Teacher beliefs and intentions regarding the instruction of English grammar under national curriculum reforms: A Theory of Planned Behaviour perspective

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ABSTRACT

While numerous studies in mainstream education have drawn on the Theory of Planned Behaviour to investigate curriculum impact, in English Language Teaching contexts such research is scant. This study applies the theory to anticipate the impact of the Japanese national curriculum for English, by exploring the beliefs of senior high school teachers regarding the integration of grammar with communication-oriented teaching. The findings imply that for some teachers, adoption will be hindered, firstly, by misconceptions regarding high-stakes examinations, resulting in unfavourable attitudes and perceptions of social pressure to reject reform; and secondly, by insufficient resources, such as time and training.

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1. Introduction

In Japan, as in many parts of the world, national curriculum reform has proven to be a complex process with implementation of policy mandates competing against the influence of strong social and contextual factors (Henrichsen, 1989). In the face of the latest reforms to Japan’s national curriculum for English, this paper explored the personal, social, and context-related factors that Japanese teachers believe could influence their teaching of grammar in the context of communication-oriented instruction, a central component in the new curriculum. Though many impact studies are retrospective in their approach, the current study sought to anticipate, rather than report subsequently on, the potential impact of the reform prior to its enactment in April 2013. From this perspective, it aimed to provide insights into the immediate challenges teachers foresee and how teachers might be better supported. Although this study did not set out to generalise its findings, it raises important issues that are relevant to the broader international context. Given that reforms to the English language component of national curricular are occurring throughout Asia, the Middle East, and other parts of the world, the findings may offer researchers and educators in similar situations further insight into the factors influencing national curricular reform in their country.

2. The subjective reality of curriculum implementation

There is numerous research to indicate that reforms to the English language component of national curricular are seldom implemented in the classroom as they were intended by their developers (e.g., Goh, 1999, Malaysia; Nunan, 2003, Asian-Pacific; Orafi & Borg, 2009, Libya; Phipps & Borg, 2009, Turkey; Silver & Skuja-Steele, 2005, five international contexts; Waters & Vilches, 2008, the Philippines). Successful implementation would appear to depend less on policy directives and more on the re-culturing of teachers and schools and establishing the necessary workplace conditions to support reform (Fullan, 2007; Goh, Zhang, Ng, Hong, & Hua, 2005; Henrichsen, 1989; Jackson, 1992; Markee, 1997; Menken & Garcia, 2010). Fullan (2007) has clearly illustrated the tension between policy rhetoric and the “subjective reality” teachers face in their day-to-day work, as they deal with numerous factors which can impede their implementation of national curriculum mandates (p. 23). Factors such as difficult classroom conditions, the absence of training, an unsupportive school environment, insufficient resources, and mismatched, high-stakes assessment have all been reported to inhibit curricular reform at the classroom level.

In terms of the first factor, classroom conditions, studies from a number of international settings (e.g., Carless, 1999, Hong Kong; Cahn & Barnard, 2009, Vietnam; Goh, 1999, Malaysia; Johnson, Monk, & Swain, 2000, Egypt; Wang & Cheng, 2009, China) as well as in Japan (i.e., Gorsuch, 2000, 2001; Kurihara, 2008; Nishino, 2009, 2011;
teaching practice, one cause being the in... Ora... stakes assessment on teaching and learning (Bailey, 1996). In Libya, Wall, 2005; Wang, 2002).

examination administered by individual institutions twice in February. In excess of... administration.

This last point relates to the third factor mentioned above, the school’s social environment. Though not as prevalent in the international English Language Teaching (ELT) literature (cf. Orafi & Borg, 2009), resistance from colleagues has also been shown to inhibit reform-oriented teaching practices. This is highlighted in Cook’s (2009) study, which found that a major barrier to applying reform-oriented training in Japanese EFL classes was the pressure to conform to “standard” teaching practices, namely, grammar-translation methodology. This finding is echoed by Sato and Kleinassers’s (2004) study, in which peer planning and peer observation in one school context served mainly to reinforce the status quo rather than question it.

A further factor concerns difficulties presented by insufficient resources. Featuring specifically in studies are a heavy workload, insufficient curriculum time, expenses for training, and a lack of appropriate teaching materials (Carless, 1999 and Richards & Pennington, 1998, in Hong Kong; Cook, 2009; O’Donnell, 2005 and Sato & Kleinassers, 2004, in Japan; Waters & Vilches, 2008, in the Philippines). Concerning materials, a number of international studies also stress the difficulties encountered using state-mandated textbooks (e.g., Cheng, 2004; Cook, 2009; Goh et al., 2005; Gorsuch, 2001; Sato & Kleinassers, 2004; Tsagari, 2006; Wall, 2005; Wang, 2002).

A final factor is related to washback, that is, the influence of high-stakes assessment on teaching and learning (Bailey, 1996). In Libya, for example, Orafi and Borg (2009) discovered considerable differences between the mandates of the national curriculum and actual teaching practice, one cause being the influence of mismatched, high-stakes examinations. Similar reports appear in relation to national curriculum elsewhere, for example, China (e.g., Huang, 2009), Iran (Dahmardeh, 2009), Taiwan (Liu, 2005), and Turkey (Ozsevik, 2010). In Japan also, the notion of washback is particularly relevant. One reason Japanese teachers frequently cite in justification of the predominance of grammar-translation methodology (e.g., Cook, 2009; Gorsuch, 2000; Silver & Skuja-Steene, 2005; Yoshida & Nagamura, 2003) is the necessity to prepare students for English-language university entrance examinations1 (hereinafter, UEs), which they perceive to emphasise discrete-point knowledge of grammar and translation items (Yoshida, Fujita, et al., 2004; Yoshida, Negishi, Watanabe, Nagamura, & Benesse, 2004).

The studies discussed here span a range of contexts and draw attention to the international relevance of this current study. At the centre of Japan’s latest curricular reforms is the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology’s (hereinafter, MEXT) new Course of Study 2009 (MEXT, 2009a, hereinafter, the COS 2009), which is to be enacted in senior high schools from April 2013. Reflecting what Nunan (2003) observed as the Asia-Pacific’s general trend towards a communicative approach to language teaching, a fundamental development in the new COS 2009 requires that the teaching of grammatical rules and terminology in English language classes “be minimized” (MEXT, 2009a, p. 43; see also Appendix A). The new policy further mandates that “grammar should be taught in a way to support communication and in a way that it is integrated into language activities” (MEXT, 2009a, p. 42). However, as yet there has not been any empirical account of the specific factors teachers believe may facilitate or inhibit their implementation of this central feature of the new curriculum. Accordingly, this study addressed the following research questions: (1) What factors do Japanese teachers believe could influence their teaching of English grammar under new national curriculum reforms? (2) Which of these beliefs might be influential in determining implementation of these reforms?

