

**Developing New Forms of Discourse  
for English Language Teaching**

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I confirm that this thesis is my original work and that I have given appropriate credit to the authors of the work I have referenced in it.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an account of how I have worked collaboratively with a group of practising Japanese teachers in order to propose a potentially new form of professional education for English language teachers in Japan. It tells the story of how we have learnt to challenge Japanese government policy on English language education and professional education for English language teachers through the process of our inquiry. It also tells of how I have learnt to find ways of developing my practice as a researcher – through working collaboratively in the teacher research group, developing myself as a PhD researcher, and becoming an independent researcher. The inquiry has led to my appreciation of the action research methodology, used for this study, grounded in collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective.

Our collaborative practice has led to our generating a potentially new understanding of the meaning of communicative competence for use in a Japanese context. This has prompted my recognition of what the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might include, which has been further incorporated into a potentially new form of professional education I propose in this thesis: the new form is grounded in a person-centred dialogic approach, and is characterised by the following four dimensions of teacher professional learning: action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration.

I hope that this thesis demonstrates that I have done my best to live my values 'in practice' and have shown my 'commitments' to the values 'in action' (McNiff, 2014, p.113). I also hope that the public presentation of the thesis may act as an invitation to policy-makers and those involved in English language education and to a public debate about the current educational context. Ultimately, I hope to influence education policy formation and implementation in Japan.

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## List of Abbreviations

ALT	assistant language teacher
BANA	Britain, Australasia and North America
CARN	Collaborative Action Research Network
CEFR	the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment
CPD	continuing professional development
EIL	English as an international language
ELTS	English Language Testing Service
GTEC	the Global Test of English Communication
IELTS	the International English Language Testing System
KEIDANREN	Nihon Keizai Dantai Rengōkai (Japan Business Federation)
LEEP	Leader of English Education Project
MEXT	the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
NS	native speaker of English
PLC	professional learning community
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
STEP	the Society for Testing English Proficiency
TESEP	tertiary, secondary, primary
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TLA	teacher language awareness
TOEFL	the Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL CBT	the Test of English as a Foreign Language computer-based test
TOEFL iBT	the Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based test
TOEFL PBT	the Test of English as a Foreign Language paper-based test
TOEIC	the Test of English for International Communication

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is an account of how I have worked collaboratively with a group of practising Japanese English language teachers in Japan, who acted as research participants in this study, in order to develop a potentially new form of professional education for English language teachers in Japan. This idea was grounded in our collective challenge to the existing policy on English language education and the professional education of English language teachers. The new form proposed in this thesis is therefore different from previous and currently existing ones, as these are based on the government's top-down decisions which are outlined below. This new form is based on a person-centred dialogic approach, and characterised by the following four dimensions of teacher professional learning: action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration. The thesis tells how the research participants and I have learnt much about overcoming any possible power relationships in the group, at least to some extent and, through working together, developing the nature of these relationships from that of facilitated and facilitator to collaborative researchers. It relates how this new form of teacher professional education has the potential to enable teachers to develop a capacity for interpersonal communication as a means of communicating their values to others, and to move into 'communicative action' where they 'strive for intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus about what to do' (Habermas 1996, cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.296).

The basis for this study was our querying of new policy statements about plans to reform English language education in Japan, announced by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (known as MEXT) on December 13, 2013. We especially wished to examine their interpretation of the term 'communication abilities'. 'Communication abilities' is the English translation of a Japanese term 'komyunikēshon nōryoku', as appears in the English translation of the Course of Study (MEXT, 2012). In my view, 'communication abilities' may be taken to mean 'communicative competence', which is the more commonly used English term that appears in second (foreign) language teaching literature, and

means how we can effectively communicate with others so as to reach mutual understanding. MEXT's policy statements appeared to have interpreted the communicative competence of students and English language teachers in terms of a limited and one-dimensional perspective of their level or score in popular English proficiency tests. Similarly, the improvement of teachers' capacity for communicative competence appeared to have been monitored from the same narrow, single perspective of the rate of attainment of these target levels or scores. This also included monitoring the progress of the professional development of English language teachers from the same narrow, single perspective; details are given in chapter 2. Such a 'monolithic' (Hall and Wicaksono, 2017) approach to English language education in general and the professional education of English language teachers in particular led me to investigate what 'communicative competence' might mean from broader perspectives. The thesis tells how the research participants and I have transformed this limited view into a more coherent understanding of 'communicative competence', grounded in our reflections on our practice, and developed it into our own conceptualisation of communicative competence within a Japanese context.

The generation of our own conceptualisation of communicative competence, as the negotiated and mutually agreed collective theory of the group, has allowed us to reflect on our practice in light of this collective theory and develop it accordingly in our own context. This has led me to appreciate what the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might involve, when seen as part of their professional development. Furthermore, while the research participants have attempted to teach for the improvement of their students' communicative competence, I have developed my own capacity for improved communication with many others through presentations, questionnaires and face-to-face communications; these others have included other teacher colleagues, other local educational community members, Board of Education officials and the British Council, the organiser of the current national teacher education project for English language teachers. These efforts appear to have led the local educational community members to recognise the validity and significance of our practices, and have encouraged me to see my thesis as possibly representing a new design for the professional education of English language teachers: which, in reality, has always been my aim. What is more, the experience of the validation meeting of academic staff at York St John University, my place of study, demonstrated that this study has been recognised by

a peer community and its methodological rigour has, at least to some extent, been confirmed.

Importantly, through putting my values into practice, which I describe below, I have also observed changes in myself, specifically in relation to my learning and the development of deeper and more coherent understandings. This has included the following:

- I have come to articulate the reasons for a certain discomfiture with policy statements; this was ultimately because of the different approaches to understanding the English language, whether 'monolithic' or 'plurilithic' (Hall and Wicaksono, 2017) (see details in chapter 2);
- I have come to recognise that what we have been challenging might be the dominant social discourses rather than policy itself;
- I have come to appreciate what processes teacher professional learning may include, and to articulate the reasons why current approaches to teacher professional education in Japan are unsatisfactory;
- I have come to articulate what 'communicative competence' may mean in a Japanese context;
- I have come to articulate what teachers' communicative competence may mean, and what the improvement of teachers' communicative competence may include;
- I have come to appreciate how possible relationships of power in teacher professional education might be revised;
- I have come to appreciate and articulate the action research methodology for this study: I have practised 'second-person action research' through working with research participants and 'third-person action research' towards 'a wider impact' (see for example Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.6), which are grounded in collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective;
- I have come to appreciate and articulate my educational values, which have informed my thinking, through negotiating and interacting with others.

I have thus developed my learning and deeper insights into the nature of language learning and teaching, as well as my capacity to articulate these insights.

Accordingly, I have come to see my whole practice as part of a process of

developing my own capacity for communicative competence to communicate the story of my study, in order to help others explore and discover their capacity for communicative competence. A primary contribution of this thesis to current policy debates could be the recognition of the significance of these changes in me, and possible ways in which to reframe them: this new phase of my investigation could lead to a career as an independent researcher.

The public presentation of the thesis, it is hoped, may act as an invitation to other Japanese English language teachers, the Japanese Boards of Education, researchers in relevant fields, relevant organisations and policy-makers to engage in public debate about the current educational context in Japan where MEXT's policy and popular discourses have put Japanese English language teachers under considerable pressure to improve Japanese students' communicative competence in English. Ultimately, I hope to influence education policy formation and implementation in Japan.

So far, then, I have articulated what may be seen as the main original contribution of this study to new understandings in the field of teacher education in Japan, with possible appreciation to similar fields in wider contexts. At this point, I now offer some editorial notes on the text:

### ***Editorial notes***

In relation to any spoken/written materials in Japanese, the following points apply throughout:

- I write 'as in original' in brackets when I refer to the English translation of government policies. I do the same when I quote English comments/English written reflections from Japanese people, and discussions in English among Japanese people;
- I write 'my translation' in brackets when I have translated the materials into English.

In relation to transcribed data, the following points apply throughout:

- Transcribed oral data, such as interviews with the research participants and discussions among the participants in my presentations, are set out as extracts. Transcribed written data such as emails from the research participants and written reflections from the participants in my presentations (as well as short oral data) are set out in the same way as quotations from



the literature, indented at both right and left margins with single line spacing;

- I use the notation symbols, which are attached in Appendix A, for transcribed oral data: they are '(talk)' as a guess for what was said in italics in brackets, '(...)' as omission, '[ ]' as anything added by myself to make the sentences more understandable, '((laughter))' as anything difficult to write down in italics in double brackets, '?' as utterance which sounded like a question and '.' as a pause;
- In terms of the transcribed data from interviews with the research participants, I usually present a piece of dialogue, in order to explain the context of each conversation.

## 1.2 My current context

I am an English language teacher at a municipal junior high school in Japan. I also worked as a professional educator for new English language teachers during the academic years 2007–2009. Concurrent with this, I studied on a master's programme for teachers' professional education: this in turn led me to study action research, which became the main methodology for my master's thesis (Kondo, 2008). There, I explained how I was experiencing myself as 'a living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989, p.43), in that my value of the collaborative and dialogical nature of teacher-centred professional education was being systematically denied in my practice. I questioned existing government-sponsored teacher education programmes for new teachers; these appeared to be seen as a technical matter of simply completing given procedures, rather than being teacher-centred or tailored to individual needs. This led to a search for a different form of teacher professional education which could itself lead to fostering teacher autonomy rather than a technocratic form. In practice it involved, during post-class discussions, encouraging new teachers to take the initiative in making their own decisions about new actions (Kondo, 2008, p.26). Also, working with my then supervisor helped me reflect on my practices and navigate my next course of action, and this led to a recognition of the value of working collaboratively with others 'as a team' (ibid., pp.39-40). Further, using an action research approach allowed me to study my practice at school, while working as a practising teacher. These experiences stimulated me to continue to study action research for my own professional and

personal development. What is more, my master's study, in which I challenged the existing dominant teacher education methodology for new teachers, raised my awareness of policy; this in turn acted as the impetus for this study. Working towards the development of a model of lifelong in-service teacher professional education has in turn led to my challenging attitudes that see action research as 'an artificial process being imposed on teachers' in light of their 'lack of time' and their 'reluctance to take on action research' (Johnston, 1994, pp.42-43). This has led to a systematic exploration of the best ways of demonstrating the effectiveness of action research for supporting teachers' professional development through working with research participants, who were my practising teacher colleagues. This method of investigation allowed me to move in and out of different roles; a colleague teacher to research participants, a collaborative researcher (which included the role of a facilitator) and a PhD researcher. Carrying out this research has led to my reflecting on who I was then and there, and how those roles influenced each other; I enlarge upon this in chapter 3. The presentation of this thesis signals that I, too, as one of those practising teachers, situated in a particular time and place, have learnt the need to demonstrate my capacity to undertake research, and to claim the quality of this study as showing its 'originality, rigour, and significance of [my] practice and its potential impact in the lives of others' (McNiff, 2014, p.5). I now begin to articulate my research issues, by explaining the concern that led me to pursue this enquiry.

### **1.3 What was my concern?**

I belonged to a teacher research group and acted as the chair of the group for the academic year 2013–2014. The research group was initiated in response to a proposal by MEXT, which advocated that 'each junior high/senior high school designs and publicises guidance for achieving learning targets for students in a form of "can-do statements"' (MEXT, 2013a, p.3, my translation). The proposal aimed to contribute to the improvement of students' English ability, by 'presenting the aim of the Course of Study in the form of specific targets (can-do statements) according to the local context and the level of students' English ability' (ibid., p.3, my translation). My colleague teachers and I started our group research by analysing existing evaluation strategies of students' communicative competence in English, as proposed by the Board of Education, and published our research

findings and potential implications in an annual journal for junior high school English language teachers in the city. Also, the group produced exemplars of can-do statements for each year level and distributed them to every junior high school there (name of the city withheld). During the process of our group research, MEXT announced a new plan to reform English language education (MEXT, 2013b), which led to a further challenge to my values, in that they proposed the following:

- specific scores in popular English proficiency tests should act as targets for Japanese secondary level students and as minimum requirements for Japanese English language teachers;
- the implementation of a new cascade form of project, the 'Leader of English Education Project', in which the government would convene leading English language teachers from each municipality, to be called 'LEEPs'. The British Council would then train these LEEP's and then the LEEP's themselves would cascade the training to other local English language teachers;
- English should be taught, in principle, only in English at junior high school level.

These decisions contradicted the values that informed my thinking and practices, as an English language teacher and a professional educator. They included the following:

- (1) education, including teacher education, should be based on a process-oriented perspective, not only an outcomes-oriented perspective;
- (2) Japanese English language teachers could act as model learners for Japanese students and their expertise ought to be appreciated rather than 'nativeness' (Rampton, 1990, p.109). Also, experienced Japanese English language teachers should act as teacher trainers rather than native speakers of English because of their familiarity with Japanese students and the Japanese contexts;
- (3) teachers should learn how to develop their practices and improve their teaching methodology by drawing on their experiences and practices and based on a reflective approach rather than following top-down decisions or recommendations; this should become a systematic form of teacher professional education throughout their careers.

I will explain what a process-oriented perspective towards teacher professional education may mean and why teachers need to learn through practising reflectively

in chapter 3. The proposals seen in MEXT (2013b) largely negate my educational values, as articulated above, in the following way:

- (1) MEXT's (2013b) focus on outcomes, such as test scores, in English language education and the professional development of English language teachers refutes my value of a process-oriented perspective towards education and teacher education;
- (2) MEXT invited the British Council to be teacher trainers; this view of teacher trainers that appears to consider native speakers of English as more desirable teacher trainers challenges my value of the desirability of having experienced Japanese English language teachers as teacher trainers;
- (3) MEXT's top-down decision about a new cascade form of professional education and their top-down recommendation for a monolingual instructional strategy at junior high school level is contrary to my value of teachers' developing their practices and improving their teaching methodology by drawing on their experiences and practices gained throughout their careers.

It would appear, then, that policy based on the curriculum for the MEXT Course of Study did not value Japanese students and English language teachers as thoughtful, creative and competent individuals. Furthermore, our research group's practice, by which we were trying to establish guidance for students to achieve learning targets according to the local context and the level of their English ability based on MEXT (2013a), appeared to be contradicted by the idea of 'test scores first' as set out in MEXT (2013b). Consequently, MEXT's inconsistency was evident in these policies. As then-chair of the teacher research group, it became evident to me that colleague teachers were also questioning the implications of the policy. They had already questioned MEXT's explanations of students' and English language teachers' capacity for communicative competence in English by using test scores as targets, as well as the way the current teacher education project for English language teachers was organised. It seemed that the task in hand was to explore opportunities for finding ways to improve the existing contradictory situation and take action to improve the quality of educational experience for teachers and students in English teaching and learning contexts in Japan.

## **1.4 What did I hope to do?**

The first task was to clarify for myself and others the reasons for questioning policy statements. There seemed to be slippage in the interpretation of 'communication abilities' as used in the MEXT Course of Study between policy makers and our group members (the research participants and myself). This meant exploring the possible implications of MEXT's use of the term 'communication abilities' through studying policy statements, to see whether test scores could represent the realisation of students' and teachers' 'communication abilities'. If not, further clarification could be found by understanding the reasons for MEXT's decision to identify students' and teachers' communicative competence with test scores. It was also important for me to agree with the research participants on the nature and meaning of communicative competence, and clarify our understanding of the term in a Japanese context.

Secondly, I needed to see whether teachers, other than the research participants and myself, were satisfied with the current project for English language teachers, and discover whether our views were shared by other teachers. Furthermore, it was important to clarify the possible reasons why it was necessary to propose new forms of the organisation of the professional education for English language teachers and revisit our vision of the nature and purposes of teacher professional education. I hoped eventually to suggest a new form of professional education for English language teachers in Japan, grounded in our emerging perspectives on communicative competence and my personal perspectives regarding the nature of teacher professional education and learning.

## **1.5 How did I start this research?**

The basis and impetus for this study was the fact that that the educational values which informed my thinking and practices were being negated by the technocratic values of policy makers. What is more, colleague teachers in the research group of which I was chair also questioned MEXT's outcomes-oriented perspective and the current teacher education project. This inspired me to try to find ways of improving the situation by proposing a participatory research project in which those colleague teachers and I could work collaboratively. An action research methodology appeared most appropriate for this study: reasons for this choice are

given in chapter 3. A further aim was to continue to study action research as a form of personal and professional development.

In March 2014, therefore, I sent a letter to the six teachers in the teacher research group, asking whether they would be interested in developing such a project. The letter contained the following:

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the development of professional education for English language teachers using an action research approach, while supporting Japanese English language teachers' teaching for the improvement of students' communicative competence (...) You are entirely free to decide to leave this project midway. Would it be possible for you to join the project? It would be very helpful if you could reply quickly (Taken from my letter to teachers, see Appendix B).

Consequently, four of the six teachers in the teacher research group expressed their interest in our working collaboratively. The other two did not respond, possibly because the distribution of the letter coincided with the end of the school year, always a hectic time in the life of a school. I also sent the letter to one of the three research participants for my master's study; these people were different from those in the teacher research group. The reasons for doing so were as follows. First, this research participant and I had worked more closely than the other two during my master's study, given that we were working at the same school at the time and had developed a good working relationship, so I thought it would be beneficial for us to work together again on a new project. Second, she worked at an integrated junior and senior high school, so working with her could help other teachers and myself, also employed in junior high schools, to understand a senior high school teacher's perspectives. She also expressed her interest in continuing to work collaboratively, and returned the first questionnaire I sent out on 31 March 2014 (see Appendix C). However, she subsequently decided to leave the project because of other professional commitments; all data about her work was then destroyed, according to the ethics statement I had distributed (see Appendix H).

A new collaborative research group therefore emerged comprising the four Japanese English language teachers that I had worked collaboratively with in the previous teacher research group. These four participants were English language teachers from different age groups, working in municipal junior high schools and

deeply committed to their work. Here are some brief thumbnail sketches of each of the teachers.

**Teacher A** is a female English language teacher and homeroom teacher at a junior high school; this is her second school since becoming a teacher. She has been actively involved in teacher research activities. While we were working together in the teacher research group mentioned above, she also joined another research group which was focusing on the development of standardised English tests in the city. After I left the group because of my pending departure to the UK, she took over as group chair. She was subsequently appointed as a LEEP in 2015, as the second LEEP for the junior high level in the city, following Teacher D's appointment as the first LEEP in 2014;

**Teacher B** is a male English language teacher and homeroom teacher at a junior high school, the first school for him: he is the youngest of the four participating teachers. Before starting his career as a teacher, he worked as a student intern at a junior high school where I also happened to be working, in order to learn what being a teacher involved, although working as a student intern is not a prerequisite for becoming a teacher. Until now, he has been pursuing his teaching career with enthusiasm. He has also been actively involved in teacher research activities, through which he has recognised the significance of learning through working with other teachers;

**Teacher C** is a female English language teacher and homeroom teacher at a junior high school, and has teaching experience at junior high/senior high schools in a range of municipalities. While she was teaching at a senior high school, she joined a master's course and completed her practice-based research using an action research approach. She has been involved in extra-curricular activities such as a musical group in the city, always trying to develop her own capacity to express herself and bring this to her teaching practice. Her commitment to the development of students' communicative competence and her professional learning as a teacher inspired her to participate in an exchange programme for Japanese English language teachers in the USA run by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and I mention this point again in chapter 5;

**Teacher D** is a male English language teacher at a junior high school. Unlike the other three teachers, he is the same age and has the same number of years' teaching experience as myself. We joined the same master's programme designed for practising teachers, where we were taught how to learn from our own

experiences and practices, in the years 2005–2009. Having been a homeroom teacher for some years, he became a head of the year in 2014 and had administrative responsibilities for that year. He has also served as the chair of the regional English language teachers meetings since 2014, and had administrative responsibilities for the meetings and worked extensively outside the meetings on behalf of English language teachers in the city. In 2014, he was appointed as the first LEEP for the junior high level in the city, joined the British Council-led teacher education programmes and started his LEEP-led programmes in 2015 in which he has been training other English language teachers in the city. He has been trying to develop his LEEP-led programmes through sharing his experiences and practice with LEEPs from other municipalities.

Following the distribution of the first questionnaire on 31 March 2014 (see Appendix C), we convened for the first time as a group on 22 May 2014: this became the start date of our collaborative research project.

## **1.6 What did I learn during the project?**

During this two-year research project, I have come to appreciate and articulate key issues of which I had limited understanding before the project, as outlined in the chapter preview. Importantly, working collaboratively with research participants has led to the development of new insights, especially the significance of this achievement. It has inspired me to develop a deeper interpretation of the literatures and has encouraged me to establish my own perspective while negotiating and taking into account the critical feedback of others. Further, working with one research participant (Teacher D), who is the same age as me, has inspired me to think about what I can do to support a younger generation of teachers. If possible, I would like to be able to support them in my future practice. In this way, the research participants have made a difference in my life, as I have possibly made a difference in their lives; I will explain the nature of our mutual learning in chapter 7.

The two-year research project, a significant part of which was the validation meeting with academic staff at York St John University, has led to my making the following 'claims to knowledge' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.151):

**(1) I have helped each research participant practise reflectively.**



The research participants' recognition of the significance of learning from their experience through reflective practice during our working together has led to the first claim to knowledge;

**(2) I have constructed a teacher education methodology through working collaboratively with the research participants so that it is relevant and appropriate to their needs and context.**

I have incorporated their ideas and feedback into my practice and discussed with them how our group learning could be developed;

**(3) I have made a possible contribution to the development of a knowledge base of English language teacher education in Japan.**

A person-centred dialogic form of teacher education and collaborative learning in a teacher community could be my contribution to the development of a knowledge base of English language teacher education in Japan.

