Exploring Japanese University Students’ Beliefs about English as an International Language

Osamu IKENO (Ehime University)

1. Introduction

This study investigates Japanese university students’ views on various issues related to English as an international language. English is now being used most extensively as the language of international communication, and various relevant issues have been discussed, such as the legitimacy of New Englishes, the definition of “native speaker,” and the dominance of the English language. While active discussions have been conducted among applied linguists, the question of how learners think about these issues has remained unexplored. The present study attempts to address this question and thereby to make an original contribution to the ongoing research on learner beliefs.

Inquiry into learner beliefs about English as an international language is significant for many reasons. First, learners may have biased views about the English language, its native speakers, and international communication, and therefore, their beliefs should be the objects of critical examination. Describing what students actually think about relevant issues is a prerequisite to this examination. Additionally, researchers and practitioners of English education often make impressionistic claims about the mentality of Japanese people, such as “Japanese learners worship native English speakers and look down on Asians” (Tsuda, 1993),
but many of these claims are based on limited anecdotal episodes and experiences, the
typicality or idiocyncracy of which is in most cases not even considered. This points to the
need to examine learners’ views in more empirically reliably ways.

**Issues regarding English as an International Language**

English has become the *de facto* lingua franca in the domains of science, technology,
and business, and this is widely recognized among those working in these fields.\(^1\) How do
university students, who in reality have limited need to use English in their daily lives,
perceive the importance of English? Is it possible that their perceptions vary between
different groups of learners (e.g., male/female, those who like/dislike English)? How
strongly do they actually anticipate using English in their future jobs?

The global spread of English has also caused its diversification, and extensive
discussions have been conducted on related issues (e.g., Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1995; Yano,
2001): the need to regard standard varieties of English as the acquisition model, the
acceptability of using non-standard varieties of Englishes in international communication, the
link between the English language and British and American cultures (e.g., the possibility of
learning English as separated from the cultures of “Inner Circle” countries and the importance
of learning about other world cultures in English lessons), among many others. These issues
have been debated among applied linguists and other intellectuals, but what opinions do
Japanese learners of English have about them? For example, to what degree do Japanese
learners perceive the need to learn about English-speaking cultures through learning English?
What level of integrative desire do they have toward American or British cultures?

Another topic that has received growing attention is the dominance of the English
language. While it is true that English has greatly fostered universal access to information
and international communication, various people now raise critical voices against the
hegemony of English in today’s world (e.g., Kubota, 1998; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson,
1992; Tsuda, 1993).\(^2\) The targets of their criticism include, although not limited to:
uncritical acceptance of the spread of English, inequality in communication between native
and non-native English speakers, the linguistically imperialistic attitudes of some native
speakers of English, the undermining of other languages, and the threat to minor indigenous
languages. What views do Japanese learners, who mostly hear positive things about English, hold regarding the potentially negative aspects of English functioning as the lingua franca of the global community?

What do learners think about their first language, Japanese, and other languages, especially those of East Asian countries geographically close to Japan? Is it possible that the greater recognition of the importance of English has a negative correlation with an interest in other languages? What do Japanese university students think of the popular beliefs about their mother tongue when compared with English, such as “Japanese is not a logical language, like English”? Is pride in their first language negatively related to motivational intensity in learning the second language of English?

In order to answer these questions, which no previous research has systematically investigated, and reveal the beliefs that Japanese learners hold about various issues concerning English as an international language, the present survey was conducted as follows. This survey was also intended to investigate how learners’ beliefs might differ according to whether they like or dislike English.

2. Method

Participants. A total of 169 Japanese learners of English participated in this survey. They were students enrolled in Japanese four-year universities and majoring in humanities, economics, law, education, technology, and agriculture. The sample consisted of 98 male and 71 female students. Based on the results of questionnaire item 1 (“I like English,” see below), these participants were divided into those who had a positive attitude toward English \((n = 91)\) (Positive group) and those who did not \((n = 78)\) (Negative group).

Material. The participants completed a 27-item questionnaire for assessing their beliefs about English, Japanese, Asian languages, international communication, and other issues related to English as an international language (see Table 1). In the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with given statements on a 6-point Likert scale. In the scale, only the two extreme values were labeled \((1 = \text{strongly disagree}, \ 6 = \text{strongly agree})\), and the values higher than the middle (i.e., 4, 5, and 6) indicated agreement, while the lower values (1, 2, and 3) showed disagreement. All
the questionnaire items and directions were written in Japanese.

