gained grammatical knowledge rather than experiencing contextual embedding. She wrote.

*English is the most important language for society in the future. That's why I wish to improve my English fluency up to the level of my Japanese. But the fact is that I can't speak English even though I have learned it for seven years. The reason could be that we don't need to use English in our daily life. Also, we learned only grammatical knowledge. So, we never had the chance to hear native English. So, from now on, I would like to use English actively without worrying about mistakes.*

Overall, the students learned English at high school as translation and

memorization work in a teacher-centred classroom. Communication skills were given less emphasis in high school where passing examinations was the focus. This tended to change at university, where students experienced greater communicative input. At present, most of the students wished to improve their speaking skills for gaining greater utility and so upward mobility. Their goals for English skill acquisition were, however, not altogether clear. They seemed to be motivated by a broad admiration of the ability to speak native-like English but without having a specific purpose in terms of application.

### ***Learner Autonomy Constraints***

#### Topic:

#### In what ways do you feel that you are interrupted in your study?

Some students expressed a feeling of frustration because they were being given too much homework. They complained that this did not allow them to focus on their own language learning strategies and thus were unclear as to which was the more important, namely, completing the homework or doing those things they believed would make them more proficient. Some also said that they were not sure of the purpose of the homework because they were just given it without any explanation.

Although the teachers tended to think that the more homework they gave to students the better, it was for the student's skill improvement, the students' comments revealed that the latter clearly thought otherwise. The students' observations were found in this research to be consistent with autonomous learner behaviour, whilst the teachers' reliance upon setting large amounts of

homework was found to be consistent with viewing students as passive learners.

This errant teacher belief regarding the efficacy of homework has occurred due a failure on the teachers' behalf to ascertain their students' thoughts about language learning. The teachers interpreted the students' preoccupation with input (listening), as being symptomatic of passive learning. In other words, because they were not saying much, the teachers made assumptions about them as learners. However, the students' silence was possibly not indicative of their passivity, but rather, of the internal language processing that was taking place. One unfortunate consequence of this misunderstanding may be that the teachers' actions in setting so much homework required students to adopt passive practices at the expense of those active language learning strategies that they no longer had time to develop. This in itself is perhaps a systemic issue for as long as the teachers give homework and the students' course marks are decided by the results of tests, then it is understandable that students would focus their efforts on obtaining good marks and passing tests.

Once at university, many students felt that finally they would have time to utilise English to facilitate their own interests and hobbies rather than merely learn the language to pass exams. The data presented here indicate that students were willing to include English study in their personal time, and they were sufficiently motivated to realize the value of doing homework. However, too much homework was seen by some as causing too much stress and was perceived as a threat to the independence of these learners. Several students wrote:

*When I am given too much homework from several teachers at once, I feel disturbed. I cannot do what I want to do such as preview the lessons or listen to English tapes. When the homework is given without any explanations, I am not sure why I should do it. So I feel lost. If I were given a firm explanation, I*

*would try to do it and trust my teachers. (Shizue)*

*I know that I have something that I should learn but if I am given lots of homework, I feel disturbed. Even little by little, I would like to do something useful so I could improve my English. As much as possible, I wish I could use my own time for what I wanted to learn. (Yuki)*

*When I get lots of homework, I become confused as to which one I should do first. (Kazuhiro)*

*I have no time to read the book, which I bought especially for my own studies (Ryuusuke)*

### **Communicative Opportunities for English Expression**

#### Topic:

#### What value did you see in having conversation with exchange students?

During the course of this research, exchange students from five different countries came to the university to study Japanese for one month. The students involved in this study took part in-group conversations with these students from overseas. The participants in the class were allowed to use both Japanese and English. Most of the students were positive about this opportunity. They noted in their journals that the conversation class gave them a chance to:

- compare their learning of English with the exchange students learning of Japanese;
- monitor their nervousness during conversation;

- monitor their own frustration at not being able to express themselves easily in English;
- maintain an interest in target culture; and
- relate to other language learning students who were in the same age group.

As previously stated, most of the students' past experience with English learning focused on grammar and translation, but included little experience of learning English for communicative purposes. This experience with foreign students showed that the Japanese students were able to develop an awareness of and strategies for real communication opportunities.

### ***Reflections on Improvement in English Language Proficiency***

#### Topics:

What are you aware of in terms of building your skills?

How effective is what you are doing?

What is useful for you?

From their journals, the students' awareness of their own skill improvement could be recognized in various ways. There was no change in the way that they tended to engage in listening practice, but some students in their own way started making a connection between output learning and input learning. Through attempting and monitoring their performance, they gained new perspectives, as evidenced in the following:

*When I was at high school, my only strategy was to use textbooks, and I don't*

*think that this is good. So, I have adopted a new learning style of speaking out loud, such as reading aloud English sentences or practicing pronunciation by following the tapes. (Yoshie)*

*I speak out loud after listening to the tapes, while reading the text. Because of this strategy, I believe that I have been able to understand better compared with the time when I entered the university. I'm not sure why, but when I read out the sentences after listening to the tapes, I can speak smoothly. I also feel that my pronunciation has become better. I am glad that I could find a way to be able to speak English better. (Yuki)*

*I practice moving my mouth (to form English sounds) by listening to music. Since I translated some English songs into Japanese, now I can understand the meaning of them. That's good. It is good to learn by connecting English with my favourite things. (Seijiroo)*

*Recently, I have been checking unknown words in the dictionary whenever I encounter them in my lessons. Then I add them to my word-notebook. In order to improve my English skills, it is important to have good vocabulary. So, I would like to continue to remember many words. (Chiharu)*

Further, some students wrote about how they were monitoring their own English learning through their daily practices:

*I feel that I can understand better than before. Before going to sleep, I listen to tapes and CDs. That seems to be effective for me. (Fumie)*

*As I study English everyday, I sometimes notice that I am trying to translate into English what I am thinking about or what I talked about. I'm not really doing it intentionally; it just seems to be my natural thinking. (Yuki)*

*On TV, when I hear English, I try to understand it consciously. (Shinichi)*

*I am using my time more effectively. I ensure that I listen to English everyday, even if it is only for five minutes. Sometimes I feel that I can understand when I hear English. I have noticed that it is important to understand the contents of what is said, rather than translating each sentence. (Ryuusuke)*

### **Learning Expectations**

Topic:

What is your intention in Semester Two?

What is your expectation of yourself?

Regarding their learning expectations, most of the students mentioned TOEIC scores and EIKEN tests. They seemed intent on improving their TOEIC scores, or getting the EIKEN certificate. They also reflected on what they might or might not be able to do by the end of the semester. In their journals, the students expressed very strongly their listening skills. Importantly, passive attitudes to learning were not at all evidenced in their journals. For example, they indicated that they were not simply accepting everything they were told without having their own thoughts on the matter. However, at the same time, they felt a strong need for support from their teachers. For example, Shingo failed the EIKEN examination. After receiving the teacher's encouragement, however, he could see this in a positive light as motivation for him to make a new start.

Yoshie set herself a goal of obtaining a 400+TOEIC score. To achieve this,



she thought that she must do her best in each lesson. Once she felt that her skills were improving, she believed that she would be able to get the desired results. Yuki also wanted to get a score of 400+ in her TOEIC exam. She believed that she would be able to achieve this because she had already improved by 130 points since began TOEIC exams. Kaoru aimed to do something in line with her interests, and not just do the work that she was given by the teacher. As with Yoshie, Kaoru believed that she could improve her English skills if she continued to make the effort. Kazuhiro indicated that he would like the teacher to speak about her (the teacher's) experience of living in foreign countries in order to know more about different cultures, thus indicating a desire to connect the language he was learning to a country where that language was the native tongue.

Ryuusuke wanted to focus on understanding English texts regardless of what was done in the classroom. In addition, he believed that if he paid closer attention to the teacher's speaking, he would be able to improve his listening skills. Erina thought that her listening skills were weak and that she would therefore like to get used to listening to English and to absorbing the important elements of her lessons. Noriko also wanted to develop a better ear for listening. For this reason, she always listened to English on TV. Shingo and Seijiroo mentioned that they would have to be strict with themselves. They believed that maximum effort would lead to success. Akiko and Hiromi thought that word memorization and grammar were important. They both believed that all their problems with English stemmed from their weakness in basic skills such as vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. With regard to his TOEIC results, Kasuhiko reflected that he was not able to improve in spite of his efforts to date, citing ineffective learning strategies as the main handicap. Chiharu wanted to focus on her weak points, which she identified in semester one, these included her

communication skills. She also thought that she should follow her teachers' advice in the area of listening and speaking English.

The above views demonstrate that the students were indeed aware of their objectives for learning and strategies for skill improvement. They focused on TOEIC or other test score improvement in order to monitor their own learning. They also connected their language learning to their interests and enjoyment and saw classroom learning as part of the language learning process as opposed to a mere analysis of the constitutory part of that process.

### ***Reflections Relating to Learning Preferences***

#### **Topics:**

**What sort of learning activities do you prefer, and what are the reasons?**

**What sort of learning activities do you hate, and what are the reasons?**

**Reflecting on what you have done this week, what do you believe has been useful for improving your English skills?**

Although the students' favourite activities were varied, complaints about undesirable activities concentrated on having too much homework and receiving too much expository input from the teacher.

Tomoko wanted to do more than just follow the textbooks, preferring instead to engage in communicative activities. Chiharu preferred to have enjoyable lessons such as playing games or watching videos instead of translating work. She thought that it was important to actively participate instead of just engaging in translating or writing. She believed that speaking and listening were most important for improving English. Shizue liked the English conversational class

because it gave her a feeling of satisfaction communicating with native speakers. Ai also liked the conversational English class because she wanted to have more opportunities to use English. Conversely, she did not like the class where she was forced to do mere memorization work. Like Shizue and Ai, many students enjoyed conversation opportunities. However, a few preferred reading or writing classes to conversation classes. Some students had no particular preferred type of lessons indicating that for them, every lesson was useful so long as the lesson related to English. Hiromi, on the other hand, wrote that she did not like surprise lessons for which she had not had the time to prepare. Ryuusuke stressed that the teacher's own level of motivation was important for students enjoying themselves because the teacher's attitude affects the students' feelings.

Such comments suggest that these students' behaviours do not support the stereotypically held view that all Japanese learners are passive recipients of knowledge and prefer to ingest material in a rote fashion.

### ***Reflections on Improvement of Skills***

#### Topic:

#### Reflecting on your English learning so far

Some students were frustrated with their skill levels because they perceived they were not improving. At this point, they seemed to have started reflecting critically on the study methods that they had used and what benefit they had gained thus far. Although Ai had been enjoying her conversation opportunities, she began to think about the need to review grammar to develop that skill. Kaoru, who had the habit of questioning whether she was able to speak English

fluently or not, was now worried that she had not acquired such skills in spite of her efforts. Satoko started to question the value of her habit of checking all unknown words each time she encountered them. She now felt that she needed more guessing skills in order to understand the meaning of English passages more easily. Kazuhiko also became aware that he used the dictionary too often, and Ryuusuke felt that his skills would only improve if he kept up a high level of daily effort. Such views tend to indicate that these students felt as though their proficiency had plateau, which lead to feelings of frustration and uncertainty.

The above critical reflections on the students' own skills in their journal writing are impressive because they show that students have an emerging awareness of questioning themselves about their English language learning.

### **A New Experience of Independent Learning: Reflections on Project Work**

The teacher organised classroom learning with a particular focus on the content engaging a textbook and video. Gradually, the class activities moved from being teacher-centred, which the teacher organised, to learner-centred, where the students presented their own ideas in the class. The final two months of the course were set aside for project work. Students were asked to plan, engage in and evaluate an activity designed to promote strategic skills, confidence and willingness through engagement with independent learning. For project work, the students were given opportunities for decision-making, collaboration and authentic resource use. Little's (1995) notion of acceptance of responsibility through interdependence underpinned the project work.

The decision was left to the students whether they chose textbook materials or their own materials for completing the project. They could choose to work either independently, in either pairs or groups. The students were required to produce written assignments such as book chapter summaries, translations, or essays, and to organise oral presentations about their project in the class. In this way, the students decided the theme, the materials and the method of presentation. Instead of leading the students, the teacher's trust in the students was emphasized in order to promote the students' sense of self-direction. This clarified for the students their degree of choice, duty and limits regarding time, procedures, and roles. In addition, the students were told to think about why they needed the project for their own development, what they wished to learn from the work, and then to write their thoughts on their planning sheet. The importance of planning was emphasized; this included what they could complete, what they were interested in and what they could submit. The project work allowed them to think about their own ideas. After each class, individual students were also given time to write about what they did and how they did it as part of their project work engagement.

After completing the project, the students wrote reflections on their own work. All of them expressed difficulty yet enjoyment with their new experience. When initiative was given to the students, they reacted and performed positively. Ryuusuke, for example, recovered his enjoyment of learning, which he had nearly lost. Seijiroo felt satisfied with using his initiative for creating activities in his own class. Yoshie realized how much she had depended on someone else in the past:

*I felt particular enjoyment in learning English, which I had nearly forgotten. I have not felt such enjoyment for so long. Besides, I thought that the class atmosphere was better when we were working on our project. (Ryuusuke)*

*I felt that we were running our class by ourselves. (Seijiroo)*

*It was very hard for me to do project work. I felt that I studied much more than I did for usual lessons. It was very difficult for me because I had to do everything by myself. But, from this work, I could realize how much I had depended on someone else. My project work gave me an opportunity to reflect on my learning in the past. (Yoshie)*

Some students realized their need for collaboration. Tomoko grew to understand the importance of collaboration with others where she and her partners had to submit each idea and consider it in terms of preparing better quality work.

*In the process of this project work, I realized the importance of co-operation with my partner we had to cooperate and negotiate with each other, and clearly express our own opinions. In other words, we could not complete good work without collaboration. For example, we had to produce each idea and consider it strenuously so that we could make a better quality of work. This might be the same in our society. We need negotiation and cooperation. Through relationships among people, we will be able to make creative and excellent work. (Tomoko)*

Promoting the students' self-motivation strategies resulted in providing them with an opportunity to develop further personal interests. Tatsuya found that he could work hard on his favourite topics when interest levels were maintained. Akiko did not wish to get involved in the project work at first and was thinking of the easiest way to get her mark by completing whatever she could. Once she started to do the work, she enjoyed the experience:

*From this experience, I have found out for myself that I can work really hard for something related to my favourite topics. (Tatsuya)*

*Through progressing in my work, I have noticed that I have become serious about it. I was suffering because I was thinking how to do it easily. It was really hard for me to complete my work. Next time if I have such an opportunity, I would like to plan properly and do it seriously from the beginning. It was very good to do the project work. I suffered very much, but also I feel satisfaction about my achievement. (Akiko)*

Through individual initiative and responsibility for work, the students could build their confidence in language learning. Hiromi usually stopped half way through doing her studying, but in this case, she found she could complete the project work. She said this experience gave her confidence and facilitated greater levels of intrinsic motivation. Yuka felt freedom because she could do her work using her own reasoning power. At the same time, she said she realized that she had responsibility for her own learning.

*I usually stop doing my study half way. But I could complete this project work. This gave me confidence that I could do it. (Hiromi)*

*As the project work is not given to one person only, I could enjoy what I did on my own. Without any interference, I felt free that I could check whatever I wanted. Because we were all doing different things, I could not count on anyone. That gave me confidence to take responsibility in regards to my work. I have also found what Internet information is like. So, I think the project opened up a new world for me, being able to manage my own work. (Yuka)*

The students enjoyed taking the initiative in their own language learning.

Miki, for example reflected on her past learning experiences and noted that she had been trapped in a traditional educational framework restricted to receiving information. She found exercising her own initiative to be refreshing and rewarding. Keiko had not enjoyed her English learning in the past, however she said she enjoyed and felt satisfied with her project work now because she could work at her own pace.

*We have been learning within the typical Japanese education system since our childhood, through which we digested what was given to us. So, it was very refreshing that I had to act on my own initiative and I was at the centre of learning. This project has really influenced me as I have even thought about the need for others to have this kind of educational experience in order to change Japanese social problems. (Miki)*

*After doing my project work, I felt it was important to use my time efficiently. This was my first experience with this kind of work, so I was worried about it. But, after completing my work, I don't think that I suffered with my work at all. I felt it was enjoyable. (Keiko)*

Some students became aware of their past teacher-directed learning experience. Kazuhiko had a problem deciding what to do for his project. Through his project work, he realized that he had until now, been directed too much by the teacher instead of making his own decisions.

*It was unexpectedly hard to be able to decide what to do on our own. In the past, I felt that I was directed what to do by my teachers. When we wanted to start, we were not sure what to do first. We had trouble, but the work was not unmotivated, so once we started, we could make quite good progress. Through this project, I realized that I should study by myself with stricter*



*objectives.* (Kazuhiko)

Through engaging in project work, the students recognized their attitude change in language learning. Kaoru reported that she developed a self-directed attitude after completing her project. She felt that in the past she had been digesting received information. Because of this project work, she discovered that the most important thing is to form her own thoughts and opinions from the information she obtains.

*I feel that my attitude toward my work has changed through my project work in terms of checking information and thinking about the theme. Until then, I counted on the given materials and information only. But in this project, I have realized that such material and information is only a reference. The important thing is that I need to understand these in my own way, and then, I should form my original thoughts and opinions.* (Kaoru)

In addition, the students became interested in authentic English as opposed to the more artificial English of written texts rather than the spoken word. Noriko had not had any opportunity to read authentic English in the past. Her learning had occurred primarily by way of textbooks. From her project on reading and translating advertisements in magazines, she had expanded her interests to include authentic English materials.

*I feel it was beneficial for me. I found out that formal passages in our textbooks are far easier to understand (than authentic text). It was a shock for me. There were very special expressions in the magazines, and therefore, I often felt discouraged from continuing my work. From now, I would like to pay more attention to foreign magazines and advertisements.* (Noriko)

From the students' reflections of their project work involvement, it seems important to provide opportunities for students to experience independent management of their own learning. The project work set for the students in this study clearly increased the low-middle achievers' confidence and willingness to learn for themselves. It would appear that once motivation is enhanced this becomes self-perpetuating and leads to greater levels of achievement.

In summary, it could be contended that a new experience of independent learning was facilitated by the use of project work. In short, students:

- exhibited positive reactions and performances when initiative was given;
- recognised the value of collaboration;
- valued self-motivational strategies as a means of further developing personal interests;
- found building confidence through individual initiative and responsibility to be effective;
- received enjoyment from taking the initiative;
- became more aware of past teacher-directed learning;
- recognised a change in their attitude toward learning;
- displayed a greater interest in authentic English.

## **The Effectiveness of Learner Autonomy Development**

### ***The Effect of Journal Writing***

In line with Little's (1995) critical reflection principles, students were given

weekly journal-writing opportunities. The teacher gave the students topics to reflect on in their own English learning. After reading their reflections, the teacher gave comments to the students individually. In this way, the journal gave the teacher and the students' opportunities for one-to-one student-teacher exchange as well as opportunities for reflecting on their developmental progress. The journals were the primary means of exchange between the teacher and the students throughout of the course. Overall, the students' comments in their journal writing activities were very positive. The students continuously reflecting on their progress and the process were very beneficial for enhancing the relationship between the individual students and the teacher.

The journal writing had several effects as is shown in the students' following comments:

- The journal writing gave opportunities for the students to get advice from the teacher:

*I could ask questions or tell her my problems to get her advice. (Yuuki)*

- A close relationship developed between the teacher and individual students:

*I felt that the journal writing made the distance shorter between the teacher and me. (Kaiko)*

- The journal writing gave the students a place to converse with the teacher:

*It was like an individual conversation with the teacher. I could feel that the teacher was listening to me. (Atsuyo)*

- The students used their journal for getting support from the teacher:

*When I had problems with my study, the journal was my support. (Kacru)*

- The students were encouraged through their journal exchange with the teacher and the journal writing created a trust between the students and the teacher:

*The teacher could listen to and consider my thoughts. I was encouraged and thought about myself. I was very glad that the teacher was thinking about me so much. I hated teachers in my past. But, now I think that the journal could create a trust between the teacher and me. (Akiko)*

- The students started realizing their goal of English learning through the process of their journal writing:

*I could think about my dream and my interest in foreign countries through my journal writing. (Ryuusuke)*

- The journal writing engendered a feeling of safety:

*I was glad and felt safe because the teacher thought about what I wrote. (Tatsuya)*

- The students clarified thoughts about their own language learning:

*By writing what I was thinking about, it became clearer to me than just thinking about it by myself. (Hiromi)*

- The journal writing gave the students regular reflective opportunities:

*The journal gave me an opportunity to think back over my English learning once a week. (Chiharu)*

*From the journal, I could get the teacher's advice. It was beneficial for me.*

*Also, when I read back my journals, I could reflect on my previous thoughts and compare myself with how I had been in the past. (Sachi)*

- The students could see progress in their language acquisition, and thought positively about their language learning:

*I could see my progress day by day. So, it was a plus for me. I could start thinking positively about myself and my future. (Tomoko)*

- The students experienced challenging tasks on their own:

*It was difficult for me, because it was the first time that I revealed my thoughts and opinions on certain themes and topics. (Miki)*

Not only did the students gain benefits from the journal writing, but also so did the teacher who could get an idea of the individual students' thoughts. This made the teacher aware of the level of student autonomy and any external constraints acting against it. Finally, journal exchanges could be one of the tools that help mediate productive interchanges between students and the teacher.