**(4) I have helped the research participants transform their communicative competence into communicative action.**

Through the project, the research participants have developed interpersonal communication in order to relate their values and reach intersubjective agreement with others;

**(5) I have developed my capacity for communicative competence into my Discourses.**

I have also developed interpersonal communication to share my values and reach intersubjective agreement with LEEPs, teachers and the British Council; I will explain what Discourses can include in chapter 2.

I will spell out my claims to knowledge more fully in chapters 5 and 6; these include my 'standards of judgement' and evidence (ibid., pp.151-155) as well as my claims to knowledge, and the way I developed my claims to knowledge through the validation meeting.

As one of the outcomes of this project, I have suggested the continuing development of an English language teacher education methodology, inspired by my research findings, as appropriate for teachers' continuing professional development after the cascade project. This includes a possible idea about how Japanese English language teachers could transform their current English classrooms into ones taught in principle in English in response to MEXT (2013b); I will explain this more fully in chapter 7.

## 1.7 The structure of the thesis

The original aim of this study was, as outlined above, to develop a potentially new form of professional education for English language teachers in Japan, through working collaboratively with them. Before coming to the UK, I convened an action research group which comprised five practising teachers including myself, as explained above. My intention was to develop a new model of teacher professional education grounded in practising teachers' reflections on their practices and experiences, not imposed on them in a top-down manner. This required me to have face-to-face communication in order to collect practising teachers' real voices. Because of the distance between them and myself, a Skype interview with them was set as the main data-collection tool, and email correspondence as an alternative. Considering their work commitment, I planned to hold Skype interviews once a school term and, additionally, hold face-to-face individual/group meetings with them when I was back home in Japan.

As seen in Appendix B, the aim was to contribute to the development of professional education for English language teachers using an action research approach, while supporting Japanese English language teachers' teaching for the improvement of students' communicative competence; this aim came to act as the main organising theme for the research that gave coherence to all aspects of its conduct. The research participants and I inquired into the meaning of communicative competence from the outset, which led to my exploring the nature of communicative competence and our co-constructing a conceptual model of communicative competence. Thus, the study came to have dual aims: developing a potentially new form of professional education for English language teachers and proposing a new understanding of communicative competence, for use in a Japanese context. Subsequently, having found that the research participants started to take the initiative in their further actions, about which I will give details in chapters 3 and 5, led to my suggesting a possible meaning of teachers' communicative competence. This in turn enabled me to link the dual aims of the study and suggest a possible idea for teacher professional education conducive to the professional development of English language teachers, including the improvement of their communicative competence. In this way, the aims of the study developed through the course of the study.

Not only the aims of the study but also the data-collection events developed in relation to the stipulated aims and purposes of the research, and as appropriate

opportunities arose. The fact that one of the research participants was appointed as a LEEP, as mentioned above, led to my distributing questionnaires to his colleague LEEPs and the teachers who joined his LEEP-led teacher education programmes. These opportunities enabled me to explore how Japanese practising teachers responded to the current teacher education project. Also, presenting this study at the British Association for Applied Linguistic Conference 2015 (Kondo and Wicaksono, 2015) gave me the opportunity to talk with the British Council Tokyo, since Board Member A from the British Council, who was among the audience, introduced me to board members from the British Council Tokyo, who had been responsible for the current teacher education project. Thus, I was able to examine the current teacher education project from both practising teachers' and the organisers' perspectives. Furthermore, working with my supervisors provided me with ideas and opportunities for further data-collection events. Co-organising a workshop for Japanese English language teachers with one of my supervisors, about which I will give details in chapter 4, gave me the opportunity to ask practising teachers for their feedback on our group's ideas about communicative competence, which were incorporated into our developing conceptual model of communicative competence. Also, my supervisors' questions about how I would ensure the methodological rigour of the study made me aware of the need to convene validation meetings. Consequently, I convened two validation meetings, one in Japan and one in the UK, in order to submit the thesis to public scrutiny both in local, practice-based and academic arenas. In this way, I became able to collect qualitative data, including both oral and written data, from people other than the research participants. The thesis tells the process of the development of the research design throughout the course of the study.

Next, I explain the structure of the thesis.

In chapter 2, I articulate the issues that inspired my research. In examining government policy on teaching and assessment of 'communication abilities' in English, I adopt a critical applied linguistic perspective, which Hall et al. (2011, p.18) explain as being the attitude towards 'addressing and resolving problems of inequality' concerning languages. This has led me to clarify the reasons for our questioning policy statements, which were the core differences of perspective on English language between MEXT and us. Specifically, it was the difference between MEXT's monolithic understanding of English language, which values standard English, and our 'plurilithic' understanding of English language, which values its diversity (Hall and Wicaksono, 2017). The examination of government

policy has further led me to recognise how the political context in Japan has been (re)shaped by popular discourses which originated in MEXT's policy. In chapter 2, I also discuss my empirical questionnaire-based study about the level of satisfaction of other teachers, beyond the research participants and myself, with the current teacher education project for English language teachers. The discussion and my literature review have led me to present a model showing my understanding of the nature of a teacher professional learning process.

In chapter 3, I spell out the action research methodology for this study. This includes research questions, ethics, timeline, and data collection and analysis methods. Following the reasons for my choice of action research as my preferred methodology, I explain the three main principles of its methodology which I have identified through this study. These are collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective; here, I see values as dialogic and democratic and mean by 'a values-oriented perspective' the process in which participants share and negotiate what they value and transform it into new values. I also discuss possible power relations in the group and ways we could revise them.

In chapter 4, I investigate what the idea of communicative competence may mean since the question about MEXT's interpretation of communicative competence led me to this study, as explained above. After developing the research participants' and my perspectives about the meaning and the nature of communicative competence, I linked them with various theories of communication in the literatures and produced a provisional conceptual model of the nature of communicative competence. Having presented the model and received valuable feedback on it at a range of opportunities such as a workshop and a seminar, I have finally produced a conceptual model of communicative competence which will be presented in chapter 4. Thus, chapter 4 outlines the dialogical process of conceptualising the nature of communicative competence, through discussions between the research participants and myself, between others and myself, between the literatures and my thinking, and between my thinking and my reflections on my previous thinking.

In chapter 5, I review our work together. I outline my five provisional claims to knowledge to show what we have done and achieved through this study, my 'standards of judgement' to communicate how well my provisional claims to knowledge are being fulfilled and the evidence that shows the realisation of my standards of judgement (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, pp.150-155). The process has led me to articulate what the improvement of teachers' communicative competence may look like, and what form of teacher professional education may

be most conducive to the professional development of English language teachers including the improvement of their communicative competence.

In chapter 6, I review two validation meetings which I convened in order to establish the external validity (ibid, pp.161-162) of my provisional claims to knowledge. At the first validation meeting, convened in Japan (05/01/2016), I aimed to get feedback on this study from critical friends, other than the research participants, in the local educational community. At the second validation meeting in the UK (09/02/2016), I invited academics within York St John University to attend the meeting, invited them to examine the data (evidence) in relation to my provisional claims to knowledge and to state whether they felt I was justified in claiming these as evidence. Based on the feedback received, I revisited and reconsidered my provisional claims to knowledge, and made more grounded and justified knowledge claims.

In chapter 7, I reflect on the study, and outline its possible implications. I also reflect on the mutual learning between the research participants and myself, and my own learning through the process. Finally, based on my learning and findings through the study, I outline how I may design a teacher professional education methodology for English language teachers in a Japanese context.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has set out the contents of this thesis and outlined the emerging research story. It is hoped that the stated aim of this study and the form of its structure contribute to clarifying the reasons for challenging MEXT's current interpretations of the nature of communicative competence in English and the organisation of the professional education for English language teachers. The aim is thereby to influence education policy formation and implementation in Japan. Throughout the project, I have systematically shared our research with other practising teachers (as explained in this thesis), encouraging them also to develop independent critical perspectives about their professional practices and development, rather than adopting existing policy. This is done in the hope that small actions may develop into bigger actions and generate 'collective pressures' (Burns, 1999, p.13) on established orthodoxies. It is hoped thereby to challenge doubts about whether teachers can contribute to the development of a new knowledge base of the field. I hope that this thesis can stand as evidence of my

contribution to the field, and the development of my capacity as an independent researcher. Further, throughout this thesis, I hope to demonstrate my commitment to living in accordance with the values I outlined in section 1.3, and how these values have informed my practices and encouraged me to take action.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Why did these issues exist?**

#### **2.1 Chapter preview**

As outlined in chapter 1, the research participants and I had been living in a situation that we were not happy with in relation to the policy context. It was also the case that my educational values which informed my thinking and practices were being negated by policy statements; those values included a process-oriented approach towards (teacher) education, appreciation of Japanese English language teachers' expertise and teacher professional learning based on a reflective approach, as outlined in chapter 1. This led me to explore the reasons for the differences in perspective between policy makers and our group members. In this chapter, I describe my exploration of the research issues identified, to see how communicative competence has been generally interpreted in a Japanese context, and how practising teachers have responded to the current teacher education project for English language teachers. In terms of the interpretation of communicative competence, I started the exploration by studying policy statements regarding the teaching and assessment of communicative competence in English. Having identified what MEXT implies by the term 'communication abilities', I then investigate whether test scores can represent 'communication abilities' as used in the MEXT Course of Study. This led me to discover the inconsistencies between the MEXT Course of Study and their policy statements. It also led me to recognise that the reasons for the differences in perspective were closely related to the difference of perspective in relation to the English language. Further, the exploration made me aware of the fact that what can be described as the prevailing ideological policy commitments have influenced popular discourses including even MEXT's own discourses. In terms of practising teachers' responses to the current teacher education project, I examined how other English language teachers, other than the research participants and myself, responded to it. Through looking at the other teachers' responses to the questionnaires I distributed (see Appendices D and E), I discuss the impact of the project and how it could be improved. I then reviewed the relevant literatures, which helped me establish my own provisional perspective regarding the delivery of teacher professional education. I hope that

this chapter adequately communicates what the MEXT Course of Study and MEXT policy in relation to English language education aim for, the possible inconsistencies between them, and the reasons why we felt the MEXT policy was lacking.

## **2.2 Teaching and assessment of ‘communication abilities’ in English**

### **2.2.1 Government policy regarding the teaching and assessment of ‘communication abilities’ in English**

I start this section by exploring what the term ‘communication abilities’ implies in relation to the MEXT Course of Study and MEXT policies. The Course of Study for Junior High Schools Foreign Languages (English) (MEXT, 2012) mentions the development of students’ basic communication abilities as the overall aim of the study of English as a subject:

To develop students’ basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages (MEXT, 2012, p.1, as in original).

This excerpt suggests that fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the study of foreign languages can lead to the development of students’ communication abilities. All four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing English are referred to throughout the Course of Study. However, MEXT’s primary concern is for the development of Japanese students’ ability to use English for communication. MEXT (2003) describes the aims of Japanese junior high school level students:

At the completion stage of English language study at junior high school level: to be able to communicate in English in simple settings such as greetings, responses and daily conversations (MEXT, 2003, p.1, my translation).



Subsequently, evaluating the contribution of MEXT (2003), MEXT (2011, p.2) finds that ‘the requirements for students and English teachers in terms of English proficiency and other skills were not met in full’ (as in original), and defines foreign language proficiency as follows:

Foreign language proficiency required in global society can be defined as capability of smooth communication with people of different countries and cultures using foreign languages as a tool (MEXT, 2011, p.3, as in original).

MEXT (2013b) expects the levels of achievement of Japanese junior high school level students to have risen to a higher level than MEXT (2003):

At junior high school level: to foster students’ ability to understand daily topics, exchange simple information and express themselves in those settings (MEXT, 2013b, p.1, my translation).

From the evidence presented above, MEXT’s main aim has been to foster Japanese students’ ability to communicate in English. Furthermore, the next excerpt shows that the Course of Study looks beyond the ability simply to speak in English:

Activities in which, for example, students actually use language to share their thoughts and feelings with each other should be carried out (MEXT, 2012, p.3, as in original).

In my understanding, the Course of Study appears to expect students to be able to produce their “Discourses,” with a capital “D”, not the ability just to produce ‘stretches of language’ (Gee, 2005, p.26): Gee defines Discourses as language used ‘together with other “stuff” that isn’t language’ (ibid., p.20) as follows:

I use the term “Discourse,” with a capital “D,” for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing,

valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity (Gee, 2005, p.21).

While aiming to foster Japanese students' ability to communicate in English as presented above, MEXT decided to adopt a number of popular English proficiency tests or frameworks for use in the classroom situation, including:

- the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR);
- the Global Test of English Communication (GTEC) for students;
- the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) test;
- the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL);
- the Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based test (TOEFL iBT);
- the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).

Also, MEXT (2003, p.1) emphasised the significance of raising Japanese people's English ability to 'a world standard level', suggesting these measures:

Studies should be carried out to analyse what kind of English abilities are tested by the English proficiency tests such as STEP, TOEFL and TOEIC, clarify what kind of English abilities Japanese students are required to learn and consider the introduction of those proficiency tests into entrance examinations (MEXT, 2003, p.15, my translation).

This statement shows that MEXT simplistically equated Japanese students' English ability with the knowledge tested in the popular English proficiency tests. In their evaluation of the contribution of MEXT (2003), as mentioned earlier, MEXT (2011, p.4) finds that 'still few students possessed English skills stipulated in' MEXT (2003) (as in original). They therefore suggest that:

steady implementation of the established requirements for students' English skills must be continued, while STEP, GTEC for STUDENTS and other external certification tests must be utilized actively to verify achievement levels and actual English proficiency of students (MEXT, 2011, p.4, as in original).

Moreover, MEXT (2013b, p.3) proposes specific scores or levels as targets to judge the quality of Japanese students' English ability. It identifies the third to pre-second grade in the STEP test or A1 to A2, 'basic user' levels in CEFR (the Council of Europe, 2014), as targets of Japanese junior high school students; basic users are expected to understand and use everyday expressions or expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (ibid.). For Japanese high school students, MEXT identifies B1 to B2, 'independent user' levels in CEFR, the second to pre-first grade in the STEP test or a score of more than 57 in TOEFL iBT, as targets. Furthermore, the adoption of those popular English proficiency tests in university entrance examinations was suggested in MEXT (2011) and (2013b) as well as MEXT (2003).

I now consider whether scores or levels in these popular English proficiency tests, on which the MEXT Course of Study has focused, actually accurately assesses the level of students' ability to communicate in English.

The aspects of language knowledge that can be assessed by tests have been called into question in the scholarly literatures: this critique potentially undermines the validity of many popular language tests. Troike (1983, p.212), for example, has doubts about 'the testing of language elements divorced from functional contexts', commenting:

what is being assessed may in reality be [the] ability to respond to test formats (which usually have little to do with natural language use), attitudes toward tests or test content, perceptions of the testing situation, reading or listening ability, personal goals and strategies, and the like (Troike, 1983, p.213).

Similarly, a validation report of the English Language Testing Service (known as ELTS), the former name of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), focuses on the context-bound nature of language proficiency:

the proficiency of any language test is not single or certain; rather it varies according to the context in which it is being examined and the question which is being addressed (Criper and Davies, 1988, p.106).

These comments thus suggest that it is difficult to assess the ability to communicate in English, which MEXT has focused on, simply by using test scores.

What is more, English language proficiency tests can have negative effects on students' learning (see for example Cheng 2000, Tsui 1996 and Yu 2014).

Students who are required to take TOEFL, or other similar tests, can, for example, spend a considerable number of hours 'doing simulated tests to develop test-taking strategies rather than improving their real language skills' (Cheng, 2000. p.444):

No doubt, these students can obtain high scores, but their language proficiency, especially their oral communicative skills, is far from what is required for their intended academic studies (Cheng, 2000. p.444).

Cheng further discusses that in such situations students are more likely to demonstrate 'reticence' and become 'quiet' in class, perhaps as a result of focusing too much on test-taking strategies and too little on real language skills (ibid., p.444). Similarly, Tsui (1996, pp.148-149) discusses how the lack of proficiency can be a contributing factor for 'student reticence'. Other research on IELTS, the other most popular test for international students for the purposes of studying abroad, shows that high scores in it do not guarantee students' academic success (Dooley and Oliver, 2002, pp.50-53). It seems that this kind of test-oriented teaching forces Japanese students to refocus their English language learning towards achieving higher scores in those tests, with the same negative effects. Further, Yu (2014, p.25) argues that fostering "skill-equipped" test-takers' is not the same as increasing their 'real language competence or communicative ability'. Analysing what kind of English abilities are tested by popular English proficiency tests and identifying what kind of abilities Japanese students are required to learn, as outlined in MEXT (2003), is described as a "false" model' of a strategy for language teaching and learning strategy (ibid., p.25).

In addition, MEXT's way of viewing English language appears to somewhat disadvantage Japanese students. If the choice is between a 'monolithic' or 'plurilithic' concept of English (Hall and Wicaksono, 2017), MEXT policy is underpinned by a monolithic concept of English, which understands it as a 'uniform and stable' entity. On the other hand, a plurilithic concept of English understands English as constituting 'variable, hybrid, and dynamic' entities. According to Hall and Wicaksono (2017), a monolithic concept of English disadvantages learners ontologically, ethically, politically and professionally. In the following, I examine the usefulness of the adoption of popular English proficiency tests, based on the

ontological, ethical, political and professional dimensions identified by Hall and Wicaksono (2017):

**Regarding the ontological dimension**, the idea that Japanese students' ability to communicate in English can be tested by those popular English proficiency tests is not 'true', as Hall and Wicaksono suggest (2017). As Troike (1983) points out, the tests have a limited relationship to the kind of natural language used to achieve communicative tasks in specific contexts. It is not possible, says Troike, to measure students' communication abilities 'through the limited sampling of performance that a test must consist of' (ibid., p.213). In addition, taking an item of language out of its context divorces it from its function/meaning; this tends to encourage students to think of language monolithically, perhaps as a collection of consistent and steady forms that can be understood as separate from their contexts of use.

**Regarding the ethical dimension**, as Hall and Wicaksono suggest (2017), MEXT's idea of adopting popular English proficiency tests in the classroom situation is not 'fair'. Those tests are 'not necessarily aligned with the English curriculum proposed by MEXT' (Iwai, 2009, p.83). For example, TOEFL is designed to measure 'the ability of nonnative speakers of English to communicate in English in the college or university classroom' (Educational Testing Service, 2017) in English-speaking countries. However, those students who wish to apply for admission to academic institutions in English-speaking countries form only a small part of the entire number of students studying English in Japanese schools. This shows that the level of TOEFL is not commensurable with the average Japanese student's ability to communicate in English.

**Regarding the political dimension**, MEXT's idea of adopting popular English proficiency tests in the classroom situation is not 'sustainable', as Hall and Wicaksono suggest (2017). Applying TOEFL, whose listening and speaking sections are recorded by native speakers from North America, the U.K., New Zealand and Australia, as explained by the Educational Testing Service, does not appear to be appropriate for the present situation where many varieties of English are used globally. Nowadays, 'much of the communication in English happens among multilingual speakers in nonnative–nonnative interactions' (Canagarajah, 2006, p.233). An insistence on popular tests using 'dominant varieties' (ibid., p.229) of English might lead Japanese students to judge the correctness of their English against a native speaker standard. Applying those tests in classrooms might not be seen as part of Japanese English language teachers' general

pedagogical responsibilities. Working in a monolingual (Japanese-speaking) country, it may be that Japanese English language teachers should be expected to become 'aware of the current landscape of the English language' (Matsuda, 2003, p.725), to raise students' awareness of the value of 'non-native varieties' (Chiba et al., 1995, p.85) and to encourage their students to have confidence in their own variety of English.

**Regarding the professional dimension**, MEXT's idea of adopting popular English proficiency tests in the classroom situation is not 'helpful', as Hall and Wicaksono suggest (2017). Applying those English proficiency tests does not necessarily help students communicate effectively or satisfactorily in the various contexts where they will be communicating by using the language (Hall and Wicaksono, 2017). From the perspective of Kachru's (1982) model of World Englishes, 'the English-speaking world' can be classified into 'the three concentric circles of the Inner, the Outer and the Expanding' (Kachru 1982, cited in Murata and Jenkins 2009, pp.2-3). According to Melchers and Shaw's (2011, pp.7-9) explanation, English is used as a 'first language' in the inner circle, while, in the outer circle, it is used as a 'second language', 'often officially recognised' and 'a characteristic of the local speakers'. In the expanding circle, it is used 'among speakers who have acquired it as a language for use with foreigners' (ibid., p.8). MEXT seems to be referring only to Englishes from the countries which belong to the inner circle: in other words, MEXT has not taken into account the outer or expanding circles. This approach seems likely to:

[put] the other circles in an inferior position to the NSs [native speakers of English] and [threaten] to undermine Japanese learners' agency as EIL [English as an international language] users (Matsuda, 2003, p.722).

Thus, too strong a focus on the 'dominant varieties (British/American)' of English (Canagarajah, 2006, p.229) might prove counterproductive to students' motivation for speaking English, rather than helping them interact with others in a range of contexts. Viewed from these ontological, ethical, political and professional dimensions, the use of popular English proficiency tests in the classroom situation may have the effect of disadvantaging Japanese students.

