

A Qualitative Approach to Investigate Japanese EFL Learners' Willingness to Communicate in English: Stages of Research Methods

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Abstract

Since MEXT introduced the new course of study for senior high schools in 2013, developing students' communication abilities has been emphasized more than ever before. The concept of "willingness to communicate", or WTC, has also been getting researchers' attention along with the interest in more communication oriented English education. Accordingly, the number of studies has continued to increase as one of the key issues at the secondary and tertiary levels, where the traditional style of English education was dominant for such a long time. This paper discusses the necessity of qualitative approaches to classroom research in Japan on the topic of Japanese EFL learners' WTC in English by pointing out that the number of studies with qualitative research has been much fewer than quantitative studies. This paper presents a part of a qualitative study (Shimamura, 2012) as an example of a stage-by-stage research process based on the Grounded Theory approach utilizing classroom observations and interviews.

keywords: Qualitative Research, Classroom Research, English as a Foreign Language, Grounded Theory, WTC

1. Introduction

A shift in research that emphasized more classroom-based research occurred in the 1980s when it became apparent that there was a widening gap between what researchers were claiming ought to happen in classrooms and what participants, the teachers and students in the actual classrooms, were experiencing. It eventually became obvious that one of the factors supporting this shift was that what had been lacking in previous research attempts of depicting what goes on in the classroom was an emphasis on the participants, especially their subjective realities to better

understand why they are doing what they are doing. The duality of doing research on what is actually happening in classrooms, and to gain participants' perspectives, logically directed researchers toward undertaking approaches to doing classroom-based research.

Since the 1990s, evidence of this direction and the need to do more classroom-based research were beginning to enter into the field of language teaching and will be cited a little later (see below Nunan, 1991 and Laskowski, 2007). Once inside the classroom, the research approach often moves away from experimental, solely objective approaches to research toward a more appropriate qualitative approach that sets out to focus on observing the participants, and in doing so has the researcher beginning to emphasize the need to learn the formers' perspectives on what is happening in the classroom. In gaining participants' views, researchers then can further substantiate what they are finding. That is, researchers are able to get closer to the data, for example, by observing and interviewing the participants. In turn, researchers are able to get a better idea of the participants' realities, and therefore the outcomes of the research can lead to narrowing the gap between what the researchers are finding and what the participants are experiencing.

A need for more qualitative approaches to do classroom research can be seen in the present situation in Japan. The challenge to narrow the gap between objective realities and subjective realities emerge in the national curriculum English policy. The Ministry of Education's (MEXT) objective is to have students develop their communication skills in English and for teachers to increase the use of English in the classroom so that students are willing to interact in English. Educational interest in Japanese students' willingness to communicate (WTC) has been attracting English teachers' as well as researchers' attention in accordance with the new course of study for senior high school, which clearly states its objective as:

To develop students' communication abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages (MEXT, 2012).

An important question is how to approach the issue of WTC from the classroom perspective based on the MEXT's new guidance, particularly, after such a

longtime and heavy emphasis on teaching English as an academic subject. In spite of the vocal leadership by MEXT, teachers' as well as learners' perceptions toward the current trend seem to be rather obscure. What do Japanese EFL learners and English teachers do to undertake such movement toward communication-oriented English education if it is widely conducted in large amounts using Japanese? More importantly, what makes Japanese EFL learners; university students in particular, willingly use English in the classroom? How are teachers accommodating their students' needs for the purposes?

The above questions demonstrate the widening gap between what policy indicates objectively want to happen and the subjective realities of teachers reflecting their concerns at the classroom level. Thus, these questions need answering regarding the English educational policies because well-balanced English education from both the administration and participants' voices from the classroom, could lead Japan's controversial English education toward a better understanding of how these policies should be implemented. It is the purpose of this paper to call for more classroom-based research using qualitative approaches to meet this aim. It has been said that the longest journey begins with the first step. This paper will take that step by depicting stages of a qualitative methodology that were designed to research WTC of university language students.

2. Necessities to Call for Qualitative Approaches in WTC research

A literature review on WTC (Shimamura, 2010) stated the necessity of investigating psychological concepts or factors that might stimulate or hinder Japanese EFL learners' use of English in the classroom. It also suggested an educational implication that teachers can be inspired from the results of those studies by reflecting on their classroom teaching from the viewpoint of communicative language teaching.