### **The Further Effects of Project Work**

Setting project work for the students resulted in giving them opportunities to challenge the accepted system. As has been shown, it seems to be important to gain an awareness of one's personal responsibility in and capacity for developing positive impressions of oneself by overcoming difficulties. This kind of student-initiated learning opportunity is just one of the starting points for fostering autonomy. I hope that this experience will prove useful for the students for future reflection and for the activation of strategies such as those

discussed. From the students' writing, it can be seen that the students have been able to learn something beyond English itself. The project work provided a link between their learning inside and outside the classroom. The students had the chance to plan, select, carry out, and control their work on their own. Most of them felt a sense of achievement from their work. During the process, they experienced both difficulties and enjoyment. The relationship between the teacher and the students improved in a way, which was not limited to the confines of the classroom. Through presentations in English, the students had the chance to use English in a natural way. At the same time, they had opportunities for self-reflection and strategy enhancement.

Although the independent project work has various advantages as outlined, several points should be considered further. Holec (1981) describes how learners can take charge of their own learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating independent project work to deliver learner autonomy. However, there is a need for caution. The principle of learner autonomy, which emphasises the learner accepting responsibility for his / her own learning, should be given greater emphasis. Often, the teacher places far too much emphasis on the skills: of planning, monitoring and evaluating rather than on allowing the students to develop their own intrinsic motivation learning strategies. Teachers may focus on explicit behaviours rather than recognizing that it is the more implicit behaviours, which are responsible for ultimate attitude change in learning. Not surprisingly, self-motivated students seem to be more successful in individual projects where greater autonomy needs to be exhibited. Less autonomous learners may require greater scaffolding by the teacher. However, students can also choose an easy option, for example, one of the groups did a very easy task with respect to English acquisition and concentrated on finishing a colouring book. They did not seem to be aware of how useful their project work could be in terms

of improving their English skills. They just enjoyed their time focusing on the completion of the book, majoring on process goal management as opposed to any learner autonomy goals.

The teacher, in order to prevent some of the potential pitfalls of independent project work such as the example outlined above, students with lower motivation could be given a range of choices by the teacher. As these students require more scaffolding support than motivated learners do, opportunities for discussions may be needed between the teacher and students to ensure they stay on track.

From what has been discussed to date, the following general points have been identified as being significant in the development of learner autonomy:

- Enjoyable learning is important but it should not only be for the students' self-satisfaction. Learner autonomy should be considered in relation to students' language proficiency improvement. For this reason, activities are needed that allow sufficient scope for language learning.
- The teacher's positive expectations, trust, and interest in individual students are more important than the intention to train students.
- Teacher-student and inter-student collaboration is important for making an effective learning environment.
- The need for and feeling of self-expression should be the motivational mainspring of the students' own activities. The real focus should be on how the learners start considering their language learning in relation to expressing themselves. Students' learning should be closely connected to their own life and interests.

There are some limitations of the independent project work from the

teacher's point of view that need to be addressed here. Firstly, the independent project posed great difficulty in providing proper feedback to the students. The teacher/researcher felt her limitations in coping with all the students' demands when the fields of interest were outside her experience. In addition, unlike teaching from a textbook, she was sometimes unable to answer students' spontaneous inquiries and requests about authentic language. Probably, it would be a good idea to negotiate with the students what is acceptable or available to them as subject areas for their projects. A framework for controlling their choice of learning materials is needed. In addition, a non-native teacher could enlist the help of a native English teacher to assist with more technical language matters. Another solution could be for different group members to help each other *a la* a peer tutoring approach.

### Summary of Study Three

The results of Study Two suggested that the development of the low-middle achievers' autonomous attitudes, both internal and external, involves several key learner characteristics. These characteristics include promoting confidence, accepting positive beliefs about oneself, being willing to ask for help and feedback and having strategic knowledge for self-motivational purposes.

The analysis in Study Three considered learner autonomy from the first-year students' viewpoints. The students seemed to value listening as a way of learning English inside and outside the classroom. In the students' journals, there was evidence of ideas about how to improve communicative skills outside the classroom such as listening to radio programs, cassette tapes, CDs, English music, or watching movies. The students also seemed to consider their



classroom lessons as basic learning, which they could build on in their own time. Therefore, a conscious effort to improve their English proficiency in class was demonstrated in their journal excerpts. From the students' viewpoints, passive participation via listening rather than talking does not necessarily equate to the notion of a 'passive learner'. Therefore, it may be unwise to first, stereotype passivity of the basis on participation; and second, to push students to talk in English before they are ready for it. It would appear that a proactive attitude to listening can constitute active involvement in one's own learning later. Students might go through a stage of concentrating on input, which would be a predominantly receptive phase of their development as language learners, rather than focusing on output in the early stages of acquisition.

The journal excerpts also indicated that students were willing to include activities in their own time, which improved their English studies. Although some teachers may tend to think that the more homework they give to students, the more they will improve, this does not necessarily hold true. The students are mature enough to realize that doing homework may be of little value to them. In fact, too much homework seemed to cause stress for this cohort and was perceived as a threat to their independence as learners. These students seemed to show greater interest in learning English after being freed from the pressures associated with university entrance examinations.

One of the major effects of the journal writing was that it gave opportunities for a good relationship to be established between the teacher and individual students. The students had a place to express themselves freely in a very private and personal manner. Japanese teachers can fulfil an important role in encouraging students to be more willing to ask for help, question, and seek feedback. As far as low-middle achievers are concerned, it is very important that they are given a space to request teacher feedback and help. Successful class

management seems to hinge on whether the teacher has an accepting attitude towards the students or not and the use of writing journals can promote such an attitude. Relationships between teachers and students are a two-way affair, providing both with feedback that will enable them to modify their behaviours and create classroom atmospheres that are conducive to learning.

The project work was effective in promoting the students' involvement in their own learning in various ways. When organizing and managing project work for learner autonomy development, teacher control, learning materials, strategies and methods, and learner-centred activities are all factors that need to be considered in terms of providing meaningful work for students. It also should be considered whether the students' project work is effective to promote their language proficiency, and whether the students could gain useful ideas for their future learning.

### **Discussion for the Implications for Learner Autonomy Development**

In light of the research question: What seems to be important for the development of learner autonomy in language learning?, the effects of the students' project work and journal reflections suggest some implications for autonomous learner development.

It seems that passivity in class is not necessarily a sign of a passive learner. Students seem to be aware that their role should be that of active learners. In addition, they seem to seek interaction with others in their classroom learning. There seems to be a barrier between what the students think and do. Keim, B.,

Furuya, R. Doye, C. and Carlson, A. (1996) study of Japanese students' attitudes and beliefs about foreign language learning supports the above point. Keim et al are convinced that there exists a real divergence between the students' awareness about new strategies and their actual behaviour in class. In addition, the attempts to elicit more information from the students, by journal writing, revealed that fear and insecurity play a significant role in the way students behave in class, even though they genuinely wish to improve their English, and in some cases, would actually like to behave differently.

Possibly the students' behaviour in the classroom is affected by the learning atmosphere of the class; the classroom atmosphere may be influenced by their relationship with the teacher or the relationship with other students. It may be the case, which some students' expressed insights that differed considerably from what they are feeling, but also they were reluctant to reveal. Therefore, the development of learner autonomy should be concerned not only with self-directedness, but also with creating and providing a supportive and collaborative classroom atmosphere. In this regard, Cotterall (1998) emphasized the crucial role of the learner-teacher relationship for fostering learner autonomy.

Another point raised by the students is that the teacher's attitude might be the key to developing learner autonomy. The importance of teachers' attitudes towards their students was supported by Cotterall (1998). In fact, the teacher's attempt to initiate learner development also resulted in the teacher's development of herself as a teacher and learner. The more she was involved in the development of learner autonomy, the more she reflected on her teaching and relationship with her students. In other words, through the pursuit of learner autonomy development, she had an increased awareness of both her students and her own teaching. In fact, at the beginning of the course she conceived of the class as a whole, failing to see the individual students. In addition, she saw the

students as being primarily passive. It was only when the project work commenced later in the course, which she started paying more attention to individuals. She became aware of establishing trust and respect for what the students wished to do. What is crucial, is whether the teacher can recognize the individual needs of students, trust them to act autonomously and try to promote their potential, so that the students' will respond more freely and be prepared to engage in greater self-disclosure regarding their own learning preferences.

It is often said that Japanese students are unresponsive and quiet in the classroom and that group settings are good for breaking such silences. However, teachers who are concerned about the development of learner autonomy should not make classroom learning a hive of activity. Rather, teachers should encourage each learner to focus on those points, which are necessary for them to progress their own language learning. The students should be free to decide how much to involve themselves in each class and in what they absorb. Especially, opportunities should be provided for confidence building, willingness for learning, and acceptance of responsibility for both self-direction and collaboration. Such changes in internal behaviour might then conceivably lead to external autonomous behaviours. Furthermore, continuous critical reflection is needed for both teachers and learners to enhance the teaching and learning process. In doing so, positive classroom atmospheres that foster learner autonomy are created, not only in the classroom but beyond it as well.

The following chapter will synthesise insights gleaned from the three studies considered in this research.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **SUMMARY & DISCUSSION OF THREE STUDIES**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, discussion is developed from the findings of Study One, Two and Three. In Study One, the Heterogeneous vs. the Homogeneous group learners, and successful learners' characteristics were identified with regard to how learner beliefs influenced foreign language learning. In Study Two, the beliefs survey results were analysed focusing on four aspects of learning which included: 1) the role of the teacher, 2) effective language learning, 3) motivation strategies and 4) self-efficacy. From Study Three, the development of learner autonomy in language learning was considered in relation to the learners' reflections. The intention in this chapter is to consider and draw together the information from all three studies in order to develop a more accurate profile of the data under investigation.

#### **Discussion of Study One**

Study One used in-depth interview data to identify sixteen high achievers' beliefs about the use of effective foreign language learning strategies; teacher/learner roles; classroom expectations; self-motivation strategies; and, oneself as a learner. This study was necessary in order to develop an understanding of learner autonomy from the insights of successful learners.

Study One was divided into two studies: Part One, and Part Two. From the analysis of similarities and differences in beliefs, Heterogeneous and

Homogeneous learners were identified; the former were labelled as those possessing non-stereotypical Japanese awareness, while the latter were labelled as exhibiting Japanese stereotypes. This analysis was presented in Study One: Part One in Chapter Five. In addition, the common aspects of successful learning and the learners' beliefs leading to different degrees of success were described in Study One: Part Two in Chapter Five.

### ***Part One: Heterogeneous vs. Homogeneous Consciousness***

Following student interviews, two types of learners were classified as either 'Heterogeneous' or 'Homogeneous' from among sixteen participants of Study One. Heterogeneous group learners possessed non-stereotypical characteristics of Japanese learners. In contrast, Homogeneous group learners showed more stereotypical characteristics in their beliefs about learning. Hideo, Kyoko, Tooru, Ichiroo, Yasuhiro and Kazuko were selected as the Heterogeneous learners, while, Kaori, Tsuyako, Sumiko, Aiko, Asami, and Mayumi were selected as The Homogeneous learners.

Apart from differences, the groups also possessed common characteristics:

- Learners in both groups were aware of their own responsibility as learners;
- All learners of both groups believed that authentic input is very important. In particular, the importance of listening practise was highlighted by most of the learners;
- With regard to effective learning strategies, the learners were very

aware of the totality of the learning process incorporating contexts both inside and outside the classroom.

With regard to differences, the Heterogeneous and Homogeneous groups could be characterised as follows:

- Heterogeneous learners had a clear goal for self-promotion and learning English was a way of achieving it. On the other hand, Homogeneous learners saw the acquisition of English proficiency as an end in itself.
- Heterogeneous learners were positive about themselves. They also felt that their teachers had high expectations of them. They were aware of their own metacognitive strategies and usually reflected on their learning processes. The Homogeneous learners, on the other hand, vacillated between positive and negative self-regard depending on the nature of the classroom atmosphere and type of teacher input.
- Heterogeneous learners were aware of English as a means of communication and a matter of life-long learning. The Heterogeneous learners were active and flexible. They possessed a strong critical awareness that they needed to continue their present efforts to maintain their level of English proficiency. On the other hand, the Homogeneous learners only focused on their skill improvement rather than learning for genuine communicative purposes which ultimately held the greatest rewards. In other words, their learning was instrumental rather than deeper in character.

- Heterogeneous learners stood out as a group in the sense that they were less concerned about the views of others and focused more on promoting their own independence. Homogeneous learners, on the other hand, consciously tried to avoid this. Heterogeneous learners were aware of themselves as class members, and sought to create a good relationship with teachers and fellow classmates, whereas Homogeneous learners lacked awareness about the synergy of classroom relationships.
- Heterogeneous learners believed the teacher's role to be that of a facilitator or supporter. Homogeneous learners felt the need of teachers' direction and understanding more than the Heterogeneous group.

The results of Study One: Part One suggest that Heterogeneous learner characteristics and positive beliefs in the self as a tool for successful language learning could be explicitly promoted to less strategically-oriented students in language learning contexts. Such promotion is likely contribute to the development of students' learning both inside and outside classroom contexts. Autonomy, expressed in both attitude and behaviour, as in the cases of Fumiko and Hideo, would seem to be the desired goal for all learners. Homogeneous learners, however, were well aware of self-responsibility for their learning and had a strong desire to acquire the language, but their internal barriers and negative self-belief appeared to prevent them from making further improvement. This was evident in the gap between their external performance and their internally held beliefs. From the Homogeneous learners' interview data, it was found that they were constrained by their personal belief systems, which is a product of the Japanese educational system.



## ***Part Two: Four Learners' Beliefs***

From the Chapter Five analysis of similarities and differences in language learning beliefs, two different types of learners: the Heterogeneous and the Homogeneous groups were identified. Of sixteen participants in Study One, four learners could not be differentiated (Hiroshi, Ryoo, Naoko, and Kenichi), and these became the subject of Part Two of Study One. To assist with comparative analysis of these four learners' language learning beliefs, two highly successful learners, Hideo from Study One: Part One and Fumiko from previous studies (Usuki, 2002) were selected. The data showed that the beliefs of the four learners indicated different degrees of success and learner autonomy.

All four learners were shown to be self-directed and self-motivated. Hiroshi, in particular, was one of the most outstanding third-year students at the university. He had very similar attitudes and beliefs to Hideo and Fumiko. For example, he had a strong, clear goal in his mind and self-trust regarding his potential. He liked communicating with people and saw English as a means of doing so. He had his own learning strategies and possessed a metacognitive awareness of these strategies. In addition, he was positive in his responses to his teachers and classroom activities, which he considered part of his own learning process. His positiveness and sincerity provided the motivation for him to maintain progress. On the other hand, he differed from Hideo and Fumiko in that he did not want to stand out from other students and had a greater respect for the teacher's knowledge base and authority.

Ryoo was also a successful learner. He exhibited a very strong self-motivation and he was very positive about his potential. However, he was still concentrating on skill improvement rather than on communicative enjoyment. Therefore, in this respect, his flexibility and communicative

strategies were insufficiently developed in comparison with the other three learners. One of the reasons for this might be his limited experience in English. At the time he was interviewed, he had never been overseas and consequently had had limited experience actually using English in its native context.

By contrast, Kenichi had no clear objectives associated with his learning, although he enjoyed it and was highly motivated to learn. Without a clear objective, he did not have a strong wish to achieve, which made his learning quite tentative. In addition, he had differing attitudes towards his favourite and non-favourite classes and teachers. These factors limited his achievement and improvement. Meanwhile, Naoko's main problem was the gap between her understanding and actual self-presentation. In addition, she was a reflective person and the negative self-image and self-doubt arising from this reflection seemed to be a barrier to her effective learning. These same two issues appeared in Kenichi's data.

Regarding both Kenichi and Naoko, it is apparent that their metacognitive awareness of learning English needs to be challenged to help them identify why they are learning, what their learning strategies are and how they are progressing. In addition, teachers' support, suggestions, and encouragement would help to build the students' confidence and assist them in creating clear objectives for their learning.

### ***Study One Implications for English Language Education in Japan***

Several implications arise for English language education in Japan from Study One. The current education system strongly influences student performance, for the most part, preventing students from developing autonomous learning attitudes and behaviours. In this respect, the following recommendations are made:

- Clear goal setting along the lines of self-growth is needed. As part of these broader goals, smaller goals should be set for English language learning. English language learning then becomes a means to an end, providing focus, motivation and purpose.
- Metacognitive awareness should be raised to enable students to consider such matters as why English is learned, how it can be learned effectively, and what they need to do to achieve their goals.
- The focus of language learning should be on communicative awareness and enjoyment rather than on personal skill/score improvement.
- A variety of forms of spoken English should be introduced in order to avoid the obsession with perfection as exposure to varieties of English can help students' communicative competence.
- The strategy of learning both inside and outside the classroom should be promoted for all learners.
- Teachers need to recognize and understand that learners are individuals rather than mere subsets of a predetermined group

mindset.

- If teachers show trust in and have high expectations of learners, this seems to provide powerful support and motivation for learning.
- Developing learner autonomy can be considered an element of the process of learning. Therefore, promoting learner autonomy should be considered as a part of the overall goal.

## Discussion of Study Two

Study Two obtained data from low-middle achievers regarding the beliefs held about their language learning. A sample of two hundred and ninety five low to middle achieving university students, comprising one hundred and four English majors, eighty Law majors, and one hundred and eleven Pharmacy majors in the same university were surveyed.

Cotterall's (1999) questionnaire was used as a basis for the instrument developed for this study. The questions were designed to investigate learner beliefs in relation to six key variables, 1) the role of the teacher, 2) the role of feedback, 3) the learner's sense of self-efficacy, 4) important strategies, 5) dimensions of strategies-related behaviour, and 6) the nature of language learning. The questionnaires in the present study consisted of the above six key variables. The questions were organised under the above six variables in order to make it clearer and simpler for the participants of complete the survey in Study Two. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis of the data. Responses to questions about teacher/learner/classroom roles, beliefs about

language learning, the participants' responses were calculated according to Cotterall's (1999) method.

### ***Study Two: Low-Middle Achievers' Language Learning Beliefs***

Students from the three faculty groups (English major, Law major, Pharmacy major) tended to have similar views, that is, there were no clear differences between students with different majors. As such, Japanese students in the context of Study Two valued responsibility for their own learning and did not expect teachers to wield great authority.

The main constraints included, however, their reluctance to ask for the teacher's feedback or help. They tended to value their own effort and kept a distance from their teacher. These strategies seemed to contribute to their low self-motivation and low self-efficacy. The gap between their acceptance of responsibility and actual skill presentation can be understood in terms of Japanese students' need for conformity and hence passivity. A lack of confidence and self-trust, borne of this stereotypical understanding, could negatively affect their performance.

The findings of Study Two are summarized under the following four headings, namely, effective language learning, teacher role, self-motivation strategies, and self-efficacy beliefs.

#### ***Effective Language Learning Strategies***

The majority of the students believed that making mistakes was a natural

part of language learning, which indicates that they were aware that failure was a strategic component in the learning process. The behaviour of Japanese students usually tends to demonstrate a fear of making mistakes in the classroom. Burden (2002) found, from his study of one thousand and fifty seven Japanese university students' attitudes to foreign language that they tended to feel over-concerned with making errors in front of peers. This point could be very important for teachers wishing to bridge the gap between the students' awareness of strategies and their reluctance in class to try these for fear of making mistakes.

### ***Teacher Role***

In this study, the majority of students believed in their ability to accept responsibility for their learning and considered the teacher's role more as that of a facilitator. They therefore exhibited the traits of classified as autonomous learners. In fact, the students in this study tended to have low expectations of their teachers' authority. This was also reflected in their belief that their language learning success depended on their own efforts, and that it was their own responsibility to find opportunities to use and experience the language. These results show evidence of the students' awareness of their autonomy in contrast to the stereotypical view of Japanese students as passive recipients of knowledge.

Seen from this different perspective, however, they lacked strategic knowledge and the necessary internal security for solving problems. In other words, they did not see the need for collaboration with teachers. They seemed to blame themselves for not making enough effort in their skill improvement. This resulted in them behaving passively and somewhat helplessly.