Indeed, scores in popular English proficiency tests do not accurately represent students' (or English language teachers') ability to communicate in English, and studying to achieve higher scores in those tests does not necessarily lead to the development of their ability to communicate in English. MEXT's instrumental approach to the assessment of students' ability to communicate in English has evidently not been consistent with what the term 'communication abilities' in the MEXT Course of Study implies as discussed above. And as mentioned earlier, the MEXT Course of Study appears to aim at helping students to produce Discourses, the combination and integration of language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing and valuing (Gee, 2005, p.21). On the other hand, MEXT's idea of adopting popular English proficiency tests in the classroom situation does not reflect their aim for Japanese students to produce Discourses. Consequently, MEXT's Discourses as seen in the Course of Study have become "discourse," with a little "d" which means just 'language-in-use' (ibid., p.26) through those policies. Along with the assessment of students' ability to communicate in English, MEXT's monolithic thinking about English language appears to have been reflected in their monolithic way of viewing the professional development of English language teachers. While referring to the improvement of both pedagogical skills and English proficiency in terms of their professional development, MEXT has referred only to specific scores or levels in popular English proficiency tests as qualities that MEXT expects them to show:

English language teachers generally have the capability and a good command of English to develop students' ability to communicate effectively through engaging them in activities designed to improve their capacity to communicate in English (pre-first grade in the STEP test, a score of more than 550 in TOEFL or 730 in TOEIC) (MEXT, 2003, p.5, my translation).

Similarly, MEXT (2011, pp.10-11), while referring to the importance of the 'improvement and enhancement of not only English proficiency of English teachers but also instruction abilities for lesson design' (as in original), describes 'minimum requirements of English proficiency for English teachers' as the:

Abilities to expand students' opportunities to come across English, while making classes a place for real communication, in order to

cultivate students' English communication skills (STEP Grade Pre-1, TOEFL (iBT) score of 80, TOEIC score of 730 or higher) (MEXT, 2011, p.11, as in original).

MEXT (2013b) is in agreement with MEXT (2011), as follows:

there is an urgent need to improve English language teachers' pedagogical skills and English proficiency (all English language teachers should meet the minimum requirements of English proficiency: pre-first grade in the STEP test or a score of more than 80 in TOEFL iBT) (MEXT, 2013b, p.4, my translation).

Further, MEXT's monolithic thinking regarding English language, as seen in their support for dominant varieties of English, appears to be reflected in the design of the current teacher education project for English language teachers. As noted earlier, in 2014, MEXT gathered together LEEPs from each municipality and initiated a five-year cascade project in collaboration with the British Council. The lack of explanation about why the British Council joined the project as teacher trainers led me to speculate that MEXT assumed that native speakers of English were more desirable teacher trainers than Japanese teachers. It also led me to speculate that MEXT assumed that being trained using the teaching method of native speakers of English was a more desirable teacher education methodology than the one developed by Japanese English language teachers. This may show MEXT's indifference to the resources and methodologies for the professional education of English language teachers that Japanese teachers had developed according to the Course of Study. This situation also suggests that MEXT did not do justice to the capabilities of Japanese English language teachers who undertook a number of teacher education programmes or attended professional education events to improve their practices. Those teachers should have had their efforts recognised and been honoured by MEXT and celebrated in relevant policy documents.

What has further complicated the situation is that MEXT policy has taken on a life of its own without doing anything to rectify the inconsistencies. The underpinning assumptions of MEXT policy have developed into 'a big social discourse by the MEXT' (Tamai, 2016, p.42) that has informed local policies, social trends and people's thinking, and has now taken the form of an ideological stance. These ideological commitments, as originally incorporated in MEXT policy, are consistent



with a belief in the 'dominant varieties (British/American)' of English, a belief manifested in popular tests targeted at 'standardized British or American English' (Canagarajah, 2006, pp.229-230). Those ideological commitments also appear to be resonant of 'native-speakerism' (Holliday, 2005, p.6):

an established belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology (Holliday, 2005, p.6).

I am suggesting here that those ideological commitments have shaped the 'Political' context in Japan. I am using the term 'Political' with a capital 'P', in order to describe the complex situation in which ideological commitments, originally generated by MEXT, have a powerful influence on popular discourses and in turn render inconspicuous the inconsistencies between the MEXT Course of Study and their assessment policies. In the next section, I describe how these commitments have already influenced others' discourses.

## **2.2.2 Local policy regarding the teaching and assessment of 'communication abilities' in English**

Apart from statutory teacher education programmes in the first and tenth years of teaching, as stipulated in MEXT (2014a), and the five-year cascade project which started in 2014, teacher education programmes tend to have regional characteristics specific to each municipality. Here, I examine local policy on English language education and teacher education for English language teachers issued in 2015 in the city where the research participants and I have been working (name of the municipality withheld).

'People become people through working with other people', says the Board of Education (2015, p.1, my translation). This is the basic principle for education and teacher education in the city, written in the guidelines for in-service teacher education, and could read that 'teachers become teachers through working with students, parents, colleague teachers and other people'. This perspective implies a commitment towards person-centred forms of teacher education, a sentiment which I value. However, a proposal from a local committee on English language education takes a different perspective altogether, as follows.

The committee in question was set up by the Board of Education in 2014 in response to measures for the promotion of education in the city proposed in the same year. Having tried to find ways of improving students' ability to communicate in English, they have published their proposal as the committee report in 2015.

The current committee comprises the following sixteen local members:

- four university professors;
- three head teachers from primary, junior high and senior high schools;
- three English language teachers from primary, junior high and senior high schools;
- three presidents of Parent-Teacher Associations (known as PTAs) from primary, junior high and senior high schools;
- three business leaders.

The proposal, published in 2015, describes communicative competence as 'not the ability to win arguments with a good command of English', but instead:

- the ability to open up to and listen to others;
- the ability to state our own opinions rationally;
- the ability to acknowledge different cultures and values;
- the ability to respect others and co-exist with one another;
- the ability to be unafraid of making mistakes in conversations, and interact with people from different cultures (Eigokyōiku o kangaeru konwakai, 2015, p.6, my translation).

The proposal also states that these abilities should 'help students become conscious of their identity as Japanese', which can lead to 'social change and the creation of new values' (ibid., p.6, my translation). These ideas appear to match Gee's (2005) idea of Discourses, as communicated in the Course of Study. Further, in terms of ensuring coherent English language education from primary to high school level, the proposal suggests the following strategy for fostering students' communicative competence:

setting targets appropriate to each grade (Plan), promoting research in relation to the improvement of teaching skills (Do) (...) examining to what extent the targets were met (Check), and reflecting the results in

the plan and targets for the following year (Act) (Eigokyōiku o kangaeru konwakai, 2015, p.9, my translation).

This idea is commensurable with an action research approach in which teachers continue to learn from enquiring into their own practices and experiences, something with which I agree. The idea appears to value teachers' taking the initiative for their professional learning, and learning from others from different school levels in 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998, pp.6-7), which also seems relevant to an action research approach.

However, in terms of possible approaches to developing students' communicative competence, the committee recommends:

- the active involvement of assistant language teachers (known as ALTs), who are native speakers of English, at events inside and outside schools;
- assessing students' speaking ability through interviews and speeches;
- encouraging students to take popular English proficiency tests in order to help them identify their learning objectives and study with enthusiasm (Eigokyōiku o kangaeru konwakai, 2015, p.16, my translation).

Consequently, students come to be viewed as 'passive' learners or test-takers, 'rather than as active participants' in communication, 'with their own goals, agendas, and strategies, which may differ with individuals' (Troike, 1983, p.213). In terms of professional development pathways for English language teachers, the committee recommends:

- implementing LEEP-led teacher education programmes as part of MEXT's cascade project towards the improvement of their pedagogical skills;
- providing teacher education programmes towards the improvement of pedagogical skills and English proficiency, in collaboration with universities and external organisations;
- providing teacher education events aimed at the improvement of team-teaching lessons with ALTs, and towards teachers' English proficiency;
- encouraging them to take popular English proficiency tests in order for them to attain pre-first grade in the STEP test or a score of more than 80 in TOEFL iBT (Eigokyōiku o kangaeru konwakai, 2015, pp.16-17, my translation).

However, in light of this advice, as previously noted, teachers are viewed as passive participants in teacher education events, or test-takers; this is far from the idea of practitioners enquiring into their own practices and experiences which the committee communicates above. Thus, the discourse in the proposal drawn up by the local committee is obviously greatly influenced by the discourse in the MEXT policy. It therefore loses the spirit of the messages of the Board of Education concerning Discourses that include a commitment towards person-centred forms of teacher education, as outlined at the beginning of this section. This suggests that MEXT policy itself acts as a contributing factor in the contradiction between local government principles and local government policy. It may also be that this contradiction contributes to strengthening the legitimacy of the top-down perspectives of the MEXT policy.

### **2.2.3 Dominant assumptions regarding the teaching and assessment of 'communication abilities' in English**

The danger of overflow from MEXT policy into the business world is of serious concern. Employers and society generally appear to accept the scores-based MEXT policy uncritically. For example, 'the number of companies which use scores in TOEIC for recruiting or promoting personnel has been increasing in these ten years' (Saito, 2013, p.35, my translation). This has led universities to provide courses that focus on test-taking skills for students to attain higher scores in TOEFL or TOEIC towards the improvement of their employment rate (ibid., p.35). Ironically, Torikai (2013, p.91) discusses a Japanese company which required applicants to take TOEIC, but later recognised that those with higher scores were not necessarily capable workers. Torikai argues that this situation might have resulted from 'minimising communication as just a means of passing on information' (ibid., p.91).

At the same time, MEXT itself has been at the mercy of the business world. Considerable apprehension about the power of the business world to exercise control over its discourses has been expressed:

there is no indication of thorough arguments in the government minutes about plans to reform English language education such as an idea of the adoption of popular English proficiency tests in university entrance exams (Erikawa, 2013, pp.13-14, my translation).

Erikawa further supposes that one Japanese business community might have drafted that idea (ibid., p.14). Torikai (2014, p.118) argues that recent MEXT policy has been designed 'in response to the request from the business world, not from an educational perspective' (my translation). Tamai (2016) describes the current circumstances as follows:

although it looks it is [*sic*] MEXT that controls this movement, the presence of such [a] powerful business community as Keidanren [Japan Business Federation] cannot be dismissed, either (Tamai, 2016, p.43).

It may be that the ideological commitments, as mentioned earlier, inherent in dominant varieties of English, popular tests targeted at standardised English and native speakers of English, have been generated at this intersection where MEXT and the business world meet and influence each other. Those commitments have become dominant assumptions regarding English language and English language education, which now appears to support MEXT's test scores first policy.

Indeed, practising teachers also show their apprehension about the capacity of the business world to exercise control over the educational context. The following extract includes interviews with one of the research participants. Teacher D, as a LEEP for the junior high level in the city, participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014: he shared his reflections on the programmes with me during an interview:

#### Extract 2.1

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Teachers' apprehensions about the current educational context  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014b, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- 1 TD: what disappointed me most [about the British Council-led
- 2 programme] was, on the last day, the programme was summarised
- 3 K: who summarised [MEXT or the British Council]? (*laughter*)
- 4 TD: probably on the instructions of MEXT, the trainers said, like this,
- 5 'Towards the growth of the Japanese economy, let's start with changing
- 6 your [English] classrooms' as the conclusion of the programme
- 7 (*laughter*) I, I work not for the Japanese economy but for the students
- 8 in front of me, I do not want to change my classrooms for that

As seen in lines 4–8, Teacher D reflected critically on the British Council's comment which linked the improvement of teaching practice (by implication, the development of Japanese students' ability to communicate in English) with Japanese economic growth. He recognised that MEXT's thinking underpinned the discourse of the British Council, as noted in line 4. His point is a reinforcement of a core principle in education, that of 'students first', as a given. Supposing the ideological commitments are 'seldom free of inconsistencies and contradictions' as Levin (1998, p.134) explains, we teachers then have to develop the ability to critique and possibly resist what we are told by messages that communicate the underpinning assumptions of dominant discourses.

To summarise so far:

- (1) the term 'communication abilities' in the MEXT Course of Study and MEXT's policies implies the ability to use English for communication;
- (2) however, scores in popular English proficiency tests, which MEXT has tried to adopt in English classrooms, do not appear accurately to represent the ability to communicate in English, and studying to achieve higher scores in those tests does not necessarily lead to the development of the ability;
- (3) the possible source of the inconsistencies to be found when comparing what MEXT implies by the term 'communication abilities' and MEXT assessment policies may be ideological commitments, as incorporated in MEXT policy; they include a belief in the dominant varieties of English, a belief manifested in popular tests targeted at standardised British or American English and native-speakerism;
- (4) those ideological commitments have shaped popular discourses;
- (5) MEXT's monolithic thinking about English language, i.e. it equates the ability to communicate in English with test scores, appears to have been reflected in its monolithic thinking about the professional development of English language teachers from the narrow perspective that test scores represent proficiency in English;
- (6) MEXT's monolithic thinking about English language, as seen in its support for dominant varieties of English, appears to be reflected in the design of the current English teacher education project undertaken in collaboration with the British Council.

I hope the above adequately communicates that MEXT's interpretation of communicative competence in English needs to be changed. I would also suggest that (5) and (6) above imply that MEXT could reconsider the professional development of English language teachers from a wider perspective, not monitoring only by using test scores, and explore ways in which teacher education for English language teachers could be redesigned independent of its monolithic thinking about English language. With this in mind, in the next section, I review the current cascade form of the teacher education project, and discuss its impact and how the quality of the teacher professional education could be improved. I also present my own provisional perspective regarding teacher professional education.

#### **2.2.4 The role of English language in the Japanese context**

In this section, I review the role of English language in the Japanese context. It seems that 'the government's desire for an urgent improvement of Japanese students' English ability' (Kondo, 2016, p.25) led to their decision to commence English language education in primary school. The new Course of Study for Primary School, due to be implemented in 2020, stipulates English language as a subject in the fifth and sixth grades, as well as introducing English language activities into the curricula for the third and fourth grades (MEXT, 2017a, p.63). In terms of junior high school, the new Course of Study is going to be made operational in 2021: it is to develop the idea for the basic four skills of English such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, as mentioned in the current Course of Study quoted in section 2.2.1, and specifically expand the idea for speaking ability by dividing it into the following two categories, 'interaction' and 'production' (MEXT, 2017b, pp.7-8). MEXT's intention to focus more on 'dialogic language activities' where 'students try to communicate and share their thoughts or feelings with others' (ibid., p.9, my translation) can be clearly shown in their expanding the idea for speaking ability. Also, linking what students are to learn in primary school and junior high school is encouraged in the new Course of Study; similarly, linking what students are to learn in junior high school and high school is encouraged in the new Course of Study for High Schools Foreign Languages (English) to be made operational in 2022 (MEXT 2017c, p.7). Thus, it appears that MEXT is trying to improve Japanese students' English ability based on a long-term perspective of their English language learning from primary school to high school. Discussions on

this have just started and some studies on this are due to be published in the near future.

On the other hand, the dominant thinking about English language as seen in MEXT's policy, discussed in section 2.2.1, which limits correct English to only 'American English' and 'British English', has narrowed Japanese people's appreciation of their own capacity in English. They have tended to put their own English 'in an inferior position' to the native speakers of English (Matsuda, 2003, p.722), which has led to the situation in which the term "Japanese English" has a negative connotation in Japan' (Chiba et al., 1995, p.84); I will develop this point in chapter 4 in relation to communicative competence. On the contrary, in the field of World Englishes, a number of studies about Japanese English have been undertaken (Morrow, 2004, p.91). However, in my understanding, the World Englishes paradigm could be underpinned by monolithic ontologies of English in its attempt to categorise English spoken in various areas. Morrow argues:

at the discourse level, Japanese speakers of English are operating with a set of rules that differs in many respects from those of speakers of Inner Circle varieties of English (...) This does not mean that JE [Japanese English] is or will become an institutionalized variety like Singaporean English or Indian English; rather, it means that we are justified in considering JE a performance variety (Morrow, 2004, p.93).

Kirkpatrick (2007, p.3) also takes up this point, and explains that instances of Japanese 'loanwords' tend to be discussed as part of a Japanese variety of English. These discussions may suggest what the World Englishes paradigm could do: it might be helping people better appreciate their own variety of English, not only highlighting the differences between so-called Standard English and local varieties (such as Japanese English), which may, in turn, lead to destabilising ideologies such as native speakerism and practices such as the British Council teacher training programmes in Japan. In the same way as Japanese students' English language learning pathway from primary to high school, Japanese English might be a possible future research topic for me to explore as one of those Japanese speakers of English.

In section 2.2.1, I refer to the ideological commitments, as originally incorporated in MEXT policy, which are consistent with a belief in the 'dominant varieties (British/American)' of English, a belief manifested in popular tests targeted at 'standardized British or American English' (Canagarajah, 2006, pp.229-230) and



'native-speakerism' (Holliday, 2005, p.6). I also discuss how those ideological commitments have shaped the 'Political' context in Japan and have a powerful influence on popular discourses and in turn render inconspicuous the inconsistencies between the MEXT Course of Study and their assessment policies. Martin (2015, p.9) discusses that 'political ideology can best be understood as actors' theorization of their own position, and available strategies, in a political field'. From this perspective, those involved in the context of English language education, such as myself and the above-mentioned scholars who study Japanese English, might also be part of political ideology. On the other hand, by theorising our own positions and strategies, and trying to communicate it, we may be able to influence others' discourses, reshape the political context, and give significance to our existence and what we do, which might lead to our personal and professional development. In summary, it might be that ideology exists in theorisation of those involved in the political context and ideological commitments as discussed above might exist in my own theorisation of the current context of English language education. This may require me to continue to explore those ideological commitments while studying others' theorisation of the current context of English language education as a researcher.

### **2.3 Reviewing the current teacher education project**

In the first half of this section, I examine the current MEXT's cascade design of the teacher education project (hereafter mentioned as the cascade project) through my empirical questionnaire-based studies on LEEPs and teachers who participated in the project. Teacher D, one research participant, was among those LEEPs, but the other LEEPs and the teachers who responded to the questionnaires were not the same as the research participants in the study under consideration in this thesis. My intention for this was to see how other English language teachers might respond to the project. This was also inspired by the reality that 'there is no indication that earlier arguments or reform plans inform current thinking' (Torikai, 2014, p.3, my translation) in English language education policy in a Japanese context. This situation might be a contributing factor to the MEXT's current way of monitoring the progress of professional development of English language teachers from a single, narrow viewpoint of the attainment rate of target level or score in popular English proficiency tests. For example, MEXT (2011) evaluates the

progress of English language teachers' professional development in line with the announcement of MEXT (2003), which equates 'pre-first grade in the STEP test, a score of more than 550 in TOEFL or 730 in TOEIC' with the level of English proficiency of English language teachers that is required for improving students' communicative competence, as follows:

only about 24% of English teachers in public junior high schools (...) have attained this level of proficiency, which means that teachers' English skills are not always sufficient (MEXT, 2011, p.10, as in original).

This does not give any consideration to English language teachers' reflections regarding the changes in their teaching methodology. Similarly, MEXT (2013c) refers to the attainment rate:

27.9% of all English teachers have attained more than pre-first grade in the STEP test, a score of more than 550 in PBT [paper-based test], 213 in CBT [computer-based test] or 80 in iBT in TOEFL, or 730 in TOEIC. 74.3% of them have taken the tests concerned (MEXT, 2013c, my translation).

MEXT (2014b) refers again to the data as seen in the excerpt above. Thus, while the Japanese term 'gurōbaruka' (globalisation in English) has repeatedly been referred to in the above-mentioned policy documents, the professional development of English language teachers appropriate to the context has been simply considered as the improvement of their English proficiency as measured by their attainment of target scores on so-called 'international' tests. Teacher D, one research participant, was also concerned about the lack of evaluation of earlier teacher education projects:

#### Extract 2.2

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Lack of evaluation of teacher education projects  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014b, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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1 K: do you mean there has been no progress [in teacher education]?

2 TD: rather, they think we have not made any progress (...) I do not think  
 3 anyone has done any research on the past programmes, I have never  
 4 seen an effective evaluation of the five-year project consisting of intensive  
 5 teacher education programmes under MEXT (2003), or of past reform  
 6 plans (...) someone like you ((*laughter*)), should evaluate the programmes  
 7 (...) yeah, I cannot help feeling that we have been doing the same thing  
 8 for the past twenty years

Teacher D assumed that MEXT did not recognise any of the teachers' progress because of the lack of evaluation or reflections about the effectiveness of earlier programmes. This situation has led him to feel that he has been 'doing the same thing for the past twenty years', as stated in lines 7–8. He also called for researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of earlier teacher education programmes, as seen in lines 6–7. This may indicate that top-down teacher education programmes often neglect the inclusion of an evaluation phase in their project design. In policy, there has been little consideration for English language teachers' reflections about the improvement of their teaching methodologies after the earlier education programmes, perhaps as a result of the lack of an evaluation phase. Also, to my knowledge, little attention has been paid in the literatures to ways in which teacher education for English language teachers is organised in Japan, although a number of literatures have discussed English language education. Kondo (2016, pp.28-29), my earlier article reviewing the cascade project, also calls for the (re)evaluation of teacher education programmes, in that what is expected of teachers may be changing due to the changes in the real-life teaching context. However, because the article was published in a linguistics journal, it reviews the LEEPs' and the teachers' responses to the cascade project mainly in relation to a monolingual instructional strategy, which is used as a teaching methodology in the cascade project and is promoted in MEXT (2013b). The article discusses LEEPs'/teachers' responses to the questionnaires I distributed as follows:

None of the LEEPs and the teachers mentioned learning and improving monolingual instructional strategy, which is the focus of MEXT (2013b), as the benefit of the program. This shows another gap between MEXT and the participants. This also implies that it is not realistic for the participants to consider the development of students' communicative competence in connection with [a] monolingual instructional strategy. Actually, [a] monolingual instructional strategy is questioned by eight [out of ten] LEEPs in the same questionnaire (Kondo, 2016, p.29).