3. Results and Discussion

It should be pointed out that the present study is intended to be exploratory, and as such, data will be examined from a variety of perspectives, and inferential statistics will be used only as an auxiliary measure. Needless to say, the validity of many of these interpretations requires confirmation in subsequent large-scale hypothesis-testing surveys. The descriptive statistics of this survey are presented in Table 1, and these results, in particular the central tendency (indexed as the mean score of each item), will be discussed in terms of (1) the value of English, (2) cultures of English-speaking countries, (3) the dominance of the English language, (4) languages other than English, (5) the Japanese language, (6) native/ non-native speaker teachers of English, (7) language use in Japan, and (8) international friendship. Due to space limitation, the results of all the items will not be mentioned (but see Table 1).

<p>| Table 1. The Results of the Survey |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Whole</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I like English.</td>
<td>3.60 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.84 (0.77)</td>
<td>2.13 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Generally, good English skills will bring me an advantage in job hunting.</td>
<td>5.42 (1.00)</td>
<td>5.48 (0.98)</td>
<td>5.35 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I think I will need English in my future job.</td>
<td>4.18 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.27)</td>
<td>3.66 (1.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Learning English helps us deepen our understanding of the Japanese language.</td>
<td>3.20 (1.52)</td>
<td>3.67 (1.54)</td>
<td>2.64 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Learning English opens up various new possibilities.</td>
<td>5.38 (0.93)</td>
<td>5.66 (0.62)</td>
<td>5.05 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 We do not need to be ashamed of “Japanese English” (e.g., Japanese-like pronunciation), as long as it works in communication.</td>
<td>4.02 (1.50)</td>
<td>3.98 (1.58)</td>
<td>4.08 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 We should learn the “standard” varieties of English, such as American or British English.</td>
<td>4.26 (1.45)</td>
<td>4.36 (1.41)</td>
<td>4.14 (1.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 It is important to learn about English cultures (e.g., American, British, etc.) through learning English.</td>
<td>4.23 (1.40)</td>
<td>4.52 (1.35)</td>
<td>3.88 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 It is important to learn about world cultures, not simply English cultures, through learning English.</td>
<td>4.18 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.55 (1.35)</td>
<td>3.73 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Now that English has become an international language, it is acceptable to separate English from Anglo-American cultures in learning English.</td>
<td>3.30 (1.43)</td>
<td>3.21 (1.46)</td>
<td>3.40 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 It is important to explain Japanese culture to people in other countries in English.</td>
<td>4.24 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.61 (1.35)</td>
<td>3.79 (1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I am proud of my mother tongue, Japanese.</td>
<td>4.75 (1.38)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I disagree with the idea of English being used as the common language in the world.</td>
<td>2.22 (1.37)</td>
<td>1.99 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I can understand why one learns English, but when I see people learning Vietnamese or Thai, for example, I honestly feel, &quot;What's the use?&quot;</td>
<td>2.75 (1.71)</td>
<td>2.59 (1.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>When I see someone speak English fluently, I feel “S/he's cool” or “I wish I could be like him or her.”</td>
<td>5.43 (1.05)</td>
<td>5.78 (0.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>When I see someone speak Korean or Chinese fluently, I feel “S/he's cool” or “I wish I could be like him or her.”</td>
<td>4.82 (1.44)</td>
<td>5.08 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I think that English is a more logical language than Japanese.</td>
<td>3.22 (1.45)</td>
<td>3.25 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>As far as English learning is concerned, I trust native speakers rather than Japanese teachers of English. For example, if a native English speaker says, “Grammar is important,” this sounds more convincing than Japanese teachers of English saying the same thing.</td>
<td>4.12 (1.60)</td>
<td>4.27 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I would like to learn English from native-speaker teachers (e.g., Americans, Australians, etc.), rather than Filipinos/Filipinas or Singaporeans, however native-like they may be.</td>
<td>3.31 (1.75)</td>
<td>3.49 (1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>In Japan, native speakers of English should speak Japanese, not English.</td>
<td>3.47 (1.60)</td>
<td>3.38 (1.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>In Japan, non-native speakers of English (e.g., Malaysians) should speak Japanese, even when they can speak English.</td>
<td>3.34 (1.61)</td>
<td>3.32 (1.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I feel an attraction to the cultures of English-speaking countries.</td>
<td>3.66 (1.59)</td>
<td>3.84 (1.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I would like to make friends with people in English-speaking countries.</td>
<td>4.36 (1.68)</td>
<td>5.0 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I would like to make friends with people in Asian countries.</td>
<td>4.32 (1.65)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Languages other than English should be promoted more in junior and senior high schools. It is un-reasonable that only English receives special treatment.</td>
<td>3.30 (1.59)</td>
<td>3.17 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>In junior high school, it is better to learn English rather than other foreign languages.</td>
<td>3.98 (1.43)</td>
<td>4.08 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>It is not reasonable that a foreign language is a required subject. It should be learned only by those who see a need for it in the future.</td>
<td>2.45 (1.36)</td>
<td>2.22 (1.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Value of English