### ***Self-Motivation Strategies***

The data in Chapter Six showed that the students lacked the knowledge, confidence, willingness, and acceptance of responsibility for various strategies relating to autonomous learning behaviour. A divergence between awareness and actual application in the classroom may be operating here, in that the students tended to be aware of autonomy, yet lacked sufficient knowledge, willingness, and confidence to behave autonomously. This seems to suggest that it is imperative to train the student in the acquisition and development of autonomous behaviour.

### ***Self-Efficacy Beliefs***

The results of the subjects' inability to use metacognitive strategies is also linked to their having less confidence in their ability in language learning as shown in Chapter Six (Table 6.5 to 6.8). Just over half of the English major students thought that they had the ability to learn a language successfully (55.8%). However, most non-major students did not feel that they had this ability (Law=72.5%, Pharmacy=63.1). These findings suggest that the students in this study need considerable support to develop their sense of self-efficacy. Their negative self-image seemed to lead to negative attitudes, even if they knew that they were responsible for their own language learning.

## ***Summary of Study Two***

In Study Two, the students tended to be aware of the responsibility for their own learning, and so possessed low expectations of their teachers.

However, the students appeared unable to address these concerns of their awareness because they showed less ability to use metacognitive strategies were less confident, less willing, and less likely to accept responsibility for their behaviour in strategic learning. Overall, the students had a very low sense of self-efficacy. This manifested as helplessness. The more conscious they were of their responsibility, the more they castigated themselves for their inability to cope with language learning. It appeared that they did not have enough knowledge about learning strategies to help themselves out of this vicious circle. Further, it may be that large class sizes and different teachers for each of their different English classes reduced the students' relationship development with their teachers. As a result, they tended not to expect very much from their teachers. Study Two indicated the need for developing confidence along with knowledge about metacognitive strategies and attitudes.

### **Discussion of Study Three**

The purpose of Study Three was to obtain low-middle achievers insights regarding their views of inside/outside classroom learning via comments reported in their journals. This included their reflections about developing learner autonomy through project work. Twenty nine first year English major students of low-middle achievement level were selected from the group of one hundred and four English major students of Study Two. This was the group taught by the researcher.



### ***Students' Journal Excerpts Findings***

In the first-year students' journals, ideas of how to improve communicative skills outside the classroom were identified. Strategies such as listening to radio programs, cassette tapes, CDs, English music, or watching movies were reported. A conscious effort to improve English proficiency in class was demonstrated in the excerpts presented. It was found that from the students' viewpoints, passive participation in class did not equate to the notion of a 'passive learner'. In fact, the students valued listening as a way of learning English both inside and outside the classroom. The data from Study Three, therefore, reflected learner autonomy from the viewpoint of the first years. From journal writing, it was revealed that passivity in class is not necessarily the sign of a passive learner.

### ***The Effects of Journal Writing***

Overall, the students' comments in their journal writing activities were very positive. They indicated that:

- Asking for advice from teachers meant that they could receive a response without losing face;
- Engendering a close relationship between the teacher and individual students assisted in developing positive relationships;
- Conversing with the teacher was valuable in furthering their expressive needs;
- Support was sought earlier;
- Getting encouragement and trust were facilitated;

- Realizing a goal was made significantly easier;
- Feeling safe in an environment was enhanced;
- Making things clearer was facilitated;
- Having regular reflective thinking opportunities was highly beneficial;
- Thinking positively was enhanced;
- Challenging oneself was made possible.

### ***The Effect of Project Work and Further Implications for Autonomous Learning***

From students' reflections of their project work, it is clear that it is important to provide opportunities for students to experience independent management of their own learning. The set project work was highly effective in raising the low-middle achievers' awareness of their own learning particularly with regard to the following points:

- Positive reactions and performance when initiative is granted to the students;
- Realization of the need to collaborate;
- Promotion of self-motivation, since it provides a learner with an opportunity to develop his/her personal interests;
- Confidence-building through individual initiative and responsibility;
- Enjoyment from taking the initiative;
- Awareness of past teacher-directed learning;
- Recognition of attitude change to learning;
- Interest in exploiting authentic English opportunities.

Findings also have implications for the setting of project work, insofar as the project work needs to be carefully designed and managed. The principle of learner autonomy, which is the learner accepting responsibility for his/her own learning, should be given greater emphasis, rather than focusing too much on the independent learning activities themselves. This is particularly so for the students with lower motivation who could be given greater guidance by the teacher in the selection of project work. These students need more support than intrinsically motivated learners do. In addition, opportunities for discussion between the teacher and students may be needed to ensure that students stay on track. The study revealed the following:

- Autonomous learning improves students' language proficiency.
- Enjoyable learning is important but it should not be only for the students' pressure. Real involvement and a feeling of achievement should be promoted as a part of the experience.
- Students' learning should be relevant to their own life and interests.
- Activities are needed that allow sufficient scope for language learning.
- Learner autonomy principles need to be interpreted in various ways, depending on teachers' ideas of autonomy. This means that no one direction exists for the development of autonomy, but that there are many possible ways to promote learner autonomy depending on the contexts.
- The teacher's positive expectations, trust, and interest in the students are more important than the intention to train students.
- Teacher-student and inter-student collaboration is also important for an

effective learning environment.

- The need for and feeling of self-expression should be the motivational mainspring of the students' own activities. The real focus should be on how the learners begin to consider their language learning in relation to expressing themselves. Self-motivation should be considered as the basis of learner autonomy.

### Discussion of the Three Studies

The findings of the study suggest that the learners' positive beliefs in themselves and the awareness of their metacognitive knowledge and strategies could be the most important aspects for success. The most successful learners, in fact, have developed their autonomous attitudes in language learning, as they could perceive themselves positively as a language learner, and they seemed to think confidently and flexibly in creating their own personal learning environment. It is possible that those learners' self-reflective and goal-oriented attitudes could make their learning meaningful. Furthermore, the successful learners defined success in term of effectively communicating with others. Therefore, they were aware of collaborative needs with others in order to use the language for expressing themselves. Their awareness of both collaboration and self-direction might be the crucial factors for their success.

The study showed evidence for the view that there were different degrees in learner autonomy. The high achievers' beliefs revealed that their autonomous attitudes are developmental. The successful learners possessed the characteristics of Heterogeneous learners. These seemed to be in opposition to the passivity normally associated with stereotypical

characteristics of Japanese learners. On the other hand, some of the high achievers still showed ambivalence between their desired level of interaction and actual passive presentation in class. In spite of their tacit acceptance of autonomy, they remained passive and this was displayed in shyness, lack of confidence and flexibility. Their drive for perfectionism and fear of making mistakes could be seen in the Homogeneous learners' beliefs. These students' beliefs seemed to be limited to gaining good marks on tests which might be influenced by their past language learning experience in Japan. Although the learners wished to attain communicative skills and fluency in English, their learning strategies seemed to concentrate on test-oriented learning.

Similarly, the low-middle achievers saw value in taking responsibility for their own learning. In spite of this awareness, however, the results of the questionnaires showed that participants lacked overall strategic abilities and had a low level of self-efficacy. Instead of actively seeking help and obtaining feedback from teachers, they seemed to act passively in class and utilize fewer metacognitive strategies in language learning. Their beliefs showed that they are not intrinsically passive learners, but their lack of confidence in their strategic skills could be the reason for their passive behaviour in class.

As the low-middle achievers' engagement in journal writing and project work in the study suggests, once students gain confidence in their ability, they seem to behave autonomously. In order to promote low-middle achievers' autonomy and lead them towards successful language learning, positive self-beliefs and attitude need to be constructed through learning experiences. The learners should be encouraged to use various learning strategies aimed at building confidence. They also need to be encouraged to have positive self-perceptions and develop self-motivational strategies.

Therefore, learner autonomy development is not a matter of instructing learners' in independent management skills but rather; of the teacher's trusting and encouraging students develop as individuals. The successful learners in Study One suggested that their teachers' high expectations were important to their success. However, the participants in Study Two showed less intimacy with their teacher. In Study Three, the relationship between the teacher and the students improved because of the journal exchanges and the project work engagement. This seemed to have a positive influence on the students' active involvement in their work. The reason for success in the first year class could be the teacher's respect for what the students had to say, which was based on an awareness of teacher-learner autonomy. In other words, it was the teacher's clear approach to objective setting based on the students' needs, which proved to be important. The most significant point is that teachers should look beyond the tentative nature of active involvement in the class, and considers how to enhance students' confidence in their own learning. Both teachers and learners need to discover for themselves what language learning really means to them and how such meaning leads to individual autonomy. This strikes at the heart of what it means to 'make meaning' for teacher and student alike.

In the following chapter, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research will be discussed. A model for understanding autonomy, based upon the findings of the current study, is also considered.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This study attempted to identify high achievers' beliefs about effective foreign language learning strategies, teacher/learner roles, classroom expectations, self-motivation strategies, and the self as a learner on the basis of Little's (1995) definition of learner autonomy. Comparing these beliefs with low-middle achievers' attitudes to their own learning, learner autonomy was seen from the internal viewpoint of learners' insights rather than from the external behaviour of their classroom. From the study, a theoretical framework for learner autonomy can be proposed.

#### **The Three Studies**

Three related studies were organised within the particular context of EFL learning in a private university in Japan. In Study One, successful learners' positive beliefs regarding the self and their metacognitive awareness were derived from in-depth interview research. Most importantly, the degree of learner autonomy for each student was confirmed from the data, by way of differences in internal attitudes. As in the archetypal cases of autonomous learners, such as those of Fumiko and Hideo, an active internal attitude was also displayed externally. Such autonomy could be considered as the ideal for language education. Another significant finding was the identification of two different awareness groups among high achievers, which were labelled

'Heterogeneous' and 'Homogeneous' learners. From the interview data, some learners were aware that they were different from other students and demonstrated a positive attitude in making this admission. Being aware of this difference made them more active and willing to challenge themselves. For this reason, they were termed Heterogeneous learners. Conversely, there were learners who were afraid of being different from others and, as such, were termed Homogeneous learners. These students were also very serious about their language learning and had in fact been making considerable effort to improve their TOEIC scores and their school marks. However, instead of possessing a clear future goal for utilizing English, they were distracted by an admiration for native-like English and a vague desire to acquire it. Their ambiguous beliefs about language learning such as no objectives for learning in spite of their desire for English proficiency improvement, and their passive external attitude, could have created a barrier against their further success in language learning.

The Heterogeneous learners focused on communication and collaboration with others. Although they were not concerned with TOEIC scores as their final goals, their positive attitude and affection for English enabled them to make progress with their actual TOEIC score achievement and improvement. By contrast, the Homogeneous learners tended to concentrate more on their own language learning ability and less on the awareness of language as a means of communication. This group suffered difficulties in respect to TOEIC scores and had problems with actual proficiency improvement. Thus, based on Study One, learner autonomy could be defined as the learners' internal active energy, which leads to effective language learning. Positive self-beliefs and metacognitive awareness could be considered as the keys to promoting learner autonomy.

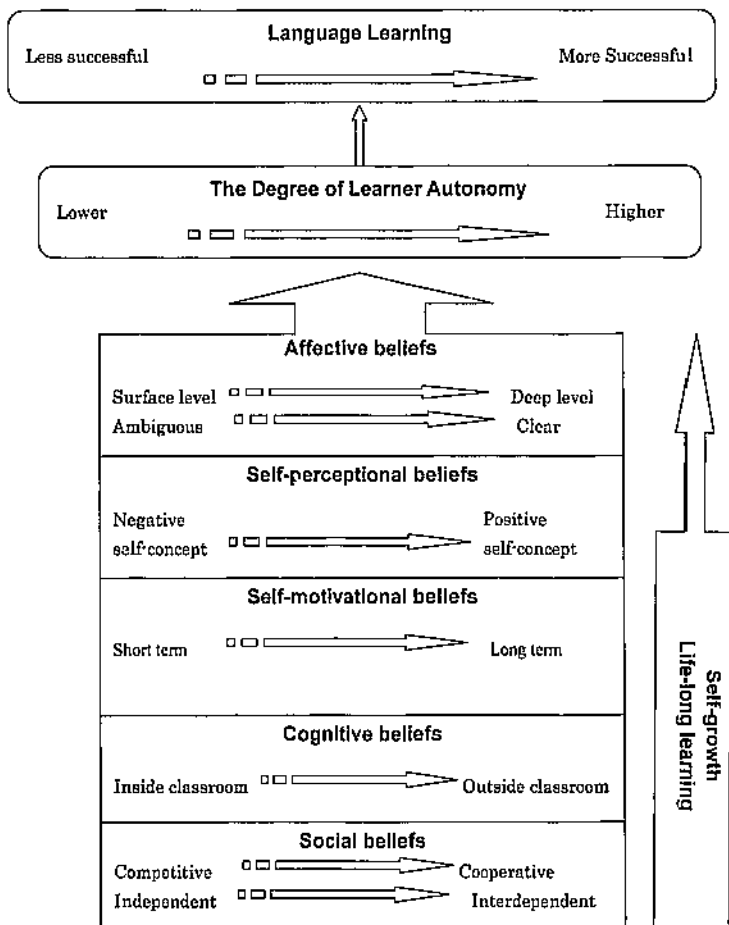


Study Two results showed that low-middle achievers were overtly aware of self-responsibility and tended to believe that their own effort was the most important factor in language learning. However, the students lacked the metacognitive knowledge and strategies to manage their language learning. Moreover, they tended to hold a negative view of their ability to learn a language successfully. Exacerbated by their acute awareness of self-responsibility, negativity and low confidence seemed to be their major problem. This shows how important it is to know about students' self-beliefs in language learning for their development as learners.

Considering the results of the three groups with different majors, there were no clear distinctions in the beliefs in language learning between English and non-English major students. English major students could be assumed to have a stronger motivation for English learning as opposed to non-English major students, but this relationship between students' motivation and their beliefs was not established in this research and this needs further investigation.

In Study Three, low-middle English level students' beliefs were investigated via data extracted from journals. The students' journals showed their awareness of self-responsibility and their various struggles with language learning. From the thoughts on the project work recorded in the journals, it was clear that confidence-building and metacognitive awareness were important for the students' motivation. Moreover, negotiation between teachers and students could be very important for managing effective classroom learning. A model for learner autonomy can now be considered.

**Figure 9.1: A Model of Learner Autonomy**



This proposed model (Figure 9.1) shows five aspects, which relate to the development of learner autonomy. The model shows that learner autonomy is a matter of degree ranging from *less successful* to *more successful*.

All five categories of learner beliefs developed in chapter four should be considered as the goal for promoting learner autonomy for successful language learning. These beliefs include affective beliefs, self-perceptive beliefs, self-motivational beliefs, cognitive beliefs and social beliefs. These five beliefs are interrelated, affecting the degree of learner autonomy in language learning.

With reference to affective beliefs, learners that are more successful seem to have clear goal setting strategies for their language learning. Their goal is not limited to the language learning itself, but involves life-long learning for self-growth and self-promotion. Their language learning becomes meaningful and purposeful, and therefore, a deeper level of learning is engaged. In contrast, less successful learners have ambiguous feelings regarding the purpose of language learning. They do not have a clear goal for language learning and the learning is limited to surface level considerations. In order to direct less successful students towards more successful language learning, the motivation for learning needs to be considered beyond instrumental language learning. The learners should be encouraged to have a clear goal for life-long learning.

As for self-perception of beliefs, the more successful learners seem to

have positive beliefs in themselves. They display greater self-confidence and trust in their ability to achieve their chosen goal. In contrast, less successful learners exhibit the converse. They fail to display positiveness and doubt their ability in gaining the desired language proficiency level. Positive self-perceptions seem to be a crucial key for success. This appears to be because the learners' positive or negative self-beliefs seem to affect their degree of autonomous behaviour in language learning. Thus, a change in the learners' belief about their innate ability seems to be the prerequisite for behaviour change in class.

Whether or not learners can demonstrate autonomous learning self-motivational beliefs become important in that they drive the process of developing a greater degree of autonomy. Learners that are more successful have an awareness of a long-term commitment for their own learning. They critically engage in reflective practice and devise their own strategies for developing autonomy. They also have good metacognitive ability in terms of regulating effective management of their own work. Further, it could be argued that they possess an internal locus of control, which further encourages the formation of self-directive behaviours. Less successful learners, on the other hand, display a lack of self-confidence and willingness to manage metacognitive strategies. Their awareness is limited to short-term goals for learning. Therefore, the learners need to be encouraged to promote self-motivational strategies and attitudes. Less successful learners should be supported in increasing their autonomy

through developing various strategies for motivating their own learning. This is very much within the ambit of the teacher's facilitative powers.

With regard to cognitive beliefs, classroom learning can be considered as a basic skill improvement opportunity for the whole process of developing the learners' language learning. The learners' awareness of learning processes should be extended to outside classroom environments. The connection between inside and outside classroom learning is important in encouraging autonomous language learning. Cognitive strategies are the cornerstone of the development of effective autonomous behaviours and should thus be facilitated by the teacher.

The degree of learner autonomy seems to be related to social beliefs. Less autonomous learners tend to put themselves in competitive situations rather than cooperative ones. The learners who developed a higher degree of learner autonomy have an awareness of both self-direction and collaboration. The successful learners expect to develop positive relationships with others and are aware of the benefits of such collaboration. As Little (1995) claimed in his notion of learner autonomy, in this way, autonomous learning becomes not only independent, but also interdependent in learning the process.

## Conclusion

This study confirmed that successful foreign language learners have positive attitudes and confidence in themselves. They know what is important for them, and approach their own learning from the point of view of predetermined goals. This kind of self-trust leads to the possession of an active rather than passive attitude toward learning both inside and outside the classroom.

In order to adapt learner autonomy theory to various contexts, learners' internal attitudes should be given more focus than external behaviour. Aoki and Smith (1999) note that, "autonomy is not an approach enforcing a particular way of learning. It is, rather, an educational goal" (p. 21). Thus, learner autonomy can be understood as the learner's internalisation of their beliefs and attitudes for taking charge of their own learning. In Little's (1995) terms, it is the acceptance of responsibility for personal learning which is important. Therefore, learner autonomy is universal goal applicable to any context. When the learner's autonomous behaviour is concerned from external viewpoints, it might be situational and specific. The same learner might behave differently, depending on different teachers and different classroom situations. The same learner might show active autonomous behaviour in some settings, and remain passive in others. However, it is the learner's internal attitude, which is the basis for external autonomous behaviour. Without consideration of

the learner's internalisation of autonomy, intervention for active autonomous behaviour inside and outside classroom learning is meaningless. The students' beliefs in this study provided evidence for the contention that Japanese discipline-oriented educational values can be influenced either positively or negatively.

This study has suggested significant implications for the future direction of language education in Japan. Promoting autonomous language learning should not be limited to only learner-centred classroom activity settings. Encouraging positive self-beliefs and promoting metacognitive awareness could be more important than independent language learning approaches. Not only should their actual classroom behaviours be a focus, but also assisting students to develop insights into their own learning. Language learning should be enjoyable and should motivate learners towards purposeful communication, rather than concentrating on the acquisition of perfect native-like ability. As the increasing globalisation of English has led to greater recognition of the various forms of English in the world, the particular dominance on American or British English should be reconsidered in Japanese society so that learners can confidently express themselves in their own form of English.

As Wenden (1998) reported, sometimes efforts towards developing learner autonomy are resisted. Accordingly, Wenden suggests that learner training may be necessary to promote learners' awareness of their autonomy. In Asian contexts, however, the concept of such learner training might not be

appropriate. This notion requires exploration, for as Bronner (2000) emphasizes:

what often seems absent or insufficient is an in-depth consideration of how learner autonomy and affective factors may differ among cultures. It appears that learners are expected to adjust to the English teaching and learning style of a native speaking instructor, rather than the teacher adjusting to the different cultural modes of teaching and learning of the learners. Whereas this may be unavoidable in an ESL (English as a Second Language) setting, it is not inevitable, nor practical, in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment such as Japan (p. 27).

Following Bronner's (2000) line of thinking, different ways of considering learner autonomy might be required for Asian contexts, instead of merely imposing Western values on Asian learners. Learner development might include the promoting of internal awareness to generate autonomous learning in the context of Asian classrooms.

Learners' selfresponsibility means awareness for both self-direction and collaboration. Learner autonomy emanates not just from the given learning environment, but also because of because of the students' motivation to create their own environment for learning. Thus, autonomous learning might not necessarily mean a complete shift of instructional mode for teachers, but could involve the creation of a more



appropriate learning environment. It could thus involve various teaching styles or ways of promoting learner autonomy, which centre on greater consideration being given to the context of the classroom.