3. The theoretical background

3.1. Investigating teacher beliefs and motivations

Over the last decade and a half, the study of language teacher beliefs has evolved into a major area of enquiry with several influential frameworks emerging, for example, Woods’ (1996) Beliefs, Assumptions, and Knowledge (BAK) model and Pratt and Associates’ (1998) Teacher Perspectives Inventory (TPI). One drawback of both these models, however, is that they deal only with beliefs at the individual level of cognition. The social and context-related dimensions, which appear to be influential in the Japanese context, are not accounted for. One framework which I would like to highlight here, then, is Borg’s (2006) concept of Language Teacher Cognition (LTC). LTC is a general heuristic framework, which encompasses what teachers believe, think, and know about teaching. Borg’s notion of LTC is significant in that it addresses the personal dimensions of teaching as well as the social and context-specific dimensions. However, as yet there are few quantitative studies that have empirically tested the efficacy of the framework in explaining or predicting teachers’ behaviour (cf. Nishino, 2009).

In researching national curricular implementation, recognising the role these three dimensions may ultimately have reflects a “bottom-up” view of curricular reform in which the teacher is regarded as central in the change process. An important aspect of this area of research is the psychological processes that are seen to influence a teacher’s behaviour. One psychological construct that has been of particular interest to educational researchers is motivation, and numerous theories have been used to explain the role of motivation in influencing teaching behaviour (https://sites.google.com/site/motivationataglanceschool provides an online documentation of a wide variety of motivation theories in education). Accordingly, with the present study’s emphasis on exploring teacher beliefs about a range of potential personal, social, and contextual factors that may influence their motivation to adopt reform-oriented behaviour, I chose the Theory of Planned Behaviour (hereinafter, TPB; Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2005) as the framework for my investigation. I will now describe the TPB in more detail and then explain its relevance to this study.

3.2. The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Ajzen’s (1985, 1991, 2005) Theory of Planned Behaviour was designed to explain and predict human behaviour and to provide a framework for devising behavioural change interventions (Ajzen, 1991; see Ajzen, 2011, for an online bibliography of more than 700 empirical studies in a wide variety of fields). To account for behaviour that is not entirely under volitional control, the TPB extends the

1 For most students in Japan, the standard university admissions procedure has two main stages: the National Center Test for University Admissions, which is administered to the majority of university applicants in January; and a second-stage examination administered by individual institutions twice in February. In excess of 3000 different second-stage UEs are administered across Japan yearly.
earlier Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which was based in part on Expectancy-Value Theory (Fishbein, 1963). In mainstream education, researchers have used the TPB to guide a number of empirical investigations across a variety of school subjects (e.g., Haney, Czernek, & Lumpié, 1996; Kim, 2009; Millar & Shelvin, 2002; Oh, 2001; Siragusa & Dixon, 2009; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998), but it has been applied to a far lesser degree in investigating the implementation of ELT reforms (i.e., Gorsuch, 2001; Huang, 2009; Kennedy, 1996; Keranen, 2008; Millar & Shelvin, 2002; Oh, 2001; Siragusa & Dixon, 2009; Wallestad, 2009).

Central to the TPB is the concept of intention, which is assumed to capture a range of motivational factors (Ajzen, 1991). According to the TPB, a person’s intention, or motivation, to adopt a behaviour (and the behaviour itself) is influenced by three main determinants and their respective attributes: (1) behavioural beliefs and attitudes towards the behaviour; (2) normative beliefs and subjective norms; and (3) control beliefs and perceptions of control. This relationship is represented diagrammatically in Fig. 1.

The construct belief is operationally defined as “the subjective probability that the object has the attribute in question” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 30), object referring to a “person, institution, policy, or event” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 6). In the current study, the object is a reform-oriented approach to the teaching of grammar. Ajzen (2005) states that people form “beliefs about an object by associating it with certain attributes” (p. 29). In the educational domain, this definition is consistent with Pajares (1992), who defines belief as “an individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition” (p. 316).

The first kind of belief in the TPB, behavioural belief, is personal in nature and is formed through associating performance of a behaviour with certain outcomes, or attributes. The attitude towards the behaviour is determined by the person’s evaluation of those outcomes. Attitudes have been defined by Gerrig and Zimbardo (2002, p. G-2) as “the learned, relatively stable tendency to respond to people, concepts, and events [objects] in an evaluative way”. Empirical research has shown evaluations often contain two components (Ajzen, 2002): experiential (e.g., pleasant, enjoyable, and fun) or instrumental (e.g., useful, worthless, and valuable). It is here that the TPB can be seen to derive from the earlier Expectancy-Value Theory (Fishbein, 1963), in which the concept of utility value is the subjective evaluation of the instrumentality (or instrumental evaluation) of a task (or a behaviour).

The second kind of belief, normative belief, reflects a social influence and arises from a person’s perception that influential others would approve or disapprove of their adopting the behaviour, or that those people themselves would engage, or otherwise, in its adoption. The subjective norm represents the person’s motivation to comply with this subjective perception of social pressure.

The third kind of belief, control belief, deals with the presence or absence of factors that would facilitate or inhibit adoption of the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control represents the degree to which a person perceives themselves to have control over the required skills and resources to adopt the behaviour. In this respect, it reflects Attribution Theory’s (Weiner, 1992) concept of ability and Self-Determination Theory’s (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) concept of competence, both of which capture a person’s capacity to perform a behaviour. Additionally, as perceived behavioural control can account for the influence of past experience/knowledge, training opportunities, and resource impediments (e.g., insufficient time), it also reflects Goal-Setting Theory’s (Locke & Latham, 1990) concept of task complexity. As Ajzen (1991) acknowledges, though, perceived behavioural control is most compatible with Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy (1977, 1997), which can be described as the degree of confidence, or control, a person has in their ability to perform a behaviour. However, as the TPB also estimates motivation to perform a behaviour in terms of a person’s evaluation of that behaviour as well as the cooperation of influential others in performing it, the concept of self-efficacy, or perceived behavioural control, is situated in a more “general framework of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 184) (Under some conditions, when perceived behavioural control reflects actual control, it can be used to predict behaviour directly. The broken arrow in Fig. 1 indicates this relation).

In context of the current study, then, according to the TPB, a teacher’s intention (or motivation) to adopt a reform-oriented approach to grammar teaching will be consistent with the interaction between, and strength of, the three core beliefs and their respective attributes.

3.3. Rationale for adopting the Theory of Planned Behaviour in this study

The TPB is applicable to this current study for three reasons. First, the model’s behavioural, normative, and control beliefs correspond with the various personal, social, and context-related factors that have emerged in the review of the literature and appear to be influential in the Japanese context. Second, in accounting for the influence of social and context-related factors in shaping teacher beliefs and intentions regarding curriculum innovation, the TPB overcomes the limitations of the BAK (Woods, 1996) and TPI (Pratt & Associates, 1998) frameworks by moving beyond the dimension of the individual teacher. Third, the TPB accounts for many aspects of Borg’s (2006) LTC framework and has also been shown through several meta-analyses (e.g., Armitage & Conner, 2001) to be a robust model for explaining and predicting human behaviour through psychological constructs such as, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions; thereby, adding to the confidence with which the findings of this present study can be interpreted.