Not surprisingly, Japanese university students recognized the importance of English strongly, as the extremely high mean scores of Item 2 ("Good English skills will bring me an advantage in job hunting") ($M = 5.42$) and Item 5 ("Learning English opens up various new possibilities") ($M = 5.38$) indicated. Note that even those in the Negative group showed strong agreement (Item 2: $M = 5.35$; Item 5: $M = 5.05$). In other words, even when they do not like English, Japanese university students are aware of the potential benefits that English will bring to them.

This recognition of value, however, is probably not based on the expectation of clearly-defined needs in their future. In fact, the mean score of Item 3 ("I think I will need English in my future jobs") was much lower ($M = 4.18$). Additionally, for this item, the learners in the Positive group showed significantly higher agreement ($M = 4.62$) than those in the Negative group ($M = 3.66$), $F(1, 167) = 22.51, p < .01$. Since the data are correlational in nature, the existence and direction of causality cannot be determined; possibly, however, because some students do not expect to use English in their future jobs, they have not developed a positive attitude toward English, or conversely, because they do not like English, they are less likely to choose a job which requires English.

In addition to the pragmatic value of English, the subjective image of being fluent in English was extremely positive among the participants of this survey, as was reflected in the result of Item 15 ("When I see someone speak English fluently, I feel ‘She (or he) is cool!’ or ‘I wish I could be like him (or her)’") ($M = 5.43$). It is noticeable that even those in the Negative group strongly agreed with this statement ($M = 5.01$), and this mixed feeling of dislike and admiration would make an interesting object of psychological analysis.

Cultures of English-Speaking Countries

The relationship between language and culture has been a topic for extensive discussion for a long time. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984), for example, argue that "to study language without studying the culture of native speakers of the language is a lifeless endeavor" (p. 140). In many university-level English programs in Japan, learning about English-speaking cultures and the ways of thinking underlying the English language has been
viewed as having equal importance with improving communicative competence. On the other hand, it is also true that with the world-wide spread of the language, English is no longer used in Anglo-American socio-cultural contexts alone. Honna and Takeshita (1998) point out that "if Japanese [people] speak English with Singaporeans, there is no room for American or British cultural influence" (p. 126).

As the result of Item 8 ("It is important to learn about English cultures (e.g., American, British, etc.) through learning English") \((M = 4.28)\) showed, Japanese learners saw a need, although not so strong, to learn about English-speaking cultures. It is more noteworthy that they felt an almost equally strong need to learn about world cultures through learning English: Item 9 ("It is important to learn about world cultures, not simply English cultures, through learning English") \((M = 4.18)\). This is probably because even university students have the awareness that communication in English involves people of diverse cultural backgrounds. If the same question had been asked about other languages, they would probably have shown much weaker agreement. (For example, few would have agreed that we should learn about American, Korean, and other world cultures in Chinese lessons.) This result provides support to the policy adopted by the majority of the present authorized English textbooks in Japan, which include various topics and characters associated with the cultures of non-English-speaking countries (cf. "international target culture materials"; see McKay, 2002).

In contrast to the perception of a need to learn about English-speaking cultures, learners did not feel an integrative drive toward English-speaking cultures, at least as far as the result of Item 22 ("I feel an attraction to the cultures of English-speaking countries") \((M = 3.66)\) showed. These results imply that Japanese university students agree, although weakly, with interculturalism (Byram, 1998), i.e., learners acquiring knowledge about another culture, but that they are not so positive toward biculturalism, in which learners identify with and/or accept the beliefs, values, and practices of that culture.