Learner development also requires reconsideration of what really makes language learning effective in a particular context. Instead of training learners to satisfy teacher expectations, or alternatively instead of giving students unlimited freedom to make decisions, learner development should be more concerned with the nature of both students' and teachers' learning as both walk the path towards self-growth.

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### Appendix 4-1: Sixteen Participants' TOEIC Results

(July, 2000 = at the interview time)

participants	year	achievement in July, '00	Improvement since first year
Kaori	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	575	255
Ryoo	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	575	250
Naoko	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	510	195
Tsuyako	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	470	200
Sumiko	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	700	315
Tboru	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	680	315
Hiroshi	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	635	335
Ichiroo	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	530	325
Hideo	4 <sup>th</sup> year	910	430
Kyoko	4 <sup>th</sup> year	795	350
Kazuko	4 <sup>th</sup> year	685	350
Kenichi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	605	325
Yasuhiro	4 <sup>th</sup> year	825	305
Mayumi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	735	350
Aiko	4 <sup>th</sup> year	720	290
Asami	4 <sup>th</sup> year	655	325

(May, 2001= follow up results)

participants	year	achievement in May, '01	improvement since first year
Kaori	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	545	225
Ryoo	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	680	355
Naoko	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	500	185
Tsuyako	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	490	220
Sumiko	4 <sup>th</sup> year	680	315
Tboru	4 <sup>th</sup> year	760	395
Hiroshi	4 <sup>th</sup> year	765	465
Ichiroo	4 <sup>th</sup> year	630	355

## APPENDIX 4-2: Informed Consent Form

### Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to be involved in this study. The purpose of the study is to help me gain greater insight into thinking processes of foreign language learners.

The study involves a background language learning questionnaire, the task of essay writing, and the interview.

The background language learning questionnaire and essay topics will be given to you in a written form. You will be asked to write all responses on the sheet.

The interview will be tape-recorded and done individually. The interview questions will be given beforehand of the interview so that you can prepare yourself. The interview will be done by one interviewer in your own language, and it will take approximately one hour. Each participant will be offered A\$ 25.00 for time spent of the interview, essay writing and questionnaires.

I would be happy to answer any questions regarding the project at any time. I can be reached at work +81-76-229-2626(TEL) / +81-76-229-0021(Fax), or you can send me e-mail to: [m-usuki@hokuriku.u.ac.jp](mailto:m-usuki@hokuriku.u.ac.jp), or my supervisor Dr. Richard G. Berlach on (08) 9273-8402(TEL) / (08) 9273-8705(Fax).

You are free to participate or withdraw from the project at any time. You can also discuss the project with me at any time and you are entitled to know what data I have gathered once the data collection has been concluded.

If you agree to participate in the study, please complete the information on the next page. You will be provided with a copy of this document once the information overleaf has been completed.

Thank you for your help.

Miyuki Usuki Surma



I \_\_\_\_\_ have read the information on the previous page and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising I may withdraw at any time. I agree to have the sessions audiotape recorded. I also agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identified.

**Signatures:**

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 4-3: Language Learners' Background**  
**/ Learning Experience / Learning Environment**  
**/ Learning Purpose / English Level**

(\* The original version will be set up in Japanese).

Please write down the following factors in Japanese.

1. Learners' Background

(1) Name :

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) Age :

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Sex :

\_\_\_\_\_

(4) Nationality :

\_\_\_\_\_

(5) First language :

\_\_\_\_\_

(6) Educational background :

the completed course \_\_\_\_\_ , the year \_\_\_\_\_

(7) Present course and major :

\_\_\_\_\_

(8) Titles of English textbooks which are used in the present course

\_\_\_\_\_

(9) Language level: beginners ( )

pre-intermediate ( )

intermediate ( )

advanced ( )

(\* Please tick the most appreciate level)

2. Learning Experience / Learning Environment / Interests

(1) Where do you live and what language do you use?

city : \_\_\_\_\_

language used at home : \_\_\_\_\_

mother tongue : \_\_\_\_\_

(2) What languages have you learnt in the past?

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Have you been to English speaking countries? No(        ), Yes(        )

If YES,

Which countries? : \_\_\_\_\_

how many times? : \_\_\_\_\_

how long? : \_\_\_\_\_

and

for what purpose? : \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Write down about your English language learning experience.

(4-1) At university level

the period of course attending : \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

the text books in the past : \_\_\_\_\_

hours of learning/week : present \_\_\_\_\_, past \_\_\_\_\_

(4-2) Before the university level

the period of course attending : \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

the text books: \_\_\_\_\_

hours of learning /week : \_\_\_\_\_

(4-3) Have you ever learnt English by yourself? No(        ), Yes(        )

If YES,

write down how and how long did you learn it for?

---

---

(5) How many hours do you spend for your language study per day?

---

(6) How often do you have a chance to talk with English speaking people?

---

(10) Do you try to read English newspapers, magazines, or books?

---

(11) Do you try to read something related with English or English speaking countries?

---

### 3. Learning Purpose

(1) What is your purpose in learning English?

---

---

(2) Which skill is the most important for you? Write the number from the most important to the least important.

Listening(        ) / Speaking (        ) / Reading (        ) / Writing (        )

(3) What are three most important learning needs for you? Choose the appropriate factors from the followings. (\*Write 1, 2, 3, from the most important one.)

1) daily conversation(        )

2) understanding of TV/Radio programs(        )

3) understanding of newspaper articles/ magazines/books(        )

4) understanding of lectures / reading reference books / presentation / writing reports (        )

5) job related English (        )

(4) After you complete university, what do you intend to do?

---

---

4. Your comments

(1) Are you satisfied with your English learning?

---

---

(2) Why do you think so?

---

---

(3) If you have any comments, please write them below.

---

---

Thank you for your co-operation.

## APPENDIX 4-4: Interview Questions

Beliefs about language learning (related to research question (1))

1. In what ways do you believe you can improve your language skills?
2. What are your reasons for studying English?
3. What, in your opinion, should successful students do and how should they be inside and outside the classroom?

Beliefs on teacher role and classroom expectations (related to research question (2))

4. What should be the role of the teacher so that you can achieve your goal of learning English?
5. How should language class time be used to achieve your goal of learning English?

Self-motivation strategies (related to research question (3))

6. Have you developed any ways of motivating yourself to learn English?
9. When you have difficulties and problems achieving your goal, how do you try to solve them?
10. Please give your thought on the following matters. Try to explain them in detail.

Many times students have difficulty studying on their own at home because there are other more interesting things they would rather do such as watching TV or going out with friends. What strategies do you use for motivating yourself to complete your work under these circumstances? What do you do if you are trying to achieve a certain goal?

Beliefs about self (related to research question (4))

9. What do you believe your teachers' expectations are of you? Why do you think so?
10. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner? Please describe how you see yourself in terms of being a Japanese language learner studying English.

## **APPENDIX 5-1: Individual Case Analysis in Study One :**

### **Part One**

#### **(1) AFFECTIVE BELIEFS**

##### **(1.1) Heterogeneous group**

###### **Hideo**

Hideo has a clear goal for his future which relates to using his English skills. He wishes to do post-graduate level study in an English speaking country. His dream is to get a job as an international public worker. He plans to acquire English for use as a major tool for his future career.

###### **Kyoko**

Kyoko would like to be an English teacher. She emphasizes English as a communication tool for self-expression. As does Hideo, she also has motivation in relation to her future career opportunities. However, her instrumental motivation is based on her enjoyment of English learning itself. One day, as a teacher, she would like to pass on to her students how good they will feel if they can communicate in English.

###### **Tooru**

Tooru shares Kyoko's wish to become a teacher. However, his real interest is travelling abroad. He regards English as a hobby. It does not mean, however, that his motivation is weak. Rather, he is strongly motivated to acquire English skills and therefore, purposely connects everything to English learning. He enjoys doing things in English.

###### **Ichiroo**

Ichiroo has job related motivation since he would like to work in underdeveloped countries.

Also, he has a wish to get a TOEIC pre-one level certificate. His one-month overseas school excursion in his 2nd year significantly increased his motivation for learning English. He started to feel an enjoyment for learning after this experience. His motivation has also increased after some mortifying experiences when on several occasions he could not express himself properly in conversations in English. It hurt his pride and as a

result he realized that he has to put in full effort.

Yasuhiro

Yasuhiro is also thinking of English in relation to his future job. He has to take over his father's business and wishes to make use of his English skills for it. He considers that increasing his English skills make him more attractive. He enjoys his English learning in his own way.

Kazuko

Kazuko wishes to use English for her future job, although she hasn't decided on a particular job as yet. She would like to acquire an English-speaker's way of thinking. She would like to converse with others and use English freely as if it were her native language.

Summary:

These 6 learners' common aspects are;

- having job-related motivation
- thinking of English skills as tools
- enjoying and having interest in their learning
- being strongly motivated for English acquisition

(1·2) Homogeneous group

Kaori

Kaori has liked English since junior high school. She thinks that being an English teacher could be a good job for her in future.

Tsuyako

Tsuyako thinks that English is important in the present world. She believes that it will never be disadvantageous for her to acquire English and it may even be hard for her to find employment if she does not have adequate English skills. Although her wish to learn seems to be based on her admiration of English, Tsuyako actually has no clear objective for learning.

Sumiko

Sumiko likes learning English. She believes that she can make her world bigger by getting to know various people's ways of thinking in other



countries through her English learning. However, similar to Tsuyako she does not have a clear objective for her study. In fact, she says that she wants to be a housewife and maybe do translation work if she can to satisfy her wish to connect with English speakers even if only a little.

#### Aiko

Aiko does not have a clear objective for her English learning, either. She says, *"I just like English. English and I are congenial. English is like my hobby. It's for my own personal satisfaction."* She feels that her relationship with English is very natural. She does not hate English study. That's why she continues to learn. *"My Australian home-stay family wrote me a Christmas card saying that they had prepared a bed for me and that they were waiting for me to come. I felt that I would like to communicate with them without any problems. If I try to give you other reasons at the moment, I don't have anything else. Basically, I was not intending to do English at first. But simply I didn't hate it, so..."* As the above extract shows, her intention is not so strong; her attitude seems to be that while it is not necessary for her, it is better to have English skills than not have them.

#### Asami

Asami also has no clear objectives similar to the preceding learners. She vaguely thinks about the advantage of English skills. *"If we can talk English fluently with foreigners, it will be useful for sure"*. She does not have job related motivation. She is interested in foreign cultures and history and thinks that English may be useful and may help her to enjoy travelling.

#### Mayumi

Mayumi has an interest in English. She wishes to get in touch with foreign cultures and to know daily conversational skills.

#### Summary:

These 6 learners have in common:

- having no clear objectives
- being interested in English or cultures rather than using skills for their future career.

## (2) SELF-PERSPECTIVE BELIEFS

### (2-1) Heterogeneous group

#### Hideo

Hideo tries to keep a balance between his study and enjoyment. He tries to complete what he needs to do before doing something enjoyable. He tries to make contact with English each day. He thinks that it is valuable for him to have such time. He knows that he is different from others, but he feels positive about 'sticking out' in this way. He feels unsafe because he does not know whether he can achieve his goal or not. Even though he has worries and frustrations, he encourages himself through positive self-belief.

#### Teacher expectations

Hideo thinks that teachers regard him as an exception, being different from others. However, he believes that his effort is recognized and encouraged. He supports himself and tries to respond to such expectations. He says that he tells teachers what he wants and doesn't merely agree with everything.

#### self-regulation

*First of all, I try to do whatever I need to do. Then, I enjoy something like TV, movies, etc. - I make the effort to manage my time like this.*

#### self-direction

*I have a weekly plan. But there are times when I can't follow it. So, it is a matter of mental strength or willpower not to get depressed at these 'failures' to reach my target. I make time to keep in touch with English each day. I consider such time as quite important.*

#### self-encouragement

*I encourage myself to do my work at my own pace.*

#### positive self-image

*A little strange (curious)*

*An exceptional student*

*An odd person (quite a character)*

*My existence itself is a gag.*

*I would like to stick out as someone different. I don't mind that 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered'. If I don't express myself, I cannot tell people what I want to say. I don't care what others think of me.*

*I usually do things in my own way. Sometimes, as a result, people around me get upset. That can't be helped. I don't care what others think about it. I think that I am understood to be a good student. I believe that all teachers know that I'm working hard.*

#### self-trust

*I feel that 'each day is struggle. Through my own effort I make progress. I believe in myself.*

*We can do what ever we want if we have motivation. Really, we are a lump of possibilities.*

#### self-observation

*I have a Japanese mind. I would like to keep this Japanese-ness. I try to understand the good qualities of being Japanese.*

#### Kyoko

Kyoko has no TV. She always completes her work before going out to meet her friends. When she has homework, she always does it as soon as it is given. She feels that her teachers and other students think that she is different from others. She also feels that she is strong and does not accept anything until satisfied herself. Like Hideo, she believes that everything is possible as long as she motivates herself to learn. Only, time and effort are needed. And she is aware that once she stops, it will finish.

#### Teacher expectations

Kyoko believes that teachers think of her as being different. However, she also thinks her teachers regard her as one of the difficult students who has a strong personality and is persistent. The reason is that she asks questions until she is satisfied she understands.

#### self-regulation

*I try to do my homework within a few days. My friends tell me as a joke that I am an unsociable person. But if they stop being friends for this*

*reason, I just think that is the kind of people they are, and it doesn't really matter to me.*

self-direction

*I am always aware that I should not wait for something to be given to me by my teacher.*

self-encouragement

*I couldn't pass one test because I was three points shy of the mark. I regret that I fail so many times. And I really think that I should never fail to pass, any more.*

positive self-image

*Strange*

*Strong personality*

*Annoying*

*Persistent*

*A difficult student*

*An odd person*

*I often ask questions if I don't know something.*

*If I don't understand something I keep on at it like a terrier, and even my teacher looks annoyed, or the other students wonder why I can't understand. So, sometimes, I wonder whether I should care more about others. I'm the person whom other students expect to ask all the questions they are too shy to.*

self-trust

*I believe that there is nothing I can't do if I try to*

self-observation

*Through learning English, I can think better of myself in Japan.*

### Toru

Toru chooses to watch English programs on TV because he tries not to waste time. He records only his favourite programs and watches them during his dinner. He likes English and enjoys English learning. He also has pride that he has been doing his best. He believes that good results will follow if he does his best. He does not care too much about others' results. It does not help anything. He knows that he is thought of as a strange person. He even admits that he behaves like that purposely. He is very positive about his attitude. He considers it important to have his own space and atmosphere. His own evaluation is that he strongly prefers to work independently at his own pace and doesn't feel good working together with others when he has to adjust his own preferred methods. He has also become more aware of Japanese culture and language through studying another language.

### Teacher expectation

Although he thinks that his teachers consider him a serious student because they see him studying English very often, Toru does not like being recognized as such. In small classes, he talks with teachers, but in lecture type classes, he is not sure that his teachers know him.

### self-regulation

*I choose my real favourite TV program to watch.*

*I try to use time effectively and valuably*

### self-direction

*I try to keep my space; I make up my own style.*

*I make my temptations positive for me by connecting them to my study of English*

*I connect my favourite things, hobbies to English learning*

### self-encouragement

*First and foremost, I will never give up.*

positive self image

*Strange*

*A very positive person*

*I have no regrets*

*I have pride that I have done my best*

*Basically, I do not think of myself as a learner. I just really like English.*

*I don't think that English is study.*

*I feel pressure from others when I am the only one actively trying to talk, I feel like I'm standing out*

self trust

*I will never be defeated by my difficulties.*

*Good results follow as a consequence if I do certain things*

*I refuse to recognise that there are any impossibilities*

*If I decide on a possibility, at that moment I feel it is certain I will achieve it*

self observation

*Through learning foreign languages, I have become fonder of Japan. I have become aware of some of the unique Japanese ways of expression and other good points. I have begun to think better of Japan and Japanese culture.*

Ichiroo

Ichiroo is also concerned about time. First of all, he thinks that he has to manage his own time effectively in order to achieve his goal. He also does not watch TV so much. He only spends time with his real friends. He believes that others understand him. He thinks of himself as being tough and different from others. He feels that he is sticking out. But he has a positive feeling towards himself. He even tries to avoid working with others and doesn't force himself to adjust to what others are doing. He does things at his pace regardless of what others say. He has a clear vision of his future, he wishes to improve and believes that he will improve. When he cannot do something the way he wants to, he gets more motivated rather than getting depressed. He believes that correcting mistakes will come naturally later on when he improves his speaking skills. He believes that he can realize his wish through his own actions.

#### Teacher expectations

Ichiroo thinks that his teachers recognize him as an active student, because he is actively involved in conversational classes and he talks a lot. Also, he faithfully does what he is told to do by his teachers. He accepts what his teachers say and the advice they give him. For instance, he stops and changes his ways of doing things according to his teachers' advice.

#### self-regulation

*I don't watch TV*

*People around me don't ask me to hang around with them anymore. It is good for me*

*I work hard. Others understand me. I am not treated badly by them.*

*In order to achieve my goal, I try to use my time wisely.*

#### self-direction

*Even when others say something, I never change my pace. I proceed in my own way.*

#### self-encouragement

*I tell myself that I will not fail it this time. Instead of being depressed, I motivate myself more by starting to think about the next focus of my study.*

#### positive self-belief

*Tough*

*Hard for others to assimilate*

*Sticking out*

*Patient*

*I am probably sticking out. But I think it is not a bad thing for me. I avoid getting into a group. If I try to do things together with people around me, I have to have a difficult and challenging task.*

#### self-trust

*I will realize my wishes.*

*I am always aware that I can do more.*

### self-observation

*I admire people who work in undeveloped countries. I hate unfairness and injustice.*

### Yasuhiro

Yasuhiro tells himself that the more he studies, the more he can improve his English. In some respects, he feels himself to be a weak person. However, basically, he feels that he is different from others, and he likes himself as he is. He tries to trust himself and maintain a forward-looking approach.

### Teacher expectation

Yasuhiro thinks that his teachers see him in a positive light. He feels that his teachers have high expectations of him. This belief supports his learning. He thinks that if he does a better job, his teachers will be happy about it, and will even appreciate his active attitude in the classroom as he says, "I hesitate to say it, but I think that I am a helpful student for teachers".

### self-regulation

*I'm very much focusing on my time. Some people say that 24 hours a day are given equally to everyone. It is possible to do anything if we use our time efficiently. I think so, too. By using my time efficiently, more and more I can both enjoy to play and learn English. It is a principle to live by. This principle doesn't just apply to English only. I make clear distinctions between my various activities. When I do something, I concentrate totally on what I need to do.*

### self-direction

*I was not ashamed of myself even if I made mistakes, even if someone told me about my mistakes. Of course, I regretted my lack of ability, but I have been doing various things by considering my feeling as achieving.*

### self-encouragement

*Even though I am a timid person, I can continue my English learning.*



positive self-belief

*A challenger*

*A timid person*

*Self-intoxication*

*A juggler*

*Conspicuous*

*I'm a person whose attitude is appreciated by teachers.*

*I talk all the time. I stand out. But, so what? There's nothing wrong with the fact that.*

*'the nail that sticks out gets hammered'. So, at the same time as we (Hideo and I) are envied, we are criticized and talked about by everyone. That's why we should be even more unconventionally active. Then people who envy us will wish to do or achieve similar things. Then, they will imitate us. We do really well, and then people will see us as interesting. Generally, it is said that Japanese people are such and such... This is stupid. We never think like that.*

self-trust

*I believe that everyone can achieve what they want if they follow my method. It is a kind of brainwashing. I can only bring about my desires by believing in myself.*

Kazuko

Kazuko selects and records TV programs that she wants to watch.

Like the above students, she also completes her work before going out.

She provides her own motivation for study. She believes that progress will be a natural consequence if she continues to learn. In this way, she expresses strong self-trust in her learning. She also believes that while it will take time, it is possible for her to become what she wants to be. She thinks that although language learning is an endless process, as long as she continues to study she can achieve anything

Teacher expectation

Kazuko believes that some teachers have no worries about her progress so far, while others expect her to be able to make more improvement. She

thinks that teachers understand that she is working hard.

self-regulation

*I complete what I need to do and then I go out.*

*When it is necessary, I refuse to go out.*

self-direction

*I do whatever I think is good.*

self-encouragement

*In the final analysis, what matters is whether we are thinking about our learning or not. Anyway, I believe that it is all right if I do my best.*

positive self-image

*Optimistic*

*Not depressed*

*I am unusually confident.*

*I think that I have confidence in my ability to act at my own discretion.*

self-trust

*If we are just taught how to enjoy studying English, we can improve our skills.*

*I have unusual confidence · I'm confident that I will never fail to improve.*

*It will take time but I can do and achieve anything.*

(2-2) Homogeneous group

Kaori

Kaori likes English but sometimes feels like not wanting to study very much. For her, English is just one of the subjects she studies. She realizes that she has never taken the long view. Each time, in each test, she has been trying to get high marks. Kaori feels that she gave up other opportunities while at high school. So, she would like to continue English in order to achieve her earlier goal. She doesn't think of English as a hobby. She tells herself that she should not give up English because whatever we do, it is sometimes difficult. She tries to ride through the difficult periods. Her life is quite

full because she is involved in a club activity. Because she is so busy now, she does not watch TV, or go out with friends.