4. Methodology

In this chapter, I start by providing an overview of the current study, my role as researcher, and how I established ethical approval. I then continue by explaining the sampling of schools, the profile of focus group, interview, and survey participants, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

4.1. Overview

Borg (2006) recognises that in studies of language teacher cognition, the beliefs that are obtained can often be “a product of the elicitational methods used” (p. 279). I aimed to address this concern through methodological triangulation (Cohen, Manion, &
4.2. Sampling and participants

This study adopted purposive sampling with the aim of providing information-rich cases that would enable me to examine the potential impact of the new COS 2009 from different perspectives. Wiersma (2000) defines this approach as maximum variation sampling, which is “a selection process that includes units so that differences on specified characteristics are maximised” (p. 286). The units being explored in this study were the type of school and teacher.

Senior high schools in Japan can be categorised in numerous ways; however, there are essentially two main types: vocational and academic (Gorsuch, 1999, provides a thorough description of Japanese school categorisation). In vocational schools, fewer students continue to four-year universities (MEXT, 2009b). Academic schools on the other hand are university-track schools and can be classified into publicly funded (kouritsu) and privately funded (shiritsu) institutions.

4.2.1. The focus group and interview participants

The first set of data was gathered from two focus groups and one semi-structured interview of Japanese teachers of English (N = 6), who were working at a private school in central Tokyo (Table 1). The school is ranked as slightly below average in terms of its standardised rank score. The participants within this school were selected according to their demographic profiles (i.e., academic qualifications, age, and social status in the school). I initially considered conducting one focus group that would include all six teachers. However, during the process of arranging participants, one novice and two senior teachers informed me that they would only participate in a focus group if certain teachers were not present. I therefore made a rational decision to separate the senior (n = 3) and novice (n = 2) teachers to establish a more comfortable atmosphere, in which the participants might speak more freely. Additionally, as a department head was also participating in the study, I decided that a semi-structured interview was the most appropriate means of ensuring privacy and a more open dialogue. While the number of participants in the two groups was smaller than what is typical for focus groups, I felt that by allowing participants to discuss their beliefs with teachers, who they regard as sharing the same goals and concerns, provided a greater potential for participants to reveal more insightful information than they might otherwise have done through individual interviews (Jourard, 1964; Krueger & Casey, 2009).

4.2.2. The survey participants

The second set of data was collected from Japanese teachers (N = 10), working in two private schools in an urban location and one public school in a rural location (Table 2). Schools were selected according public or private status and whether the institution was attached or unattached to a university. To select participants in each of the schools, I adopted snowball sampling (Rea & Parker, 2005), also referred to as network or chain sampling (Wiersma, 2000). A contact teacher in each school was asked to identify up to five teachers who would be prepared to express their views on both the advantages and disadvantages, thereby, helping to reduce sampling bias, of MEXT’s new COS 2009 approach to grammar instruction.

School A is a co-educational, private senior high school in central Tokyo, which is not attached to a university. The school is ranked as slightly below average in terms of its standardised rank score (Contact Teacher, A1, personal communication, November 12, 2010). It focuses primarily on English language education, although several other languages are also taught at the school.

School B is a co-educational, private senior high school in central Tokyo, which is attached to a mid-level private university just outside of Tokyo. The school is below average in terms of its standardised rank score (Contact Teacher, personal communication, November 12, 2010). As the contact teacher at this school was not Japanese, he did not participate in the survey.

School C is a co-educational, public school, which is in a rural location in the Northwest Japan. The school is not attached to a university. It is above average in terms of its standardised rank score and focuses on the UEEs of prestigious institutions (Contact Teacher, C2, personal communication, November 29, 2010).

4.3. Data collection

Data collection through focus groups and belief questionnaire surveys is standard procedure in the formative stages of TPB studies (Ajzen, 2006; Francis et al., 2004). Furthermore, the content and design of questions in the survey stage of the current study conformed to standard TPB procedures (Ajzen, 2006; Francis et al., 2004), which use open-ended response items based on the three TPB belief areas. In both stages of the research, questions were open-ended in order to avoid imposing any beliefs upon the participants and influencing their responses, which was an important limitation highlighted in Richards, Gallo, and Renandya’s (2001) study of teacher beliefs in Southeast Asia. In addition, the questions were worded to encourage teachers to disclose personal beliefs in reference to themselves (e.g., What factors would inhibit your adoption of a reform-oriented approach in 2013?), rather than

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2 In Japan, the level or ranking of schools and universities is calculated by standardised rank scores (referred to as hensachi in Japanese) according to the difficulty of their entrance examinations. Saith and Newfields (2010) provide an informative discussion on the development of this ranking system in the Japanese context.

3 Krueger and Casey (2009, p. 2) state that focus groups can consist of 4–12 people.
statements based on a generalisation or hypothetical “other”. While the format and presentation of questions differed slightly between the focus groups, interview, and survey, in essence they covered three main areas of enquiry:

1. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of teaching according to MEXT’s proposals from 2013?
2. Can you think of anyone who might support or not support your decision to teach according to MEXT’s proposals from 2013?
3. What skills and resources do you think you will need to teach according to MEXT’s proposals from 2013?

In order to help establish that the beliefs I aimed to elicit were in reference to the new COS 2009 proposals, all participants were given an information letter explaining the research and a document providing extracts from the COS 2009 (in Japanese and English), which related to the teaching of grammar (Appendix A). In addition to the extracts from the policy documents, I also provided participants with a hypothetical teaching scenario (in Japanese and English) that embodied the new COS 2009 approach (Appendix B, Part 2). The scenario aimed to provide an effective visualization (Argyris & Schön, 1974, as cited in Borg, 2006) of the policy and a clear conceptualization of how grammar and communication might be integrated in an actual English lesson. In this way, I wanted to reduce the potential for any misconceptions about the integration of grammar and communication that were apparent in previous studies (e.g., Kurihara, 2008; Pacek, 1996; Sakui, 2007).

Prior to conducting the focus groups and interview and before completing the main section of the survey, participants completed a Background Information sheet, which provided the following data:

- years of teaching experience
- courses currently teaching
- time spent on explicit grammar instruction and translation in a 50-min class
- school status: attached or unattached to a university
- familiarity with the COS 2009
- recent professional training

The focus groups and interview were conducted in English as all participants had a sufficiently high level of English and stated that they were comfortable doing so. Both focus groups and the semi-structured interview lasted approximately 1 h. Because of my dual role as researcher and data collector, I attempted to minimise my influence on the participants in two ways. First, during the focus groups, I was mindful to keep my involvement at a minimum, moderating interaction among participants and allowing their views to emerge and develop. Second, during the semi-structured interview, while some degree of empathy was necessary in order to encourage the informant to tell his story, I avoided providing clues for potential or favourable responses. As the participants’ views rather than my agenda predominated, I considered the validity of data was enhanced.