By saying 'another gap', I indicate that MEXT's intention to promote a monolingual instructional strategy for 'the increase of students' English use' (MEXT, 2014b), by implication, possibly for the development of students' communicative competence, was not appreciated by the LEEPs/teachers. Consequently, the article concludes:

The present situation shows the limitations of MEXT's (2013b) rushed decision to push forward a monolingual instructional strategy in junior high schools for the development of students' communicative competence. [A] monolingual instructional strategy could be a means for developing students' communicative competence, however, it should not be the goal of English language education or teacher education programs (Kondo, 2016, p.34).

Thus, because of too great a focus on the appropriateness of a monolingual instructional strategy, a constructive discussion towards the improvement of the project is missing in this article. With the aim of filling the research gap in the evaluation of an appropriate methodology for the professional education for English language teachers in Japan, in the next two sections, I review the cascade project from the perspectives of the impact of the project, and how it could be improved.

### **2.3.1 The British Council-led teacher education programmes for LEEPs in 2014**

Under MEXT (2013b), MEXT commenced the cascade project 'in cooperation with an external professional expert' (MEXT, 2014c), the British Council. The aim of this new project was 'promoting the training of globally-minded human resources with communicative competence in English' (MEXT, 2014c, my translation) and to achieve it:

the government implements education programmes in order to train Leaders of English Education Project at each school level. Those who completed the programmes are supposed to educate other primary-level teachers or secondary-level English language teachers towards the improvement of their class management and assessment, as teacher educators, in each municipality (MEXT, 2014c, my translation).

Accordingly, MEXT convened the first LEEPs from each municipality from all over Japan, providing them with the two sets of four to five-day education programmes in 2014. The first education programme for the LEEPs focused on their learning of practical teaching strategies, the second programme on how to instruct other teachers (MEXT, 2014c). Successively, LEEP-led teacher education programmes started in each municipality. They were mandatory, in that MEXT (2014c) stated that all primary school teachers and English language teachers should benefit from the project within around the following five years. In order to attain this, every year since 2014, each municipality has appointed new LEEPs, who are supposed to conduct their LEEP-led teacher education programmes after being trained through the British Council-led programmes, in the same way as the first LEEPs. I asked Teacher D, the first LEEP in the city, for his reflection on the British Council-led programmes, during two interviews (Teacher D, 2014b and 2014c). I also sent a questionnaire to other LEEPs who participated in the second British Council-led programme in 2014 (see Appendix D), benefitting from Teacher D's cooperation, and received responses from ten LEEPs, together with their approval for possibly using their comments anonymously as data. In this section, I review those eleven LEEPs' general reflections on the British Council-led programmes, including Teacher D's reflection; the LEEPs other than Teacher D were not the research participants for this study. In response to a question about the most beneficial teacher education programme for their professional development that they have ever attended (question 3 in the questionnaire), seven out of the eleven LEEPs mentioned the second British Council-led teacher education programme. Teacher D (2014c) suggested that the focus of the programme (how to instruct other teachers) might have seemed to the LEEPs like a new form of education programme, in that teacher education programmes tend normally to focus on how to instruct students. This might suggest that the Boards of Education could be required to offer programmes in which experienced teachers are trained as teacher educators, as well as normal teacher education programmes. These could help those experienced teachers become sufficiently confident to perform the role of teacher educators (or LEEPs). Table 2.1 provides a selection of their comments. Having identified 'obvious and recurring topics' in their reflections (Hyland, 2010, p.202), I sorted out their responses into the following four categories based on the topics:

**Table 2.1: Outline of LEEPs' general reflections on the British Council-led programmes**

<b>Outline of the 11 LEEPs' general reflections on the British Council-led programmes/ their responses to Question (5) in the questionnaire (Appendix D) (my translation)</b>	
What the benefit of the programmes was	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Networking and sharing ideas with other LEEPs which took place 'outside the programmes' was mentioned most (by 6 LEEPs) as the main benefit of the programme, as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Meeting with the highly respectable LEEPs as individuals and professionals was the greatest benefit from the programme.'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Impact on their practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'I was stimulated by a totally different way of teaching from mine.'</li> <li>- 'Following the advice to focus on speaking, my teaching and my students have changed.'</li> </ul>
Points they think are at issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 LEEPs called into question the monolingual instructional strategy which the British Council used in the programmes and they were encouraged to practise, as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Realistically, it is doubtful whether I will be able to practise a hundred percent what I learnt at the programmes.'</li> <li>- 'If we follow the method and teach English only in English, we might produce less motivated students, increasing polarisation between strong students and weak students.'</li> <li>- 'I would like to understand and deliver what I learnt at these programmes in my own way.'</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ 3 LEEPs reflected that they had not realised the aims of the programmes at first, as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Why do we attend these programmes? How will our learning be related to the future English language education? If we had understood the relevance between these programmes and the new Course of Study before the start of the cascade project, our attitudes, vision or thinking about these programmes might have been different. Other English language teachers as well as LEEPs should understand the aims of the programmes before attending them.'</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ No feedback was given to the LEEPs on the materials which they submitted to the British Council, as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'We all submitted lesson plans and videos with the expectation of some feedback. The feedback is supposed to be put on the community site page on the Internet. However, most of us do not visit it.'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ About who should be teacher educators, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'MEXT should make the best use of experienced Japanese English language teachers, who have tried to develop students' communicative competence with their own beliefs and values in teaching in the Japanese context for many years, learn from them and collaborate with them to develop a more advanced form of teacher education methodology.'</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Other issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Both the contents and the materials should be more conscious of students in real-life situations.'</li> <li>- 'Considering my future practice as a LEEP, I need much more time to be prepared to be a teacher educator.'</li> <li>- 'The British Council method should be only for people who are motivated to learn English conversation and it is unlikely that we can apply it to a classroom context which has students of various types from well-motivated to less-motivated.'</li> <li>- 'What we learnt through these programmes was relevant to what we learnt through the previous programmes, although I presumed that we would learn how to develop our accumulated knowledge. I felt like starting over again.'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Other reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Although both trainers and trainees might have found difficulties because this year is the first year of the project, I hope this project will continue.'</li> </ul>

The following can be seen as the positive impact of the programmes:

- (1) LEEPs had the opportunity to network and share ideas with other LEEPs;
- (2) LEEPs learnt new instructional skills; the trainers' encouragement to focus more on speaking in class changed at least one LEEP's teaching practice, which has led to changes in her students (maybe the students began to use English more in class).

In terms of (1) above, MEXT (2014c) suggests that the programmes based on task-based group learning can allow LEEPs to share practices with other LEEPs. However, the LEEPs appreciated most the opportunities to share their practices 'outside the programmes'. This could mean that they shared their reflections on the content of the relevant programmes as part of task-based group learning. On the other hand, outside the programmes, they might have been able to share and exchange views on the whole project and what it means to be LEEPs. Based on this analysis, I suggest how the programmes could be improved as follows:

- First, the programmes could include an opportunity for LEEPs to share their practices and learn from each other's experiences. This could be linked with the content of the programmes, or stand independently;
- Second, the programmes could provide an opportunity for trainees (LEEPs) and trainers (the British Council) to share reflections on their content. This could help the trainees communicate what they think could be reconsidered in the programmes to the trainers, and help the trainers redesign them. The points to be reconsidered could be the substitution of the British Council's monolingual instructional strategy for a teaching strategy which the LEEPs think is more appropriate to their teaching context, and the relationship between the level of English which is assumed in the programmes and real-life students' level of English. The opportunity could also be used for the trainers to give feedback on the work which the trainees have submitted; the issue of 'no feedback given to the LEEPs' works', as seen above, could be solved through this;
- Third, the aims of the programmes need to be shared between programme organisers/trainers and trainees at the outset. One LEEP mentioned that he was not sure what was expected of him in the first programme. He finally understood in the second programme that he was expected to cascade what he had learnt there to other English language teachers. Trainees also need to be informed about the relevance of what they will



learn at the programmes and the new Course of Study, so that they can think about how to apply their learning to their future practice;

- Fourth, LEEPs could work collaboratively with a mentor in designing their LEEP-led programmes. A mentor could be a Board of Education official, a local university academic or a researcher in a relevant field;
- Fifth, considering new LEEPs are appointed every year up to the end of this five-year project, collaborative learning opportunities among older and newer LEEPs could be organised in a systematic way for their mutual learning, so that older LEEPs can cascade their findings and knowledge through their own LEEP-led programmes to newer LEEPs. As Zehetmeier et al. (2015, pp.170-171) suggest, ‘teacher networks’ can act as the main contributing factor for the ‘sustainability’ of the impact of teacher education programmes, so the LEEP networks could contribute to the development of local educational communities even after the cascade project;
- Sixth, effective evaluation of the programmes may be required, in that at least one LEEP found their content was not new. The absence of effective evaluation of the previous programmes might impede teachers’ professional development, as the LEEP felt like ‘starting over again’.

Table 2.1 presents issues other than the above. These include whether the British Council method for English conversation schools can be applied to a classroom context, and the idea that experienced Japanese English language teachers might possibly be more suitable teacher educators because of their familiarity with Japanese students and the classroom context. These issues could also be overcome or mitigated through improved communication between trainees and trainers as suggested above. By taking these points into consideration, the programmes could be characterised as a ‘collaboration’ model, not a ‘client-supplier’ model (Bevins and Price, 2014, pp.275-278), meaning that those involved learn from one another. Bevins and Price suggest that a collaboration model is the only available model that is sure to lead teacher professional support to success (ibid., p.275).

### **2.3.2 LEEP-led teacher education programmes in 2015**

Having been trained by the British Council, LEEPs have started to conduct their LEEP-led teacher education programmes in each municipality. Teacher D, as the

first LEEP in the city, conducted the three-day programmes comprising eight sessions (fourteen hours in total) in 2015: the first programme in June, the second in August and the third in November. Participants were required to attend all of these three-day programmes. I asked Teacher D for his reflection on his LEEP-led programme held in June during an interview (Teacher D, 2015b). I also sent a questionnaire to the teachers who participated in the programme in August (see Appendix E), with Teacher D's cooperation, and received responses from fifteen teachers, together with their approval for possibly using their comments anonymously as data; these fifteen teachers are different people from the research participants for this study. In this section, I review those fifteen teachers' general reflections about the LEEP-led programmes, including Teacher D's reflection. Table 2.2 provides a summary of all of the comments from the fifteen teachers. In terms of Teacher D's reflections, having identified 'obvious and recurring topics' in his reflections (Hyland, 2010, p.202), I selected his comments based on the five topics below:

**Table 2.2: Outline of teachers' and Teacher D's (LEEP) reflections on the LEEP-led programmes**

<b>Outline of 15 teachers' responses to Questions (1) and (2) in the questionnaire (Appendix E) (my translation)</b>	
1. What they expected from the programmes before participating in them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 11 teachers expected their teaching to improve through learning new teaching ideas. The others' expectations were (multiple-response):</li> <li>- sharing issues and discussing how to deal with them</li> <li>- learning how to develop students' four skills of English</li> <li>- improving a monolingual instructional strategy</li> <li>- discussing a monolingual instructional strategy</li> <li>- learning about second language acquisition theories</li> </ul>
2. General reflections about the programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 11 teachers were generally satisfied with the programmes, and wrote 'interesting', 'a good opportunity to improve English skills and improve teaching skills' etc. Other reflections were:</li> <li>- 'It was an interesting and effective method for improving students' English ability, if I didn't have to think about English for entrance exams.'</li> <li>- 'The method would improve students' English ability; however, we should be better trained before using it.'</li> <li>- 'We should discuss how to teach with the MEXT-authorized textbook.'</li> </ul>
3. What they found very useful and beneficial about the programmes (frequency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 14 teachers mentioned what they found very useful and beneficial. More frequent answers were (multiple-response):</li> <li>- got new ideas (6), writing session (3), vocabulary session (2)</li> <li>▪ Other answers:</li> <li>- student-centred class management, how to construct and connect activities, how to increase English use in class, updating knowledge</li> </ul>
4. Gaps between the content of the programmes and their real-life teaching context (frequency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 11 teachers mentioned the gaps, in terms of time management:</li> <li>- 'Teaching with the method takes more time, we do not have enough class time.'(3)</li> <li>- 'I need more preparation time if I use the method.'</li> </ul>

	<p>in terms of level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'My students will find class more difficult if I teach with the method.'(2)</li> <li>- 'I need to modify the method if I use it in my school.'</li> </ul> <p>in terms of the relevance to the Course of Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'The idea is not relevant to MEXT's Course of Study or the MEXT-authorized textbook.'</li> <li>- 'We should discuss how to teach with the MEXT-authorized textbook.'</li> </ul> <p>in terms of a monolingual instructional strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'A Japanese explanation is necessary depending on the content.'</li> </ul> <p>in terms of training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'We should be more fully trained before using it.'</li> </ul>
5. Other reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'I wanted to learn about second language acquisition theories.'</li> <li>- 'The method is very different from my current teaching.'</li> </ul>
6. General opinions about the professional education of English language teachers (frequency)	<p>Where they want to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher community (6)</li> <li>- workshops, seminars (6)</li> <li>- by themselves (2)</li> </ul> <p>How they want to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning from other teachers' experiences, through observing other teachers' lessons or through demonstrating lessons (5)</li> <li>- reflecting on their practices as well as getting new knowledge (2)</li> </ul> <p>What teacher education programmes should be like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- should be relevant to the real-life classroom context (3)</li> </ul>
<b>Outline of Teacher D's reflection on his LEEP-led programme in June 2015 (my translation)</b>	
1. About the programme management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Because of the predefined content/procedure/material, I did not modify them in my original way. Therefore, I told the teachers, "I am not going to use Japanese during the two-hour session, although I don't know whether it is an appropriate method or not, because I have to follow the British Council method."'</li> </ul>

2. How the teachers responded to the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'The teachers seemed to be willing participants. It seemed they were stimulated by the fact that all the participants including me used English intensively, and appreciate the programme as experience.'</li> <li>- 'The fact that their trainer (me) is one of their colleague teachers might have produced a positive effect.'</li> </ul>
3. How to reflect on the impact of the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'When I meet them at the next programme, I am planning to ask them if they practised what they learnt on the programme in their teaching context.'</li> </ul>
4. What to do for further improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'I am planning to ask them to put on their name cards in the next programme, in order to get to know each other better.'</li> </ul>
5. About sharing experiences among LEEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'We LEEPs have been sharing our experiences openly among ourselves, but it is unlikely that LEEPs will contribute their opinions to the webpage organised by MEXT and the British Council, which LEEPs are required to join.'</li> </ul>

The following can be seen as the positive impact of the programmes:

- (1) Teachers learnt new instructional skills; this met the expectation of most of them; teaching improvement through learning new teaching ideas. Some mentioned specific sessions (such as the 'writing session') which they found very useful and beneficial, which implies that they found some practical teaching ideas in those sessions. This may also imply that some of the content of the programmes met their needs;
- (2) As seen in Teacher D's comment, teachers seemed to have been stimulated by the programme structure through their English immersion experiences. They appreciated that it helped them improve their English skills, and that the monolingual instructional strategy, by which they were trained, would lead to improve their students' English skills.

On the other hand, the teachers seemed to have been caught in a dilemma as the comments of Teacher D show. As seen above, this was that Teacher D had to cope with the slippage between the British Council's strategy, which he was expected to cascade to other teachers, and his thinking on language use in class which preferred the use of Japanese if necessary. Similarly, eleven out of fifteen teachers were confused by the gaps between what was suggested in the training programmes and the reality, which includes teaching for entrance exams and teaching with MEXT-authorized textbook based on the Course of Study, while the same number of teachers were generally satisfied with the programmes. In order to minimise the impact of these dilemmas, I suggest ways in which the programmes could be improved as follows:

- First, they could be redesigned in light of real-life situations in the classroom. For example, the MEXT-authorized textbooks can be used as the material in the programmes. This could lead the content of the programmes to become more relevant to the Course of Study and more appropriate for real-life students' English levels. This may also be applied to the British Council-led programmes;
- Second, the design of LEEP-led programmes could be left more to the discretion of LEEPs. This would enable LEEPs to modify the content of the programmes, such as language use, according to the local needs and context;
- Third, LEEPs could advise teachers to practise what they have learnt on the programmes in their teaching context, and share their experiences and

reflections during the next one. This could help them link their learning and practices during the programmes; connecting three-day programmes could not lead each programme to a one-off English immersion 'experience', as Teacher D commented. This could also meet their needs of learning from each other's experiences in a teacher community as seen above;

- Fourth, in relation to the third point, I would suggest that each teacher set his/her individual research question concerning the content of the programmes in the form of 'How do I ...?' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.16), which could allow them to study their practices in their teaching context after their attendance on the programmes and contribute to their continuous learning.

Teacher D's reflection as seen above shows that he was trying to find ways of improving his LEEP-led programmes within the framework of cascading the British Council's strategy to other teachers; he was planning to ask teachers to put on their name cards during the next programme in order to get to know each other better, and to share his experiences openly with other LEEPs. I also hope to find ways of helping LEEPs with designing their LEEP-led programmes.

Last but not least, the teachers as well as the LEEPs were concerned about the relevance of the content of the programmes to the Course of Study, and the relevance between the English level which is assumed in the programmes and the level of real-life students' English. Two LEEPs showed their apprehension that the monolingual instructional strategy, which the British Council apply to the programmes, might lead to increased polarisation between strong students and weak students. Teachers are thus concerned about their students and their students' learning rather than their own. This suggests to us the need to recognise 'whose interest' we serve (McNiff, 2014, pp.24-25) through teacher professional education. Ultimately, it is students that should benefit most from programmes designed to enhance teachers' professional development.

### **2.3.3 Literature review on teacher professional learning**

The review of the cascade project through my empirical questionnaire-based study suggested that both the LEEPs and the teachers called for collective learning opportunities in teacher education programmes where they could share and learn from each other's experiences. Relevant literatures also see teachers as individual

and collective learners. Johnson and Freeman (2001, pp.58-62) similarly suggest that teachers have both 'individual agency' that 'think and are learning in their own right' as well as 'belonging and collective identity' learning through 'socialization'. Socialization may take place in 'a critical community made up of teachers, students, parents and others concerned for the development and reform of education' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.5) which teachers, as collective learners, belong to. Thus, teacher professional learning becomes a 'socially negotiated' process which 'cannot be separated from the socio-cultural environments in which it occurs' (Johnson and Freeman, 2001, pp.55-59). However, the socio-cultural environment is not the only factor to shape teachers' professional learning; their 'prior knowledge and experiences' also shape it (ibid., p.65). This suggests the need to consider teacher professional learning as 'a long-term, complex, developmental process' (ibid., p.56) where they continue to learn individually and collectively throughout their career: however, this cannot be measured by specific scores in English proficiency tests independently of the process. This point is mentioned in the policy document from the Council of the European Union, which explains teacher professional learning as follows. First, teachers as individual learners:

themselves need to reflect on their own learning requirements in the context of their particular school environment, and to take greater responsibility for their own lifelong learning (the Council of the European Union, 2009, p.8).

This suggests that teachers as individual learners should be expected to become aware of their learning needs and take the initiative in their own learning throughout their career. Second, teachers as collective learners can:

receive regular feedback on their performance, together with help in identifying their professional development needs and establishing a plan to meet these (the Council of the European Union, 2009, p.8).

This can read that the aim of teachers' collective learning is to enhance their individual learning. The document further recommends greater collaboration of policy makers and teachers for their mutual learning (ibid., pp.8-9). This could



enable policy makers to reflect on the effectiveness and impact of the policies they have proposed, and teachers to become involved in a review of the policies, which have influenced their teaching context, by communicating their reflections to policy makers.

As a way of investigating how collective learning can be incorporated into actual teacher education projects, I review the following teacher education projects, all of which used an action research approach:

- a collaborative action research project for secondary school English language teachers in Argentina (Banegas et al., 2013);
- an action research project for high school teachers conducted in Indonesia (Burns and Rochsantiningsih, 2006);
- the RELEASE project (Towards achieving Self REgulated LEArning as a core in teachers' In-SErvice training in Cyprus) for primary school teachers and principals (Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou, 2015);
- a collaborative teacher development project using on-line journal sharing in America (Matsuda and Matsuda, 2001);
- Japanese municipality-led English teacher education projects using an action research approach in Niigata (Mikami, 2011) and in Kochi (Nagasaki, 2012);
- an action research project for non-subject trained English teachers at primary schools in Hong Kong (Poon, 2008).