Based on the review, Shimamura (2011) ran a pilot study on Japanese university EFL learners' anxiety and perceptions by replicating Nagahashi (2007). The pilot study found that it was 'speaking' that the subjects felt they lack in confidence, and this means that their level of anxiety increases when they are put into situations where they are supposed to speak English. Data taken from field notes and interviews further showed high anxiety leads to lower rates of student speaking. The students' main purpose of learning English was to improve communication

skill. This view was supported by their preference for authentic communication activities, and they believed interactive communication activities enhance their English proficiency although they self-evaluated that their speaking was the poorest among the four skills (Shimamura, 2011).

The subjects for the pilot study were in an oral English class with a native English-speaking teacher, and so the class was taught to train their oral presentation skills with various activities as well as interactions in English. This means the class exactly matched the learners' preferences as a means to supposedly improve their oral communication skills. Yet, the results of the pilot study also revealed a contradictory fact of high possibility that the learners feel less confidence, or high anxiety. If that is the case, their WTC may be hindered greatly in spite of their motivation to learn English and being in an ideal oral skill-focused classroom environment. The last question of the questionnaire confirms this assumption. It asked whether they would speak out more actively in the class if they had better speaking skills and all the subjects responded, "Yes". Confirming the existence of anxiety in the oral class through the pilot study, the research needs to move forward to investigate answers of the research questions, that is, how Japanese university EFL learners' WTC, conversely, can be raised in the classroom; and how can the teacher help assist their learners for that purpose?" The main research inquiries were thus planned to answer these questions.

The results of the replication pilot study confirmed the subjects' anxieties for communication apprehension in English. Additionally, they responded "speaking" to be the least confident English skill according to the open-ended questionnaire. Therefore, anxieties over communicating in English and lacking confidence seem to affect the students' WTC. These outcomes required a deeper look at student thinking to explore what the factors are that may underpin why they feel communication apprehension and lack of confidence. On the one hand, there are a number of empirical studies, including this pilot study, which takes quantitative approaches to investigate EFL learners' WTC or anxiety. However, few studies have used qualitative approaches to study EFL learners' inner psychology concerning students' perspectives toward WTC, which would be expressed through their reflections. Laskowski (2007) emphasizes the necessity of take more qualitative approaches in the classroom research by quoting Nunan (1991) that studied 50 often cited classroom research papers, and found that only 33

percent of them had been conducted in classrooms. Laskowski (2007) himself conducted the similar type of study analyzing 13 Asia TEFL journal articles. The results of the survey also showed that only 38% of them had been researched in authentic classroom settings, and he concludes, "... there has not been much of a change in the quantitative-qualitative ratio of CR (classroom research) studies in the past two decades" (p. 8). As these studies indicate, the imbalance between the two types of approaches is obvious.

Focusing attention on students' thinking provides opportunities to uncover influences that affect students' WTC in the classroom and under what circumstances they occur. In the same manner, a qualitative approach allows the emergence of teachers' voices to shed light on their beliefs and thoughts about the role WTC plays in their classrooms. For example, "What priority do they give WTC in their instruction?" "How could students' WTC be enhanced in the EFL classroom?" or "How can the teacher improve instruction to encourage students' WTC in his or her class? Nespor (1987) states the importance of research to explore the role that teacher thinking and teacher beliefs play on instruction in the following:

In spite of arguments that people's beliefs are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience...little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools they work in (p. 317).

Classroom research in ESL or EFL tends to focus on learners' achievements or improvements in their target language since that is the primary interest of researchers to investigate practical applications contributing to the classroom teaching. Defining that the classroom is an environment where the interaction of teaching and learning takes place between both the learner and the teacher, it is time that researchers should investigate the teacher's perspectives more than before, as Nespor argues. Thus, teachers' views were also included in this research as to how they might be able to assist the learners' WTC (Clark and Peterson, 1986). In order to uncover learner perceptions, teacher thinking and the voices that reflect these inner thoughts, a qualitative approach was taken in this study.