The survey instrument was written in both Japanese and English (an English version of the survey is provided in Appendix B). With the assistance of two other bilingual colleagues, the Japanese version of the survey was then back-translated into English to establish equivalence with the original questionnaire (Francis et al., 2004). All participants responded to the survey in Japanese. Their responses were sent for translation into English, the accuracy of which I then discussed with colleagues.

4.4. Data analysis

The analysis of focus group and interview data followed the Classic Approach suggested by Krueger and Casey (2009), which is considered to provide a “concrete and visual” means of analysis (p. 199):

1. fully transcribing the audio recordings
2. checking transcriptions with participants to verify accurate representation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
3. colour-coding transcriptions according to the comments of individual participants

### Table 1
An overview of focus group and interview participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years teaching English</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Specific Training/Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice 1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid-20s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>BA (Int. Rel.)</td>
<td>Highly fluent in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice 2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid-20s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MA (TESOL)</td>
<td>MA studies through L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior 1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Late 30s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>MA (TESOL)</td>
<td>MA studies in U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior 2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>BA (Chinese)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior 3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mid-40s</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>BA (Eng. Lit.)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. Head</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mid-40s</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>BA (Eng. Lit.)</td>
<td>Highly fluent in English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Novice and Seniors teachers participated in focus groups, the department head participated in a semi-structured interview; Int. Rel. — International Relations; TESOL — Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages; Eng. Lit. — English Linguistics; Eng. Lit. — English Literature; L2 — second language (i.e., English).*

### Table 2
Survey respondent profiles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years teaching English</th>
<th>Additional qualifications/Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>BA (English Literature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>MA (English Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>BA (Russian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>MA (English Language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>MA (English Language), TEFL Diploma, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>BA (English Literature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>MA (TESOL), regular CLT training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>BA (English Literature)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: A — a private unattached urban school; B — a private attached urban school; C — a public unattached rural school; CLT — Communicative Language Teaching; TEFL — Teaching English as a Foreign Language; TESOL — Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.*
4. categorising and colour-coding specific comments according to the TPB areas of enquiry
5. discussing categorisation with a colleague to verify coding and reduce personal bias; thereby, increasing investigator reliability (Denzin, 2009)
6. writing a narrative summary each of the areas of enquiry

Open-ended responses from the survey data were also content analysed according to the classic approach. As I was the sole researcher, it was important to reduce personal bias during the analysis stage. Firstly, a colleague and I independently analysed a selection of surveys and discussed the allocation of responses to specific categories, thus helping to establish investigator reliability (Denzin, 2009). Independently, I then allotted responses to categories under each of the three TPB belief areas. For example, one response might have referred to the difficulty of matching evaluation practices with colleagues; another might have referred to the difficulty of evaluating communicative activities. In this instance, both responses would have been allotted to the category of problematic evaluation under the superordinate category of control beliefs. Identical responses that were repeated by the same teacher were not counted twice.

5. Findings

In this chapter I will present the data from the focus groups, semi-structured interview, and surveys according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour’s behavioural, normative, and control belief areas. As data was triangulated through multiple sources, the findings are presented together.

5.1. Behavioural beliefs

The first area of enquiry concerned what teachers believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of the new COS 2009 approach to grammar instruction.

Firstly, it is clear from the data that teachers generally regard the approach favourably. The department head was positive towards the new COS 2009’s approach, stating that if “grammar, can be integrated into reading or speaking or writing, that’s fantastic I would say” (lines 85–86). In the novice teachers’ group, Novice 1 also made several references to the role of integrating grammar with communication, suggesting that, in principle, the incorporation of the grammatical syllabus into Communication English 1 could be a positive step. The survey data (Table 3) also reflects teachers’ positive evaluation of integrating grammar teaching with communication, as evident in the frequency of responses under Survey Item 1, Disadvantages of a Reform-oriented Approach, Categories 1 and 2. In the senior teachers’ focus group, Senior 1 recognised the potential to increase student motivation through this approach:

Communicative English is more fun compared to an independent grammar class or a grammar-translation method... If we come to the classroom and say ‘Oh, I’m going to teach grammar today’, then they [students] don’t want to listen. They just hear the word grammar and start preparing to sleep. But if I say, we’re going to have fun today and then we teach the grammar, you know implicitly, they may not notice that we are actually teaching grammar, but they acquire the grammar (Lines 78–88).

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**Table 3** Survey responses in behavioural belief areas: Items 1 and 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Belief area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages of a Reform-oriented Approach (Item 1, Part A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Enables students to utilize what they learnt for practical communication</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grammar and vocabulary can be practiced through many activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students’ negative view towards grammar may change</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. More enjoyable than a focus on grammar only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Using English more might be beneficial to learning new grammar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages of a Reform-oriented Approach (Item 1, Part B)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Insufficient attention to grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Problematic evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students might not participate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grammar cannot be taught systematically</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Preparation of grammar-translation classes easier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The number of teachers was ten; Participants were able to state numerous factors for Item 1, Part A and B, in the survey; Item 2 allowed further elaboration.

*Frequency represents the number of teachers who mentioned a belief. Beliefs repeated by the same teacher were not counted twice.

This belief is also reflected in the survey data (Survey Item 1, Advantages of a Reform-oriented Approach, Categories 3 and 4), which suggests several teachers believe student motivation could increase through the integration of grammar instruction with communication-oriented activities.

The range of beliefs reported here supports previous research in the Japanese context (Browne & Wada, 1998; Gorsuch, 1999, 2001; Nishino, 2008; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Watanabe, 2006), which has found teachers hold positive attitudes towards lessons that emphasise communication. However, the findings of this present study perhaps go beyond those cited in previous studies by providing evidence that most teachers recognise not only specific benefits to intrinsic motivation but also instrumental advantages associated with integrating grammar instruction with meaning-oriented skills-work. These findings also echo those of Borg and Burns’ (2008) international study of 176 English language teachers across 18 countries (regarding their beliefs about the integration of grammar), in which the most commonly occurring belief (n = 57) referred to the potential for improving students’ ability to use language for communication.

However, the results from the focus groups, interview, and surveys also highlight a possible tension between teachers’ beliefs about the advantages of a reform-oriented approach and the disadvantages they associate with it. For instance, from the frequency of responses in the survey data (Survey Item 1, Disadvantages of a Reform-oriented Approach, Categories 1, 2, and 4), it was evident that teachers place a noteworthy amount of importance on attending to grammatical accuracy and evaluation. As C1 commented:

[The COS 2009] emphasises accuracy in students’ understanding of grammar and vocabulary in its teaching approach. However, it is doubtful that with this teaching method one could prove such accuracy and establish student understanding in such a short time period (Survey Item 1, Disadvantages, translation).