Table 2.3 shows forms of collective learning in those projects and how they had an impact on teachers' professional learning:

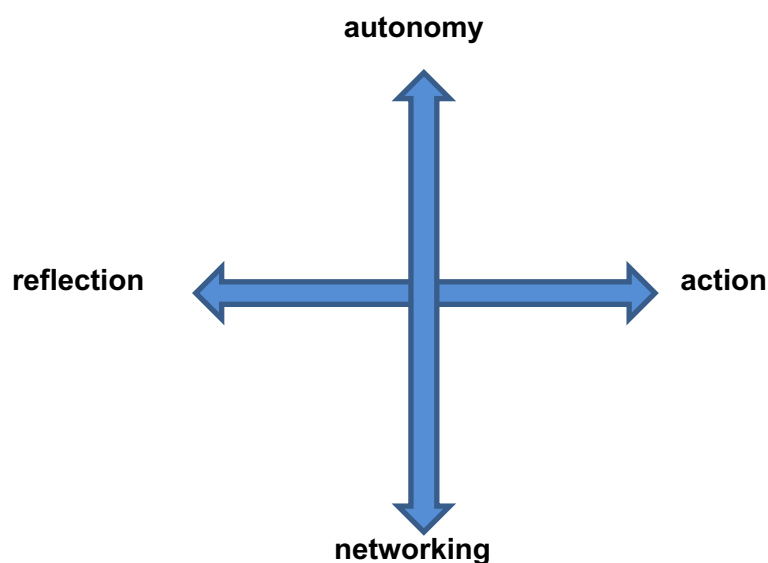
**Table 2.3: How collective learning enhanced teachers' professional learning**

<b><i>Project</i></b>	<b><i>Collective learning</i></b>	<b><i>Impact on teachers' professional learning</i></b>
Banegas et al. (2013)	meetings, group interviews, classroom observations, post-observation interviews and meetings for co-reflection on the project (pp.188-190)	became more reflective through peer observation, became more autonomous through perceiving more objective views (pp.197-198)
Burns and Rochsantiningsih (2006)	Individual interviews (the researcher interviewed each teacher), group meetings for sharing their progress and issues (pp.25-26)	implementing change in their classrooms and observing the result became more feasible (p.29)
Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou (2015)	peer observation, group reflections and the web forum where teachers shared experiences and learned from others' experiences (pp.130-133)	enhanced quality and effectiveness of their reflections, cultivated a trusting relationship between colleagues (pp.134-135)
Matsuda and Matsuda (2001)	ongoing feedback on journal entries by emails, and collective retrospective analyses on them afterwards (p.113)	helped them reflect critically on their own teaching practices from multiple perspectives (p.113) and better understanding of other members' practices led to greater teacher autonomy, which encouraged them to be different, to appreciate their differences, and to learn from the differences (p.118)
Mikami (2011)	group meetings where teachers shared their opinions about their project plans, presented their practice after the project and co-reflected on the outcomes of their projects (p.61)	successful lesson improvements (p.67)
Nagasaki (2012)	group meetings where teachers inquired into shared issues as co-researchers, and shared their classroom-based research with support from mentors (the Board of Education officials) (p.9)	more positive self-evaluation (p.9), generation of collegiality among group members, good relationships between them and mentors (p.18)
Poon (2008)	post-conferences where the researcher and each teacher co-evaluated their class immediately after class (p.49)	became more and more confident in implementing the new approach (p.51)

The following points can be read from the above:

- (1) teachers became more autonomous through perceiving more objective views on their practices and understanding the rationale of others' practices;
- (2) teachers became more reflective through different perspectives;
- (3) teachers were encouraged to implement new ideas in their class;
- (4) collective learning led to good rapport between those involved.

As an instance of teachers' becoming more autonomous, the role of 'feedback provider', which belonged to a certain member of the group at the beginning of the project, came to be shared between members through collaborative work, and then any member came to give advice to the others (Banegas et al., 2013, p.192). On the other hand, Matsuda and Matsuda (2001, p.118) report that teacher autonomy, due to the absence of a teacher educator, inevitably generated 'networking and collaboration among teachers' for making 'group decisions'. This tallies with the example of the LEEPs as mentioned above. The lack of communication with the British Council trainers (no feedback given to the LEEPs) led the LEEPs to collaborate with one another spontaneously outside the programmes; the group of LEEPs, to whom I distributed the questionnaire, started to organise their own online forum to exchange ideas and share experiences (Teacher D, 2014b). These instances may suggest the complementarity between collaboration (or collective learning) and autonomy. Krainer (1994 1998, cited in Llinares and Krainer 2006, pp.446-447) refers to this point in his 'holistic and integrated view of teacher development support'. Having identified the four dimensions of teacher professional practices consisting of 'action', 'reflection', 'autonomy' and 'networking', Krainer (1998) pairs up 'action and reflection' (which tallies with the idea of action research) and 'autonomy and networking' (Krainer 1998, cited in Llinares and Krainer 2006, p.447). Krainer further positions each dimension in the pairs as complementary dimensions 'to be kept in a certain balance, depending on the context' (ibid., p.447). This can be seen in Figure 2.1, adapted from Zehetmeier et al. (2015, p.166), and originally inspired by Krainer (1998, cited in Zehetmeier et al. 2015, p.166):



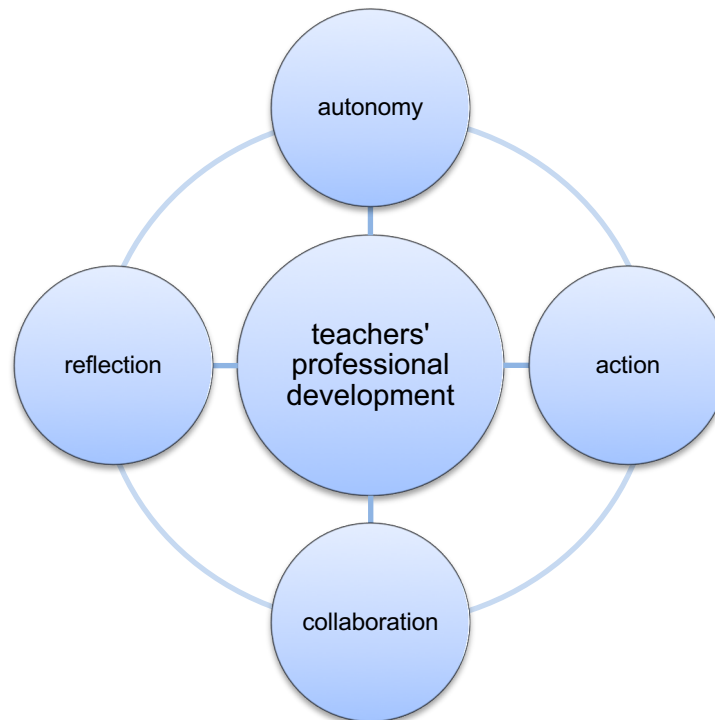
**Figure 2.1: Four dimensions of teachers' professional development adapted from Zehetmeier et al. (2015, p.166)**

This may read that the two pairs ('action and reflection' and 'autonomy and networking') support teachers' professional development respectively. However, the above-mentioned literatures suggest, as seen in Table 2.3, that the pair of 'autonomy and networking' enhanced teachers' 'reflection'. For example, Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou (2015) report that teachers came to become more reflective through individual and collective reflection activities. At the beginning of the project, they tended to attribute class problems to their students rather than themselves or their teaching styles, which prevented them from identifying 'possible inadequateness in their teaching' (ibid., pp.131-136). However, as the project went on, they came to question 'their own capacity to handle the problematic situation' (ibid., p.132). This may suggest that the two pairs are not distinct but rather complement each other and contribute to teachers' professional development in a holistic way.

As shown, there is much support for the provision of collective learning opportunities in teacher professional education, as also called for by the LEEPs and the teachers. Also, they helped me imagine what teacher professional learning might include: it could be grounded in action research ('action and reflection') which includes both individual and collective learning processes ('autonomy and networking').

### 2.3.4 My provisional perspective on teacher professional learning

Following a review of the cascade project through my empirical questionnaire-based study and of relevant literatures, I would suggest the following provisional model to show how I understand a teacher professional learning process conducive to their professional development. The model was originally adapted and inspired by Zehetmeier et al. (2015) and Krainer (1998). (Please note that I use the term 'collaboration' in place of 'networking, in that it is more often used in those literatures and I include mutual learning in the interpretation of the term.) It suggests that the four dimensions of action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration support teacher professional learning in a complementary way, while additionally each dimension in the pairs complements the other:



**Figure 2.2: How I understand a teacher professional learning process**

This may tally with a systematic form of teacher professional education throughout their careers based on a reflective approach, and a process-oriented perspective on teacher professional education, which I value as outlined in chapter 1; I will explain why teachers need to learn through practising reflectively, and what a process-oriented perspective towards teacher professional education may mean in

chapter 3. Also, I will review the model again in chapter 5 while reflecting on the data generated through working with the research participants.

The model also led to my recognition of the need to update the suggestions I made towards the improvement of the cascade project, as seen in section 2.3.1. There, I suggested collaboration between LEEPs, between LEEPs and the British Council, between LEEPs and their mentors and between newer and older LEEPs. In addition to these, it could be sensible to incorporate action-reflection cycles in the programme design, which could also enhance LEEPs' autonomous and continuous learning. Based on this, I will propose a possible model of an action research project within the framework of the British Council-led programmes in chapter 7. On the other hand, in section 2.3.2, I suggested an idea of teachers' setting their individual research questions concerning the content of the LEEP-led programmes, studying their practices in their teaching context and sharing their experiences and reflections in the next programme. This approach appears to be grounded in the four dimensions of action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration. Thus, conducting this research has been an ongoing process of improving my own learning.

As Zehetmeier et al. (2015, p.167) suggest, I hope that this model can be used to 'design professional development programmes'. In addition to this, I would suggest that it may be used as a criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of teacher education programmes, regardless of subject or school level. I would also suggest that it might help MEXT monitor the progress of teacher professional learning and advise teachers on how they can improve their professional learning with a more holistic view than from the single perspective of test scores.

## **2.4 Summary**

Exploring the first research issue (the interpretation of communicative competence) has made me realise that the reality of the educational context in which we have lived and practised is more complex than I had originally believed. Although I had thought MEXT were the author of popular discourses which have had control over teachers' practice, it might be those ideological commitments, originally generated by MEXT policy, that have been constantly shaping popular discourses and influencing English language teachers' practices. The reality, which English language teachers have to navigate, is that they have been under dual pressures

from MEXT policy and the ideological commitments generated by it. This accordingly suggests that English language teachers may need to intensify the ability to think for themselves about what to do to improve their practices and their professional development, without being at the mercy of popular discourses. The review of the cascade project through my empirical questionnaire-based study suggests that our group's view that the cascade project needed to be changed was shared by other practising teachers for organisational and instrumental reasons. It also suggests therefore that it was necessary to propose new forms of the organisation of the professional education for English language teachers. Further, a review of relevant literatures led to my own provisional perspective of teacher professional education, which I will revisit when reflecting on the data generated through working with the research participants. I hope that this chapter may suggest that MEXT's way of interpreting communicative competence and designing teacher professional education for English language teachers needs to be reconsidered. I hope that it may also suggest that MEXT needs to shift their thinking about teachers' professional development from an outcomes-oriented perspective (as seen in the test scores-focused policy) to a process-oriented perspective.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, there appears to be very little research on the MEXT policy perspective towards the professional education for English language teachers or the examination of past/current teacher education projects. Therefore, I would claim that my discussion in this chapter could possibly be useful for filling this gap and contributing to the topic.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Chapter preview

Having explored the research issues, in this section I explain the action research methodology for this study. Nowadays, many scholars define action research in different ways, because the contexts where they work, the processes they use and the outcomes they seek are diverse (Stringer, 2010, p.313). However, in spite of the differences in perspective about action research, those accounts tend to share some basic similarities. In my understanding, this is because Dewey's (1997, pp.5-6) notion of 'reflective thought' and Schön's (1983, pp.49-50) notion of 'reflection-in-action' have influenced many of those works. For example, regarding the aim of action research, Elliott (1991, p.49) comments that the aim is 'to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge'. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.165) also refer to 'the improvement of a *practice*', 'of the *understanding* of the practice' and 'of the *situation* in which the practice takes place' (emphasis in original). On the other hand, Whitehead (2008, p.103) values 'improving practice and generating knowledge'. McNiff and Whitehead (2011, p.14) also call for the generation of 'new knowledge' which 'feeds into new theory', through 'taking action to improve [practitioners'] personal and social situations'. Kemmis and McTaggart (2008, p.297) focus more on changes in practitioners themselves and the society in which they live. In light of these accounts, it can be said that the broad aim of action research is to improve practice, situations, understandings and knowledge, although the explanations for those different perspectives vary. The accounts also seem to share basic similarities in relation to how practitioners are positioned in research. Elliott (1991, pp.54-56) sees teacher researchers as 'insiders' who are engaged in 'collaborative reflection'. Similarly, Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.159) call for the involvement of '*participants themselves*' in the research process (emphasis in original). On the other hand, Kemmis and McTaggart (2008, pp.297-298) argue for the possibility of creating "insiders" and "outsiders" to the group' in action research, highlighting the concept of '*inclusion*' of 'all of those involved in and affected by' the action research process (emphasis in original). In contrast, McNiff (2010, pp.5-6) explains that action research is both 'self-reflection' and 'self-evaluation' in relation to others who are doing the same thing. Similarly,



Whitehead (1989, p.43) emphasises the existence of “I” as a living contradiction’. He developed this idea by suggesting that we are practitioners ‘holding educational values whilst at the same time negating them’ (ibid., p.44). This notion is relevant to McNiff and Whitehead’s (2011, pp.27-28) account of what they see as the ‘value-laden nature’ of action research. This value-laden nature inevitably leads us to try to ‘live in the direction of the values’, while recognising that we are in a context with others who have their own values (ibid., p.28). From this perspective, these accounts share the idea of practitioners in relation to others in action research. So, it would appear that the complexity and variety in the action research literature, as outlined, would require us to decide which option to choose (ibid., p.50).

This study takes as given the core aspects of action research as outlined above: improving practice, situations, understandings and knowledge through working with others. Given that this engages with the action aspect of action research, this study also takes on the reflection aspect of action research; that is, reflecting on our practice and ourselves through dialoguing with each other. Specifically, in relation to methodological issues and in relation to this study, working collaboratively in a group, led by our mutual concerns about the current educational context as outlined earlier, can be primarily categorised as second-person action research. Reason and Bradbury (2008) explain:

Second-person action research/practice addresses our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern – for example in the service of improving our personal and professional practice both individually and separately (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.6).

This notion seems to tally with the concept and practice of ‘co-operative inquiry’ in which people who share concerns work together through cycles of inquiry (Heron and Reason, 2001, p.180). This has implications for my study: for if I see this study as a process of conducting second-person action research with the research participants, then the most significant learning has been the importance of interrogating my positionalities and some of the dilemmas involved in the relationships with these research participants. This means that I have learnt to interrogate what appears to be the solely outsider nature of my positionality, as Herr and Anderson (2015) propose:

We may occupy positions where we are included as insiders while simultaneously, in some dimensions, we identify as outsiders (...) our obligation as researchers is to interrogate our multiple positionalities in relationship to the question under study (Herr and Anderson, 2015, p.55).

Throughout the research process, I have moved in and out of different roles as mentioned in chapter 1; I have positioned myself, and have been positioned by others, as a colleague teacher to the research participants, a collaborative researcher (which has included the role of a facilitator for the research participants), and a PhD researcher. The importance of understanding these issues stemmed from the comments made by the members of the validation group at York St John University on February 9 in 2016 and revealed the importance of interrogating the potential power relationships that existed between the research participants and myself. Effectively it showed me the importance of interrogating my self-identification as an outsider researcher who did research on them; I give details in chapter 6. The insights subsequently developed and encouraged me to consider my role as a collaborative researcher who was trying to overcome existing power relationships in the group in order to increase its collaborative aspect and improve its collaborative practice. I have since learnt to articulate how working collaboratively and reflectively through dialogical relationships has the potential for revising existing possible power relationships among group members, and how this could have a possible impact on people other than the group members; therefore, at this point, the study can also extend to the aspect of third-person action research, which aims to:

create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (say, in a large, geographically dispersed corporation), have an impersonal quality (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.6).

I hope that this chapter communicates appropriately the process of my learning to reflect on my positionalities as a researcher.

Now let me outline the chapter contents.

I first articulate my research questions. Next, I explain the rationale of my choice of action research through reviewing what I consider are the main three principles for

the action research methodology which have permeated this study: collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective. Concurrently, I consider how I have learnt to revise the possible power relationships in our group. I then outline how I conducted this study; this includes matters of research ethics, timeline, and the methods for data collection and analyses.

### 3.2 Research questions

In chapter 2, I explored the possible implications of MEXT's use of the term 'communication abilities' through studying policy statements, and clarified my view that test scores cannot represent students' and teachers' 'communication abilities' as referred to in the MEXT Course of Study. I also suggested that ideological commitments, originally generated by MEXT policy, have constantly shaped popular discourses and influenced MEXT's practices such as conflating students' and teachers' 'communication abilities' with test scores. It seems evident to me that a different understanding of the meaning of 'communicative competence' should be adopted for use in a Japanese context. Consequently, the first research question to be explored was:

1. how can we understand the nature of communicative competence?

This required the consolidation of the research participants' and my ideas regarding the nature and meaning of communicative competence, and clarification of our understanding of its meaning by linking our group's perspectives with relevant literatures; further details are provided in chapter 4. Further, in chapter 2, I clarified that our opinions about the need for the cascade project to be changed were shared by other teachers, and that suggestions were needed about how the project could be improved. I also suggested the following. First, it is necessary to reconsider ways of monitoring the improvement of English language teachers' ability to communicate in English, accepting that test scores could possibly represent proficiency in English. Second, it is necessary to redesign the professional education for English language teachers independently of MEXT's support for native speakers of English (namely, the British Council). Consequently, the second and the third research questions to be explored were:

2. what might the improvement of teachers' communicative competence include?

3. what form of teacher professional education might be conducive to the professional development of English language teachers, including the improvement of their communicative competence?

In the longer term, I was aiming to propose a possible long-term teacher education methodology for English language teachers in Japan, not a makeshift teacher education project 'in preparation for the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020' as referred to in MEXT (2013b, p.1).

Accordingly, I aimed to evaluate my work in terms of how my practice might have made a positive contribution to the improvement of the situation in which the educational values that inform my practices and thinking, as explained earlier, have been denied, and in which my fellow teachers have become dissatisfied with the current educational context, as outlined above. The question therefore arises, 'Why action research?'

### **3.3 Why action research?**

First, as mentioned in the chapter preview, this study accepts as given the core aspects of action research: improving practice, situations, understandings and knowledge through working with others. That is, the research participants and I have tried to find ways of improving the situation in which we were dissatisfied with the current educational context, by generating a new understanding of communicative competence, improving our practice to teach for our students' communicative competence and contributing to a new knowledge base of teacher professional learning, through working together. Second, action research comprises the three main principles which have permeated this study: collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective, which I spell out below. Third, the complexity and variation in the field of action research methodology, as mentioned in the chapter preview, seemed to justify my choice of positionalities throughout the process. However, this in turn led to my struggle to uncover, interrogate and resolve the hidden power relations in the group so that the group itself would take the form of a democratic, collaborative unit whose aims were to achieve educational reform.

As mentioned in chapter 1, I started this project by asking colleagues in the teacher research group, which I chaired at the time, whether they would be interested in developing such a project. I quote part of the letter to the teachers again:

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the development of professional education for English language teachers using an action research approach, while supporting Japanese English language teachers' teaching for the improvement of students' communicative competence (Taken from my letter to teachers, see Appendix B).

This can read that from the outset, I positioned myself as a supporter and facilitator for the other members to teach for their students' communicative competence. This tallies with McKernan's (1991, p.235) view of action researchers' role as 'facilitators'. McKernan's point is that in view of teachers' 'lack of time' and 'lack of research methodology skills', facilitators could help teachers become engaged in research more seriously (ibid., p.235). I would support McKernan's point of teachers' lack of time for research from my experiences as a teacher. In terms of their research methodology skills, although two of the research participants completed a graduate course where they studied and practised action research, those teachers appeared to form only a small part of the entire number of practising teachers. This idea may also emphasise the potential of teachers' working with a facilitator. However, the method of my communicating the outline of the project as seen above could read that I positioned myself as an outsider researcher (though with the name of a facilitator) rather than working collaboratively with the research participants. The research participants also appeared to have recognised that. This might be clarified in the next extract. I quote part of a conversation between Teacher D and myself before starting to discuss the value of communicative competence. When I presented two provisional models of communicative competence (Figures 4.3 and 4.4) while requesting some feedback during an interview, Teacher D began to explain:

### Extract 3.1

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My being positioned as a researcher  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- 1        K: I would like to have your comment [on these models], you are the first  
 2        one I asked for feedback

3 TD: which sits better with you, Ms Kondo, this circle model [Figure 4.3] or  
 4 this hierarchy model [Figure 4.4]? (...) I do not mean I did research [about  
 5 this issue] (...) I don't think I understand the process in which you reached  
 6 this [hierarchy model]

As noted in lines 4–6, Teacher D mentioned that he had not done research in the same way as I had, which, however, did not lead to my inquiring into the relationships between the research participants and myself at the time. It was the validation meeting at York St John University on February 9, 2016 that led to my interrogating the relationships between us; one member of the validation meeting indicated that power relationships were evident between the research participants and myself, and that I evidently saw myself as an outsider researcher who was researching them, as mentioned above. This in turn led to my starting to interrogate my positionalities by reflecting on the purposes of three roles, other than my role as their colleague teacher. These could have been:

- generating a new understanding of communicative competence and exploring a new form of teacher professional education, as a collaborative researcher;
- helping other members practise reflectively and schedule managing of our group practice (such as organising the dates for meeting and interviews) as a facilitator;
- writing up my thesis, disseminating what we have done and contributing to the development of a knowledge base of communicative competence and teacher professional education for English language teachers in Japan, as a PhD researcher.