3. A qualitative approach and methods in data collection and analysis

When conducting qualitative research like any other research approach, the researcher needs to demonstrate rigor in data collection and analysis. Davis (1995) writes, "... each research method [ology] involves particular philosophical, theoretical, and methodological parameters that must be observed to ensure studies are valid/credible, reliable/dependable and generalizable/transferable" (pp. 435-436). Terminology usually aligned with quantitative methods such as validity and reliability can be addressed in the use of triangulation to show qualitative rigor. In the following section, the research sequences of the study are delineated to show cohesive attempts to collect and analyze the data through triangulated methods of note taking, observations and interviews. In addition, various methods associated with qualitative research were used in the study and described below.

Since this study uses a qualitative approach in its methodology to include collecting and analyzing data that reflects both student and teacher thinking, the challenge becomes how to make the unobservable observable. One of the methods used in this study that coheres with a qualitative approach can be found in techniques involved with ethnology. Laskowski (2006) claims an advantage of using ethnographic research methods in his study on teacher thinking is that it provides an analytical framework to bring out and investigate the subject's inner thinking (and how those thoughts are manifested in what a teacher does). He writes, "... an ethnographic approach was deemed the most appropriate methodology to observe the unobservable, i.e. the mental lives of teachers" (p. 69). The effectiveness of an ethnographic approach in qualitative research is further suggested by Watson-Gegeo (1988). She suggests that people's behavior is influenced by the culture to which they belong. Ethnography is used to explore cultures of communities within the natural contexts in which they exist to better understand human behavior. Therefore, when taking an ethnographic approach, the researcher must go inside the community to collect data. Assuming the classroom is a smaller scale of community, then the students' attitudes and behavior should be observable in that natural environment. The students' perspectives are also sought in order to allow them to define their own reality so that rich descriptions of their mental constructs that underpin their WTC can surface. Interviews to bring out the students' perspectives provide effective methods to confirm or supplement what the researcher observed in addition to the field observations.

In this regard, another important concept about ethnographic research is etic-emic analysis, also discussed by Watson-Gegeo (1988). Etic analysis is the researchers' interpretations of observations based on his or her viewpoints in the research environment. Although their analyses have to be derived from theoretical rationality, etic analyses may not avoid the researchers' subjectivity, which is their own ontological views of what they perceive is happening. Therefore, another view is needed to keep the researcher's subjective analysis grounded. In short, the learning environment cannot or should not be interpreted in a certain theoretical framework solely representing the researcher's subjective analysis without considering actual occurrences specific to each research context. Thus, emic analysis, which represents the members of the research community or the subjects' viewpoints as a counterbalance are indispensable to accommodate the researcher's subjectivity. Watson-Gegeo supports the necessity of adopting the emic analysis as follows, "Concern with the understandings the participants themselves have of the situations in which they are observed has led ethnographers to emphasize emic analysis" (p. 580).

As a result, qualitative research with ethnographic methods, which in this study include classroom observations, and interviews, were chosen as appropriate means in the methodology of this research to answer the previously mentioned research questions to investigate both Japanese university EFL learners' and their teachers' perceptions. The research also followed the Grounded Theory method (Glaser). Grounded Theory is a bottom up data analysis procedure that generates theories from data. In Grounded Theory, data collection and analysis are an ongoing process. As the data are collected, they are immediately analyzed. This is referred to as conducting comparative analysis. This back and forth procedure leads to emerging inquiries in order to eventually form sound categories and theories that are substantiated or grounded in the data. Based on this research principle, in this study raw data taken from observations and interviews were further analyzed through the use of a three-step note taking procedure using filed observational, reflective and theoretical memos.

The Grounded Theory memoing technique was implemented to identify some thought-provoking phenomena regarding the subjects' WTC, and then compiled for the questions for the interviews later on. Because of the broad scope of the study that requires both learners' and teachers' perspectives with extensive

interview data, the paper must be subdivided into smaller sections: research methods, learners' perspectives, and teachers' perspectives. The study also requires discussion to synthesize the analyses based on the both perspectives. The following is the research method section by Shimamura (2012), which demonstrates how the author carried out his study by using a qualitative approach. It is used as an example to illustrate how ethnographic methods were used to collect data in an authentic classroom environment followed by qualitative approaches to investigate them.

4. Research Sequence of the Study

The following research sequence grid demonstrates methodological procedures applied during stages of the study. Rationale reflects the justification for each stage

of inquiry, methods reflect procedures and instruments used to gather data, and results show outcomes that lead to the next research stage of inquiry. The research proceeded with the following sequences in Table 1.