While it is quite reasonable that teachers might believe a reform-oriented approach to have both favourable and unfavourable outcomes, there appears to be some degree of contradiction in their responses. Teachers clearly understand the COS 2009 to advocate an integrated approach to the teaching of grammar as evident in the responses presented above. However, throughout the data there is a high occurrence of comments regarding concerns about the lack of time that would be available for grammar instruction, a concomitant reduction in time for UEE preparation,
and a potential decrease in grammatical accuracy; concerns that are also reflected in 
Huang’s (2009) study of teacher beliefs in the Chinese ELT context.

In the focus groups and interview, this theme was raised in specific reference to the disjunction teachers believe exist between MEXT’s new COS 2009 and the perceived centrality of grammar in UEEs. In the senior teachers’ focus group, Senior 1 remarked that “the university entrance exam requires students to write or read accurate English, and accurate English means no grammatical errors” (lines 22–24). He contrasted this with the focus of communication that “allows people to make small errors because it doesn’t lose the meaning… because English is a part, a very big part [emphasis] of university entrance exams, that’s kind of a conflict” (lines 24–27). Senior 3 supported this view by stating that while MEXT does not mention UEEs in the COS 2009, “in reality it is a goal for the students” (line 46). These views imply that UEEs emphasise discrete-point knowledge of grammar, and grammar-translation methodology is the most efficient and effective means of preparing students. More specifically, in the interview with the department head, two reasons were offered for the persistence of this teaching approach. The department head believes it is due to a misalignment of MEXT policy with the National Center Test’s Question 2, which claimed focuses on discrete-point knowledge of grammar and the content of second-stage UEEs, such as Waseda University, a highly prestigious institution.

Novice 1 was concerned about the level of grammar that could be realistically taught through activities that focus on the communicative aspect of language. “There is a limit to the grammar that is presentable. Especially in reading. I think grammar skills will be more important” (lines 13–14). Senior 1, who has an MA in TESOL, echoed a similar view but in reference to his students’ learning styles:

> If grammar is taught through the text that might be interesting, …they have to find out the rule by themselves and for certain level students that could be fun and once they find it by themselves they don’t lose it easily, [Senior 3 signals agreement], but for the students who have a low logical thinking skill it just is painful for them. It might just be easier to memorize it. (Lines 143–149)

It is interesting to note that teachers in schools attached to a university are as much concerned with maintaining grammatical accuracy in preparation for UEEs as those teachers in unattached schools. This is in part of there being, in principle, less need for students in these schools to sit competitive UEEs. In Question 5 of the Background Information sheet (Appendix B, Part 1), focus group, interview, and survey participants were asked how long they normally spend on explicit grammar and translation instruction in a 50-min, four-skill class. Their responses suggest that teachers from all types of school spend a comparable amount of time on this kind of instruction, ranging from 10 to 25 min, with the average time being 15 min. Other demographics such as age, qualifications, and training do not appear to affect the amount of time teachers reported. This is evident in the responses of teacher C2, who works in a public academic school (unattached to a university), has a master’s degree in TESOL, and is actively involved in professional development. While this teacher reported spending only 10 min on grammar and translation in English 1, due to the perceived pressure from UEEs, she reported having to use—against her better judgment—the Oral Communication 1 class (Grade 10) entirely for grammar work.

In summary then, the tensions described here seem to suggest that teachers are finding difficulty in conceiving how the integration of grammar with communication-oriented activities could be realized in their classes.

5.2. Normative beliefs

The second area of enquiry asked participants about who they believe would approve or disapprove of their adoption of a reform-oriented approach to grammar instruction.

The findings here confirm what research in other Southeast Asian countries (Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001) has suggested about the centrality of student expectations. In the current study, many senior and novice teachers from all school types identified students as among those who would oppose a reform-oriented approach to teaching. The responses from the survey (Table 4) indicate that students are regarded as the most influential. Specifically, while few teachers (n = 2) made reference to students being supportive (Survey Item 4, Supportive Referents, Category 1), a large number of teachers (n = 5) believed that students who favour UEEs would not supportive (Survey Item 4, Unsupportive Referents, Category 1). This suggests that for many students a policy approach to grammar instruction might be perceived as ineffective in preparing for UEEs. In contrast, the specific comments of C2, a senior teacher working in an unattached public school, present an alternative perspective:

> In terms of student success…by using English [to explain grammar], if the students do not understand, they may rebel against it. Likewise, if by participating in activities that integrate grammar they become interested and feel they are improving, they will enjoy the class (Survey Items 3 and 4, Influential Referents, translation).

Teachers from both the novice and senior groups made only minimal reference to those who would approve, namely, novice teachers and parents favouring development of their child’s communicative skills. Instead, teachers focused more on three groups of people who might disapprove, namely, students, senior teachers, and parents favouring preparation for UEEs. In this unattached private school, the first kind of pressure appears to be asserted by second- and third-year students (Grades 11 and 12). Novice 1 mentioned that conflicts can arise when students experience teaching styles that differ from the traditional grammar-translation approach they encountered in previous years. On the other hand, Novice 2 suggested that if students “can get a good score from teaching in that style then they will think, ah this is good teaching and the teachers are good” (lines 74–75). Both Novice 1 and 2 believe that first-year students (Grade 10), who have not yet formed strong expectations, might have a more positive response.

These teachers are also concerned about the opinions of senior colleagues. Though it was encouraging to note that Novice 2 reported spending only 5–10 min on grammar-translation in the required courses English 1 and English 2,² she also revealed that her approach was beginning to cause friction with senior colleagues. She reported that while she was initially eager to join the English Department and apply her TESOL knowledge and training, she is becoming increasingly dispondent and is now beginning to question the efficacy of a reform-oriented approach. Her comments revealed the influence senior teachers are having on her teaching decisions, “A lot of teachers think communication, I mean speaking, and grammar teaching is different. I don’t think we cannot [sic] combine these two [even] if I want to, but all teachers won’t let me do that” (lines 5–7). The comments from Novice 2 are a cautious reminder of Carless’ (1999) observation in relation to educational innovation in the Hong Kong context that “even teachers initially enthusiastic about an innovation can become frustrated by problems in implementation and eventually turn against the project” (p.

² The English 2, four-skill course is taught in Grade 11.
Table 4
Survey responses in normative belief areas: Items 3, 4, and 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Belief area</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Referents (Item 3)</td>
<td>Students who favour a focus on communication</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers in their twenties</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Language Teachers (native-speaker ALTs)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive Referents (Item 4)</td>
<td>Students who favour a focus on UEEs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The number of teachers was ten; Participants were able to state numerous factors for Items 3 and 4 in the survey; Item 5 allowed further elaboration. * Frequency represents the number of teachers who mentioned a belief. Beliefs repeated by the same teacher were not counted twice.