Another related issue is the separability of language and culture.\(^4\) In this regard, Widdowson (1994, p. 385) points out that "[t]he very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it" and that English "is only international to the extent that it is not their [its native speakers'] language." Suzuki (1975)
also proposes a new variety of English called "Englic," which is dissociated from the culture of traditionally English-speaking countries. With regard to this separability, Japanese university students expressed an ambivalent feeling (i.e., no objection but slight reservation), as was observed in the result of Item 10 ("Now that English has become an international language, it is acceptable to separate English from English cultures in learning English") ($M = 3.30$). Note that no significant difference was observed between the respondents in the Positive group ($M = 3.21$) and those in the Negative group ($M = 3.4$), $F(1, 167) = .78$, ns., indicating that even those who like English do not have any strong objection to de-Anglo-Americanizing the English language.

**The Dominance of the English Language**

The respondents generally objected to Item 13 ("I disagree with the idea of English being used as the common language in the world") ($M = 2.22$), and even those who disliked English expressed objection ($M = 2.51$). This may indicate that Japanese university students generally do not see the current status of English as problematic, or perhaps they have never even thought about this problem.

The dominance of English can also be seen in foreign language education in Japan, in the sense that English is the only foreign language for the vast majority of Japanese students in secondary education. In administrative terms as well, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has proposed that in junior high schools, students learn English rather than other languages. Nakamura (2004) criticizes this policy and points out that "[t]oday’s educational system essentially overemphasizes the dominant foreign language [= English], leading to a weakening of interest in less major tongues among young people. This goes against the ultimate goal of nurturing harmonious coexistence among various cultures in the 21st century" (p. 16).

Nakamura’s criticism, however, was generally not shared by the respondents of this survey; they did not show agreement (or disagreement) with Item 25 ("Languages other than English should be promoted more in junior or senior high schools; it is unreasonable that only English receives special treatment") ($M = 3.30$). Additionally, as the result of Item 26 ("In junior high school, it is better to learn English rather than other foreign languages") ($M = 3.30$),
showed, the respondents generally thought the current concentration on one language is somehow acceptable at least at the level of junior high school, probably because many are aware of the practical difficulty of learning other languages in addition to or instead of English.

**Languages Other than English**

It might be expected that the recognition of the importance of English in international communication would result in the loss of an interest in other languages. Contrary to this expectation, however, the respondents displayed disagreement with Item 14 ("I can understand why one learns English, but when I see people learning Vietnamese or Thai, for example, I honestly feel, 'What's the use?'") \( (M = 2.75) \), indicating that they do acknowledge the value of learning other languages—a sound and balanced view of languages and their learning. Also note that the Positive group learners expressed stronger disagreement with the statement \( (M = 2.59) \) than those in the Negative group \( (M = 2.94) \), which suggests that a positive attitude toward English does not mean a lack of respect for other languages.

With regard to the subjective image of being fluent in foreign languages, if we compare the result of Item 16 ("When I see someone speak Korean or Chinese fluently, I feel 'She (or he) is cool!' or 'I wish I could be like him (or her)'") \( (M = 4.82) \) with that of Item 15 ("When I see someone speak English fluently, I feel 'She (or he) is cool!' or 'I wish I could be like him (or her)'") \( (M = 5.43) \), we find an interesting difference between English and the two Asian languages, \( F(1, 336) = 19.6, p < .01 \). This confirms the observation that Japanese people do not attach such a high cultural value to excellent Korean and Chinese speakers as to English speakers (e.g., Tsuda, 1993, p. 49). Nevertheless, this does not suggest that fluency in these Asian languages receives little respect and admiration (see the considerably high mean score of Item 16).

**The Japanese Language**

As the rather high mean score of Item 12 ("I am proud of my mother tongue, Japanese") \( (M = 4.75) \) indicated, the respondents showed considerable pride in their mother tongue. It could be hypothesized that pride in the mother tongue would have a negative correlation with
a positive attitude toward other languages (especially when it is functioning as an expression of cultural identity and resistance to more dominant languages like English), or conversely, that enthusiasm toward foreign languages may be negatively correlated with the love of the first language. These speculations, however, did not bear empirical support in this survey. There was no significant difference between the respondents in the Positive group ($M = 4.83$) and those in the Negative group ($M = 4.65$), $F(1, 167) = .69$, ns., and this implies that attitude toward English (i.e., like and dislike) and pride in Japanese are not related.