On reflection, during the research process, I had reflected on myself as a facilitator (when considering interviews with research participants) and as a PhD researcher (at supervision meetings). However, it seemed I had not reflected on myself as a collaborative researcher enough, despite having repeatedly thought about how the research participants' and my understandings of the meaning of communicative competence and of teacher professional education had developed and how we had worked together. This meant that my recognition of myself as a collaborative researcher was superficial, and I needed to explore more deeply what it meant to work as a collaborative researcher in a teacher researcher group. This also led to my recognition that the attitude of paying little attention to what it meant to be a collaborative researcher in an action research group might lead to the argument

that sees action research as ‘an artificial process being imposed on teachers’ (Johnston, 2011, p.43) which I argued against in chapter 1. Thus, I appreciated what could be inquired into through the project, as well as the research questions as mentioned above: how we could overcome power relationships in our group, and move our relationships from that of facilitated and a facilitator to collaborative researchers in the second-person action research context? This serves as a good reason for my choice of action research because I hoped to improve my understandings and knowledge of second-person action research through my inquiry into the above.

In the next sections, I explain the process of how it appears that we have learnt to overcome power relationships in our group, through reviewing the action research methodology grounded in the main three principles which have permeated this study as mentioned above.

### **3.3.1 Collaboration**

In our action research group, collaboration appears to have helped us learn to practise reflectively through ‘synchronous and asynchronous’ reflections (Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou, 2015, p.128). In the RELEASE project in Cyprus mentioned in chapter 2, synchronous reflections meant self- and group reflections, while asynchronous reflections meant communication among the participants on the web forum (*ibid.*, pp.128-130). In the collaborative teacher development project in the US, also mentioned in chapter 2, ongoing feedback exchange by emails is referred to as equivalent to synchronous reflections and the ‘retrospective’ collective analyses of journal entries afterwards as asynchronous reflections (Matsuda and Matsuda, 2001, p.113). The combination of these two kinds of reflection appears to have produced a positive impact on both projects: specifically it seems that asynchronous reflections following the synchronous reflections enhanced the members’ ‘critical reflections’ (*ibid.*, p.113). Now I outline the nature of our collaboration. First, having consolidated the research participants’ and my perspective on communicative competence, which I spell out in chapter 4, we started the following synchronous reflections:

- reflecting on the research participants’ practices to teach for their students’ communicative competence, and continuing to inquire into communicative competence and teacher professional learning together during individual

interviews.

Also, I transcribed what they said during interviews; transcriptions were sent to them shortly after each interview for their approval, and this led to their asynchronous reflections as follows:

- reading the transcriptions of each interview, reflecting on what they had said and re-reflecting on their practices.

Further, in order for them to remember what they had said before, I sent the transcriptions of the first interview to them again before the second interview; this led to a recognition of the need to find ways of saving them time in re-reading the previous transcriptions. I then produced their interview summaries (see Appendix F) by adapting the transcriptions in light of one research participant's feedback; I give details in chapter 5. I updated their interview summaries after each interview, and the interview summaries were sent to them before the next individual interview, which also led to their asynchronous reflections as follows:

- reading the interview summary, reviewing how their practices and thinking had changed since the beginning of the project, and reinterpreting that on their own.

Next, I give the data to show how one research participant has learnt to practise reflectively through synchronous and asynchronous reflections: I recognise that one research participant's experience does not necessarily reflect on the experiences of all. At the beginning of the project, Teacher A appeared simply to tend to accept her practice as given in the previous year rather than reflect on it objectively:

### Extract 3.2

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The first synchronous reflection

The first group meeting, 22/05/2014 (Teacher A, 2014a, my translation)

TA = Teacher A, K = Author

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | K: looking back through last school year, are there any aspects you want to improve (...) strengthen (...) change [in your English class]?                                  |
| 2 |   |
| 3 | TA: I do not want to change very much, last year (...) I did my best in my own way, although I could not produce good outcomes, I would like to continue rather than change |
| 4 |   |
| 5 |   |



As seen in line 5, she wanted to continue her practice regardless of the quality of the outcomes from the previous year. However, shortly after she read the transcription of what she had said during this interview, which I sent her, she emailed favourably to me as follows:

reading the transcription made me more confident and motivated. In fact, last year, I had felt stressed with myself as an English language teacher with no pride or teaching principles. However, through reflecting open-mindedly on myself, I was able to accept what I could not do and remember what I wanted to value, with which I am very happy (...) I hope that this research will give me the opportunity to reflect on myself (Teacher A, 2014b, my translation).

It seems that reading the transcription led Teacher A not only to accept the reality, which included outcomes contrary to her expectations, but also to remember what she had valued in her teaching; this was relevant to my asking her what she valued in her English class (see Appendix C). Reflecting open-mindedly on herself might have led to her accepting the reality as the consequence of her past practices which was informed by what she had valued. Teacher A further said during the second interview:

### Extract 3.3

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#### Example of asynchronous reflections

Interview with Teacher A (Teacher A, 2014c, my translation)

TA = Teacher A, K = Author

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1        K: well, I sent you the transcription of the previous interview again, did  
2        reading it again help you reflect on this school term?

3        TA: (...) well, it is important to reflect on our practice isn't it?, I think an  
4        actual entity is important, well, reading [my reflection] by letters, yeah as I  
5        told you yeah ((*laughter*)) our thoughts do not remain, they are always  
6        rewritten right? ((*laughter*)) nevertheless our thoughts have remained in the  
7        transcription, which means a lot ((*laughter*))

She appreciated that her old thoughts still existed visibly in the transcription even after it had been updated ('rewritten' in her word), as seen in lines 6–7. This might imply that reflecting on her practice through reading transcriptions helped her recognise where she was coming from (how her thinking had changed), which might have led to her appreciation of practising reflectively; this is contrasted with

her comment, as seen in extract 3.2, in which she said that she wanted to continue rather than change.

Teacher A's comments led to my asynchronous reflections on the meaning of transcriptions/interview summaries. I have transcribed the interviews, which I conducted in Japanese, into English, in order to present the data to English-speaking readers. This means that their narrative data from the interviews were first given meaning through my individual meaning-making process of transcribing based on my 'judgments of relevance (what goes into a transcript and what does not)' (Gee, 2005, p.106). Through experiencing the research participants' individual meaning-making process of reading and approving the transcriptions, we have shared judgments of relevance. Further, interview summaries appeared to have given greater significance to what they had said, or possibly even a different perspective. Another research participant, Teacher D, mentioned, 'I had another look at what I had said [through reading the interview summary] you sent me like this, which led me to thoughtful reflection' (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation). Thus, while coming and going between us, their narratives have been (re)interpreted from multiple viewpoints. That is, transcriptions/interview summaries have served as a tool for our individual and collective meaning-making processes. Through these processes, we have reached our agreed perspectives on communicative competence (which I spell out in chapter 4). This may be the consequence of our collaboration.

### **3.3.2 Reflective practice**

While learning to practise reflectively through synchronous and asynchronous reflections, we have been engaged in multiple reflective practices which included 'solitary introspection' and 'critical dialogue with others' (Finlay, 2008, p.2).

Multiple reflective practices have helped us learn to reshape our thinking and practice to make sense of it. Teacher D reflected on his fourfold reflective practice, as a mentor for a new English teacher and a co-worker of an ALT, in addition to his solitary introspection and critical dialogue with others, including myself:

## Extract 3.4

## Multiple reflective practices

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation)

TD = Teacher D, K = Author

- 
- 1 K: you have been doing threefold reflective practice, I have been  
2 wondering how this has worked for you, influenced you
- 3 TD: well, threefold, I have always done [reflective practice] within myself,  
4 doing it while thinking, however, I often got stuck, that made me  
5 exhausted, which often happened when doing it by myself, as for this  
6 year, before talking with you, I have tried to consolidate my thoughts,  
7 trying to think over again 'why I do what I do', 'what is the reason of what I  
8 do', which has helped me consolidate my thoughts, I can also discuss with  
9 you on the same level of thinking, which has inspired me, as a mentor for  
10 the new English teacher (...) I see she is trying to practise what I told her  
11 in her class, which made me think if I was able to make my ideas  
12 understood, wonder if what I told her might have not been consistent with  
13 my thoughts, might have been wrong, through observing [her practice]  
14 from a third person point of view
- 15 K: that means you were reflecting on your philosophy while observing her  
16 classes?
- 17 TD: yes (...) she did some practices similar to mine, sometimes she was  
18 able to manage to do that better than me, which made me think about the  
19 reason, inspired me and led to my new challenge, each reflective practice  
20 has stimulated me in different ways, as for my changes, working with the  
21 ALT, although you can't see that, also means a lot (...) we have  
22 cooperated and created things through discussing, that has also led to my  
23 changes
- 24 K: so you have done fourfold reflective practice, then, haven't you?
- 25 TD: fourfold

As seen in lines 6–8, dialogues with me encouraged him to think about the reasons for his practices. On the contrary, other reflective practices as a mentor for a new teacher and as a co-worker of an ALT encouraged him to reflect on his practice differently; these other practices may be characterised as different types of reflective practice. During the same interview, he mentioned, 'Through looking at myself in the mirror [the new English teacher's practices], I have noticed something wrong' (my translation). That is, his practices and thinking that had underpinned his practices had been reflected in the mirror (the practices of the new teacher who was trying to learn by following his practice), which confronted him with questioning the consistency between his practices and thinking. This may be explained as 'reflexivity' in reflective practice in that he found 'strategies to question [his] own attitudes, theories-in-use, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions' (Bolton, 2014, p.7). On the other hand, regarding working with the ALT, he

mentioned, 'The ALT is not a mirror, but, through looking at the ALT and reflecting myself in him, [I have considered] if I could act this way or that way' (my translation). That is, he projected himself onto his colleague ALT and tried to imagine what he could do. This may be explained as 'reflection' in reflective practice, as an 'in-depth review of events' (ibid., p.7) through self-projection onto others. Cook's (2009, pp.279-280) notion of a 'messy area' appears to indicate the complexity of the situation where multiple perspectives are 'muddled' and assumptions are 'challenged', as seen in Teacher D's fourfold reflective practice. However, as noted in lines 19–20, he appreciated each episode of reflective practice; the combination of those different types of reflective practice helped him avoid 'getting stuck' which he had often experienced when he practised reflectively only by himself, and instead facilitated his making sense of his practice. In other words, he appeared to have got out of the messy area by 'finding new ways of interpreting what is seen' through multiple forms of reflective practice (ibid., p.280). Eby (2000, pp.49-50) could explain how Teacher D might get out of the messy area. Eby says that our real life seems like an 'amoeba' where its shape changes to accommodate external factors such as pressures, policies and popular discourses; however, we have 'the ability, and significantly the opportunity to adapt and change' (ibid., p.50). In my view, our ability to practise reflectively and the opportunity to interact with different perspectives through multiple forms of reflective practice can help us reshape our 'amoebic' context by 'pushing and pulling' (ibid., p.50) in order to find new ways of interpreting the situation and make sense of it. In this way, Teacher D might have made sense of his practice. This suggests that the research participants and I have been involved in reshaping each member's amoebic context. On reflection, this study itself has comprised multiple reflective practices; the shape of the amoebic research context has been changed in relation to other discourses. Our group's perspective towards communicative competence was challenged by local educational community members and the academics within York St John University; I give details in chapter 4. Interacting with those different perspectives led me, as a PhD researcher, to present alternative perspectives. However, those alternative perspectives were in turn challenged even by the research participants, which led to my further reviewing of the literature and a revision of our group's perspective; I give details in chapter 4. Thus, we have made sense of our thinking and practices by reshaping them. We have engaged in a continual process of reflection and re-reflection throughout the duration of our interactions.

As part of multiple reflective practices, I have also interacted with feedback from my supervisors and others. The feedback from my supervisors has always encouraged me to focus more on my own learning through this second-person action research. This meant that I had explored just what collaboration and reflective practice meant to the research participants and how I could understand the nature of them: I had not focused on what I could learn from the exploration. It took me some time to shift to what I had learnt from my learning through working in relationship with others. It was the validation meeting at York St John University mentioned above that led to my exploring what I could learn from my learning from others. The feedback which indicated existing power relationships between the research participants and myself led to my exploring how democratic and collaborative aspects of action research could be improved when working in a group. Having revisited the data from the conversations with the research participants, as part of the exploration, I recognised that each member in our group made decisions for further actions on his/her own through reflecting on his/her practice in relation to others, which I explain in the next sub-section. Bolton (2014) explains:

reflective practitioners take their share of responsibility for the political, social and cultural situations within which they live and work, as well as for their own actions and values (Bolton, 2014, p.10).

I saw that each member's making decisions for further actions on his/her own might be relevant to taking their share of responsibility for the political, social and cultural situations, which could lead to the improvement of the democratic and collaborative aspects of action research. In the next sub-section, I explain how this could be recognised in our group.

### **3.3.3 A values-oriented perspective**

A 'values-oriented' perspective is a frequent subject in the action research literature (McNiff, 2014, p.23). Our values inform how we think and thus our practices, and how we think and do our practices inform the development of our values; we are living in the 'dynamic transformational cyclical relationship' between them (ibid., p.34). The values that informed this study were dialogic and democratic. By saying 'a values-oriented perspective', I mean that those involved

share their perspectives in a dialogic context, try to reshape or enhance shared perspectives and construct new values collaboratively. The new values might also be democratic and dialogic ones; they might be developed through further dialogic contexts. At the first group meeting, I asked the research participants what they valued in English class and what they thought communicative competence was (see Appendix C). That was because I thought that what they valued in their teaching might be informing their thinking on the nature of communicative competence. Having shared what we valued in our teaching and discovered each other's thinking about communicative competence, we moved into the process of co-constructing a collective group theory about its nature; this became our agreed conceptual model of communicative competence, which I spell out in chapter 4. As the research has progressed, what the research participants valued in English class has also changed; this can be seen in Teacher D's interview summary (see Appendix F), and is in line with McNiff's (2014, p. 181) idea that values can change 'through the course of the enquiry'. In our group, the collective theory of the group might have informed their thinking. Subsequently, the research participants have started to or planned to communicate to others what they valued regarding the nature of communicative competence, such as their colleagues and students. What all the research participants valued at the same time was by coincidence 'empathy', that is, 'a capacity for being considerate towards others and avoiding a stereotypical perspective', as spelled out in chapter 4. Two research participants have focused on it from the outset and the other two have started to focus on it during the research process:

- Teacher A has planned to enhance 'empathy' between her students and colleague teachers to contribute towards a happier school atmosphere;
- Teacher B has decided to communicate to new students the value of 'empathy' in English class, which means emphasising the value of helping each other through communicating in English;
- Teacher C has started to communicate the value of 'empathy' outside classrooms, at a student leaders' meeting;
- Teacher D opened his class to his colleagues, showing how he valued 'empathy' in his class: also, his students have started to show their empathy in other classes; this has stimulated his colleague teachers to reconsider their class management (I give details in chapter 5 in light of my provisional claims to knowledge).

The research participants' taking the initiative in communicating what they value to others as seen above might be seen as moving towards communicative action, which Habermas (1984) explains as communication:

in which people consciously and deliberately aim 1. to reach *intersubjective agreement* as a basis for 2. *mutual understanding* so as to 3. reach an *unforced consensus about what to do* in the particular practical situation in which they find themselves (Habermas 1984, cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.293, emphasis in original).

I am not sure whether the research participants have reached intersubjective agreement with others through the practices mentioned above; this may need follow-up research on my part. However, it might be that they at least have decided to articulate what they value to others, and encourage the others to do the same (that is, think for themselves about what to do in a particular situation). Further, this might have led people to communicate their interpretation of those research participants' practices to many others; Habermas (1996) explains this as opening a '*communicative space* between people' as one of the features of communicative action (cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.294, emphasis in original). I still need to find out how collaborative practice grounded in a values-oriented perspective can encourage members to move into communicative action. Having recognised this, I would imagine that continuing to identify their changing values might lead to acknowledging the growth in themselves, which might be the initial driving force for their moving into communicative action. This may be a topic for my further research.

Concurrently, I have moved into further actions in which I have encouraged LEEPs and other teachers to think for themselves about what to do in this particular context through the distribution of questionnaires (see Appendices D and E); I give details in chapter 5. I have further interacted with the British Council and communicated to them the slippage between what I valued in teacher professional education and what appeared to be valued in the cascade project. This in turn led to a recognition that both the British Council and I shared what should be valued in teacher professional education; the slippage, or misunderstandings, appeared to have been caused because of the lack of communication regarding what should be valued in teacher professional education between the organiser (MEXT), the

trainers (the British Council) and the trainees (teachers); I give details in chapter 5 in light of my provisional claims to knowledge.

The research participants' taking the initiative in communicating what they value to others as seen above has also led to my reviewing the educational values which informed my thinking and practices, as explained in chapter 1. I say again:

- (1) education, including teacher education, should be based on a process-oriented perspective, not only an outcomes-oriented perspective;
- (2) Japanese English language teachers could act as model learners for Japanese students and their expertise ought to be appreciated rather than 'nativeness' (Rampton, 1990, p.109). Also, experienced Japanese English language teachers should act as teacher trainers rather than native speakers of English because of their familiarity with Japanese students and the Japanese contexts;
- (3) teachers should learn how to develop their practices and improve their teaching methodology by drawing on their experiences and practices and based on a reflective approach rather than following top-down decisions or recommendations; this should become a systematic form of teacher professional education throughout their careers.

On reflection, these do not explain what kind of process could be included in 'a process-oriented' teacher education, and why teachers need to learn based on 'a reflective approach'. Reviewing research participants' taking the initiative in communicating what they value to others, possibly moving into communicative action, led to my appreciating that practising reflectively may lead to encouraging teachers in their decision making on what to do to improve their practices and the situation they are in. Furthermore, this ability to exercise their initiative in communicating what they value may lead to fostering their commitment to taking 'responsibility for their own lifelong learning' (the Council of the European Union, 2009, p.8) as mentioned earlier; this could be one possible reason why teachers need to learn based on a reflective approach. Also, the teachers' professional learning process may be the process of trying to improve their practices and thinking while recognising the changes in their values through negotiating with others; this is what a process-oriented perspective towards teacher professional education may mean. McNiff (2014, p.181) explains that 'the capacity to negotiate values should be a main criterion in action research'. It may be worth practising



action research grounded in ‘a values-oriented perspective’, by which I mean that those involved share their perspectives in a dialogic context, and try to reshape or enhance shared perspectives and construct new values collaboratively, in teacher professional education. Then, teachers might be able to monitor and evaluate their professional learning by reviewing how they shared, negotiated and co-constructed values with one another. Further, it may be that each member of the group’s taking the initiative in communicating what they value to others, possibly moving into communicative action, may help us overcome power relationships in the group and develop our relationships from the facilitated and facilitator to collaborative researchers. In chapter 1, I mentioned the denial of my values, as mentioned again above, which have informed my practice and thinking. This has been significant because it seemed to me that there was no way to share and discuss what should be valued in English language education and teacher professional education between MEXT and myself. However, I would at least be able to start from my immediate circle communicating about what we value in English language education and teacher professional education, which I hope could lead to ongoing further discussions.

Up to this point, I have reviewed:

- (1) Why I chose action research, given that this study is grounded in its core aspects of improving practice, situations, understandings and knowledge through working with others. It comprises the three main principles of this study: collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective, and it aims to justify my choice of different positionalities throughout the process;
- (2) I have moved in and out of my assumed three roles: as a colleague teacher to research participants, a collaborative researcher (which included the role of a facilitator for the research participants), and a PhD researcher. However, it seemed that I paid less attention to the role of a collaborative researcher until I was advised by others to think what it meant to be;
- (3) In our action research group, collaboration has helped us learn to practise reflectively through synchronous and asynchronous reflections;
- (4) In our action research group, multiple reflective practices have helped us learn to reshape our thinking and practice in order to make better sense of it;

- (5) Through working with the research participants, I have learnt to appreciate the educational values which have informed my thinking; I have come to articulate what a process-oriented perspective towards teacher professional education may mean and why teachers need to learn based on a reflective approach;
- (6) We have learnt to 'take [our] share of responsibility for the political, social and cultural situations' (Bolton, 2014, p.10), through taking the initiative in further actions grounded in what we value, which I view as possibly our moving into communicative action;
- (7) Each member's possibly moving into communicative action may help us overcome power relationships in the group and develop our relationships from the facilitated and facilitator to collaborative researchers;
- (8) I still need to find out how collaborative practice grounded in a values-oriented perspective can encourage members to move into communicative action; this may be a topic for my further research.

I hope that I have been able to explain the action research methodology for this study, through reviewing its three main principles. I also hope that the discussions in these three sections may support the effectiveness of teacher research grounded in collaboration, reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective for teacher professional development. In the next section, I outline how I conducted this study grounded in the action research methodology as explained above.

### **3.4 How did I conduct this study?**

#### **3.4.1 Research ethics**

As soon as I started my PhD study in the UK, I filled in the Research Ethics Project Vetting and Approval Form (see Appendix G). In the approval form, I gave a brief justification of my proposed research project, and outlined who the research participants were, how I recruited them, what they would be required to do, how their consents would be obtained, how I proposed to minimise any potential risks to them, the procedures I intended to follow in order to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality and how the data would be handled and stored. The form was sent to the Faculty of Education and Theology Research Ethics Committee.