23). While the beliefs and experiences of Novice 2 should not be generalised beyond this study, their inconsistency with the reports of similarly qualified teachers elsewhere (i.e., Carless, 2001; Cook, 2009), further emphasise the importance of considering the influential role of social factors. The insight provided by Novice 2, though anecdotal, also adds support to the findings of Yoshida, Negishi, et al.’s (2004) study, cited in Section 2 of this paper, which found that classroom practices were less likely to be aligned with MEXT policy in schools where the social context was unsupportive. Also in relation to the role of senior teachers, the comments of the department head indicate that while younger teachers might have greater hopes for teaching in a reform-oriented way, senior teachers over 45 years of age would be more resistant, “From my experience, some of them—not all of them—have a very strong belief in the way that they have been taught and they don’t want to change” (lines 118–120). The 20–25 min that senior teachers in his school reported to spend on grammar and translation during their 50-min English 1 and 2, four-skill courses perhaps lends weight to this belief. The department head’s view was further echoed in the survey responses by two teachers in their 20s and one in her 40s, who also believe that senior teachers would be influential in hindering their adoption of reform-oriented practices.

In the senior teachers’ focus group, however, all participants agreed that student and parent expectations regarding preparation for UEEs are the strongest influences working against a reform-oriented approach. Senior 1, contrasted his working context with that of schools attached to a university, where students can enter university without sitting normal UEEs:

“I have no idea how to teach grammar in Communication English 1” (lines 23–24) and “There will be confusion...You know, we do not know how to connect this course, grammar and communication” (lines 39–40). From the senior teacher focus group, Senior 1, while not conveying the despondency expressed by Novice 2, recognised that not all teachers would have the methodological expertise (lines 155–158). Teachers’ responses in the survey (n = 5) also reflect the belief that having more teaching skills would better facilitate implementation of the reform (n = 2, Survey Item 6, Facilitating Factors, Category 3), and the lack of teaching skills would inhibit it (n = 3, Survey Item 7, Inhibiting Factors, Category 4).

A third theme emerged from the focus groups and referred to the requirement of teachers to use more English in the classroom. Novice 1 commented, “Sometimes it’s difficult to speak [about] grammar in English. And if we use Japanese we have to have the switch of [sic] English and Japanese, and that’s also confusing and difficult” (lines 146–148). Developing the students’ willingness to communicate through English in the classroom also appears difficult for Japanese teachers, due to role expectations. For instance, Senior 2 commented that in “many courses the teachers are Japanese for oral communication. Students...think that they can speak Japanese if they can’t speak English to us...Being a Japanese teacher can be a handicap” (lines 165–169). These are important points because they highlight a potential difficulty that may arise as Japanese teachers try to increase their use of English during the lesson.

Table 5
Survey responses in control belief areas: Items 6, 7, and 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Belief area</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Factors (Item 6)</td>
<td>Colleague’s support</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More curriculum time for English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More teaching skills and training courses</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textbooks that support the new approach</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes with fewer pupils</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University entrance examinations with speaking tests</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhibiting Factors (Item 7)</td>
<td>Insufficient time for preparation and class time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient understanding the COS 2009 approach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low English communicative ability of teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient teaching skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences in student abilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure to prepare students for university entrance examinations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The number of teachers was ten; Participants were able to state numerous factors for Items 6 and 7 in the survey; Item 8 allowed further elaboration. * Frequency represents the number of teachers who mentioned a belief. Beliefs repeated by the same teacher were not counted twice.
A fourth theme raised in the surveys referred to teachers’ knowledge of the COS 2009. In Part 2 of the survey, four teachers reported that an insufficient understanding of the COS would hinder their adoption of the reform (Inhibiting Factors, Category 2). Additionally, in Part 1 of the survey (Question 7), six of the ten teachers reported that they were only somewhat familiar with the COS and one reported that she was not familiar with it at all. As the COS 2009 will not become required policy at the senior high school level until 2013, this was perhaps understandable. Yet, for some teachers, this lack of familiarity with the reforms coupled with a non-education major (e.g., Russian or literature), and perhaps insufficient TESOL training (respondents A1, A3, B1, B4, and C3), may result in their having neither a clear sense of what the COS 2009 requires nor how they could implement it.

One final theme to emerge was the need for more appropriate materials. From the senior teachers’ focus group, Senior 1 was apprehensive about the amount of time that would be necessary to prepare materials to teach English communicatively (lines 205–207). Similarly, Senior 2 suggested the need for more textbooks which integrate grammar into contexts (lines 132–135). From the survey data, the comments of B2, who works in a private (attached) school and participates regularly in TESOL training, reflect this sentiment well:

The grammar that senior high school students need to learn is much harder than junior high school, and preparing materials based on the activities they do in class sounds too hard to do and would consume too much time. (Survey Item 1, Disadvantages, translation)

This finding further reinforces the point made by Goh et al. (2005) in relation to teachers’ implementation of the Singaporean national curriculum. They stressed that given many teachers’ reliance on the textbook for guidance and direction and, therefore, its key role in helping teachers assimilate national curriculum guidelines, the provision of quality textbooks is of paramount importance. A point worth mentioning here is that the potential benefits to private school teachers (i.e., greater freedom in materials and teaching approaches, and the allocation of more hours to English curriculum), which Aspinall (2005) claims to exist, are not reflected in teacher responses in this current study. For instance, one teacher from each of the private schools in the survey study stated the necessity of more class hours for English with another reporting the need for more appropriate textbooks.

6. Discussion

Overall, the findings presented in this current study suggest that for these teachers, the intention to adopt a reform-oriented approach to the teaching of grammar is determined by the interaction of all three TPB belief areas. However, for the most part, teachers’ attitudes towards the COS 2009 and the social pressure they experience from unsupportive referents are mediated largely by control beliefs: firstly, those related to time, training, materials, and knowledge of the reform; and secondly, misperceptions of the content and relevancy of UEEs. I will discuss both of these in turn before presenting some of the practical implications this study might offer to educators and researchers involved in similar educational reforms elsewhere.

First of all, the findings indicate that most teachers believe the new COS 2009 approach to integrating grammar with communication would have both instrumental advantages (e.g., students would use grammar for practical communication) and experiential advantages (e.g., students’ enjoyment of the class might increase), and their evaluation of these advantages was favourable. However, teachers’ intentions to adopt a reform-oriented approach appear inhibited by control factors, such as lack of time, training, appropriate materials, and knowledge of the reform. The lack of time to prepare lessons that might require an entirely new approach to teaching and the perceived absence of appropriate materials to facilitate that approach suggests that even teachers with favourable attitudes to the reform might not intend to adopt a reform-oriented approach. Additionally, several teachers in this study also appeared to be at a loss as to how they could go about implementation of the policy in spite of the training they had received. Moreover, the potential benefits of a post-graduate master degree in TESOL, while perhaps resulting in a greater depth of reflection from participants (evident in the responses of Novice 1, Senior 1, A2, and C2), for these teachers would not seem to offer any practical advantage due to the greater influence of other social and contextual factors operating in their schools.