There are many widely-believed myths about the Japanese language, one of which is that Japanese is an "illogical" language, when compared with Western languages like English. This false belief can be seen, for example, in Saisho (1975), who states "what is present in English but not in Japanese is logical and analytical reasoning" (p. 177). The equivalent statement in Item 17 ("I think that English is a more logical language than Japanese") is also often heard in the field of English education, where in many cases it is English teachers who spread this highly misleading belief, and therefore, it might be assumed that Japanese learners have been conditioned to believe this. Contrary to this assumption, the respondents of this survey generally did not think that this was true ($M = 3.22$). A close look at the data, however, revealed that 38 respondents (22% of all the participants) chose either the value 6 (= strongly agree) or 5 in the scale. This result suggests that the myth of illogical Japanese and logical English is held only by a certain group of learners, and this possibility merits further empirical examination.

Native/Non-Native Speaker Teachers of English

Another persistent myth is concerned with the expertise of native speakers of English (and probably other languages as well). I have had the impression that in Japan, many native-speaker teachers without formal training in second language acquisition and teaching are receiving respect and expectations from learners that they do not actually deserve. It is true that native speakers of English know English (e.g., they can make correct judgments about the usage of English), but many do not necessarily have professional knowledge of how second languages are acquired. In spite of this, many Japanese learners seem to show undue respect and trust for their expertise in language learning and education. In other words, as
far as English-related matters are concerned, they see a "glow" or "aura" of authority around native speakers of English. Based on this observation, it was hypothesized that the respondents would show agreement with Item 18 ("As far as English learning is concerned, I trust native speakers rather than Japanese teachers of English; for example, if a native English speaker says, 'Grammar is important,' this sounds more convincing than Japanese teachers of English saying the same thing"), and this hypothesis received weak empirical support ($M = 4.12$). In addition, if we take a closer look at the data, 39 respondents (23%) chose the value 6 (= strongly agree), and 45 (27%), the value 5 in the scale, indicating that approximately half of the learners believe or strongly believe in what native English speakers state about English learning.

A related issue concerns the preference for and admiration of native-speaker over non-native speaker teachers, even with an almost equivalent English ability. This is evident, for example, in the attitude of many English conversation schools in Japan that proudly advertise that only native speakers give lessons. Regarding this point, however, Item 19 ("I would like to learn English from native-speaker teachers (e.g., Americans, Australians, etc.), rather than Filipinos/Filipinas and Singaporeans, however native-like they may be") showed a somewhat unexpected result. As the mean score ($M = 3.31$) indicated, strong preference of native speakers was generally not observed among the respondents. At the same time, however, the number of respondents who chose the values 6 (= strongly agree) and 5 were 22 and 23, respectively; if they are combined, they account for approximately 30% of all the respondents. Overall, the native speaker preference is probably held among a certain subset of learners, and it would be interesting to find out who might constitute such a group. Note that it was not those who liked English, as might be expected, because they also did not show any stronger agreement with Item 19 ($M = 3.49$).

**Language Use in Japan**

Item 20 ("In Japan, native speakers of English should speak Japanese, not English") and Item 21 ("In Japan, non-native speakers of English (e.g., Malaysians) should speak Japanese, even when they can speak English") both addressed language choice in international communication in Japan. It is true that English has become the language of
communication in international contexts, but does this mean that non-native English speakers should speak the language to English speakers even in their home countries? On the one hand, it is natural that people, native or foreign, use the official language(s) of the country or community in which they live. Indeed, when Japanese people reside in English-speaking countries, they are naturally expected to communicate in English. In contrast, some (not all, of course) native English speakers do not even make an attempt to speak or learn Japanese while living in Japan. Tsuda (1993, p. 50) is among many who strongly criticize this as an arrogant attitude and argue that we do not need to speak English to Westerners in Japan. On the other hand, it may sound too ethnocentric and exclusive to say that all people should speak Japanese in Japan.

What do Japanese learners of English think about language choice in communication with non-Japanese people in Japan? Do they show more tolerance toward non-native speakers of English (e.g., Malaysians) about the use of English in Japan, because English is their second language as it is for Japanese people? The results indicated that the respondents did not strongly expect native English speakers to speak Japanese (Item 20, $M = 3.47$), and their attitude toward non-native speakers was no different (Item 21, $M = 3.34$), $F(1, 336) = .61$, ns. This can be interpreted to mean that Japanese learners are considerably generous about non-Japanese people’s language use, perhaps because many of them share the widely-held belief that Japanese is a difficult language, and also because, given the international status of English and their own history of having learned English for more than six years, the respondents think that they themselves should be able to communicate in English.