Table 1 Research Sequence of Study

Pre-stage

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Low WTC may impact on Japanese learners of English in oral communication. | View literature on WTC. | Literature suggests low WTC leads to low communicative levels. Studies suggest anxiety impacts on WTC. |

Pre-stage is basically based on the literature reviews in Shimamura (2010, 2011). These two reviews are the precursor to the pilot and main studies derived from the research question of how Japanese university EFL learners' WTC in English could be raised. As reported, the literature reviews showed a strong relationship between WTC and anxiety (see Hashimoto, 2002; Kang, 2005; Yashima, 2002). The concept of IP (International Posture) as an intriguing factor for Japanese EFL learners also emerged in the pre-stage level of the research. Also, Japanese EFL learners' heavily examination-oriented educational backgrounds in their secondary education were hypothesized in playing a part of low WTC in general. All of these factors, derived from the literature reviews, motivated the researcher to conduct

the pilot study in the following stages of the research.

Table 2 Stage 1 ~ Pilot Study

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|---|--|--|
| To identify if anxiety functions as a counter-factor against WTC. | Conduct a replication study of Nagahashi (2007), combination of FLCAS by Horwitz et al. (1986) and open-ended questionnaire by Nagahashi (2007). | Three overlaps were identified from Nagahashi (2007) and this pilot study. Subjects at Kumamoto Univ. showed least confidence in speaking skills. Further investigations into literature show few studies on WTC carried out at the classroom level. |

Stage 1 is the pilot study, and its detailed results were presented in Shimamura (2011). Anxiety is hypothesized as a primary negative factor against WTC based on empirical studies in the literature review section. (see Hashimoto, 2002; Kang, 2005; Yashima, 2002) The pilot study was conducted on language majors only, but nevertheless, showed the subjects' anxiety, particularly in speaking skill.

Table 3 Stage 2 ~ Classroom Observation 1 (Engineering Majors)

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|---|---|---|
| Classroom-based research was conducted to learn more about the role of WTC for classroom learning. Thus, a research plan is needed asking the subjects perceptions of WTC by focusing actual and natural contexts (classrooms) where teaching occur. | 1st year Engineering (non-English) majors were chosen as subjects. Qualitative approach using ethnographic and Grounded Theory methods were used. Three on-site observations were conducted. Observational, Reflective, theoretical field notes began. | Hypotheses generated from the observations and notes. To further support data it was decided to apply triangulation by using multiple methods of data collection. Field notes eventually lead to develop a model of Japanese EFL learners' WTC. |

Stage 2 is the first filed observations in the classroom for the engineering students. They are based on the aforementioned etic-emic approach to observe what is actually happening in the environment, hoping some observable factors

regarding WTC might emerge there. The researcher took three types of notes: field notes, reflective notes and theoretical notes. The three types of note taking are part of an interconnected data collection and analysis process that are vital to helping the researcher formulate understandings of qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The field notes are classroom records of the teacher's instructions, the students' learning behaviors and the researcher's on-site comments. The reflective notes and theoretical notes provide opportunities for the researcher to step back and reflect on what has been recorded in the field notes. For example, field notes represent data concerned with the researcher's reflections as well as self-discussion on certain memorable classroom phenomena such as the students' and teachers' particular conducts, or some noticeable atmosphere that contributes to the classroom context. The raw data described in the field notes and the reflective notes with the researcher's comments are integrated into the theoretical notes contributing to forming tentative hypotheses, which provide possible categories for the data to be analyzed. Straus (1987) states the role of theoretical notes as, "writing in which the researcher puts down theoretical questions, hypothesis, summary of codes etc. --- a method of keeping track of coding results and stimulating further coding, and also as a major means of integrating theory" (p. 22). Figure 1 illustrates the three types of notes followed by excerpts of each note as examples.

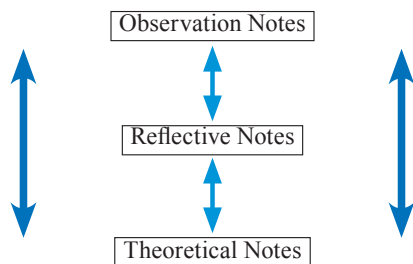


Figure 1 Three Types of Notes

An excerpt of the observation notes. (T=Teacher, Ss= Students)

(class begins)

T checks the attendance.