The second issue relates to the content and relevancy of UEEs. For the majority of teachers a reform-oriented approach is also seen to be at the expense of grammatical accuracy and knowledge of grammar, which was frequently reported as important in preparing for UEEs. This behavioural belief does not seem to vary according to whether the school was attached or unattached to a university, public or private. However, perhaps, one of the most interesting insights to emerge from this qualitative study is related to the focus group and interview participants’ misperceptions regarding the content and relevancy of specific UEEs.

Firstly, the department head stated that in spite of COS 2009 recommendations, grammar-translation methodology would likely persist due to the misalignment of MEXT policy with the content of the National Center Test for University Admission (NCTUA). However, an analysis of this examination shows that only Part 2 of the NCTUA focuses on grammar (20.5% of the examination’s total score). Considering the research into recent versions of the test (i.e., Guest, 2008; Underwood, 2010), it is clear that a grammar-translation approach to instruction alone would be wholly inadequate in preparing students for this section of the test or, indeed, the rest of it.

The department head also stated that grammar-translation methodology would likely persist because of washback from prestigious second-stage UEEs, referring to the content of an examination from Waseda University, a highly prestigious institution. This was in spite of his realising that such UEEs are not a realistic goal for the vast majority of students in his school and that their content is perhaps changing. Indeed, according to the school’s website, only three students (out of an approximate 1000) were accepted into Waseda University in 2010—those applying would not have been more than 15. Of course, in certain senior high schools where the majority of students might expect to apply, and be accepted, to prestigious universities whose UEEs do emphasise translation and discrete-point knowledge of grammar (e.g., Kyoto University), any ethical question is less pertinent. Indeed, teaching towards one prestigious examination might even be regarded as improving “everyone’s chances of getting into a good university” (A. Waters, personal communication, March 10, 2011). Nonetheless, it is clear from Kikuchi’s (2006) analysis of Waseda University’s 2004 Department of English UEE that there were no items that required translation (p. 86). This is further corroborated by the recent Seki et al. (2011) analysis of 91 prominent second-stage UEEs, in which Waseda University’s 2009 Faculty of Science examination was shown to emphasise critical thinking and a broad range of reading skills and abilities.

Similarly, Novice 1 also rationalised the importance of grammar and translation in preparation for the examination for Rikkyo University, another prestigious institution. This was in spite of the fact that in 2010, no more than four students (out of more than 1000) were accepted into Rikkyo University—those applying would not have been more than twenty. While it is unclear as to which examination Novice 1 was referring, or which departments those four
students joined, Kikuchi’s (2006) analysis of the English Department’s 2004 UEE indicated that there were no translation items on the examination. My subsequent inspection of Rikkyo’s 2007 UEEs (Xam, 2007) drawn from a variety of departments (Psychology; Social Studies; Community Welfare; Tourism; Economics; Literature; and Law) and the All-Faculty 2007 UEE clearly indicated a small proportion of items requiring discrete-point knowledge of grammar or translation, yet a substantial amount emphasising the integration of numerous reading skills and abilities. These findings are also supported by the Seki et al. (2011) analysis of Rikkyo’s 2009 All-Faculty UEE, which showed that “discrete-point knowledge of grammar and grammar-translation methodology would not be sufficient preparation for success on this examination” (Y. Watari, personal communication, June 12, 2011). Until recently, there has been little serious research to call into question the validity of teachers’ assumptions about the content of prominent UEEs (cf. Mulvey, 1999). However, the empirical work of Seki et al. (2011), clearly demonstrates that the examinations cited here—and numerous others in their research—no longer emphasise discrete-point knowledge of grammar and translation to the extent that teachers have previously speculated.

While the findings discussed here are contextualised in Japan, as countries in other parts of the world increasingly move towards more student-centred, communication-oriented English language curriculums (e.g., Iran, Libya, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Turkey), educators and researchers in similar situations may find resonance with the experiences of the teachers and the beliefs reported here. In view of this international connection, then, I would like to summarise this discussion with some thoughts on the implications these findings may have and offer some general recommendations.

To begin with, for several teachers in the current study, negative attitudes towards reform-oriented teaching appeared to derive not from their views on the nature of language or language learning—they also reported positive evaluations of the reform—rather their misguided beliefs about the content of UEEs, a control factor. Similarly, concerns about limited class time, another control factor, and perceptions regarding the disapproval of a reform-oriented approach by other people, a social factor, could also be traced to these misconceptions. One theoretical implication, therefore, relates to the importance of investigating the cognitive foundations of attitudes by considering them in relation to other social and control beliefs. The deeper insights provided by this approach will allow those responsible for designing remedial interventions (aimed at facilitating implementation of a new curriculum) to target specific beliefs more accurately.

“Awareness-raising”, as Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) suggested, might also be relevant in certain contexts if we want to “change or get teachers to question their beliefs” (p. 359). Therefore, one practical recommendation is that in contexts where teachers report high-stakes examinations as central to their practice, they need to have access to up-to-date information on not only the content but also the constructs that are tested in those examinations. Importantly, they should be encouraged to actively consider how such information could affect the content and methodology of their teaching. In turn, accurate information also has the potential to moderate the social pressure to conform to standard teaching practices (e.g., those emphasising grammar and translation), which many teachers reported in this current study and is apparent in other international contexts cited earlier in this paper (e.g., Egypt: Johnson et al., 2000). One further and related suggestion is that proving the efficacy of a new curriculum’s approach to hard-to-convince students, parents, and colleagues would no doubt be supported through actual improvements in students’ language abilities and test scores, as two of the teachers in this current study suggested (Section 5.2).

This leads to two further implications that relate to the provision of time resources and the development of skills for implementing the reform. Considering the numerous beliefs associated with a perceived lack of time, if school administrators are serious about adopting national curricular reforms, they need to recognise the burden that non-essential, extra-curricular demands can place on teachers. Naturally, recommendations to deal with this would be highly context-specific. However, irrespective of the specific ways in which schools might reduce the workload, considering also the findings related to the lack of training, it might be argued that effective strategies should aim to provide teachers with more time for appropriate professional development. Recalling the caveat that Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) raise regarding peer planning and observation merely serving to reinforce standard practices, such training should be, as Carless (1999) advises, “ongoing and developmental rather than of an isolated one-off nature” (p. 28). One approach might be the careful structuring of collaborative, school-based professional development, in which teacher co-learning is encouraged through a system of talk, observation, and feedback (Avalos, 2011). This could in turn, have a positive impact on how teachers learn to work with required textbooks and the methods they adopt in preparing students for high-stakes examinations that may or may not be aligned with reform-oriented goals.

