Japanese EFL students' learning strategies and beliefs about learning English.

Raphael K. O'Donoghue Ph.D.

Why are some individual learners of second languages more successful at the task than other learners? One possible reason for differential success may be found in the learner's beliefs. Horowitz, (1985, 1988), Kern, (1995), Rifkin, (2000) Based on this research, we hypothesized that learning strategy use among Japanese EFL learners is related to the beliefs that Japanese students hold about the task of learning English.

Language learning strategies are conscious or unconscious steps or actions that the learner uses to learn or use the language. The purpose of strategy use is to ‘‘make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations”. (Oxford, 1990) Wenden, (1991) reported language learning strategies to be consistent with learners’ personal beliefs about learning the language. Knowledge that students’ beliefs about learning English are related to strategy use would help develop more effective strategy based instruction.

The purpose of this study was to survey Japanese EFL students’ beliefs about language learning for clues to their learning strategy use. The current study surveyed Japanese EFL students’ beliefs about foreign language learning as measured by the Horwitz, (1985) Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) that was adapted and translated for use with Japanese EFL students. Japanese EFL students’ language learning strategy use was measured by Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) that was adapted and translated into Japanese. Comparisons across gender, language level and college major of subjects are reported. Systems of students’ beliefs are examined for patterns of learning strategy use.