T speaks about the TOEIC scores that many companies require in Japan (560-580 average). T recommends Ss to take the test by raising their awareness to learn English more seriously. Ss listen to T attentively. This could be one of the good motivators.

T tells Ss what they are going to learn in the class. T uses English first then follows up in Japanese for Ss' better understanding.

One group (three Ss) comes to the front, and makes an oral presentation about the Internet. They look a bit nervous. They look down at their notes and do not look up (not even once!) No eye contact. Their English is OK but sounds monotonous. T helps them occasionally for their pronunciation. The other Ss also look down and simply reading the text.

Later, reflective notes were written based on the field notes for the researcher's self-discussion, and then consequentially all the reflections were generated into theoretical notes to create a tentative model to provide descriptions of targeted Japanese university EFL learners' WTC.

An excerpt of the reflective notes

This class consists of the learning of the four language skills overall, and I sense that the students do not seem to feel strong anxiety in reading, listening, and writing activities. On the contrary, speaking (in English) stands out as an exceptionally inactive activity in this class [reference from field notes: They look down on their notes and do not look up (not even once!) No eye contact.

During various stages of reviewing observation notes and reflective notes (as given in samples above), the researcher would begin to formulate theoretical categories to describe the data by writing up theoretical notes.

An excerpt of the theoretical notes

After conducting three classroom observations, [and writing reflection notes] some factors concerning WTC (or anxiety) have come to emerge.

(1) Relaxed/Friendly classroom atmosphere ~ Although research suggests that this would be a prerequisite in any foreign language class (e. g., see Brown,1987; Moskowitz, 1978), this is hard to achieve in the classroom. Also, it is important for teachers to give clear instructions such as what they are going to learn in this class, what assignments are supposed to be submitted, deadlines, and information about the examination. I saw the students were all ears for them, and started to feel nervous when information was not clear.

The samples of the three notes indicate how the category of relaxed atmosphere gradually emerged. The excerpted notes record the students' behavior in the class (observation notes) to the researcher's self-discussion of why the students felt anxiety in speaking English based on the observation (reflective notes) of the students' high level of anxiety demonstrated in the public speaking activity. The recorded notes lead to the suggestion that more work needs to be done to lessen anxiety which would lead to improvement of WTC. Lastly, in the theoretical notes a tentative hypothesis was established that relaxed/friendly classroom atmosphere, could be a category to raise the students' WTC in the classroom.

In the above theoretical notes the area of a relaxed/friendly classroom atmosphere emerges. Later, this working theoretical category evolved into psychological and environmental categories representing assistances to which teachers can contribute in raising students' WTC. The above note taking processes represents the researcher's etic analysis of data, that is to say, even the observation notes of real time happenings in the classroom are still filtered through the subjective lens of the researcher. Therefore, observations and reflections by the researcher needed to be verified or 'grounded' and further explored through emic analysis by eliciting the learners' perspectives concerning WTC. In this regard, interviews were conducted.

Table 4 Stage 3 ~ Interview with Students (Engineering Majors)

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|--|---|---|
| To identify learners' perceptions of their WTC further data collection using interviews were carried out. Interview questions were grounded from areas of questionnaire | A questionnaire battery by Yashima (2009), comparing the subjects' L2 WTC and International Posture, was used. Interview selection and questions formed based on results of questionnaire. | The engineering majors showed observable contrasts between Low and High WTC |

Stage 3 is the interviews with selected students from the engineering class that the researcher observed at Stage 2. Six interviewees among the 23 students enrolled in the class were chosen. The participants were originally chosen based on the results of a questionnaire battery (Yashima, 2009) asking students' L2 WTC and International Posture (IP) on the five-point scale. The average scores were compared. Then, the top and bottom three scores respectively were chosen for the interviews for the original purpose of comparing results to see if any differences could be expected between the two groups. However, this criteria to analyze data was dropped because the number of participants could not substantiate level differences. Questions for the interviews were generated from the literature reviews as well as the classroom observations, and consisted of three parts: the subjects' English education backgrounds, IP and WTC. Each interview took about 30 minutes in Japanese and voice recorded upon the subjects' consents. All voice recorded data were translated and transcribed in English by the researcher later on.