**International Friendship**

No significant difference was found between the results of Item 23 ("I would like to make friends with people in English-speaking countries") ($M = 4.36$) and Item 24 ("I would like to make friends with people in Asian countries") ($M = 4.32$), $F(1, 336) = .04$, ns., implying that Japanese university students do not take different attitudes toward people in the two regions in terms of friendship. This result is not in tune with the oft-heard claim that Japanese people wish to identify themselves with Westerners, and conversely see Asian
people as inferior (e.g., Oishi, 1990). Another point that deserves mentioning is that a remarkable difference was seen between the respondents in the Positive and Negative groups: Item 23, $M = 5$ vs. 3.58, $F(1, 167) = 35.9, p < .01$; Item 24, $M = 4.86$ vs. 3.68, $F(1, 167) = 24.5, p < .01$. Although the direction of causality is not known, a positive feeling toward English and desire for friendship with non-Japanese people, whether they be English speakers or Asians, seem to be closely related.

4. Conclusion

This paper has reported and discussed the results of a survey on Japanese university students’ views regarding English as an international language. The survey has generally revealed: (1) Japanese university students highly recognize the pragmatic value of English, and admire fluent English speakers greatly, regardless of whether they like or dislike the language; (2) they perceive a moderate (not strong) level of need to learn about English-speaking and other world cultures through learning English, but they do not feel a strong integrative drive toward British and American cultures; (3) most do not view the English domination in international communication and in foreign language education as problematic; (4) learners recognize the value of learning languages other than English and they highly respect fluent speakers of such languages, although not to the same degree as fluent English speakers; (5) they have considerable pride in their mother tongue, Japanese, and many do not believe in the myth of Japanese being a less logical language than English; (6) a considerable number of learners display excessive trust of native English speakers’ authority related to language learning, while preference for native speaker over non-native speaker teachers is generally not strong and held only by a sub-group of learners; (7) Japanese university students show generosity toward non-Japanese people living in Japan about the use of the Japanese language; and (8) learners who like English show a significantly higher level of desire for international friendship, with Westerners and Asians alike, than those who do not like English.

The present exploratory survey, of course, is not free from various limitations, which future research can overcome in the following ways. First, given that the depth and range of responses that learners provide depend to a great degree on the types of questions being asked,
other meaningful questions need to be presented to reveal various aspects of Japanese learners’ beliefs about English as an international language. Second, data should be collected from a larger sample of learners with diverse backgrounds (e.g., age, proficiency levels, university majors, prospective job types) in order to make more reliable generalizations and also to examine how their beliefs differ among different sub-groups of students. In this paper, mainly the central tendency of learner beliefs was presented and discussed, but this, of course, does not deny the importance of looking at variation among learners; for this purpose, it is essential to identify meaningful subcategories of students. Third, as a way to advance the descriptive nature of this study, it will be important to analyze and explain the structure of learner beliefs more deeply by employing various theoretical notions in relevant fields (e.g., social psychology), and also to critically examine these beliefs in terms of bias and balance.

Notes
1. The current status of English looks different to different people. Horibe (2000, 2002) summarizes these diverse images in the following metaphor: Is English Cinderella, a kidnapped or adopted child, or Godzilla? These images symbolize, respectively, the heroine in a success story who has attained the status of common world language, the kidnapped child over whom native speakers can no longer exercise exclusive ownership or a child whom non-native speakers have adopted and now have the right to raise in the way they want, and the terrible monster who lands in many places and damages languages and cultures there.

2. Some of their criticism may be seen and dismissed as an expression of their deep-seated grudge against English and a private feeling of being victimized in international communication. It is, nevertheless, important to consider how we can learn and use English as an international language in such a way that its potential problems can be minimized. This includes explaining to learners the importance of English in the global community without discouraging an interest in and respect for other languages, giving native and non-native teachers the respect that they deserve, and requesting native speakers of English both to stop thinking, if they do, that everyone should speak English in the
world and to show respect for the language(s) spoken in the community in which they live, to name but a few.

3. Those who chose value 1, 2, or 3 in a 6-point scale were classified into the Negative group, while the remaining participants who selected value 4, 5, or 6 fell into the Positive group.