She needs to preview lessons in order not to have any problems. She thinks that she needs to use time effectively to get spare time. She thinks that her study is important but she is not doing enough. She feels that she must study harder. She believes that doing just enough study to pass does not allow her to make any improvement, and she has to suffer a little more. She thinks that if she studies harder, she should be able to go up one more level, and if she can measure her improvement, she should be able to determine her possibilities. She believes that someone who has ability and a sense of English can improve a lot by making effort. She is not sure whether she is such a person or not. For both herself and her learning, she seems to have a negative attitude. Despite her strenuous effort, she continuously blames herself for her lack of progress.

#### Teacher expectations

Kaori believes that her teachers think of her as a serious student. In conversational classes, however, she is quiet and not active. She thinks about the theme seriously, but does not speak out. Some teachers understand her and give her encouragement.

#### self-regulation

*If I tried to use my time more efficiently, I would have enough time.*

*If I had been stricter with myself, I would have improved more.*

*I don't watch TV.*

#### self-direction

*Before tests, I review the relevant parts several times in a planned manner.*

*I don't do this except for the tests.*

*I have to attend the class. I have to understand by myself.*

#### self-encouragement

*I like English, but sometimes I really hate it. I can't help it. But I know that if I give up, I will never decide what else I want to do. Even though I sometimes hate it, I feel everyone must overcome such difficulties in their*

*lives. I try to think in this way.*

*For me, English is my study. So, it is hard. I don't want to do it as my hobby. Even though I suffer because of it, I still have to do it.*

*What I have done so far is to find someone better than me and establish how low my ability is as a spur to make myself better.*

#### negative selfimage

*If I were stricter with myself, I would improve more. Once I improved, I would see it (my potential). If I did a little more, I would see it.*

#### self-doubt

*I think of myself as not working as hard as others think of me. I feel worried before the tests about how the others will do.*

*English learning needs a kind of a suitable ability or sense. If someone who has such suitability makes the effort, anything is possible for them. I don't know myself whether I am a such person.*

#### Tsuyako

Tsuyako stops studying for a while when she has problems. She tries to do something else and enjoy herself. Then, she tries studying again because she feels there is no point trying to do something while she dislikes doing it. Before she stops to enjoy something else, she tries to complete all necessary work. She also does not watch TV so often. She knows that she should be more active and rigorous. She believes that the more she talks, the more she would acquire the language and therefore she needs more listening and speaking skills. She feels that she needs a place for asking questions as well as the lessons from teachers. She is aware of what she has to do. In this respect, Tsuyako seems to have a gap between how she wants to be and what she actually does.

#### Teacher expectation

Tsuyako thinks that teachers think of her as a normal student, not bad, but not so excellent either. She regards herself the same as people around her.

#### self-regulation

*When I feel no motivation for study, I accept the feeling, and then, I try to reduce my stress. It is better to work after relaxing.*

#### self-direction

*I try to solve any problems by myself. I believe that it is my fault that I could not succeed (could not improve my scores or could not get a certificate).*

#### self-encouragement

*I am (overly) conscious of others. I think that what I do should be more important than the perceptions of people around me. So, I think that I need to be more active. It should not be a matter of what others think, but...*

#### negative self-image

*I think of myself as a normal student, not so bad, but not so smart either, just the same as people around me.*

*I like English, but sometimes I am too lax and I suffer poor results from that. or...I like English but sometimes I am too timid and I don't believe in myself enough*

#### self-doubt

*I am a little passive. As I don't have enough ability, I can't say what I want to say.*

*I feel strange to talk English with my Japanese classmates. I sometimes stop trying to use English in class or become passive.*

#### Sumiko

Sumiko also does not watch TV so often. She imagines that successful people are studying hard while she is being lazy. She uses this approach to keep her motivation up. Before going out to enjoy herself, she regulates herself to complete what should be done. Although she is busy previewing the lessons, she likes to feel that she is improving her listening skills and consequently tries to preserve time for listening practice. She believes that all lessons are useful and it is not always possible for people to improve their skills if they only do whatever they want. She regards herself in a positive

light and believes that she is doing fine. However, she does not mention anything about her self-trust aspect. Rather, she talks of only her present learning in a positive manner. She also has an admiration for American societies and English speakers. Also, She wishes to be a native-like English speaker. She feels uncomfortable in Japanese society, because she has to worry about being conspicuously different.

#### Teacher expectations

Sumiko thinks that her teachers consider her a serious student, because she always does whatever she needs to do and always previews the lessons. Also, sometimes she goes to teachers to ask questions. She has faith in her teachers. She does not express her preference for any particular teachers because she feels she should not.

#### self-regulation

*I don't watch TV*

*Before going out to enjoy myself, I complete what I have to do*

*I consistently preview the classes*

*I need to keep some time for listening to tapes*

#### self-direction

*I preview and review properly*

*I try to listen to English everyday*

*I take memos whenever teachers say something useful*

#### self-encouragement

*I believe that effects cannot be seen straightaway.*

*The effects will appear later*

*Even if I can't see the good result /effect of my learning, I should not be impatient*

*I need to overcome my occasional feelings of laziness and imagine successful people are working hard while I am being lazy*

#### positive self-image

*I have a feeling of not wanting to stick out. When I stand out a little from others, people around me look at me like they want to avoid me. Even when I*

*consciously try not to stand out I am told that I am a serious student. I really want to ask questions during the classes, but I feel that I should ask them later.*

self-trust (Not indicated)

**Aiko**

Aiko does not like to talk English in front of her friends at school, although she has a wish to speak English fluently. On the other hand, she attends adult English classes in the city for the reason that she can be frank and talkative there without worrying about what other people think. The class members consist of various age groups and everyone is motivated to learn English. She has both positive and negative self-image towards herself. She is talkative and seems to be very motivated to learn English. In fact, Aiko feels that she is an active learner due to such things as having an English-speaking language partner or joining volunteer activities. She attempts to explain her complicated, almost self-contradictory feelings by saying that while it is not her intention to do so; she pretends to be a passive learner in her class. ??

**Teacher expectation**

Aiko believes teachers' expectations towards her differ, depending on her relationship with the teacher and the contents of the class. If she reacts to the class positively, she participates actively. In these cases, the teacher thinks of her as a motivated student. However, if the class is given non-challenging materials, she believes that the teacher doesn't notice her in the class because in such a class, although she does not disrupt the class, she is not motivated at all. She does her best not to show her lack of motivation. The teacher whom she most trusts knows that Aiko wishes to be active but hesitates to behave actively.

self-regulation

*Ideally, it is better to do whatever I need to do before enjoying myself. Even if I do something else, I always think about my work.*

#### self-direction

*I have chosen more difficult classes.*

*I think for myself and choose what I feel comfortable doing.*

#### self-encouragement

*I take an interest in what I'm doing. I feel satisfaction when I understand something. When I listen (to something in English) and understand it, I feel happy.*

#### positive self-image

*When I attended adult English class in the city, there were older people or more varied people in the class. I felt open-minded, and I did not think about other people looking at me, so I could talk more than at school. Such classes where people talk English outside school are a place where motivated people who really want to learn English gather.*

#### negative self-image

*What can I say, I feel shy in front of my classmates, because they are the same age as me. It would be no problem if I could speak (English) perfectly. But my English is not perfect at all. I feel shy if my class members see me trying hard.*

*I feel awkward that I am seen as an exception.*

*At school I'm not sure that everyone wants to learn or even to be there. There are people who are not working hard. And amongst them, I feel kind of hesitant. I cannot be active. I dread being seen as special. So, I'm not strong enough to stand out in public. That's why I'm passive in class.*

#### self-trust

*I behave passively in front of people. To tell the truth, I think that I am an active person. In fact, I have gotten involved in volunteer work for international events, and also, I have had an English-speaking partner to practice my English. I am not passive, only pretending to be so unintentionally (without intent).*



### Asami

Asami has both positive and negative self-images.

She believes that she is evaluated as a good student in lecture-type classrooms. The reason is that she always does whatever she needs for the class such as given assignments or previewing. Outside the classroom, she extends her efforts by listening practice. On the other hand, she has nobody to communicate with in English. She feels there is no chance for her. However the fact is that she seems not to seek such opportunities actively. Her feelings are somewhat contradictory as to whether she still can improve her English or not. In the past, she could readily feel she was making progress in English. In spite of her wish for further improvement, she has a sense of limitation as well.

### Teacher expectation

Asami believes that teachers think of her as an average student. She also thinks that lecture-type class teachers evaluate her as a good student, while conversational class teachers believes her to be not so good. She feels that it all depends on the teacher and her rapport with the teacher.

### self-regulation

*Once a day, at least, I listen to two radio programs- English conversation and Business English, so that's at least 40 minutes of English listening practice.*

### self-direction

*I believe that we have to do extra things by ourselves beyond lessons.*

### self-encouragement

*I try not to give up. And I make this my habit.  
I am putting in more effort than others, but I still don't work hard enough.*

### positive self-image

*I believe that my teachers think me an average student. Report type teachers might evaluate me better because my marks are good.*

### negative self-image

*I think that I ask questions quite often, but I'm shy, so I ask teachers after lessons. I don't want everyone to think about me as a pushy person. I have lots of things in my mind, but I can express only 20% of these in English. I feel very frustrated. My conversational class teacher might think that I am not so good. Also, I did not have such good rapport with him.*

#### self-trust

*Maybe, if I can make foreign friends, or if I listen to foreign news or something all the time, my English will improve a lot.*

#### Mayumi

Mayumi assesses herself by comparison with her friends. This seems to force her to study more but her attitude toward herself seems to be negative she always accuses herself of putting in effort that is inferior to her fellow students.

Mayumi seems to be an obedient student. She never fails to do her given assignments; she always attends the classes; when she is called upon by her teacher, she can provide the appropriate answer in class.

#### Teacher expectation

Mayumi thinks that her teachers do not recognize her very readily. She believes that she has not made a strong impression on them. Therefore, they do not know her although they might remember her face.

#### self-regulation

*I memorize a little new vocabulary or grammar everyday. At home, there are lots of interruptions, so I made the library my study environment.*

#### self-direction

*I went through a time when I could not improve my TOEIC scores. I thought the reason was that I didn't know enough vocabulary and I didn't make enough effort.*

self-encouragement

*My TOEIC score has improved, and now I can understand English more. So, if I continue to follow this discipline, I will continue to improve.*

positive self-image

*I give my full attention in lessons.*

*It was not sudden, but gradually, I think I have raised my level*

.

negative self-image

*I don't stand out. I don't make a strong impression on people. I'm quiet. My teachers might not notice me. My school marks are good, but I don't contribute much in class.*

*I feel like I should not do anything wrong ..., I feel like I should not speak... I worry about my mistakes. If my English cannot be understood, I think that I cannot continue the conversation. I feel compelled to speak properly, so my nervousness prevents me from speaking at all.*

self-trust

*If I make more effort, I would like to believe that I have the potential to achieve more.*

self-observation

*I am a person who tries hard and works conscientiously, but sometimes I give up half way.*

### (3) SELF-MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS

#### (3.1) Heterogeneous group

##### Hideo

Hideo says he felt terrible frustration when he was learning English without any clear objective. Hideo started questioning why he was making the effort to learn English. Then, he set a goal in accordance with his future dream. This goal provides him the direction he needs to study English. He wishes to acquire English skills, not for tests or certificates but to use those skills as a communication tool in an expert capacity. He always tells himself that study is a challenge to be maintained continuously and

patiently with small daily efforts. He thinks his one month home-stay experience in Canada had influenced him very much. Since then, he has had the flexibility of both Japanese thinking and Western thinking

#### goal awareness

*I had problems that sheer effort could not overcome. I reflected on my basic reason for learning English and looked at my goal again. I tried to get rid of any apathy or lethargy.*

#### weak point awareness

*I am sometimes my own worst enemy. I'm quite neglectful, but I am aware of this weakness.*

#### reflections

*Before I had a visible goal, I was just trying to improve my English in a haphazard manner.*

#### self-monitoring

*I check my English through talking with English native speakers. It is a good way to assess my level of ability, whether I can understand her/him or how I can conduct our conversation.*

#### initiative

*I want to get ahead of others) I am aware that I'm pulling against others. I'm trying to pull others along with me  
It is boring to sit down and keep quiet. We can be more animated occasionally.*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*I will try to do what I am doing now.  
I have to continue in my life.*

#### flexibility

*It is important to keep balance. I have various hobbies, and my study. I don't have a strict order of priority, but try to balance my activities.  
It is all right for me to go off on tangents. I take it easy. I tell myself that 'a genius is slow to develop.*

stronger internal locus of control

*I try to absorb as much as possible from wherever and whatever I can.*

critical awareness

*I feel that I'm on a cliff and at the top of my power*

endless possibilities

*Effort. It all depends on our motivation. We can do what ever we want if we have motivation. Really, we are a lump of possibilities.*

self-actualisation

*I always think that basically true English ability cannot be measured by TOFEL, TOEIC, or EIKEN etc. They are just figures or certificates. Until we get out into real situations, we will not know our own English skills. It depends on the practical matter of how we can communicate with people.*

**Kyoko**

Kyoko emphasizes self-expression in English. For her, English is a communication tool for self-expression. Therefore, she seeks opportunities for, and motivates herself through contact with other people. She also reminds herself that she needs to at least maintain her present English level. When she can't make good results in tests, she thinks that she didn't put in enough effort. In this respect, she is a self-directed learner who takes responsibility for her own learning.

goal awareness

*Self-expression. I study English to express something as a means of communication. I would like to be a teacher. I would like my students to know the feeling of happiness that can come from being able to communicate in English.*

weak point awareness

*When I study, there are periods when I strongly feel that I don't like studying.*

*When I concentrate (too exclusively) on some aspects, then I completely miss*

*other aspects.*

reflections

*The time when I began to think English was enjoyable was when I wrote a letter to an ALT in English. I study so that I can communicate.*

self-monitoring

*I think that it (the bad result) is because I don't study hard enough, or I have been lazy.*

*My American e-mail friend asks questions about the things he cannot understand.*

*So, I try hard to explain it in a way he will understand. This kind of thing is useful.*

initiative

*Unless I try to make it happen, it is not so easy to have contact with English. Instead of being given material, I would prefer to have tasks requiring me to express myself.*

conscious effort of continuation

*I would like to continue my effort to keep up my English skills.*

flexibility

*Once I wondered why I couldn't read a particular book. Then, I substituted an easier one and thought that this book was more interesting.*

stronger internal locus of control

*I believe that people count on me as a person who asks questions others would like to ask.*

critical awareness

*Sometimes, even though I am trying my best, I can't make any headway at all. At these times, I feel disappointed, but if I don't do anything about it, I am sure that I will fall behind. If I stop somewhere, it will be over.*

endless possibilities

*If we can successfully maintain motivation, we can progress indefinitely.  
If we put in the time, anything is possible. It all depends on our effort.*

#### self-actualisation

*I try to make use of English as a communication tool.*

*In order to improve my English skills, I need to have a speaking partner and always have opportunities for real communication.*

#### Tooru

Tooru has a unique learning style. He prefers not to think of English as study. He connects his favourite activities to learning English. He also makes opportunities to talk with his friends in English in daily life. In these ways, he uses all of his time connecting with English. He feels the learning of English to be a kind of hobby. The use of English is a second purpose achieved while accomplishing his first purpose. In this way, he does as much as possible in English. For him, English is something to enjoy, and a tool for doing things. He is always looking for new ideas and ways to enjoy himself while learning. He thinks it is important to make his environment an English-speaking one through TV, movies, radio, etc. He is aware that he must keep up his English level.

He does not like exercise books because he believes that language is a means of communication and a mediator for talking and learning something. Also, he wishes to travel around the world. He mentions that it is important to meet people and exchange opinions in order to add to the possibilities you already have. For this reason, he is interested in other language learning as well. He trusts himself and is always positive in what he is doing. He also works at his own pace. When test results are not as good as he expected, he tries to have a break for a while. Then, he tells himself that he will try to do better next time. He thinks that once he quits his language learning, it will over his success with English. He knows he still has a long way to run and tells himself to never give up. Furthermore, he reflects on why he sometimes can't make improvement, and on the efficacy of his way of learning.

#### goal awareness

*I try to find why I need to learn, what the purpose of learning English is for us.*

#### weak point awareness

*At the moment, I can't make progress in my TOEIC score. Whenever I get back bad EIKEN or TOEIC results, which differ from my expectations, I am really shocked. But if I get de-motivated and give up everything, then, it will all be over.*

#### reflections

*I attended an EIKEN BENKYOOKAI (study group) as my own wish. There was no compulsory attendance but we attended of our own free will. We studied very seriously there.*

#### self-monitoring

*When my TOEIC scores are not improved, I think about various reasons as to why it happens, whether my methods are not so good, or maybe, it is a natural stage for me.*

#### initiative

*There is homework, but lots of it is not what I want to do.*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*For the whole of my life, I will never stop learning...until I die.*

*For example, when I pass EIKEN level 1, or TOEIC 900 points, will my learning stop? No. Basically, no highest point exists.*

*I will continue to do as I have been doing so far.*

*I will learn English my whole life. I will never stop. There is no ending point. I would like to take myself to the furthest point of achievement that I can.*

#### flexibility

*Not only do I have to continue my current ways, but I try to add new ideas and always examine various ways to study.*

*I do not care too much (I feel all right) even if it is 'Japanese English'.*

*Something like... it is believed that our English should be as the language*



*native teachers talk, with fluency and good pronunciation.*

stronger internal locus of control

*If I don't make use of English, it is meaningless.*

critical awareness

*I have to put English into myself. I have to make necessity for learning it by myself. Otherwise, my English level will go down. So, I need to maintain my level and not let it slip.*

endless possibilities

*Possibilities? I may not have possibilities..., or I just may not realize my possibilities by myself. When I think about my possibilities, I feel that I will have reached the limit whenever I decide what the possibilities are.*

self-actualisation

*In my case, learning English is not the first purpose, but it is my second purpose.*

*My first purpose is to learn or absorb something such as manga, family computer, or cooking, and English is simply a tool for doing so. In general, Japanese-English is believed to be no good and not able to be understood, but I think it is all right. If we don't talk, it is meaningless to attempt to acquire a language.*

**Ichiroo**

Ichiroo keeps his stimulation by talking with native speakers to see how well he can communicate with them, or comparing his TOEIC scores with other students. He does not want to defeat anyone. He merely motivates himself that he can be better and has the potential to do anything. He believes that he has the ability to put in strenuous effort. When he can't improve his English, Ichiroo tells himself that he just needs to endure (be patient). He is a positive thinker. He has a real purpose to learn English for identified outcomes in his future. He keeps his own pace and follows a step-by-step approach towards his final goal. He is aware of what he needs to do. He thinks that daily conversational skills alone are not enough, and that he needs to acquire the skills to be able to cope with specialized areas.

#### goal awareness

*My final goal is to be similar to native speakers.*

*I have a personal goal. I would like to go abroad and work in an under-developed country. Anyway, I have something to aim at.*

#### weak point awareness

*I can't catch up with the speed of spoken English. I'm not good at maintaining a natural rhythm or long sentences.*

*When I try to check my English ability by talking with a native speaker, probably, I can't make them understand my English. This kind of thing becomes a learning opportunity for me.*

#### reflections

*I would like to spend the same amount of time on listening as I have spent writing and reading so far.*

#### self-monitoring

*I have been improving my reading and writing skills. Actually, my English level as a whole has been improving.*

*My monitoring strategy is to remember: I made a mistake with this aspect in the past, so this time, I have to do such and such.*

#### initiative

*I believe that I know my deficiencies. I have to do the rest on my own.*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*The real objective is to be able to speak English. That remains the only point I have to achieve.*

*When I go through a period when I can't improve my English, I tell myself that it is a time to be patient. I have heard that improving one's English is like climbing stairs. So, I imagine I am on the stairs. If I make more effort, I can take another step up.*

#### flexibility

*Through experiencing and trying various things, my scores will come up naturally, I believe.*

*Once I am able to talk, I can start to correct my mistakes. The more chances I have to talk, the more I will be able to notice my mistakes, naturally.*

*I sometimes break off doing things my own way and try to do what my teacher suggests.*

#### stronger internal locus of control

*In conversation, I try to talk without caring about any mistakes because I know that mistakes are inevitable. I feel sure that I will be able to correct my mistakes after I am able to talk.*

#### critical awareness

*My pride sometimes got hurt. I wondered what I was doing, and then I realized that I had to do my best. I started from an experience of mortification.*

#### endless possibilities

*I believe that I will be able to raise my level higher and higher. So, I never think I can't do anymore. I may not have a natural facility for languages but I have an ability to make effort.*

#### self-actualisation

*In order to keep myself stimulated, I try to talk with English speakers.*

#### **Yasuhiro**

Yasuhiro knows the advantage that having English skills will bring to his life. It is not a big issue but he thinks learning English has priority over spending time doing nothing. He had a difficult time but succeeded in overcoming all his difficulties. At that time, his English level went down because he could not dedicate enough time for his English study. He dreads his ability/achievement level going down, and for this reason, he forces himself to continue his study. On the other hand, he takes a strongly active attitude, not only in his English learning but in his leisure time with friends and his hobbies as well. In this respect, he is a very flexible person who uses his independent time wisely.