Subsequently, the Chair of the committee approved it on 01/07/2014; the reference

number was REF ET/01/07/2014/TK. I then drew up consent forms for the research participants, and the head teachers of their schools, in accordance with the University's research ethics terms of reference, which were distributed to those concerned. It was because I needed to start this study before coming to the UK that I consequently distributed and collected the consent forms afterwards. In the consent forms, I outlined the institutional ethical guidelines which I used for this research (see Appendices H and I). Subsequently, all the members and their head teachers returned the signed forms to me. With respect to referring to the members' names in presenting this study at conferences, as seen in the Appendices, I followed this advice from the panel for my PhD interview:

You must be prepared to support the teacher-researchers in their own professional-research profile, for example by arranging for their research to be published and/or by them achieving their own academic accreditation for their work (presumably with a university based in the city) (Taken from email from York St John University PhD interview panel to Author, 3 March 2014).

I took the former standpoint; when I presented our collaborative research as a main researcher, I put both my name and their names on the first page of my presentation slides, as well as sharing the slides beforehand for their feedback.

### **3.4.2 Research timeline**

Table 3.1 shows all the data sources with a timeline of data collection up to February 2016:

**Table 3.1: Research timeline and data collection**

Timeline	Data collection from the research participants	Data collection from others
22 May 2014	Group meeting 1 in Japan (Interview 1)	
July-August 2014	Interview 2 on Skype (Reflection on the 1st school term 2014)	Consent forms distribution & collection
October 2014		Questionnaire for LEEPs
November 2014	Interview 3 on Skype (Reflection on the 2nd school term 2014)	Presenting research in the UK & Japan
20 December 2014	Group meeting 2 in Japan	LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014
March-April 2015	Interview 4 on Skype (Reflection on the 3rd school term 2014)	
July-August 2015	Interview 5 on Skype (Reflection on the 1st school term 2015)	
August 2015		Questionnaire for teachers
8 December 2015		Interview with the British Council Tokyo
5 January 2016	Group meeting 3 in Japan (with critical friends)	Validation meeting 1 (in Japan)
9 February 2016	data analysis	Validation meeting 2 (at York St John University)

The following points are significant:

- group meeting 2 was combined with the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 that I co-organised with one of my supervisors for Japanese English language teachers; I give details in chapter 4 (see also Appendix J);
- group meeting 3 was combined with the first validation meeting in Japan; I give details in chapter 6;
- the number of the interviews varied according to the research participants' availability, and email correspondence was used as an alternative when they were not available;
- I was also in touch with the research participants by email during the research process, and data from some emails are included in this thesis.

In the next sections, I explain the way I collected and analysed data in terms of 'second-person data' (Chandler and Torbert, 2003, p.135) and third-person data.

### **3.4.3 Data collection and analyses**

#### **3.4.3.1 Second-person data**

The main data source in this study was qualitative data generated through communication with the research participants; Chandler and Torbert (2003, p.135) view them as 'second-person data'. The following are the data collection methods I applied: this can be seen in Table 3.1:

- (1) five individual interviews on Skype maximum, where Japanese language was used;
- (2) a semi-structured interview style where I asked them open-ended questions;
- (3) each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed into English 'as soon as possible after the interview' to make it easier to remember nonverbal expressions (Grbich, 2010, p.464).

In terms of (1), during the first interview (the first group meeting), I asked them the questions as seen in Appendix C in order to find out their ideas about their teaching and the term 'communicative competence'.

As seen in (2), when conducting interviews, I used a semi-structured interview style with 'predetermined' open-ended questions (Robson, 2002, p.270). I used this

style because I was able to modify the order of questions or add new questions, according to my recognition of what appeared most relevant to the context (ibid., p.270). I also hoped that this could lead both interviewees and myself to broaden out the dialogic context according to the flow of conversation, and that it might lead to 'a more equal balance in the research relationship' (Burns, 1999, p.120) between us. As partly seen in Teacher D's interview summary (see Appendix F), I asked the research participants more or less the same open-ended questions each time, in spite of my 'considerable freedom' with a semi-structured interview structure (Robson, 2002, p.278). By doing this, I hoped that reviewing the interview summaries would help us see how their thinking and practices had changed with time. The open-ended questions I asked each time were:

- Did reading the transcription (or the interview summary) help you reflect on your practice during this school term?
- Regarding the action plan you mentioned last time, please describe what you changed, how it worked and how the students have changed (if at all);
- On the basis of your reflection, what kind of practice are you planning to do for next term?
- What do you think of our project?

In addition to these regular questions, I asked the following open-ended questions during interviews, as seen in the extracts presented in this thesis:

- I have been wondering how this [threefold reflective practice] has worked for you, influenced you (extract 3.4);
- I have been wondering if the model of communicative competence has influenced your practice and thinking (extract 5.11);
- what is the reason for and value of what you are doing? (extract 7.1).

By asking these questions, I also intended to 'keep conversations going', which Cook (2009, p.286) understands as the role of a facilitator towards generating 'new ways of seeing' (ibid., p.286). While telling stories during interviews, the research participants appeared to have reached new ways of seeing the situation. Teacher B noticed the need to change his way of posing questions and Teacher A noticed the significance of changing herself, rather than changing her students; I give details in chapter 5. In Cook's view, those research participants appeared to have moved into 'the "messy turn"' where 'new understandings are revealed, developed and articulated', through inquiring into their experiences in the space between 'explicit knowledge' and 'tacit knowledge' in the messy area (ibid., p.282):

The facilitator leads participants into the 'messy area' and then supports them in moving forward *within* the mess, and *with* the mess, towards a 'messy turn' (Cook, 2009, p.286, emphasis in original).

In my view, semi-structured interviews led by a facilitator appears to have been an appropriate interview style for my project which aimed at creating new understandings of communicative competence and teacher professional learning through collaboratively inquiring into those research issues and our practices.

In terms of (3), as explained in section 3.3.1, I transcribed the interviews, which I conducted in Japanese, into English, in order to present the data to English-speaking readers. That means that their narrative data from the interviews were first given meaning through my individual meaning-making process of transcribing based on my 'judgments of relevance (what goes into a transcript and what does not)' (Gee, 2005, p.106); and through experiencing the research participants' individual meaning-making process of reading and approving the transcriptions, we have shared judgments of relevance. Further, I started to produce their interview summaries by adapting transcriptions, as mentioned above, which appears to have helped them realise their own changes through comparing their previous thinking and practices with their then thinking and practices, as seen in a comment, 'There is the evidence of my changes here' (Teacher D, 2015a).

However, the data from the research participants were not always confirming data; the research participants questioned the meaning of one of my provisional models of communicative competence which I had revised after getting feedback from others (see details in chapter 4). This inspired me to begin my further literature review on communicative competence to establish a more well-grounded theory of communicative competence. Thus, both confirming and disconfirming data from the research participants have been incorporated into my further thinking.

Now I explain how I analysed second-person data including spoken data collected through interviews/meetings and written data collected through emails. I applied content analysis to analyse them, following the suggestion from the panel at my six months review meeting (20/11/2014). Since I had not then decided how I would set about analysing data, they pointed out that the need to demonstrate methodological rigour should include an explanation of this, and suggested the

idea of using content analysis. In Burns' (1999, p.166) view, content analysis is the analysis of 'the meaning of the structures and expressions contained in a message or communication'. The usual process of doing content analysis includes constructing, proposing and identifying 'coding categories' for analysis (ibid., pp.166-173); Robson (2002, p.355) explains this as '*the most crucial aspect*' of content analysis (emphasis in original). As one way of producing and improving categories, Hyland (2010, p.202) suggests starting with 'obvious and recurring topics', and searching for 'themes' that run through the data. In this study, I analysed the data based on the 'theme' I had; it was ultimately how we have learnt to co-construct a potential new form of professional education for teachers of English language in Japan. I incorporated McNiff and Whitehead's (2011) framework for data analysis and evidence generation in doing content analysis, following an action research framework, in order to present the evidence at the validation meeting. The process of my data analysis was as follows:

- (1) I identified my provisional claims to knowledge as coding categories, in order to show what I have done throughout this study;
- (2) I set my standards of judgement to communicate how well my provisional claims to knowledge were being fulfilled;
- (3) I selected data from my data archive that shows the instances of my standards of judgement so that they can stand as evidence, and did content analysis on them in order to turn the data into evidence;
- (4) I tested the validity of my provisional claims to knowledge, in relation to these standards of judgement and the evidence generated at the validation meeting (ibid., pp.150-155).

In the actual research context, this was not a linear process as written above, but a constant back-and-forth one: a series of revisiting selected data, comparing them with standards of judgment, rethinking standards of judgement and revisiting my data archive in light of my new understanding. I examined all the data which I have referred to in this thesis in more or less the same manner, repeating the cycle of production, reconsideration and reproduction of evidence. Also, I attended to the way they expressed themselves such as repetition, hesitation and overlap.

I now give an example of how I conducted my data analysis. First, I set my first provisional claim to knowledge as follows:



- I have helped each research participant become a reflective teacher researcher.

Next, I set the following standards of judgement to show how I have fulfilled the claim:

- Each research participant has recognised the significance of learning from their experience through reflective practice during our working together.

Then, from my data archive, I selected the following part of the conversation:

### Extract 3.5

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#### Content analysis 1

Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2014b, my translation)

TB = Teacher B, K = Author

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- 1 K: did reading the transcription help you reflect on this school term?
- 2 TB: ((*laughter*)) well, yes, it did yes yes yes.
- 3 K: well, ah, well, regarding the fourth question in the questionnaire

The point I attended to and my analysis were as follows:

- He closed the topic without continuing the story, as seen in line 2, in spite of answering in the affirmative with the repetition of 'yes'. This means, reading the transcription might have confronted him with the reality rather than helping him reflect on the school term, since he said subsequently that his target for the school term ('students' mutual learning' which was documented in the transcription) had still not been achieved.

On the contrary, during the next interview, he also responded to my first question in the affirmative, but very differently:

### Extract 3.6

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#### Content analysis 2

Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2014c, my translation)

TB = Teacher B, K = Author

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- 1 K: did reading the interview summary help you reflect on yourself?
- 2 TB: yeah I remembered what I had said, very much, yes, I read it while
- 3 remembering what I had done (...) I mentioned I would change how to pose
- 4 questions last time, yeah, then, well, when asking new questions, I realised

5 I had tended to pose single-answer questions, yeah, I thought that was not  
6 good

His response can read:

- As noted in lines 5–6, reading the interview summary appeared to have led to his rethinking his practice and finding the point to be considered regarding posing questions.

Subsequently, he told a story that the finding led to his changing his way of posing questions in order to stimulate his students' speaking activity. Consequently, he came to appreciate reflective practice; I give details in chapter 5. Thus, I have analysed the data in order to present them as evidence at the validation meeting. Since the members of the validation meeting at York St John University examined the validity of my provisional claims to knowledge, standards of judgement and the evidence, I have revised my provisional claims to knowledge. I present the data to show instances of the attainment of my standards of judgement as evidence in chapter 5 and expand discussions about my data analysis and data presentation based on the feedback from the members of the validation meeting in chapter 6.

As explained above, I started to do content analysis by setting my provisional claims to knowledge based on what I had done, and searching for data which showed the realisation of my identified standards of judgement; I did not start by identifying 'coding categories' for analysis from the research participants' narratives as seen in the usual procedure in content analysis. However, it might be that I recognised topics or themes running through what the research participants said through transcribing it once, which may have informed my setting provisional claims to knowledge and may support my decision to use my provisional claims to knowledge as coding categories. Although I think there seems to be the need for further improvement in data analysis, I would claim that I was able to demonstrate a reasonable degree of methodological rigour which the panel at my six months review meeting had requested.

### **3.4.3.2 Third-person data**

I also collected the following third-person data from people other than the research participants:

- a) questionnaire responses from 11 LEEPs who participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014 as mentioned earlier (see Appendix D);
- b) questionnaire responses from 15 teachers who participated in LEEP-led teacher education programmes in 2015 as also mentioned earlier (see Appendix E);
- c) videotape/audio recording and participants' written reflections at the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014, as outlined in chapter 4 (see Appendix J);
- d) audio recording of the interview with the British Council;
- e) videotape/audio recording of the first validation meeting in Japan;
- f) audio recording of the second validation meeting within York St John University;
- g) feedback from and email correspondence with my supervisors, and feedback from participants in my presentations.

Some of these data helped me be aware and, I hope, prevent 'researcher bias' in this study (Burns, 2010, p.86). For example, looking at both LEEPs' and teachers' voices, and the British Council's perspective, (a), (b) and (d) above, helped me consider the cascade project from both the participants' and the project organisers' perspectives. In terms of (c), I aimed to examine the impact of the workshop, which I co-organised with one of my supervisors, through reviewing how the workshop participants (teachers) responded to our group's perspective on communicative competence and on our group project. The data such as (e) and (f) enabled me to examine the significance of this study for my local arena, and the potential and relevance of this study for the academic arena. As for ethical practice, I gained institutional approval each time for the possibility of using respondents' comments or statements anonymously as data from those other than the research participants, in written form with respect to (a), (b), (c), (d) and (f) above, and in speech with respect to (e). The third-person data also included disconfirming data. I was given some critical feedback on our group's perspective on communicative competence from the participants in the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014, from the participants in my presentation and from the panel for my upgrade meeting. They mainly questioned the lack of grammar knowledge such as knowledge of sentence structure and words in our group's perspective, and instead suggested a hierarchical understanding of communicative competence such as

proficiency based on accuracy and fluency. Receiving this feedback led to a recognition of the need to establish better grounds for our group's perspective and my further research on communicative competence; I give details in chapter 4. Furthermore, I got some critical feedback on my provisional claims to knowledge from the participants in the second validation meeting. The feedback was mainly about the relationship between my provisional claims to knowledge and what can be read from the data (evidence). This made me aware of the need for more careful consideration about what the data implies and about my choice of language, and of more practice on articulating a story of my study; I give details in chapter 6. Thus, disconfirming data has challenged me to reflect on and reconsider what I have done, informed my further practice and encouraged me to consider how I could improve my practice. Next, I explain how I organised the collection and analyses of the data from (a) to (f) above. I applied content analysis to analyse the data:

(1) Questionnaires to LEEPs and teachers; data (a) and (b): I produced two kinds of open-ended questionnaires, one for LEEPs and the other for teachers who participated in the cascade project (see Appendices D and E). In order to remove 'lack of clarity, ambiguity, bias and "leading-the-witness"' (Burns, 2010, p.90), I shared both questionnaires with one of my supervisors and Teacher D beforehand for their feedback, as 'pre-testing' of those questionnaires (Robson, 2002, p.254). I produced them in order to see the effectiveness/impact of the cascade project and incorporate the findings into an idea for a potential new form of professional education for English language teachers. The reasons why I used an open-ended questionnaire style was that I hoped to collect 'subjective data' (Wagner, 2010, p.27) such as their thinking on the usefulness of the project, and find out how they really found the project by allowing respondents to 'go into more depth' (Robson, 2002, p.275). Further, I asked the following, as well as for their reflections on the programmes:

- what they thought communicative competence means;
- what they thought about MEXT's idea of teaching English in principle in English at junior high school level, and introducing popular English proficiency tests into the assessment of students' English ability and university entrance examination;
- what they thought about MEXT's idea of identifying the minimum requirements for English language teachers with test scores;

- in relation to the above, what they thought the needs of teachers of English language in Japan might be (see Appendices D and E).

I hoped that considering the questions would inspire the respondents to question whether the values that informed policy and the values that informed their practices were commensurable. I also hoped to encourage them to think for themselves about their own professional development, rather than simply following top-down opinions. I distributed them with the co-operation of Teacher D; after having secured prior approval from the Board of Education, he distributed them to his colleague LEEPs at the second British Council-led programme in 2014 and to teachers to whom he cascaded the training at his (LEEP-led) programme in 2015. On analysing them, I identified 'obvious and recurring topics' running through the data (Hyland, 2010, p.202) and sorted out their responses based on the topics, as seen in Table 2.1 and 2.2, and discussed in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.

(2) Data from the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014; data (c): The workshop was videotape/audio recorded with the participants' consent. I transcribed part of the discussion which took place in the workshop, in order to use it in the thesis as evidence showing the process of how our group's perspective on communicative competence has developed; I give details in chapter 4. Also, I collected written reflections on the workshop from the participants in order to examine how they responded to the workshop regarding their learning. I sorted out their written reflections in light of the possible impact of the workshop on their learning as coding categories (see Table 5.8). Their positive feedback as seen in the table encouraged me to try to find ways of incorporating the ideas of studying English language and researching teachers' own practice into the professional education for English language teachers; I give details in chapter 5.

(3) Interview with the British Council; data (d): I used a semi-structured interview style. The interview was audio recorded for later analysis with participants' consent. During the interview, I recognised differences of perspective (rather, misunderstandings) about the cascade project between the British Council and myself. In analysing the data, first, I sorted out the data according to the following as coding categories: background ideas/beliefs, objectives, structures (methodology, or trainers' background) and effectiveness/points at issue of the cascade project. Then, in order to clarify the differences of perspective, I compared the data from both sides (the British Council and myself) (see Table 5.9). This led to a recognition that the British Council and myself considered the

cascade project from opposite points of view, and the differences of perspective could be overcome by communicating with each other about our different perceptions of the nature of teacher professional education. The draft of the relevant section in this thesis (section 5.6.3) was sent to the British Council for their checking, and it was hoped, approval.

(4) The first validation meeting in Japan; data (e): The purpose of the meeting served as a review of my PhD study. The meeting was videotape/audio recorded with the participants' consent. Having identified the topics running through the meeting, I sorted out the participants' comments according to the topics as these constituted coding categories (see Table 6.2). Then, I drew out possible implications and the potential impact of my study on the participants of the meeting from them; I give details in chapter 6.

(5) The second validation meeting within York St John University; data (f): The meeting was audio recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for later analysis (see Appendices P and Q). The feedback was given mainly in relation to the relationship between the evidence and my provisional claims to knowledge rather than the evidence itself, which led to my exploration of the reasons for that. I imagined three reasons and selected the data which appeared to be relevant to these reasons. This turned out to be a good lesson for me about how to articulate my ideas and communicate the story of my study; I give details in chapter 6.

### **3.5 Summary**

As mentioned above, it was not until others perceived that possible power relations existed in our group that I reflected on my role as a collaborative researcher, while also reflecting upon my role as a facilitator (when thinking about interviews with the research participants) and as a PhD researcher (at supervision meetings). This led to my inquiry of what it meant to work as a collaborative researcher in a teacher researcher group, as also mentioned above. Having written this chapter, I now understand that working as collaborative researchers in a teacher research group may mean enhancing each other's ability to take the initiative for further actions through working together. I now also understand that this may help those involved overcome possible power relations between them. Thus, I was able to develop my understanding of second-person action research through this study. This study has also suggested to me a topic for further research: finding out how collaborative

practice grounded in a values-oriented perspective can encourage practitioners to move into communicative action. The further research could suggest what the process of sharing and negotiating democratic and dialogic values in third-person action research may be like.

Due to the limited period of collaboration (five individual interviews maximum and three group meetings in less than two years), there seems to be insufficient data to examine how our group has developed as a teacher researcher group. This may be one possible limitation of this study. Also, it appears that the data analysis method in this study needs to be further developed. On the other hand, however, I would claim that I was able to demonstrate the methodological rigour of this study by explaining how I have pursued the research questions while working collaboratively with the research participants, in light of the three main principles for the action research methodology which have run through this study: collaboration reflective practice and a values-oriented perspective. I now move into a process of investigating the first research question: how we can understand the nature of communicative competence.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Investigating communicative competence**

#### **4.1 Chapter preview**

In chapter 2, I clarified how the term ‘communication abilities’ is used in the MEXT Course of Study and explained that MEXT assessment policies imply the ability to use English for communication. I also explained the inconsistencies between the MEXT Course of Study and the MEXT assessment policy, and the possible source of the inconsistencies, namely, ideological commitments. These are consistent with a belief in the ‘dominant varieties (British/American)’ of English, a belief manifested in popular tests targeted at ‘standardized British or American English’ (Canagarajah, 2006, pp.229-230) and appear to be resonant of ‘native-speakerism’ (Holliday, 2005, p.6), as explained in chapter 2. They have led to the contradictory situation in which candidates try to get higher scores to demonstrate their communication abilities, in spite of the fact that communication abilities as used in the Course of Study cannot be tested by scores, as discussed in chapter 2. In other words, the inconsistencies between the MEXT Course of Study and the MEXT assessment policy have generated another inconsistency. This situation may present ‘policy epidemics’ involving “infection” by superficial but seemingly attractive policies’ (Levin, 1998, p.139). It seems that they cannot resist the infection because they do not know what ‘communication abilities’ actually stands for. It seems that discussions about what the term means have not taken place yet, not only in society generally, but also in the educational context. Torikai (2014) refers to an idea from a policy statement that ‘communication abilities, as a tool can be measured relatively easily’ (Gurōbaru jinzaiikusei suishinkaigi, 2012, p.8), and argues that it:

completely lacks the understanding of communication as complex action which is influenced by the context such as culture, the setting, and the relationship with the other (Torikai, 2014, p.109, my translation).