**Table 5 Stage 4 ~ Classroom Observation 2
(Communication and Information Studies Majors)**

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|--|--|---|
| To complement the results of a quantitative research asking the subjects perceptions of WTC, study focuses on actual and natural classroom contexts. | 2nd year Communication and Information Studies major students chosen as subjects. Three on-site observations were conducted using Observational, Reflective, and Theoretical field notes. | Hypotheses generated from the observations and notes. |

The similar process was repeated during Stage 4 for communication and information studies majors for a comparative reason.

**Table 6 Stage 5 ~ Interview with Students
(Communication and Information Studies Majors)**

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|--|---|--|
| Study further qualifies data by conducting interviews. | Yashima's Questionnaire and follow up interviews carried out (see above stage 3). | Unlike the engineering majors, the CIS majors did not display observable differences between high and low WTC subjects. After looking at student data, the next step was to collect data from teachers. |

Stage 5 for communication and information studies majors generally followed these steps for the interviews that were similar to those conducted for engineering majors. Since the research focus is Japanese university EFL learners' WTC, the subjects for the study were chosen at Kumamoto University where the researcher was studying as a part-time graduate student. Kumamoto University is the only national university in the community with thousands of undergraduates register, including international students. At first, Communication and Information studies majors, whom the researcher used the subjects for the pilot test, were supposed to be the candidates for the main study.

However, the original plan turned out to be impossible because their class schedule (they had already moved up to the next year at that time) and the researcher's available time to conduct his research did not coincide with each other. Additionally, the researcher feared that interviewing them might reflect highly motivated English learners only, not necessarily considering more general students struggling with English learning. Even if this idea was hypothetical, comparisons between the communication majors focusing on English learning and non-language majors had to be made so that the research scope could cover Japanese EFL learners' WTC comprehensively. All these issues considered, the researcher decided to run the research on two groups: engineering majors in the spring

semester of 2009, and communication and information majors in the fall semester of the same year.

Table 7 Stage 6 ~ Interview with Teachers 1

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|---|---|--|
| To investigate how teachers conduct classes to raise their students' WTC. | Questions were derived from results of interviews with the students and from the literature that connect to emerging categories of study. | The teachers' protocol led to categorize three types of support: linguistic, psychological, and environmental. |

Stage 6 is interviews with English teachers teaching at universities in Japan. Four teachers, three native speakers of English and one Japanese, agreed to have interviews. The criterion for selecting the teachers was accessibility and that they were experienced teachers who were familiar with teaching English communication courses. The interview questions were generated from the literature reviews (Shimamura, 2010, 2011). the three types of notes (observational, reflective, and theoretical) and the interviews from the students. The students' voices, in particular, were reflected in the questions to examine whether they might coincide with the teachers' teaching principles as well as classroom teaching. The interviews were given in English except for the Japanese teacher, and they ranged from 30 minutes to almost an hour. The interviews were recorded and transcribed later for analyses.

Table 8 Stage 7 ~ Interview with Teachers 2

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|---|---|---|
| To further investigate issues that emerged from analyzing first interviews. | Questions were based on the results of the first interviews with the teachers, and from Tharp & Gallimore's (1991) framework focusing on assisting performance. | Tharp & Gallimore's framework categories of 'assisting learning' were found to be useful to label data from teacher interviews. |

Stage 7 is follow-up interviews of Stage 6 interviews. One of the reasons the time taken for Stage 6 varied from 30 minutes to almost an hour is that some native English speaking teachers' interviews went fairly long with their personal

experiences, which were understandable as the researcher asked them to talk their own foreign language learning and teaching experiences freely. This relaxed atmosphere encouraged them to talk about a fairly broad scope of topics; however, its drawback was not being able to make interviews focus deeper on newly emerged concepts of assisting performance (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) at Stage 6 interviews. The researcher, therefore, decided to have another interview session, Stage 7, to limit the focus more on the issues of assisting performance. The four aforementioned teachers willingly accepted to have interviews once again. The interviews basically followed the same manner as Stage 6; voice recorded and transcribed for further analyses. This time, the interviews took between 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