#### goal awareness

*Interests and needs - these two are essential.*

*An uncertain goal is no use, but we should set a clear goal for ourselves first.*

#### own weak point awareness

*I am a timid person. That's why I can continue my English learning.*

#### reflections

*When I was a second year student, it (my English level) was at its peak, I think. I took EIKEN pre-1 level. My present level is lower than at that time, maybe. Really, life doesn't always run smoothly, with family matters or my search for future employment etc. Then, I couldn't devote so much time to my English study. My mind got disturbed. These kinds of matters affected my life and consequently my English suffered. However, I wanted to finish these matters off and resume studying English as soon as possible.*

#### self-monitoring

*I have the feeling that I have to respond to my teachers' expectation. Actually, I have been like that. I feel satisfied and I believe that I am learning when I discuss my study with and get feedback from my teacher.*

#### initiative

*Being Active is absolute.*

*I always sit at the front of the class, and ask questions.*

*I think that I can ask questions about anything. I always try to get the most out of my classes.*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*There is nobody who can improve his level without doing anything.*

#### flexibility

*In fact, we are second language learners. So, there are difficulties for us that don't apply to native speakers. We should accept it as part of the learning process.*

*When I failed pre-1 level EIKEN twice I felt something was wrong with me, "I can't do anymore" I thought. I don't think I stopped learning, but I felt sad because I was sure that I had done my best. In the library, I read a book about a successful person's experience.*

*If I stop now, I will be just a usual person. But I still continue - I might be able to improve. I can't achieve my target right now, but one day ... I am optimistic.*

#### stronger internal locus of control

*I was greedy - I was motivated to become attractive through English. Value. English surely has a big potential, which everyone admits. It is useful. So, why not do it?*

*What's the matter with making mistakes? If I make mistakes, I will learn something from them.*

#### critical awareness

*I believe that it is important to be critical. If we don't, our competence level will surely go down like an elevator. In short, when I stop, someone overtakes me, and I go down. This critical sense is becoming more and more important to me.*

#### endless possibilities

*Endless. There is nothing we cannot do, if we try to. As Walt Disney famously said, "if you can dream it, you can do it". It is really true. If we can dream, we can bring it into being.*

#### self-actualisation

*If we can think that English seems to be interesting, that's good. If we can see advantages in knowledge, for example, being able to make hotel reservations in a foreign country in English - it becomes important. If it is more valuable, we study it.*

Kazuko thinks of herself as an optimistic learner. She is confident that she can improve through her own effort. Also, she is aware of learning as something requiring persistence. She believes that teachers understand her as an effortful person, and see potential in her. She thinks that it is enough for her to be accepted and given opportunities for growth. She is motivated by her own dedication to study, goal setting and the influence of others.

#### goal awareness

*A person who has no goal will not improve. But I have a goal. This is the point. In my case, I have a goal, so I have no reason to stop studying. As long as I have my goal, and I pursue it until the end, I have possibilities (many things are possible for me).*

*I have a goal to get a 1st level certificate*

#### weak point awareness

*I have to study properly the things that I should know. It is not enough that I just talk with native speakers. I have to study the finer details thoroughly by reading grammar books or talking to myself.*

#### reflections

*I can make progress automatically - The teacher gave me materials for referral and left me alone. Because I had such a teacher, - someone who didn't meddle but helped me progress - I could improve my skills.*

#### self monitoring

*I always follow the same procedures. I should learn an appropriate amount thoroughly - I should not try to bite off more than I can chew. I need to be beware not to underestimate the difficulty of English. I have to study continuously in order not to forget English.*

#### initiative

*For any given materials, I advise my teacher what I wish to do with them.*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*I have been continuing to increase my skills. I don't want to lose what I have acquired at school. So, I should continue to study. Learning a language is an endless process.*

*We can improve by applying ourselves seriously and aiming to get better little by little over long periods - that is a kind of one of the characteristics of English.*

#### flexibility

*If there are tasks I dislike, I can change/modify them to suit myself.*

#### stronger internal locus of control

*I feel it's hard, but I believe that it is worth doing*

*So I like lessons, which are hard to grasp.*

#### critical awareness

*If I feel it is too hard for me and I stop learning, that's it - everything I have gained so far will disappear.*

#### endless possibilities

*Compared to others - it is a plus for me that I can change myself for sure. Sometimes, I feel inferior. Then, I feel that it is good to feel like that because I realise I can still improve much more.*

*If I don't give up half way, anything must be possible for me.*

*I have confidence in myself that I can improve over the long haul.*

#### self-actualisation

*I would like to talk with various people. All conversation is communication, but for nuance, in order to communicate accurately, grammatical knowledge will be essential. We need to know these nuances exactly because we cannot predict all cases that will arise, emergency situations for example.*

### (3-2) Homogeneous group

Kaori

Kaori had problems and felt depressed when she could not improve her TOEIC scores in her 1st year. She consulted her close friend from her high school days and also asked her teachers what she should do. She reflected on why she could not improve her scores, but she could not get any answers. Her aim has always been to get better marks on tests. She has been thinking about English only in the short term, and has never thought to improve her real English skills. She thinks that she should do TOEIC exercises rather than lessons. She has been trying to find someone better than her in order to determine her weak points. Her evaluation is that she likes reading but also that she does not have enough skills to apply her knowledge to something else. She had to memorize everything in advance to cope with classroom lessons. She has begun to hate her strategy because it seems not to be effective.

goal awareness

*I would like to have an English-related job, to be a high school teacher.  
I believe that what we can teach is very different from what we know  
When I hate studying, I tell myself that I can't achieve my goal without doing  
this now.*

weak point awareness

*I don't have the skills to apply to non-memory questions. Until now I have  
got my test scores by remembering things, which I have already done in the  
textbooks. I think my way of learning is useless at university level. I can  
do things, which I have memorized. If it isn't something which can just be  
remembered, I am not able to cope with it.*

self-monitoring

*Everyone else has improved. I was not so low at first, but haven't been able  
to progress from my starting level. I have been doing my best, and feel that  
I have got used to English as well. But my score didn't improve, it even  
went down. What should I do? Where was I going wrong? Something  
other than previewing, or class attitude... those other sorts of things? Was  
there something else? Are there any completely different reasons? I was*



*thinking about myself. I didn't know what to do. I just got depressed.*

initiative

*I have never failed to do my assignments. But probably, my teachers think of me as a passive student. There are distinctions between active and non-active people in the class. Nobody can say that I am one of the active ones. I am quiet in the class. It is not that I do not think about the topics, but I do not talk.*

passive

*I know that if I become actively involved in English conversational practices, my English can improve. In group-work situations, I always wait for somebody else to take leadership.*

short term effort

*I have never thought seriously how to improve my English skills. I have only been thinking about English in short bursts - just working for each test. I have been getting good marks by remembering texts and words for tests.*

restriction

*If I change my method, it may work well or it may become worse. I worry about it and I'm unable to change my style. So, I always study in the same way.*

weaker internal locus of control

*Considering... study it is important, but I am not doing as much as I think I should.*

critical awareness

*I have been trying to find someone better than me, and establish which skills I'm lacking.*

*I need to preview the lesson very thoroughly in order not to have any problems.*

*I cannot improve if I continue as I am now. I have to do something beyond classroom learning. I believe that doing just enough study (to survive) does not enable me to make any improvement. I have to suffer a little. I have*

*to be stricter with myself.*

uncertainty

*I have realized my way of learning is useless at university level, so I have started hating the way I'm doing things.*

*I don't have confidence as to whether or not I can do it without having previously learned it.*

*I asked my teacher (for feedback), and he said I was doing all right, but I am wondering.*

English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*If I were an active talker, I could improve my English.*

*I wonder whether I should study TOEIC or EIKEN exercises books in addition to my lessons.*

Tsuyako

She believes that TOEIC scores and skills to use English are the same. She believes that it is her fault if she cannot make progress or cannot get certificates. She reflects on her deficiencies, and tries to solve her problems by herself. In spite of her wish to have English fluency, she seems not to get actively involved in conversational classes. She does not wish to stand out from others. She worries about people looking at her. She feels herself to be passive and lenient on herself. Sometimes, she does not know how to say in English what she is trying to say. Other times, her partner is Japanese, so she uses Japanese instead of English.

short term goal

*I don't make any plan*

*I decide what to do each day*

*I don't want my scores to go down*

weak point awareness

*I can do reading and writing practice by myself in my room. But I cannot do speaking practice alone. Speaking is the most important. I use Japanese with my partner in my conversational class. I feel strange when I talk with*

*a Japanese partner in English.*

reflections

*I need to reflect on my shortcomings even if I did my best. I need to reflect on myself and find the reason(s) for not doing as well as I need to.*

*Even if I think I did my best, it is still necessary to re-examine my faults.*

self-monitoring

*At first, I reflect on myself and determine the cause of my problems. Then, if (I think) I can solve the problem by myself, I do such things as go to the library to get a CD etc. I can study by myself.*

passive

*I ask questions after lessons.*

*In the conversational class, I take the easy way out and talk in Japanese. I have a passive side in me.*

restriction

*Japanese people try to talk in Japanese English. I believe that you can't make yourself understood in such Japanese-English.*

weaker internal locus of control

*If I try to force myself to study, I start not wanting to. So, I prefer to do my favourite things when I study. If it is a plus for me, it is the best.*

critical awareness

*I believe that the ones, who succeed, are those who consciously or unconsciously are always thinking about English in their daily life.*

*We need to make the effort ourselves to get chances to talk with foreign teachers*

English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*For me, improving TOEIC scores and being able to talk with foreigners are the same thing.*

Sumiko

She believes that she keeps her lessons the basic constituent of study by doing previews and reviews, and by taking notes of the teachers' lecture. She thinks that she enjoys and likes English because of the influence of her past teacher. She wishes to be a native-like English speaker one day. She values listening to English everyday. Sometimes she talks to herself in English. She prefers American society or movies to Japanese ones, but also is aware of the need to know about Japan when learning the language or culture of other countries. She is aware of the long commitment required for language learning and tries to tell herself not to be impatient. She believes that the effects of her study will appear later but not straightaway. In this way, she is a flexible thinker. When she feels lazy, she reminds herself that successful people are studying/doing something while she is not. In this way, she stimulates herself. She sets a small goal each time.

#### weak point awareness

*I was told that we need 1000 hours of listening in the same way that babies learn by listening naturally. Therefore, our English learning time is not enough at all.*

#### reflections

*When I was young, I got to know the enjoyment of learning English in my English class.*

*Because of the teacher, I have become fond of English.*

#### self-monitoring

*First I think of what I want to say, and then I try to say it in English.*

*I believe that my listening skills have been improving*

#### initiative

*Inside/outside class, I try to make time for listening to English each day*

*All lessons are useful*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*Generally, we cannot improve our English level by doing whatever we want.*

*The only thing we can do is put in effort.*

#### flexibility

*I try not to get upset even if my study doesn't appear to lead to good results straightaway*

weaker internal locus of control

*Sometimes, all day I was thinking about what would be a good Japanese translation for English sentences*

*If I hear something new and useful while someone's talking, I take a memo of such expressions.*

*I try to use Japanese as little as possible.*

*If I complete the lesson previews, I will not have time for my listening exercises.*

critical awareness

*If I don't study, my level will go down rapidly.*

endless possibilities

*The effect will come a long time from now.*

short sight goal

*I set small goals each time.*

English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*I wish to acquire the same English, which American people use to talk with each other.*

Aiko

Aiko worries about her English skills nervously. She expresses impatience when she does not understand something during listening or reading tasks. In this matter, she is concerned about her own proficiency rather than communicative ability to talk with others.

When challenging tasks are set by a reliable teacher, she feels herself to be an active participant. Aiko is aware of students' self-responsibility. She feels she must show initiative for her own learning. She confirms that it is not a teacher's job to think about their students' work, but rather it should be the students themselves to think about their own study.

weak point awareness

*When I don't understand something, I feel impatient that I cannot understand.*

reflections

*The first TOEIC score was quite good. Then, I thought that I was suited to English.*

self-monitoring

*I wonder why I cannot understand. In daily life, I stay in touch with English, and feel that I have not been studying enough.*

*I would like to continue to attend examinations. (EIKEN)*

initiative

*It is not right that teachers always have to prepare interesting materials for English classes. Basically, it is the students who are going to study.*

*I am more eager to do the lessons in which we have to do many pages per day and the teacher talks exclusively in English.*

conscious effort of continuation

*Although I don't need English for my employment, I would like to continue to learn it.*

flexibility

*If I can improve my English, I would like to. If I cannot maintain my level, it is all right, but...*

weaker internal locus of control

*In daily life, I always feel angry with myself if I don't understand what they say on TV or so on. So, the times when I'm unmotivated don't last so long.*

*I am very sensitive to things related to English.*

critical awareness

*I have drifted a little away from English recently. I have not done enough study so I feel that I don't have the necessary patience.*

endless possibilities

*Now, it is a challenge for me. The challenge is to see how much I can achieve.*

*I should have possibilities in mind for my English learning the same, as everyone should have.*

#### English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*(The possibilities) mean that the more I listen, the more the extent of my understanding can be increased. Also, my ability to speak, read or write can be increased and my vocabulary too.*

#### Asami

Asami's wish is to be a fluent speaker of English. She thinks indistinctly that English skills will be useful for her future. She admires her classmate who can speak English very well. But her objectives seem to be not so clear. In contrast to her vague admiration for English fluency, she is specifically concerned with TOEIC scores and EIKEN tests. Her goal is to be able to get a TOEIC score of more than 700 and pass EIKEN preliminary level 1. She believes that she knows her own weak points in the way she learns English. Therefore, she thinks that she must rectify those particular skills. She also thinks that she has been trying harder than others, but still not enough for her own liking. Her awareness is directed towards the improvement of her English skill. However, there is not enough concern about language for the purpose of communication with others.

#### goal awareness

*My final goal is to (be able to) say whatever I want on any topic in any situation.*

#### short sight goal

*I did best in a lower level class in my 1st year. I tried to maintain my level and set my goal as gaining higher scores in TOEIC. At the moment, I would like to pass EIKEN pre-1 level and get more than 700 points in TOEIC.*

#### weak point awareness

*I need to improve my vocabulary retention skills.*

*I analyse my weak point.*

*Analysing my TOEIC results or EIKEN results; I see I score poorly in the same parts. I don't have enough reading comprehension skills.*

#### reflections

*At first, I was doing my best in a lower level class.*

*In the placement test, I had to explain the picture, but I could not say anything. I was shocked.*

*I thought that I didn't know how to express myself, how to say something.*

#### self-monitoring

*I try to continue attending TOEIC or EIKEN tests.*

*I am sometimes depressed a lot. At such times, I try to stop for a while. I don't want to do anything and I stop listening to the radio for a week. Then, after I have taken a break for a while, I feel that I should continue it. Something like that.*

#### initiative

*During conversational classes, I thought that this type of class was necessary but if students are left completely alone, there is no progress - just talking freely.*

*I am not sure what we should do, but it would be better if we could progress. I ask questions more than others.*

#### conscious effort of continuation

*I need to continue my study as I have been doing so far.*

*I should not stop.*

#### flexibility

*I sometimes try to change my way of doing things.*

#### weaker internal locus of control

*I diligently do a little everyday. I am making more effort than people around me but still I am not making enough effort.*

#### endless possibilities



*I'm sure that even high level people in the class went through the same stage as me.*

*I wonder if it really is true that we can improve our English if we listen to it every day. I have read about this in a book. Anyway, I just continue listening while I have faith in my possibilities.*

#### uncertainty

*I wonder if I might have already reached my final English level without being able to improve anymore.*

#### English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*Comparing my TOEIC score with when I entered university, my present score is double. My peak was when I had completed a TOEIC preparation exercise book. So, if I repeat this method, I might improve my score.*

#### Mayumi

Her school marks are excellent and TOEIC results are also high. But as for what frustrates her, she still has lots of problems speaking English. It may be that her problems come from her own attitude; she seems to have set up a barrier, which blocks her improvement.

#### short sight goal

*I had a time when I could not improve my TOEIC scores so easily.*

#### weak point awareness

*I still have problems expressing myself freely. So, I wish I could say whatever I want smoothly.*

#### reflections

*In my 3rd year, I had an interpretation class. When I was participating in this class, my TOEIC scores improved and I could understand English better.*

#### self-monitoring

*I think if I continue doing this kind of exercise, I might improve my level.  
I should take TOEIC or EIKEN examinations to check the results of my study.*

passivate

*At least, I do the work given to me.  
I answer when I am asked questions.*

conscious effort of continuation

*I would like to continue as now.*

restriction

*I worry about (the opinions of) people around me. I feel I should not do or say anything wrong. If I cannot make myself understood, I cannot continue the conversation. If I am focused on speaking accurately, I cannot say anything.*

weaker internal locus of control

*I think I am doing my best. But it is still not enough.*

uncertainty

*I would like to believe that I can do what I aim for if I make more effort.  
I wish I could improve a little or at least maintain my level while at university.*

English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*I should listen to English as much as possible and practice speaking it out loud. I should get used to the speed. I should remember more words and get (better) vocabulary skills. I should increase my grammatical knowledge.*

(4) LANGUAGE

#### (4-1) Heterogeneous group

Hideo

##### Classroom learning

In classroom lessons, he wishes to have a place for speaking and expressing his own thoughts.

Hideo thinks that learners should make each lesson valuable by trying to absorb whatever possible. He emphasizes the importance of the learner's own responsibility, enthusiasm, and motivation. Particularly, Hideo is aware of the need for leadership to make a good atmosphere in the class. He thinks that he should take the role of motivating and even influencing class members.

He wishes to have a place in the class for producing language such as presentation work or discussions. He thinks that both teachers and students should be responsible for the organization of classroom learning. He says that if students have (opportunities for) active participation then outside and inside classroom learning will connect with each other more effectively.

##### Effective language learning strategies

Beyond formal learning, he believes that he should put himself into English environment as much as possible by using various learning materials around him. He emphasizes that opportunities to use English and an English learning environment can be made by learners in Japan. Hideo is skilfully using the available environment and attempts to create 'his own' English world. He tries to expose himself to English in his daily life.

*I take opportunities to be in contact with English as much as possible. It is important for me to expose myself to an environment where I can always use and listen to English. I make my own environment artificially like an English speaking country. We can do various things for English learning. The most important thing is how well we can use the resources around us.*

Kyoko

##### Classroom learning

Kyoko thinks that students need to have an atmosphere where they are able to give voice to their opinions in the class. She believes that classroom

while learning should not just be fun, there should be room for students to take the initiative. She does not like unilateral lessons in which information only flows from the teacher. She asks for teachers to make space for students to think and express themselves.

She admits that classroom learning is the means of basic skill acquisition. Kyoko's classroom awareness is directed more at her own learning itself rather than making a good atmosphere as Hideo tries to do.

*It is boring if only the teacher talks and it is all just information given in a one-sided manner. We need a cushion. I would like to have more students' work. Not just things we enjoy at the time either, but I really want to have classes in which we always tackle something.*

*I can learn grammar and language basics in the classroom, not only by taking notes, but also keeping memos of how teachers express themselves.*

#### Effective language learning strategies

As for outside learning, she suggests authentic language use such as reading newspapers, e-mail exchange, and talking with native teachers? She hopes to keep her English skills through effort.

#### Tooru

##### Classroom learning

In classroom learning, he feels that his own time is taken away from him. He feels the lessons are not effective and even a heavy burden (interruption of his own learning). He wishes to study in his own way and at his own pace. Therefore, he is not good at keeping in step with others. His ideal lessons would be individual independent work in the class. On the other hand, he believes that learner-centred lessons should be organised, for example it is better for the students to do something together using English instead of learning English in isolation. He wishes to have something like debates or discussions to practice using English naturally.