4. Whether language and culture can be separated is not really a meaningful question and may better be reformulated for the following two reasons. First, “culture” is a vague and all-encompassing concept, and we need to specify which particular aspects of culture can or cannot be detached. For example, it is clearly possible to learn American English without learning about McDonald’s or Hemingway’s works. Second, a clear distinction needs to be made between the “possibility” argument, i.e., whether language and culture can/cannot be separated, and the “desirability/acceptability” argument, i.e., whether they should/should not be separated. Many preceding discussions seem to have conflated these two types of arguments.

5. It is true that people state their ideas more or less explicitly or logically in a particular language, but this should not be confused with the inherent linguistic features of the language. In the modern science of language, the idea that a certain language is more logical than another is never taken seriously.

6. Conversely, this result can be viewed as showing learners’ distrust of Japanese teachers of English.

References


Appendix: 英語に関するアンケート

このアンケートは皆さん（大学生）が英語や英語教育に対してどのような考えをもっているのかを調査することをねらいとしたものです。以下の質問に正直に答えて下さい。

・学部及び専攻 （ ）学部 ・ 性別 （ 男 ・ 女 ）
・学年 （ 1 ・ 2 ・ 3 ・ 4 ）

以下の項目では、提示された内容についてどう考えるかを判断してもらいます。このタイプの質問に対しては、単に端にある数値であるという理由で、「1」（全くそうは思わわない）や「6」（大いにそう思う）を選ばない人もいますが、該当する場合にはこれらをきちんと選択するようにして下さい。

全部そうは思わない　大いにそう思う
1 ------- 2 ------- 3 ------- 4 ------- 5 ------- 6

(1) 英語が好きである。
(2) 英語ができると一般的に就職の時に有利であると思う。
(3) 自分の将来の仕事には英語は必要だと思う。
(4) 英語を学ぶことで自分の母国語である日本語に対する理解が深まると思う。
(5) 英語ができると自分の世界が広がると思う。
(6) コミュニケーションでは、意味が通じれば別に「日本人英語」（例えば日本語的な発音）であることを恥じる必要はない。
(7) 習得しようとする英語は、アメリカ英語やイギリス英語などいわゆる「標準英語」であるべきである。
(8) 英語を通して、アメリカやイギリスなどの英語文化について学ぶことは重要である。
(9) 英語を通して、英米文化だけでなく世界の文化について学ぶことは重要である。
(10) 今や英語は国際語になったのだから、英語を英米文化から切り離して学んでも問題はない。
(11) 英語を通して、外国人に日本のことを説明するのは重要である。

89
(12) 母国語である日本語に誇りを持っている。
(13) 英語が世界共通語として用いられることに反対である。
(14) （英語を学ぶのは分かるが）ベトナム語やタイ語などを学んでいる人を見ると、「何でそんなことやったの？」と正直思ってしまい。
(15) 英語がベラベラな人を見ると、「かっこいい」「すごいなぁ」と感じる。
(16) 朝鮮語や中国語がベラベラな人を見ると、「かっこいい」「すごいなぁ」と感じる。
(17) 英語は日本語よりも論理的と言語だと思う。
(18) 英語の学び方に関しては、英語のネイティブ・スピーカーが言うことの方が日本人教師が言うことより正しいように感じてしまう。例えば、英語ネイティブに“Grammar is important”と言われると、日本人教師に同じ事を言われるより説得力がある。
(19) いくら英語ができて英米人と変わらないと言っても、フィリピン人やシンガポール人の英語教師より、やはり英米人の英語教師から英語を学びたい。
(20) 英米人は、日本においては、英語ではなく日本語を話すべきである。
(21) 非英米人（例えばマレーシア人）は、日本においては、英語が話せる場合でも、英語ではなく日本語を話すべきである。
(22) アメリカやイギリスの文化にあこがれを感じる。
(23) 将来英米人の友人を作りたい。
(24) 将来アジア人の友人を作りたい。
(25) 中学校や高校で、英語以外の外国語をもっと奨励すべきである。外国語の中で英語だけが特別扱いされているのはおかしい。
(26) 中学校では、基本的に他の外国語よりも英語を学んだ方がよい。
(27) 中学校において、外国語が必修教科なのはおかしい。将来必要と思う人だけが外国語を学ぶようにすべきである。