7. Conclusion

Though changing teachers’ beliefs is not a straightforward process, and establishing the necessary conditions equally so, the findings of this exploratory research are the first step towards understanding teacher beliefs regarding the instruction of grammar under the new national curriculum reforms in Japan. The findings perhaps go beyond those of previous quantitative studies in the Japanese context in that they provide deeper insights into nature of beliefs, specifically, the nature of teachers’ misguided preconceptions about specific high-stakes examinations. In other international contexts, these findings may also have implications for researchers and teachers in similar situations, where, for example, high-stakes examinations are reported to influence teaching practice. Certainly, in Asia and the Middle East where preparation for such examinations has traditionally emphasised attention to language form, future research should consider this aspect of current study carefully. From a theoretical perspective, the findings further illustrate how a qualitative enquiry of teacher beliefs can bring to light tensions between the ideals of national curriculum and the subjective reality facing teachers. I suggest, therefore, that the current study demonstrates the effectiveness of the TPB as a heuristic framework for investigating the complex nature of, and interaction between, teacher beliefs and is one means by which the impact of ELT curricular could be anticipated in a variety of international contexts.

Appendix A. Grammar-related extracts from the new Course of Study 2009 (MEXT, 2009a)

1. また、今回の改訂で「コミュニケーション英語」がすべての生徒に必ず履修させる科目となったことに伴って、「文法事項」に掲げるすべての事項を「コミュニケーション英語」で取り扱うこととした。（p. 38）[As Communication English I [is] a mandate for all students, it [the Central Education Council] has also reached a decision to include all the topics, which are stated in Grammar, in Communication English I.]

2. 文法については、コミュニケーション英語を支えるものであることを見まえ、言語活動を効果的に関連付けて指導すること。（p. 42）Grammar should be taught in a way to support communication and in a way that it is integrated into language activities.
3. 文法は基盤として必要であるが、文法をコミュニケーションと切り離して考えたり、この二つを対立的な事項としてとらえたりしないことが大切である。(p. 43) Grammar is needed as a basic foundation for communication; therefore, it is important not to separate these two elements.

4. 実際の指導においては、文法の用語や用法等に関する説明は必要最小限としつつ、当該文法を実際に用いて言語活動を行うことによって慣れてくることができるように、当該文法を用いた多様な文を聞いたり読んだりする活動を行ったり、話したり書いたりする活動の中で、新しい文法事項を積極的に用いることを奨励したりして、文法をコミュニケーションに活用することができるようにするための授業を行うことが重要である。(p. 43) In teaching grammar, explaining technical terms and usage should be minimized. Instead, it is important to instruct students in a way that they can utilize their grammatical knowledge in communication. In conducting language activities such as reading and listening, different varieties of materials that include new grammatical expressions can actually put that grammar into a real context for the students, which makes it easier for them to relate to these new expressions. Encouraging them to actually make use out of new grammatical expressions in speaking and writing also helps them to be more familiar with the topics they are learning.

5. コミュニケーションを行うために必要となる語彙や文構造、文法事項などの取扱いについては、用単語や用法の区別などの指導が中心となるよう配慮し、実際に活用できるように指導すること。(p. 43) When teaching phrases, sentence structures, and grammar, which are needed for communication, do not let the explanations of each term and usage be the dominant part of the teaching.

6. 英語に関する各科目を指導するに当たって、文法について説明することに偏っていた場合には、その在り方を改め、授業において、コミュニケーションを体験する言語活動を多く取り入れていく必要がある。(pp. 43–44) As for every English course, if a lesson places a disproportionate emphasis on teaching grammar, it needs to be adjusted to make the lesson more language-activity based in order to provide students with an environment where they can practice communication.

Appendix B. English version of the beliefs questionnaire survey

English Version of the Beliefs Questionnaire Survey

The following questionnaire survey comprises two parts: (1) your background information; and (2) your beliefs about English language teaching in the private senior high school context. Please respond in Japanese or English if you prefer.

Part I: Background Information

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

2. How many years have you been teaching?

3. Which age group are you?
   - 20s
   - 30s
   - 50s
   - 60s

4. What education have you received? Please tick and specify your degree / major.
   - Undergraduate degree
   - Postgraduate degree
   - Other

5. For each of the classes you teach below, how much of your lesson regularly focuses on grammatical explanations and instruction? Please tick and specify.

   - English 1 minutes per class
   - Reading minutes per class
   - English 2 minutes per class
   - Writing minutes per class

6. Is your senior high school attached to a university? Yes / No

7. Have you read the New Course of Study yet? Please tick.
   - Yes, I've read it.
   - Yes, I'm moderately familiar with it.
   - No, I'm unfamiliar with it.

8. Have you participated in any professional teacher training over the last five years? Please give details.
Part 2: A ‘New Course of Study’ Approach to Grammar Instruction

Tanaka-sensei teaches English grammar in the New Course of Study way, which is associated with a focus on the communicative function of language. Tanaka-sensei believes that senior high school students learn English best when grammar and vocabulary is integrated into language activities and when it supports communication. For this reason, Tanaka-sensei does not focus too long on explanations of grammar, sentence structures, and vocabulary. Instead, these aspects of the language are presented in a variety of reading and listening contexts for students. Although the class is conducted mostly in English, Tanaka-sensei usually switches to Japanese for grammatical explanations. Tanaka-sensei requires students to make use of the new grammar and vocabulary by letting them use it in a variety of writing and speaking activities. While Tanaka-sensei encourages accuracy in grammar and vocabulary use, students are encouraged to focus on communication. Students in Tanaka-sensei’s class are required to participate in individual, pair, and group activities.

1. What advantages and disadvantages do you associate with this ‘New Course of Study’ approach to grammar instruction? Please describe them below.

Advantages

1. 

2. 

3. 

Disadvantages

1. 

2. 

3. 

2. Do you have any other views on teaching grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013?

3. Are there any people who would approve of your decision to teach grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013? (e.g., students, senior teachers, etc.)

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5.
4. Are there any people who would **disapprove** of your decision to teach grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013? (e.g., students, senior teachers, etc.)

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5. 

5. Is there anything else you associate with other people’s views about teaching grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013?

6. **What factors or circumstances (e.g., teaching skills, time, etc.) would enable you to teach grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013?**

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5. 

7. **What factors or circumstances (e.g., lack of teaching skills, time, etc.) would make it difficult for you to teach grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013?**

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5. 

8. Are there any other issues that come to mind when you think about your teaching grammar according to the ‘New Course of Study’ approach from 2013?

If you would be happy to answer any questions regarding your responses in this questionnaire, please leave your contact details.

Name: ___________________ Email: ___________________

Telephone: ___________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

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