*We feel lessons are a heavy burden, because there is lots of homework, and most of it is stuff we don't want to do.*

*I believe that there are two reasons why we might not be able to talk: one is having nothing to say and the other is an atmosphere where it is not easy to*

*talk.*

*Everyone believes that English must be spoken fluently with native-like pronunciation*

*but I do not mind Japanese-English.*

*There is no meaning in learning a language if we don't talk*

#### Effective language learning strategies

Tooru believes he needs to be in touch with English in the class. He sometimes feels pressure from others when he tries to talk English something like standing out. But he believes that there is no meaning (being a language student) without having opportunities to practice speaking. He does not mind that his English is not like native speakers' pronunciation. He makes no connection between what happens inside and outside the classroom. He thinks that successful learners do work hard outside the classroom. He believes many people focus on listening. He is a very independent learner.

#### Ichiroo

##### Classroom learning

Ichiroo sets objectives for himself in his mind. He expects of classroom learning something, which he cannot do on his own. Classroom learning for him is the place where he tries to solve his problems. He tries to concentrate on the lessons. For conversational classes, he talks as much as possible. He believes that amount of talking practice he does is connected to his reading and writing skill improvement, and when he improves his skills there will naturally be a reduction of his mistakes as well. So, he believes that he should talk without worrying too much about his grammatical mistakes. Ichiroo believes that effective learners are active participants in the class. He thinks that everyone should work at their own pace according to their own level.

*In the class, there are people who are at various levels, but we are all studying together.*

*So, each person needs to consider their own personal level and work on their own*

*I don't have any complaints. I have no room for them because I concentrate*

*very hard on listening to the lessons*

*I don't need word tests in the class because I can remember words by myself*

#### Effective language learning strategies

Ichiroo is doing a 'Hearing Marathon' on the suggestion of his teacher. He would like to spend the same amount of time on listening practice as he spent on writing and reading. He believes that increasing one's vocabulary improves one's listening skill. Also, he thinks he should memorize unknown words. Also, he believes that if he can improve his listening skills, he will be able to speak out more. He also values previewing and reviewing the lessons. He feels however that various learning activities other than the lessons should be done for immersion in and stimulation for English. He also believes it is important to know one's own weak points and compensate for them (by studying) outside the class.

*I remember things I didn't previously know. I need to remember words. (e)  
This will assist with reading or writing skills and if we can acquire the  
knowledge, we can be aware of mistakes*

Yasuhiro

#### Classroom learning

Yasuhiro expects lessons to be useful opportunities for him. He does not like one-way lessons. For him, one of his favourite lessons was the Business English class in which he reads companies' annual reports. The authentic topic was closely related to his interest. In class, he always sits at the front of the classroom. He tries to ask questions and along with his friend Hideo he tries to make good atmosphere.

*I would be happy if I had lessons, which expand out more and more from  
questions I/we ask like the branches of a tree.*

#### Effective language learning strategies

He considers his lessons as basic learning opportunities. He always previews and reviews the lessons. He prepares in advance to ask questions related to his key-points.

Outside the classroom, he continues to listen to the radio program that he

has listened to everyday since junior high school. He makes a distinction between learning English and doing other things. He thinks that concentration is important.

### Kazuko

#### Classroom learning

Kazuko thinks that classroom learning is the place for stimulation of interest. She prefers to have lots of work to do in her lessons, and she wishes to have hard/challenging work. She also expresses her wish to have lessons from which she can recognize her improvement. From her excerpts, Kazuko is very motivated to learn and needs to enforce her learning with stimulation and support.

*It is ideal to have lessons that are very hard to grasp without previewing. I wish to have a class which makes me conscious of my improvement, for example - lessons in which I feel I participated better this week than last week in how much I said or I how accurately I conveyed my opinion.*

#### Effective language learning

Kazuko thinks continuous everyday rhythm for learning is important. As well as Kyoko or Yasuhiro, she also thinks that classroom learning is for gaining basic skills such as vocabulary building. However she believes that she needs more in-put (receptive) skills such as listening and reading authentic English rather than out-put (productive) skills. Kazuko believes that she would like to acquire English naturally by reading extensively. She emphasizes the importance of her strategy to get main ideas from reading. She believes that a firm grasp of grammar is very important to make her language skills effective. She feels that she must study grammar more seriously to be able to cope with real situations.

*Rather than trying to remember grammar by using grammar textbooks, it is better to get sentence structures into your own head naturally. I believe that naturally acquired sentences will be refined like real English. Without checking each time, we can guess the key points. Through such reading, we can acquire English naturally. I think it is a good idea to use such a practice in the classroom, but even if we are given lots of*

*information and articles, we can't read them if we are not interested in them.*

#### (4-2) Homogeneous group

Kaori

##### Classroom learning

In the classroom, Kaori thinks an active attitude as important, such as asking questions or taking leadership in group work, even though her own attitude is passive. Also, she thinks that if she tries to speak more and more, her conversational skills might improve. Actually though, she is very quiet in her class. She would like to know how to explain things well because she thinks there is a difference between knowing something herself and being able to teach it to someone. She believes that attending, understanding and reviewing the lessons makes a difference.

*If we review each lesson properly, it (the effectiveness of lessons) will be very different.*

*Previewing and attending lessons regularly - It is central to our ability to understand lessons.*

##### Effective learning strategies

She is aware of effective learning through using authentic materials outside the classroom setting. However, her learning seems to focus on TOEIC score improvement and class exercises only.

*Outside the classroom, there is a clear difference in English expression skills between those who read newspapers, do listening and speaking practices with tapes, listen to radio programs and watch TV and those who do not.*

Tsuyako

##### Classroom learning

Tsuyako thinks that speaking practices are the most important for her. She feels that she would like to do something in class, which she cannot do on her own. She wants to have opportunities to talk with foreigners in the class. She believes that Japanese teachers should not teach conversational classes



because they are limited in their English.

*I can do writing and reading practices by myself. But I can't do speaking practices by myself.*

*I would like to do something in a specialized area of study, which I can't do by myself.*

*I preview and attend the lessons. Then, I listen to the lesson and try to understand what I couldn't understand in my preview.*

*We need a place for asking questions and clarifying our understanding in the class.*

#### Effective language learning strategies

Tsuyako thinks that she should study listening and speaking more. She watches movies trying not to look at the sub-titles. When she sees native teachers, she tries to talk with them. She likes Western movies and music, so she listens to them. She believes that she should not force herself to do uninteresting things, and it is best to learn what she likes to do.

Tsuyako also believes that willingness and an active attitude are important to improve such English skills as asking questions and talking with native-speakers of English. She believes imitation of native speech is an effective strategy. Outside the classroom, she thinks the ones who will succeed are those who are interested in English and maintain consciousness of English learning in their daily life.

#### Sumiko

##### Classroom learning

Sumiko says that she wants useful things from her lessons. She cannot stand boring one-way lessons. She says that students need to have time to think about their own opinions. As for classroom learning, she wants to listen to English as much as possible. Also, she wants to have opportunities to express her opinions. She feels enjoyment when she gets such opportunities.

#### Effective learning strategies

Sumiko strongly emphasizes the importance of listening practices in her daily life such as radio programs or movies in English. She watches movies

without translated sub-titles. She too is doing the 'Hearing Marathon' (1000 hours listening) correspondence program as Ichiroo is. She thinks it is important to concentrate on lessons. She also mentions the strategy of trying to pick up unknown expressions and take memos of them. She believes that improving conversational skills depends on effort and the awareness of not using Japanese.

Aiko

#### Classroom learning

Aiko says that, in her opinion, whether students behave passively or not is entirely dependant on students' interest in the class. If students are not interested in the class, they will behave passively. Moreover, she seems to adopt her attitude depending on the nature of the class. Aiko admits she takes a different attitude depending on the class, so for example, she tends to be de-motivated in a class where unchallenging tasks are given. In these situations, she behaves in a way where it is not sure whether she is there or not. For example, when she is given a topic in her conversational class that is meaningless for her, she feels bored and uses Japanese.

*In the classroom, if the lesson (material) is challenging, students will have no time to care about others, and passive students will fall in with the active class atmosphere.*

#### Effective learning strategies

Aiko believes that it is important to get in touch with authentic English as much as possible. For example, she thinks that it is most important to listen out for English news on TV or radio. Also, she thinks that successful learners do something extra to their lessons beyond the tasks given them by their teachers. In conversational classes, she believes the most effective learner is someone who does not worry too much about what other students think of them, although she does.

*I would like to get in touch with authentic English as much as possible anyway.*

*For example, even if I cannot understand it very well, it is most important to try to listen to English news on the radio. If I can understand it, I am very*

*happy.*

*Successful learners do extra things, such as checking unknown words in the dictionary and getting other usages of the words.*

Asami

#### Classroom learning

Asami has been doing the translation work diligently every time, quite well. She liked the Debate & Discussion class, because she felt she could see her progress clearly. In the class, students practiced using new words related to the various topics each week. She felt her improvement not only in her vocabulary skills, but also in her debating skills.

She believes that basic knowledge (of English) was acquired at high school, but that she was not given enough skills on how to use the knowledge.

#### Effective language learning strategies

Asami continues to listen to the English conversational program on the radio everyday. She believes that listening has been a big part of her learning. She thinks that she needs more opportunities for keeping in touch with English speakers. To improve, she wonders if it is necessary to go abroad. On the other hand, she is afraid to make contact with someone whom she does not know because she is not sure that she will be able to express herself fully in such correspondence as letters or e-mail.

Mayumi

#### Classroom learning

She always attends classes, regularly. In the classroom, she is very quiet and behaves in such a way that her teachers are not able to readily recognize her. She is shy and does not like to get the teacher's attention either. However, she believes that it is important to participate actively in the class as well as to concentrate on listening to the class.

#### Effective language learning strategies

Her strategies are concentrated on grammar, vocabulary exercises and listening. Her focus is on improving her TOEIC scores. When she can't improve the score, she feels that she should have made more effort.

#### (5) COLLABORATION

#### (5-1) Heterogeneous Group

Hideo thinks that it is up to students to achieve their goal. He believes that the teacher's role is to give mental support for their students to head in good directions.

Hideo is aware of collaboration between teachers and students and among students. Regarding the relationship between a teacher and their students, Hideo suggests that a solid relationship should be established on the basis of trust that both parties have in each other. Moreover, Hideo thinks that a 'give and take' relationship is needed, in which teachers not only give something to students, but also teachers learn from their students. He thinks both teachers and students have a responsibility to make their lessons useful.

*I value each lesson.*

*Not only does a teacher give something to the students, but also the teacher can learn from the students. It is best if we have a give and take relationship. Ideal classes are when the students are responsible for doing something. So, I think that both the teacher and the students are responsible for the class.*

*A relationship of trust needs to be built firmly between teachers and students.*

*I make the effort to make the classroom atmosphere better. I have been stimulated by others, and we have encouraged each other. If there are many motivated students, the class atmosphere becomes better. So, we should influence each other (positively).*

*The teacher's role is to lead their students in better directions, not only teaching us but also giving us mental support. Whether we can achieve our goal or not, it is up to us. Teachers can help us to keep our motivation, and make us aware of ourselves and our potential.*

#### Kyoko

Kyoko says that classmates should try to co-operate with and encourage each other. She is aware that classroom is the place for learning together and influencing each other.

She requests that teachers make space for students to think and express themselves.

Tobru

Tobru says that the teacher's role is very important, but he thinks that the role should be assisting or providing a little help as a supporter. He expects that Japanese and native teachers' roles are different. He would like to go to the teacher who is a specialist in the area, which he is interested in. He says that the teacher should be cooperative.

*From one teacher to another, they all have different areas of specialization/expertise. So, if I become interested in their area, I will ask them*

*I expect Japanese teachers and native-speaking teachers to have different roles*

*In the class, they should be supportive - we need help and cooperation*

Ichiroo

He too respects teachers' longer and wider experience. He expects their ideas and information will be useful in his future.

Yasuhiro

Yasuhiro requests that teachers do research on what their students are interested in. He has self-directed thinking, but also considers teachers' expectations and encouragement as very important to keep up his motivation

*If my teacher cares about me, I feel that I need to do my best. I would like to live up to my teacher's expectation. I feel worthwhile if I have a good relationship with my teacher.*

Kazuko

Kazuko expects teachers to act as as a facilitator. Although the teacher's influence is very important, she believes that learners can improve by themselves if they are stimulated to do so. At the same time she feels that there is no meaning for her when she is inundated with learning materials

and teachers cannot force their students to study.

*I think it is all right to do the materials, which my teacher has chosen. Teachers cannot do much. They can only improve us by correcting our wrong points. - stimulate us - that's enough.*

#### (5-2) Homogeneous Group

##### Kaori

Kaori thinks that teachers can help and advise how to improve her weak points because teachers have more experience than her. She thinks that it is useful for her to tap into teachers' experience or ideas. As for the teacher's role, she expects more direction.

*I would like teachers to talk about their experiences or what they have done so far.*

*I would like my teacher to lead me and help me decide what to do.*

*Do I have to find my own weak points by myself? I want teachers to help and direct me how to do better. Because teachers have rich experience, they know better than me. I would like to know how they learned in the past, too.*

*Teachers have more experience than we have. So, in that respect, I would like them to lead us.*

*When the teacher checked my homework and praised me, I thought the teacher knew how well I was doing.*

*Teacher told us to plan for the test and since then I have done so.*

##### Tsuyako

Tsuyako thinks that teachers regard her as a normal student - not bad, but not excellent either. She thinks of herself as being the same as people around her.

She wishes to be able to talk actively with foreigners as an equal. She wishes to have teachers who listen to students' problems and respond to them. She thinks that it is better to have a relationship between teachers and students in which they both teach and learn from each other. She feels that it is better to have equal status/mutual respect whereby students attend the lessons and teachers listen to the students.

### Sumiko

Sumiko expects teachers to tell her about English from different perspectives. Teachers can tell her various things from their experience, which she could not otherwise have known by herself.

### Aiko

For the teacher's role, she expects a teacher as a helper or a supporter who can motivate her. She mentions the importance of teachers having empathy with students. She also expects the teacher to function as a resource person who can help learners by giving them necessary information. She liked the Debate & Discussion class. The class was challenging and also involved collaboration with fellow class members. Also, she feels her teacher understands her. The teacher knows that she really wishes to be active but at the same time feels hesitant.

### Asami

She expects the teacher's role to be that of an advisor. This does not mean just giving advice whenever she needs something, but also telling her effective ways of learning.

### Mayumi

For the teacher's role, she expects an adviser who can give effective learning strategies from their own rich experiences. Her attitude is obedient and faithful; she dutifully accepts her teachers' instructions. Therefore, she is evaluated as a quiet but good student.

*I do whatever my teachers set. I follow them. It is the most suitable way for me.*

## Appendix 5-2: From Hideo & Mayumi's Self-Report (Two Different Types of Learners' Beliefs)

### Questions:

#### Beliefs about language learning

1. In what ways do you believe you can improve your language skills?
2. What are your reasons for studying English?
3. What, in your opinion, should successful students do and how should they be inside and outside the classroom?

#### Beliefs about the role of the teacher and classroom expectations

4. What should be the role of the teacher so that you can achieve your goal of learning English?
5. How should language class time be used to achieve your goal of learning English?

#### Self-motivation strategies

6. Have you developed any ways of motivating yourself to learn English?
7. When you have difficulties and problems achieving your goal, how do you try to solve them?
8. Please give your thoughts on the following matters. Try to explain them in detail.

*"Many times students have difficulty studying on their own at home because there are other more interesting things they would rather do such as watching TV or going out with friends. What strategies do you use for motivating yourself to complete your work under these circumstances? What do you do if you are trying to achieve a certain goal?"*

#### Beliefs about the self

9. What do you believe your teachers' expectations are of you? Why do you think so?
10. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner? Please describe in ten sentences how you see yourself in terms of being a Japanese language learner studying English. Start from "I am a".



## **Hideo's Self-Report**

- 1. It's a secret – as previously said, there are suitable ways for each individual. In order to look for the way suitable for oneself, one has to learn English for a while. Then, through the process of learning the language, we have to find the way. In order to immerse myself as much as possible in an English language environment, I make an effort by listening to radio programs, and the news in English, or by watching movies.*
- 2. The reason is simply that it is necessary for my future. I have a wish to study abroad at postgraduate level in an English speaking country. Therefore, I need to use English as a tool in my daily life.*
- 3. After all, I believe that the individual person who is successful at learning English is the one who succeeds in finding suitable ways of learning. Before thinking about what sort of things lead to success, I believe that sustaining motivation to learn English is an important factor. The person who does not give up and continues until the end will succeed. This is the ironbound rule of success.*
- 4. Probably, the role a teacher can take is changeable depending on the relationship with the students. At first, the teacher's role is to increase the students' motivation to learn. And it is necessary to guide students directly and successfully towards their goal. For this, it is vital to build trust between the teacher and the students.*
- 5. Ideally, lessons are needed which make all students participate actively and motivate them. One idea would be for teachers to give opportunities for the students to practise their spoken skills (being able to speak out). Through discussions, presentations, debates, they should give students the environment to use English in a more sophisticated manner.*
- 6. I am clearly aware of the reason why I am learning English. And it is necessary to have the purpose and the continuous feeling of accomplishing it. The above awareness of both the purpose and the goal*

*are the basis of keeping my motivation strong.*

7. *At first, I return to the basic point. I try to look at my attitude towards English or my purpose, again. Then, I make a fresh start to tackle it again. Also, I try to solve my problems by talking to my close friends or getting the teachers' advice.*
8. *I tell myself that I need to make an effort in order to achieve my future dream. Or, I think about my parents who pay high educational expenses for me, and my friends who are going to go far in life, as I will. Probably, it is the most important to be always aware of my own dream, (purpose).*
9. *One teacher said to me, "you are powerful and have guts". These words were very inspirational for me and made me happy. I am not sure, but I think that teachers think of me as a hard worker with strong motivation. Also, I think that I am recognized as being a little exceptional. I don't know the reason very well, but I guess that I show my enthusiasm towards English learning in my usual studies and daily life.*
10.
  - 1) *I am still immature. I still need to make lots of effort.*
  - 2) *I need to participate more in the places where English is used.*
  - 3) *I need to have more contact with foreign people.*
  - 4) *I should make more mistakes through using English.*
  - 5) *I should have a clearer objective for foreign language learning.*
  - 6) *I should devise more ways to learn a foreign language.*
  - 7) *I should make more effort to make foreign friends.*
  - 8) *I believe that I am a learner who has a firm purpose and proceed with my English learning towards the purpose.*
  - 9) *I believe that I am a learner who makes considers his mother tongue equally important.*
  - 10) *I believe that I can keep my own pace up and learn.*

## Mayumi's Self-Report

1. *I think that I could acquire English skills by my everyday effort and memorization practice. As I have had vocabulary tests in every lesson from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> year, I was memorizing little by little while travelling to school. Also, at least, by the day before the lesson, I never failed to preview – look over the English (sentences, words, etc.) related with the lesson and check unknown words in a dictionary. In that way, I believe that I have gained my English skills. In my 3<sup>rd</sup> year, when I got a score of 735 in TOEIC IP, I felt a little bit more confident in my English. Until then, 500 was the maximum score I could get. My reading skills were better in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year. I took some reading and writing lessons, but I was the most successful in interpreting lessons. Because of this, I believe that I improved my listening skills a lot. Until then, I had not listened to authentic English except the English language assistants' conversations. Also, I realized how slow they were talking to make us understand more easily. Really, I caught up with this lesson with great difficulty and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, it was very hard. It went without saying that the speed of English was so quick, I suffered because I could not resort to using Japanese. I still remember the time when I felt as if I were actually engaging in conversation.*

*If I try to improve my English more, I think that I need to be able to practise my conversation skills. Even if I can read, write and translate somehow, I think that I am not good at listening and speaking. In TOEIC, we can see the standard of our listening skills and reading skills. But even if I can get quite good scores in the tests, I sometimes feel that I don't know how much I can actually handle, and I don't have enough confidence. Except in tests, I can do writing and reading with a dictionary or a reference book even if it takes a lot of time. But as for conversation, I cannot predict or prepare because it is impossible to know what the topic will be or when the conversation will occur. Even if I don't understand, I cannot ask so many times, and there is no time to think about the grammar. In the end, I feel impatient and cannot think of any words.*

*In the first place, I tried to convey what I wished to say by using gestures or something. I tried to share my thoughts very hard, but*

*couldn't express myself very often. I felt as if I was no good to my partner and frustrated with myself as well. Then, I think that I gradually stopped trying. Instead, I started trying to cheat. When I couldn't reply to my partner because I didn't know the proper expressions, I smiled it away. After all, I might not have enough English skills to express myself. In addition, I feel that I am acting out when I speak in English. I feel that it is not myself. So, it needs plenty of courage for me to speak English to a Japanese partner. I am not sure whether it is because I feel ashamed of myself or I don't have confidence in my English. The list is endless to think how I could improve my English.*