Table 9 Stage 8 ~ Analyses and Discussion

| Rationale | Methods | Results |
|---|--|--|
| <p>All the factors concerning the subjects' WTC (or anxiety) are analyzed and discussed.</p> <p>Educational implications from the teacher's perspective are given to complement the learner's viewpoints.</p> | <p>Transcripts are analyzed to identify factors to explain Japanese university EFL learners' WTC (or anxiety).</p> | <p>Analyses and discussion are shown in the following discussions.</p> |

Stage 8 is the final phase of the research. Factors emerged from both observations, and follow-up interviews were synthesized into theoretical models to explain how Japanese university EFL learners' WTC could be enhanced. Educational implications based on the interviews with the teachers follow to complement the issues of WTC from teaching perspectives. All the transcripts are analyzed cross-sectionally. The researcher highlighted the parts which identified to be candidates of factors for WTC (or anxiety). The roughly estimated factors are later confirmed by close examination to improve the accuracy of the analyses. Although the whole process is conducted manually, the analyzed data are entered into PC software, Nvivo 8, for the convenience of retrieving categorized data for further analyses.

The data obtained through the pre-stage to stage 8 are views toward Japanese university EFL learners' WTC, inclusive of the student's as well as the teacher's views. Analyzing the observations, the researcher's reflections and the interviews, therefore enables the researcher to recognize some factors which emerged from the data to speculate causes of raising their WTC that arose from the three types of notes and interviews, for example, the learners' English educational backgrounds, IP or existence of students who can play a mentoring role.

The categories that arose from the data were analyzed by an ethnographic method called 'domain analysis' (Spradley, 1997), which uses semantic relationship as a tool to group the categories further. He found nine proposed universal semantic relationships:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|---|
| 1. | Strict inclusion | X is a kind of Y |
| 2. | Spatial | X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y |
| 3. | Cause-effect | X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y |
| 4. | Rationale | X is a reason for doing Y |
| 5. | Location for action | X is a place for doing Y |
| 6. | Function | X is used for Y |
| 7. | Means-end | X is a way to do Y |
| 8. | Sequence | X is a step (stage) in Y |
| 9. | Attribution | X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y |

(Spradley 1997, p. 111)

The steps suggested by Spradley starts from (1) select the semantic relationships, (2) finding key words from data, and (3) label a theme that characterizes the general concept of the key words.

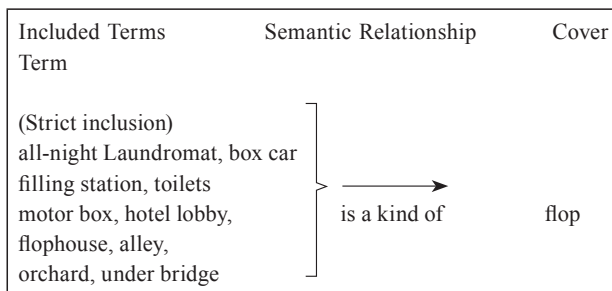


Figure 2 Process of Domain Analysis (Spradley, 1997, p. 114)

In this example of domain analysis, Spradley (1997) conducted research on homeless people, and thus some key terms from the data are synthesized into a characteristic of a cover term ‘flop’. As the figure above illustrates, domain analysis is a process of generalizing raw data (key words) to a characterized concept integrated by semantic relationship. Spradley (1997) explains the reason to utilize semantic relationship as it is universal and can be a good hint to analyzing meaning of a different culture; therefore the researcher judged that the application of this method is appropriate.

According to the domain analysis, the categories identified from the classroom observations and the interviews were broadly divided into two: perceptions of WTC on the learners’ views and that of the teachers’. In addition, the categories are subsumed into larger categories of Affective and Behavioral factors under learner perceptions to further help sort out the data.