2.
  - *I thought that it would be good if I could talk with foreigners.*
  - *I thought that I would like to experience foreign countries*
  - *I thought that it would be convenient if I could use English for my trips abroad.*
  - *I thought that I liked English. That's why I wanted to learn more.*
  - *I thought that I liked movies. That's why it would be good if I can understand without translations.*
  - *I thought that I would be able to understand the meaning of English songs.*
  - *I thought that I wished to know the foreigners' way of thinking, their sense of values, customs, which are different from the Japanese and this would be possible through studying English.*

3. *(\* From a third person's view: objectively viewing)*

*In conversational classes, (successful) people talk actively or speak up without worrying about their mistakes. They talk with confidence. They don't worry. They are usually good at talking Japanese as well.*

*In lecture-type lessons, they answer even if they make mistakes when they are called. They do at least their given work properly. Anyway, I believe that successful people have their own opinions or ask questions.*

4. *My goal is to speak in English, and be able to improve my TOEIC scores.*

*In order to do this, I would like to request teachers to make a comfortable atmosphere in conversational classes (such as doing games or a quiz). In my case, it is easier not to be noticed. I prefer small classes together with people who are of a similar level and personality as me.*

*Also, in other classes, I expect to be given the teachers' advice or learning methods (strategies) from their experience. It is better to tell us clearly what the class' aims are. It is better if I can sometimes hear the teachers' own experience. I would like them to organise the class so we are not bored.*

5. *I prefer work to be given to us taking into account the teachers' ideas of setting up times to do the work and of a suitable level.*

*I think that it might be passive but I sometimes do not know how I can improve my*

*conversational skills, or get good TOEIC scores. So, at least, I believe that teachers*

*are telling us some ideas through classes. I try to do it in this way, and if it does not work, then I will think about it. Anyway, at first, it is easier to do whatever teachers give me.*

6.
  - *Checking my skills by attending TOEIC tests or EIKEN*
  - *Observing my friends are studying or talking to them*
  - *Watching movies*

7. *It is very hard for me to improve my TOEIC scores. In such time, I get so depressed. Or I re-fresh myself without studying and enjoy myself. And then, I apply myself again. I also reflect to myself what the problem was and what the solutions will be.*

*I cannot talk even if I would like to talk because I stumble over my words. In this case, I should tell myself that it is natural and talk without worrying about mistakes.*

*I should study at my own pace without worrying about others around me. I should try to do what I think. But, honestly speaking, the fact*

*is that I know this, but I cannot do it so easily.*

*When I was a high school student, I put pressure on myself to get high marks. So unconsciously, I appeared to be nervous and could not make the grade. But since entering university, I think that the so-called 'Entrance Examination' skills of my high school days were almost useless. Of course, depending on the lessons, (reading or writing, etc.), they were useful, though. Especially, in conversation, I had lots of trouble how to express myself equipped with only my Examination skills. But also, I feel that I could start learning from scratch using a completely new methodology. .*

*In addition, it was help that I could see various people and people with various levels of English at university. I realized that people might make effort without being noticed, and there was no one who can do perfectly. Because of this realization, I could make myself relax. I could study at my own pace comfortably without feeling pressured. And I feel that I could enjoy the classes, by not just cramming.*

8. *I do not have many friends. My friends are not close to me. So, I did not play much outside school. I also do not have a car, nor a mobile phone. So, I could not move or contact them so easily. And on Saturdays and Sundays, I had a part-time job. So, I could have my own time. In these situations, I did not have any problems to reject my friends' invitations. When I was busy, my friends were also busy. On the other hand, when I had some friends' invitation other than from my university friends at the time when I had something to do, I told them the reason and refused them. If I thought that I could make it, I accepted and enjoyed myself with them. In many cases, I accepted, I think.*

*But, when I felt that I couldn't refuse them because I had refused them too often already, I went to the library so that they could not contact me. Now, I feel that I was doing terrible things to my friends. If I could study harder, it would be all right. But I could not study so hard at that time.*

*When I feel that it is difficult to study at home, I try to change my environment. It is the best for me to use the study room of the library.*

*I can concentrate on my study because it is quiet and comfortable. In summer, the air-conditioning is on. At home, I stay in a room with no TV, and make an effort to finish in a short time. Sometimes I go out to re-fresh myself. In this situation, I don't go to the TV room. Basically, I choose to only watch my favourite programs. I cannot continue studying for a very long time. So, I try to have a break. It is necessary for me to decide my goal and achieve it in a short time.*

9. *I believe that many teachers think me as a serious and quiet student. Because I never fail to attend the lessons and never come late or be absent at all, and always take notes. Being quiet – I speak in a small voice and not so clear. Also, I don't talk much and just listen, or be unresponsive.*
  
10.
  - 1) *I would like to be able to talk English.*
  - 2) *I believe that I have been making an effort to be able to do this by deciding my goal.*
  - 3) *I like English that is why I would like to learn it.*
  - 4) *I think that I am doing it seriously when I have to do it.*
  - 5) *I have not enough confidence in conversation.*
  - 6) *Sometimes, I give up half way. I neglect my work and finish it off in a halfhearted way.*
  - 7) *I would like to think that I have possibilities to be able to improve my level even a little. Because If I give up on the possibility of doing so in the first place, I will not make any effort and will not be not able to anything. I feel that there would be no point in doing so.*
  - 8) *I cannot deny my feeling that I wish to be able to speak very well or improve my TOEIC scores. But the moment when I feel I could improve or understand even a little, I felt that it was worth making such a big effort.*
  - 9) *I am happy and motivated to do more.*
  - 10) *I believe that I can do it, and my courage increases. Therefore, I would like to believe in the possibility of improving my English people can work hard, make effort, and grow because we believe in the possibility of being able to do something by some means.*

## Appendix 5-3: Four Learners' Beliefs in Study One: Part Two

### (1) Affective Beliefs

#### Hiroshi

Hiroshi would like to be a teacher. His wish is very strong. He likes English. But basically, he likes meeting and communicating with people.

- Job related motivation
- Wish to acquire English skills
- Interests
- Wish to converse with others
- Enjoyment

#### Ryoo

Ryoo targets to improve both English skills and TOEIC scores. He believes that it is the same thing that he gets good marks for tests and tries to improve his English skills. He has been doing repeatedly exercises books for listening and reading. He thinks that listening and reading are important to get speaking skills as well. He is aware of his own improvement for reading skills. He thinks that the exercises of listening and speaking out are effective as his teacher taught him. His teacher told that TOEIC score is important for employment. So, he believes that it is important. He has very strong teachers' influence of his thinking and methods. When he meets native teachers, he tries to talk with them, but before he was afraid to do so.

- Job related motivation
- Wish to acquire English skills
- Interests



Naoko

Naoko also would like to be an English teacher. She has been interested in English native speakers and admires their English lessons. Not JUKEN EIGO, but she would like to study English on her own.

- Job related motivation
- Wish to acquire English skills
- Interests
- Enjoyment
- Wish to acquire English ways of thinking (culture)

Kennichi

Kenichi has strong affective motivation. Especially, he likes himself when he uses English. As well as other three students, he also wishes to use English for his future job and communicate with various people.

- Job related motivation
- Wish to acquire English skills
- Interests
- Wish to converse with others
- Enjoyment
- Wish to get advantages of English skills

## (2) Self-Perceptive Beliefs

Hiroshi

### self-regulation

*I have a TV set, but I haven't put the antenna on. I go home and want to watch TV, but there is no antenna, so I can't watch it.*

*I use my time effectively.*

### self-direction

*I am doing what I need to do. And the important concern is how I can make extra learning opportunities beyond the ones I am given.*

#### self-encouragement

*I motivate myself by trying to maintain my level.*

*It is not a matter of whether or not I can be something; I just will be that thing.*

#### positive self-image

*I really like English, so I enjoy studying it. I think it is important to feel this way.*

*It is not overconfidence on my part, but I think I have achieved what I have so far by following the direction that I set for myself.*

#### self-trust

*I do whatever I believe is good to do. On the face of it, it may be a false impression but when I believe that I am good at English, then I will have started to be able to study.*

#### self-observation

*I like English songs, so I did not feel a sense of incongruity with the language and the*

Ryoo

#### self-regulation

*When I come home after enjoying myself, as a minimum I thoroughly complete my required work. If there is something I have to do, I give priority to it.*

*I select which programs I watch on TV, and I don't watch TV so often.*

#### self-direction

*I can't rely just on teachers' lectures, and I can only improve if I do extra work on my own.*

#### self-encouragement

*I cannot talk (in English) as I want to. I haven't been able to improve my speaking skills as yet - this is a kind of problem, which I face. However, when I am facing a difficulty, I try to study as much as possible...in order to forget that I have a difficulty at all.*

self-trust

*I know my level. I can concentrate whenever I need to. I can do it.*

self-observation

*The teacher told me that companies put great importance on TOEIC results, so TOEIC is important for me.*

Naoko

Self-regulation

*If I need to, I refuse my friends' invitation to go out and instead I give priority to my study.*

*I don't usually watch TV. I watch only my favourite programs.*

self-direction

*I believe that, as a minimum, we should never fail to do the basic work we are given.*

*I think that we should be active in our study.*

*I think that we should do something beyond what we are given in lessons.*

self-encouragement

*After reflecting on Semester 1, I feel that I would like to study harder.*

↔negative self-image

*I didn't ask teachers about the things I don't understand or ask them to check my work. I have not been doing enough so far to enable me to say that I am doing my best.*

conscious effort of continuation

*The way I am now is no good. Everything depends on how much effort I put in. I won't quit, but my current inadequacy is always on my mind.*

self-doubt

*I haven't studied properly, so I can't say clearly that I have positive possibilities. I think about my future quite negatively.*

self-observation

*I have trouble deciding which work to do first.*

Kenichi

self-regulation

*After achieving my objective, I give myself a reward. Until then, I am really patient.*

self-direction

*If the person him/herself has no wish to learn, then he/she will just be there · that's all. Without wishing to work by ourselves, we can't achieve anything. When I get a bad result, it is my fault. I hate to get lower scores than I have previously got because I take it as kind of defeat.*

*I don't like to think that the environment can prevent me from doing anything. Whatever our current environment, there should always be something we can do to practice or improve our English.*

self-encouragement

*Until now, I have not done anything special for TOEIC, but I know my score has been increasing so it increases my motivation.*

*I like myself when I do my best. I would like to learn more because I am happy when people can understand me.*

*Because I have been evaluated highly, I would like to do as is expected of me.*

positive self-image

*I don't worry too much. If I can solve a question, that's fine, but there are many things that I'm unable to work out even if I really think about it deeply.*

↔negative self-image

*I didn't make any effort. I feel that I have to do something but I can't get my actions and my feelings to agree with each other.*

*capricious*

*stubborn*

#### self-trust

*I am positive about myself.*

*Once I can see that I can communicate, I think that I will be happy and improve even more.*

#### ↔self-doubt

*I evaluate myself as having low skills. With respect to learning English, as a whole, I am not sure what I have achieved so far. So, I don't know...*

#### self-observation

*I feel that I am doing my best when I am talking in English. I like myself when I am doing my best.*

### (3) Self-Motivational Beliefs

Hiroshi

#### own weak/strong point awareness

*I don't have enough vocabulary skills. I need to spend more time learning vocabulary than on other subjects.*

#### reflection

*I reflect that the reason for getting good results so far has been that I have been enjoying English. Because of this feeling of enjoyment, I have been studying English without really being aware that I am studying.*

*Somehow, the fact that I am able to be fond of English has been a strong influence.*

*I did have a period when I could not improve. I hate bottling up problems inside myself, so I spoke with various people and then I felt easier.*

*I enjoyed English, so my test results became better - a pattern emerged. I feel like I have been studying English without my knowledge.*

*At university, for the first time, I have started real listening practices.*

#### self-monitoring

*When I become a teacher, and my students believe in me, and they are interested in English, then I will give whatever I can. Why are we learning*

*English?*

initiative

*Unless we commit ourselves to it, there is no lesson. So, our intention is vital.*

conscious effort of continuation

*The only thing I can do is to continue what I am doing.*

*I am continuously interested in English. For example, I watch movies without translated sub-titles, etc. It is just a trivial thing but I think that it is important to continue to do such things.*

flexibility

*In my ideal thinking, I enjoy myself by having fun and also do my utmost when studying. When I have fun, I really have fun. It is important. If I believe it will be good for me, I try it, but if I think I shouldn't do it, I don't do it.*

internal locus of control

*I have to listen to the lessons closely and if I have questions, I ask teachers after the lessons.*

*If I don't make the most effective use of my lessons, I'll lose out.*

critical awareness

*If I ignore what I don't understand, I will get further and further behind. I would like to relax, but I sometimes fear for my future.*

endless possibilities

*It is not at all wrong to think that we can succeed if we make the effort.*

*If we do our best, one day we will reap the reward. I believe in this principle. It is not a matter of whether or not I can be what I want to be, but how strongly I want to realize my wish.*

goal awareness

*I have a strong desire, so to achieve the goal I have set for myself. I have begun to think deeply about learning English.*

#### self-actualisation

*When we meet English-speaking people and can talk with them, we (will be able to) feel a glow of satisfaction in our mind.*

*I like people. I am learning sign language for the deaf. Everything is related to communication with people. I enjoy relating with people. Basically, I like communicating with others.*

Ryoo

#### own weak/strong point awareness

*I know myself what my weaknesses are and what I'm good at. I know my level. In my mind, I have something to say, but I can't express it in English.*

#### reflection

*When I was a 3rd year junior high student, I was able to get top marks. I realised that success in English was within my capability, so I was very happy. That was when I really started studying.*

#### self-monitoring

*When I cannot at first express what I want to say, I try to tap into my knowledge and think of some way to say it.*

*Before university, I had never been in contact with foreigners, so at first I could not talk to them, but now, I can talk with them.*

#### initiative

*I know my own level and both my weak points and my good points. So, it is enough to be taught only those things which I do not understand.*

#### internal locus of control

*There are things I would like to say in English, but I don't have the correct expressions. When this happens, later on I sometimes unconsciously think about how I could have said it. It is a matter of getting used to speaking in English, so I should try to do so more actively and freely.*

#### critical awareness

*If I don't do it by myself, I will never progress.*

### endless possibilities

*If I study, I will improve. I do whatever I can, and make the most of my chances. Many possibilities are open to me. If I study, I can achieve what I want to.*

### goal awareness

*My goal should not just be based on speaking English, because that is a given with learning a language. I would like to have another purpose. I should have another purpose.*

*Completing exercise books on my own is good for both improving my English skills and raising my test scores.*

### self-actualisation

*I try to talk with English native teachers.*

*I try to catch up with my favourite things while using English. For example, I like sports, so I enjoy watching sports on TV with English commentary, or reading about sports in English language newspapers.*

### English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*Well, to help with my reading, I bought an exercise book with grammar explanations and lots of exercises. I went through it 5 - 6 times during my spring holidays. Then, when I had finished with it, I bought another one. I have been doing this in order to get used to the exercises and I think it is valuable for improvement of my English skill as well as improving my scores.*

Naoko

### own weak/strong point awareness

*My English level is not the same as my TOEIC or EIKEN scores.*

*When I preview lessons - which are the step for acquiring new knowledge - I see that there are lots of things I still don't know.*

### reflection

*I study because I would like to learn something by myself for my own use. At my junior or senior high school, I learned English solely for entrance examinations.*



#### self-monitoring

*I feel that there are problems in the present method of providing English education (in schools). Actually, I have opinions about how to improve the way English is taught/learned, but I don't speak out forcefully. I can speak, but only softly.*

#### initiative

*students have to show their teachers that they are motivated.*

#### flexibility

*If I happen to go through a flat or stagnating period, I accept it as being just that. I know that if I continue with my studies, the results may show later on. I try to be patient while I'm learning.*

#### ↔ restrictedness

*I like to find small, subtle pieces of knowledge.*

*I like to find examples of the same expressions being used in different textbooks.*

#### stronger internal locus of control

*I have to do more than just the given work even if it is just trying to find inconsequential things. If I come across something I have already learnt in a different textbook, I try to recall these repeated English expressions. I like to have such things confirmed as being valid.  
it is important to be surrounded by an English environment.*

#### ↔ weaker internal locus of control

*I haven't studied properly or well. I haven't studied in the way that I think I should have.*

#### critical awareness

*If I don't study effectively, my English level will not improve, and instead it will get worse and worse.*

### ↔uncertainty

*I don't really choose to, but I suppose I must think about my potential and what possibilities are open to me.*

*I don't know how to compare my abilities with others. I think that I should be able to improve more, but so far I have not been doing my best, so I can't tell you what my possibilities are. However, the more I study, the more possibilities I will gain.*

### goal awareness

*Even if it takes another 4-5 years, I would like to be an English teacher, so I hope to keep studying towards my goal*

### self-actualisation

*Beyond just lessons, we should do something else if we feel we want to learn English more - such as reading good books or listening to good programs in English.*

*It is important to be surrounded by an English-speaking environment, so occasionally it is important to get away from our Japanese environment.*

*I believe that the most effective students are those who try to express their own opinions completely, and try to speak their thoughts clearly without worrying too much about making mistakes, while at the same time taking notes or recording important things which teachers tell them.*

### ↔ English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*If I can maintain the progress I have made so far, I would like to pass the pre-1 level in EIKEN, and get a score of more than 800 in TOEIC.*

Kenichi:

### own weak/strong point awareness

*If I know what is wrong, I work on it.*

### reflections

*From the 1st year to the 4th year, I have certainly been increasing my score - that means I will be able to continue increasing it from now as well.*

### self-monitoring

*My score is shown as a number, so I can see how much I have improved or not improved. It is good to see the progress I have made because I think I need to know my level of achievement.*

*I am happy when I feel that I am able to converse in greater detail than before, or when I am talking with a native-speaker about more difficult issues.*

*I really go for it with my favourite activities, but I don't do things I don't like. So, I show very different commitment to different things.*

### initiative

*I try to speak a lot without caring about my mistakes.*

*I put as much energy as much as possible into what I am interested in.*

### conscious effort of continuation

*If I decide that I can't learn any more, then that will be the end of my study, but I am hoping to improve more than now, so...*

*language learning is an effort.*

*When we learn with enjoyment and stimulation, then we can improve more and more.*

### flexibility

*I don't worry and (if necessary) I try to study in different ways, or change the exercise books I'm working with. In this way, I regain my enthusiasm. It is better to be able to change one's direction."*

### stronger internal locus of control

*When I think I hear a useful expression, I take a memo of it.*

*If I can understand everything, that's all right, but if not, there may be something I'm unsure about, then I have to review it properly later on. Otherwise, I haven't got the most out of it.*

### ↔ weaker internal locus of control

*When I consider whether or not I put in enough effort, I am not doing anything particularly.*

*I have to put myself in the right environment.*

goal awareness

*I believe that the goal is actually just a step.  
At first, it is a dream, then, gradually, it becomes a goal, and then a step.*

selfactualisation

*I study the grammar used in daily conversation, and also I think about what words I needed when I couldn't express what I wanted to say.*

↔ English proficiency vis-à-vis TOEIC scores

*Being able to express what I want to say is not the same thing as test scores.  
culture. I like people; I like to get in touch with people.*

(4) Cognitive Beliefs

Hiroshi

Input: authenticity

CD/tapes

Music

Movies

Memorisation: vocabulary learning

*It is important to remember with sounds for learning practical English.  
If I don't know words, I can't catch the words by both listening and reading.  
So, at first, I am aware of my needs for increasing my vocabulary skills.*

Ryoo

Input: authenticity

TV/Radio news

Newspapers

Naoko

Input: authenticity

Radio program

Key point (underline)

exposure of English environment

Output: communicative opportunities  
*self-directed practices in talking to oneself*  
*talking with friends in English*  
*talk with native teachers*

Kenichi

Memorization: vocabulary learning  
*In order to express what I want to say, knowledge or vocabulary skills are important which I have to remember.*

#### (5) Social Beliefs

Hiroshi

Teacher role:  
*facilitator*  
*advisor*  
*supporter*  
*helper*  
*recourse person*  
*leader*

Relationship between teacher and students:  
*trust*  
*good relationship*  
*faithful to the teacher*  
*support*

Ryoo

Teacher role:  
*advisor*  
*supporter*

Relationship between teacher and students:

*trust*

*good relationship*

Relationship with others:

*stimulation*

*making good atmosphere*

Naoko

Teacher role:

*facilitator*

*advisor*

*helper*

*leader*

Relationship between teacher and students:

*trust*

*faithful to the teacher*

*teacher-learner responsibility*

Relationship with others:

*influence*

*making good atmosphere*

*seeking opportunities for relationship*

Kenichi

Teacher role:

*facilitator*

*advisor*

Relationship between teacher and students:

*good relationship*

*faithful to the teacher*

*teacher influence*