Table10 Categories for Analyses

| Learners' Perceptions | Teachers' Perceptions |
|--|--|
| Affective Factors ~ (1) Educational background (2) Value identification (3) International posture (IP) (4) Low anxiety Behavioral Factors ~ (1) Communication strategies (2) Readiness (3) Mentoring | Performance assistance (Cf. Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990) ~ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructing • Modeling • Contingency Management • Feeding back • Questioning • Cognitive structuring Psychological assistance ~ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing rapport • Use of humor Learning environmental assistance ~ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class size • Opportunities to use English • Effective use of mentors |

Thus, the categories for analyses on the learners' perceptions were: (1) Educational Background, (2) Value identification of learning English, (3) Anxiety functioning as a negative factor to hinder their WTC, and (4) Positive attitudes and interest to establish conversation in English characterized by International Posture or communication strategies. Whereas the categories for analyses on the teachers' perceptions were: (1) Performance assistance in the classroom (cf. Tharp & Gallimore, 1990; 1991) where the teacher provides adequate linguistic support in raising the students' WTC as well as English learning, (2) Psychological support, and (3) Learning environmental support. Therefore, the data will show that university EFL teachers need to assist their learners not simply focusing on teaching English as a school subject, but at the same time, to provide them internal (psychological) support and external (classroom environmental) support.

5. Conclusion

This paper first presented the necessity of conducting classroom-based research, and especially the importance of gaining the voices or perspective of the learners

themselves to learn their subjective realities on why they do what they do in the classroom. The catalyst for the study was to focus on WTC of Japanese university EFL learners, and additionally, senior high EFL learners as the next generation who have been being educated under the more communication-oriented new MEXT course of study than before. Then, it also pointed out that teachers' perspectives on how to raise learners' WTC in the classroom should be considered in the research, since the classroom research needs to concern both learners' and teachers' viewpoints.

The paper briefly introduced the results of the pilot study by replicating Nagahashi (2007), which confirmed the issues of Japanese university EFL learners' anxiety in the classroom, and additionally that they feel less confidence in the English speaking skill. The findings offered implications on the necessity of conducting further research by pointing out that few qualitative studies have been conducted toward the issues of WTC or anxiety reflecting both teachers' as well as learners' perceptions. The process of data collection and analyses of each research step reflecting a qualitative approach was illustrated in the tables as an example to demonstrate how classroom research (Shimamura, 2012) was conducted.

The qualitative nature of the study as described in the paper particularly utilizes research methods such as ethnology combining both etic-emic analyses (e.g., classroom observations, three types of notes), and data analyses based on Grounded Theory (interviews, domain analysis). The paper concluded with the emerging categories that are to be discussed in subsequent papers. They deal with the analyses of the emerged categories based on the notes and interviews to answer what is presented above. Due to the limitation of the Bulletin, however, the paper cannot present the whole scope of Shimamura (2012). Subsequently, the discussion will develop to suggest possible theoretical models based on data analyses, and suggest implications for effective classroom instructions from the teacher's perspectives.

Since Chaudron (1988) interpreted ethnographic methods as qualitative approaches which investigate the interaction in the classroom, the necessity of the classroom research conducted by such methods has increased. Chapelle, Jamieson, and Park (1996) in their review of ethnographic research, state the rationale of using qualitative approaches in classroom research. They write,

Moreover, because second language acquisition is a complex process involving socio-cultural, psychological, affective, and personal variables, ethnography has been advocated as providing a unique and important perspective on the second language classroom (p. 47).

It is certain that studies with quantitative approaches do contribute to providing rich implications for the issues of WTC. Still, observations from the classroom through ethnographic approaches hold enormous potential for researchers to investigate authentic social interactions between the teacher and the learner.

Ethnographic data can offer food for thought for researchers through on-site observational impressions or questions followed by reflections leading to establish some theoretical frameworks. The theoretical bases in conjunction with previous research reviews lay groundwork for interview questions, which enable researchers to probe into interviewees' minds. Grounded data arisen from transcriptions allow researchers for further analyses as well as discussions. The qualitative research methods presented in this report are also an example of a research technique of triangulation that ensures the reliability of qualitative research methods.

Through the process of qualitative approach, the researcher assumes that one of the reasons that the number of qualitative research studies has not increased so much after all these years could partly be the fact that it is such a time consuming process to conduct, for example, multiple observations, interviews, transcribing and categorizing data before analyses and discussions. In spite of such cumbersome processes, the data can directly focus on the particular issues of the classroom with the particular inner voices of people who interact in it. In this way, the researcher can get much closer to the data as compared to quantitative methods of analysis that are constrained because they look at much larger numbers to achieve generality. EFL classrooms with qualitative approaches have yet to be fully researched. It is the researcher's hope that the potentials of qualified approaches combined with prevalent quantitative approaches will shed more light not only on the issues of WTC but also the classroom English education as a whole in Japan.

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