Torikai further calls for theorising communication abilities 'from the viewpoint of what communication abilities conducive to the development of our global citizenship are like' (ibid., p.119, my translation). In my efforts towards generating a conceptual framework of communication abilities for use in a Japanese context, I started my investigation into the nature of communication abilities by consolidating the ideas of the research participants and myself. This provided me with ideas for some possible factors which communication abilities may involve. I produced an initial conceptual model based on those ideas. I then looked at relevant literatures in an attempt to link the model with various theories of communication, and revised it in light of those literatures. Further, the feedback I received on the revised model led me to reconsider the nature of communication abilities in relation to context, and finally we formed our group's collective theory of communication abilities. This chapter describes the process of our conceptualisation of communication abilities, as mediated through the channels between the research participants/others and myself, between literatures and my thinking, and between my thinking and my reflections on my previous thinking. It tells the story of how I have developed my insights into communicative competence through my research.

## **4.2 Our group's perspective towards 'communication abilities'**

First, I started the investigation by asking the research participants to consolidate their ideas on communication abilities, in order to find out what practising Japanese English language teachers thought about this phrase. I sent them a questionnaire (see Appendix C) in March 2014, and asked them what they thought the phrase meant. Teacher B sent me back his answers before the first group meeting, as follows:

Communication abilities implies not only the good ability to use English but an attitude towards interaction with others. True communication abilities means the ability to try to make ourselves understood by persistently using our own knowledge without making the excuse, 'I'm not good at English' (Teacher B, 2014a, my translation).

At the first group meeting in May 2014, I asked the other three research participants for their thinking on communication abilities, as follows:

Extract 4.1

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Research participants' thinking on communication abilities 1

The first group meeting, 22/05/2014 (Teachers A/D 2014a, Teacher C 2014, my translation)

TA = Teacher A and so forth, K = Author

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- 1 K: what do you think communication abilities means?  
 2 TA: (...) in addition to Teacher B's idea [the ability to try to make  
 3 ourselves understood by persistently using our own knowledge], the ability  
 4 to try to listen, it is necessary to desire to understand the other (...)   
 5 positively (...)  
 6 TD: consideration (...) imagination, if people do not try to be considerate  
 7 of others, imagine [what they think] and try to understand them, they  
 8 cannot communicate with each other, consideration (...)  
 9 TC: so do I  
 10 K: consideration?  
 11 TC: yes, [the ability to] understand others even if we are using different  
 12 languages, [the ability to] understand others' feelings (...) being broad-  
 13 minded is important for communication

My own thinking on communication abilities was also consistent with the ideas of Teachers A and B; it was 'to try to make ourselves understood by persistently using our own knowledge'. This was because I thought, from my experience as a teacher, that students tended to focus on correctness, and that an attitude of speaking English with tenacity without minding mistakes would provide the key for them to get used to speaking English and improve their ability to speak it. Teachers C and D's idea on communication abilities was 'consideration', as seen in lines 6–9. Thus, similar forms of thinking could be seen in operation between the teachers. Specifically, Teachers A, C and D referred to the ability to understand others, as seen in lines 4–5, 7 and 11. Subsequently, I had the first individual interviews with the research participants in July and August 2014, where one of them made another key comment:

## Extract 4.2

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Research participants' thinking on communication abilities 2  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014b, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- 1 K: in the next school term, what are you starting or continuing to do in  
 2 order to develop students' communication abilities if any
- 3 TD: (...) I would like to modify them [communicative activities in the  
 4 textbook] to meet with my students' situation, provide them with the  
 5 opportunities to speak and write in their own words and give them more  
 6 opportunities to master what they learnt, which is my target

As seen in line 5, Teacher D added students' ability to 'speak and write in their own words'. He also mentioned enhancing his students' learning by giving them opportunities to master their old knowledge, as seen in lines 5–6, which I presumed meant encouraging them to activate their old knowledge while speaking. These ideas emphasise the active nature of students' language performance, in contrast to their inner attitudes such as 'consideration' and 'imagination' which he mentioned in the previous interview.

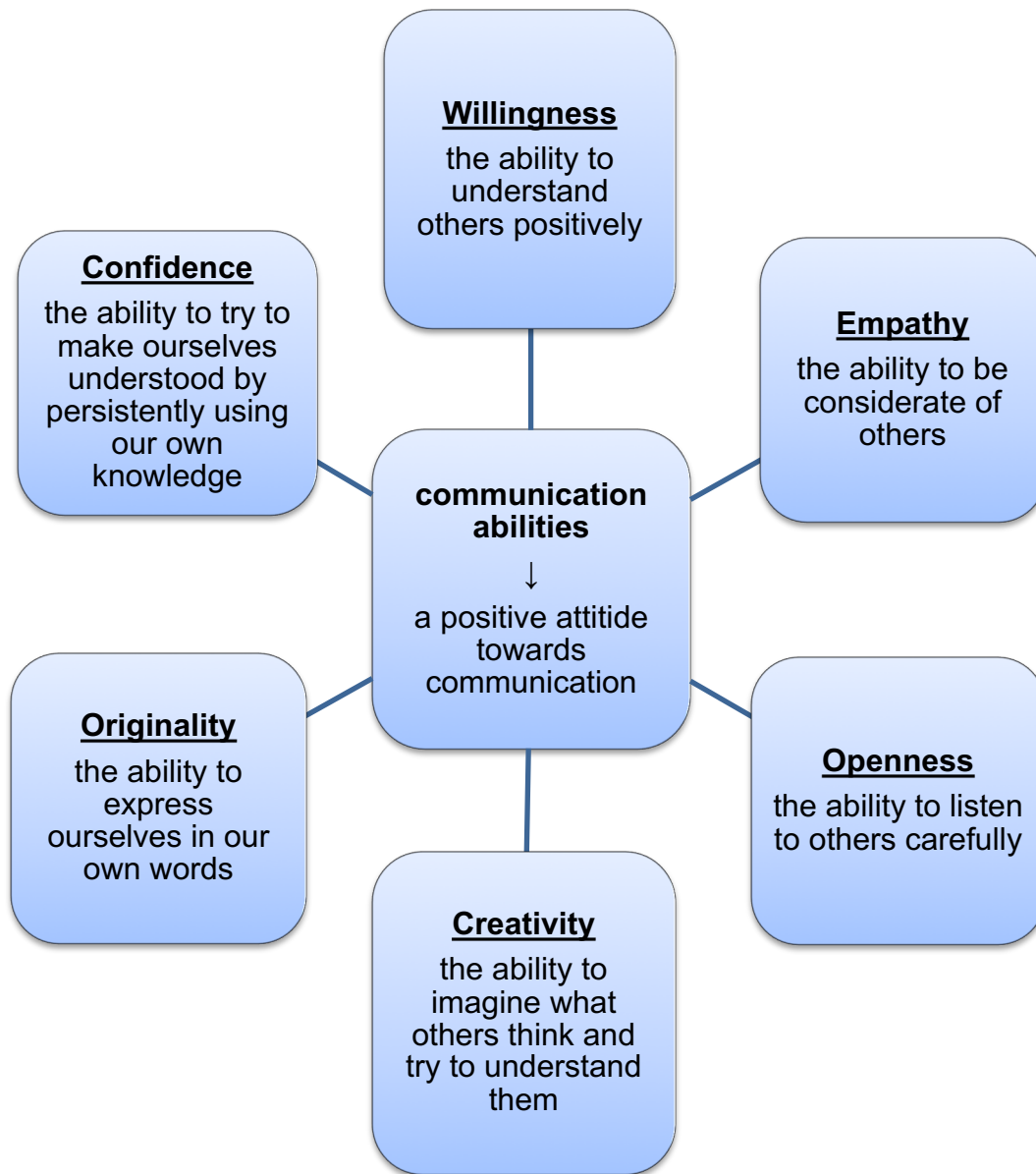
Next, having consolidated the aforementioned descriptions from the research participants, which include my perspective, I collected what I felt were their most significant comments on communication abilities, and classified them according to my interpretations, as follows:

- 'the ability to understand others positively' demonstrates willingness;
- 'the ability to be considerate of others' demonstrates empathy;
- 'the ability to listen to others' demonstrates openness;
- 'the ability to imagine what others think and try to understand them' demonstrates creativity;
- 'the ability to express themselves in their own words' demonstrates originality;
- 'the ability to try to make ourselves understood, by persistently using our own knowledge' demonstrates confidence.

NB: it must be acknowledged that the categories I have identified above are my own choice: other researchers may have different interpretations.

In summary, our joint perspective on communication abilities may be relevant to developing a positive attitude towards communication. Next, based on my

classification above, I diagrammed our ideas as an initial model, as seen in Figure 4.1:



**Figure 4.1: Our joint perspective on communication abilities**

A significant difference can be seen between the thinking of our group members, which has been established as a result of our reflections on our practices, and the thinking of MEXT, who appears to have simply tried to equate communication abilities with scores in popular English proficiency tests. What I had to do next was to examine the credibility of our perspective through reviewing relevant literatures, to discover if a positive attitude towards communication as represented by the six factors in Figure 4.1 could be relevant to communication abilities. In order to avoid

confusion in the usage of terms, from now on I take up the term 'communicative competence' in place of 'communication abilities', because this is more generally acknowledged and widely used in the literatures.

### 4.3 Theoretical frameworks of communicative competence

Hymes (1972, p.282) defines '*competence*' as 'the most general term for the capabilities of a person', which depends on 'both (tacit) *knowledge* and (ability for) *use*' (emphasis in original). This idea is derived from his argument against the concept of '*linguistic performance*', which constitutes Chomsky's idea about linguistic theory together with '*linguistic competence*' (Chomsky 1965, cited in Hymes 1972, p.271, emphasis in original). Hymes views Chomsky's idea about linguistic theory as fundamentally unrelated to 'sociocultural features' (ibid., p.271); this shows Hymes' interest in sociocultural features in theorising communicative competence. Attending to appropriateness as well as grammaticality, Hymes looks at 'when to speak', 'when not', 'what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner', which may be described as 'the other code of communicative conduct' interrelated with language (ibid., pp.277-278). Further, Hymes argues against the traditional thinking which 'simply equates one language, one culture, and takes a set of functions for granted', and claims 'a theory of competence must go beyond the notion of ideal fluency in a homogeneous community' (ibid., pp.287-289). Communicative competence has been much debated in the literature over several decades, by Savignon (1976, 1997 and 2002), Horwitz and Horwitz (1977), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and, in recent literatures, Canagarajah (2013 and 2014) for example. Noticeably, these scholars appear to attempt to theorise communicative competence with attention to sociocultural features in the same way as Hymes (1972). On the other hand, in my view, traditional ways of theorising communicative competence in relation to native speaker competence are seen in early second (foreign) language teaching literatures; later literatures appear to theorise it regardless of the status of different groups of language users, in alignment with Hymes.

I now review how the above-mentioned scholars form their theoretical frameworks of communicative competence. Following the reflections by Savignon (1976) and Horwitz and Horwitz (1977) about the concept of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) present their theoretical framework. Their provisional

theory of communicative competence consists of three components: 'grammatical competence', 'sociolinguistic competence' and 'strategic competence' (ibid., pp.28-31). In my view, Canale and Swain mean accuracy by grammatical competence, appropriateness by sociolinguistic competence and, by strategic competence, the use of "coping" strategies' (ibid., p.31) to avoid communication failure such as paraphrasing. Among these three components, Canale and Swain's view of sociolinguistic competence appears to remain ambiguous. They include both 'sociocultural' appropriateness (if 'utterances are produced and understood *appropriately*') and appropriateness of discourse (such as 'cohesion' and 'coherence') (ibid., p.30, emphasis in original). However, they acknowledge that they are unsure how to distinguish discourse rules from grammar and sociocultural rules (ibid., p.30). This point has been apparently improved by Canale (1983). Canale develops his own theoretical framework, by adding 'discourse competence' independently from sociolinguistic competence (ibid., pp.9-10). In his attempt to illustrate how to distinguish discourse competence from grammatical and sociolinguistic competence, he gives a sample dialogue that includes a 'grammatical and sociolinguistically appropriate' but irrelevant response (ibid., p.10). Accordingly, sociolinguistic competence is concerned mainly with properness in 'meaning' and 'form' in a given context (ibid., pp.7-8). Subsequently, Savignon (1997, pp.40-50) gives her detailed explanations of the components of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). She shares similar views about the nature of grammatical competence and strategic competence with them but, on the other hand, she (Savignon, 1997, p.41) explains sociolinguistic competence from a wider perspective, and defines it as the ability to understand 'the social context in which language is used'. Rather than the speaker/writer's properness in meaning and form, as Canale (1983) explains, understanding 'the roles of the participants', 'the information they share' and 'the function of the interaction' is suggested as part of sociolinguistic competence (Savignon, 1997, p.41). Discourse competence is concerned with 'the *connection* of a series of sentences or utterances to form a meaningful whole' (ibid., pp.42-44, emphasis in original); this is referred to as 'cohesion' and 'coherence' also by the above-mentioned scholars. However, Savignon explains that improving discourse competence depends on shared knowledge between those involved (ibid., p.44). This may suggest that while Canale (1983) explains the competences from a speaker/writer's perspective, Savignon (1997) tries to interpret them as competences developed in relation with others in actual communication.

Savignon's (1997) contribution appears to present a model showing the interrelationship between the four components which Canale (1983, p.12) assumes. Savignon's (1997) view is that:

an increase in one component *interacts* with the other components to produce a corresponding increase in overall communicative competence (Savignon, 1997, p.49, emphasis in original).

Further, her model suggests that one can develop communicative competence by exercising sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence, even before acquiring grammatical competence (ibid., p.49). This gives form to her earlier insight: 'accuracy in the use of all of these discrete linguistic elements is not essential to communicative competence' (Savignon, 1976, p.4). Savignon (1997) also suggests the special characteristic of strategic competence contrary to the other three competences: its significance decreases as one increases the other three competences (ibid., p.49). The model is adapted by Savignon (2002) while maintaining the same perspective as Savignon (1997). Savignon's (2002) contribution is to take leave of traditional thinking about theorising communicative competence based on the perspective of what helps non-native speakers communicate with native speakers effectively, which the above-mentioned studies apparently assume. From the perspective of multicultural communication, Savignon comments:

The 'ideal native speaker,' someone who knows a language perfectly and uses it appropriately in all social interactions, exists in theory only (Savignon, 2002, p.10).

Further, she broadens the concept of sociolinguistic competence, as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), and presents instead a new concept of 'sociocultural competence':

What must be learned is a general *empathy* and *openness* toward other cultures. Sociocultural competence includes a *willingness* to engage in the active negotiation of meaning along with a *willingness* to suspend judgment and take into consideration the possibility of cultural differences in conventions of use (Savignon, 2002, p.10, my emphasis).

Please note hereafter that the words I emphasised above feature in our group's joint perspective as seen in Figure 4.1 and I emphasised them here in relation to what other researchers said. These qualities, which include three factors (empathy, openness and willingness) in our group's joint perspective as seen in Figure 4.1, are further explained as 'cultural flexibility' or 'cultural awareness' (ibid., p.10). Similarly, the recent term, 'dispositions', presented in Canagarajah (2013, p.5) assumes multilingual communication. Through a study on how skilled migrants develop their communicative competence, Canagarajah (2014, p.91) consolidates his perspective on dispositions as follows, and makes a clear distinction from the four components of communicative competence which Canale (1983) originally suggested:

- (1) Language awareness:
  - a. language norms as open to negotiation
  - b. languages as mobile semiotic resources
  - c. a functional orientation to communication and meaning
- (2) Social values:
  - a. *openness* to diversity
  - b. a sense of voice and locus of enunciation
  - c. strong ethic of collaboration
- (3) Learning strategies:
  - a. learning from practice
  - b. adaptive skills
  - c. use of scaffolding (Canagarajah, 2014, p.91, my emphasis).

I interpret each aspect in the three domains above as follows. I put a possibly relevant competence from Savignon's (2002) framework in the square brackets when I have found similarities between them:

- (1) Language awareness:
  - a. open-mindedness towards negotiation of meanings through communication [sociocultural competence]
  - b. open-mindedness towards speaking through mixing and switching languages [strategic competence]
  - c. focusing on delivering one's ideas/thoughts, rather than on 'accuracy or correctness' [discourse competence]
- (2) Social values:



- a. being prepared for the situation in which one does not share 'values, norms, or conventions' with the other [sociocultural competence]
- b. feeling confident in one's own 'voice' even if it sounds different from others', and 'comfortable' with speaking with the influence of one's own language, value and identity
- c. 'skills for collaborating with others to co-construct meaning' [sociocultural competence]

(3) Learning strategies:

- a. learning languages 'through speaking and listening in actual interaction'
- b. learning from one's own experience and practice the learning 'in the next context'
- c. learning autonomously through various possible strategies which include individual learning with various resources, and through socialising with others (Canagarajah, 2014, pp.91-99).

Most of the aspects in the first two domains (language awareness and social values) appear to be related to sociocultural competence, strategic competence or discourse competence, compared with Savignon's (2002) framework. In the 'learning strategies' domain, Canagarajah is concerned mainly with learning attitudes, not with developing grammaticality. That is, his three domains above apparently do not include grammatical competence, which the above-mentioned scholars have positioned as one component of communicative competence. This might suggest that the significance of grammaticality decreases as societies become more multiethnic and multilingual.

Reviewing theoretical frameworks of communicative competence suggests:

- A positive attitude towards communication, as seen in the six factors in Figure 4.1, might be seen as a component of communicative competence. For example, 'empathy', 'openness' and 'willingness' are discussed as the qualities forming part of communicative competence in the above-mentioned quotations from the literatures (Savignon 2002 and Canagarajah 2014); they are related to sociocultural competence in Savignon's (2002) framework. This may support part of the joint perspective of our group as seen in Figure 4.1;
- The joint perspective of our group as seen in Figure 4.1 does not include grammatical competence. This is in alignment with Canagarajah (2014); it

might tally with present and future circumstances, anticipating that societies have/will increasingly become globalised;

- On the other hand, some aspects in Canagarajah's (2014) perspective on dispositions, such as open-mindedness towards the negotiation of meanings or speaking through mixing and switching languages, may not be realistic in a Japanese context where most of the population speak only one language, Japanese.

These suggest that some perspectives of the theoretical frameworks of communicative competence as mentioned above agree with the joint perspective of our group, as seen in Figure 4.1, but some do not. This made me aware of the need to conceptualise our own theory of communicative competence for use in a Japanese context. Therefore, I decided to investigate each of the six factors in Figure 4.1, including 'creativity', 'originality' and 'confidence', which are not mentioned in the discussion above, by comparing our descriptions of the factors with relevant literatures, and establish better grounds for supporting our perspective. I also decided to take Savignon's (2002) framework as the basis of my investigation of the six factors. Although this framework is not necessarily consistent with our perspective in that we do not assume grammatical competence, I had three reasons for this decision. First, it does not assume native-speaker competence. Second, it looks at the same qualities such as empathy, openness and willingness, as in the joint perspective of our group. Third, linking our perspective, which evolved in a monolingual context (Japan), with Savignon's framework assuming multilingual communication, could lead to conceptualisation of a theory of communicative competence which does not assume a particular context. Further, I aimed to try to find ways of taking Canagarajah's (2014) 'learning strategies' domain, which Savignon's (2002) framework does not include, into our theory of communicative competence.

## **4.4 Linking the six factors in Figure 4.1 to theory**

### **4.4.1 Willingness**

In Figure 4.1, 'willingness' includes the ability to understand others positively. The idea came from Teacher A's comment which values one's desire to understand the other positively, as seen in extract 4.1. Teachers C and D also mentioned the

need to try to understand others, as also quoted above. As a supporting literature, Gumperz (1979, p.273) refers to the 'need to understand the other person'. Savignon (2002) refers to willingness as a factor of sociocultural competence: I quote again:

Sociocultural competence includes a *willingness* to engage in the active negotiation of meaning along with a *willingness* to suspend judgment and take into consideration the possibility of cultural differences in conventions of use (Savignon, 2002, p.10, my emphasis).

As examples of 'conventions concerning language use', Savignon gives 'taking turns', 'appropriateness of content', 'nonverbal language' and 'tone' (ibid., p.10). Canagarajah (2013, p.5) also refers to 'a *willingness* to negotiate with diversity in social interactions' (my emphasis). Taking these explanations literally, it seems we are required to have a lot of knowledge about different conventions or cultures. However, Gumperz (1979, p.274) advises us to attend to 'culture with a little "c"', which is 'everyday matters' of culture, not to think of 'culture with a big "C" in terms of gross cultural differences'. Thinking of culture with a little 'c' indicates:

simply (1) an awareness that the problem exists, (2) a *willingness* to perceive differences in communication, and then (3) a *willingness* to seek ways of alleviating the difficulties (Gumperz, 1979, p.273, my emphasis).

From this perspective, willingness might include the quality of being able to attend to culture with a little 'c'.

While these accounts of willingness assume the relationships between speakers, Savignon (1976) looks at another aspect of willingness towards ourselves:

An understanding of the process of second language learning means not only a tolerance but encouragement of risk-taking in saying what you mean. This implies acceptance of 'error' as a natural and desirable feature of language learning (Savignon, 1976, p.9).

The quotation above suggests a tolerance of ourselves, which means an acceptance that we will make mistakes while learning languages. It includes the

quality of not minding 'risk-taking' and accepting errors. This finding has added a new interpretation, that of 'a positive attitude towards ourselves', to our group's joint perspective, as seen in Figure 4.1, which includes only 'a positive attitude towards others'. Relevant literatures also refer to the significance of making mistakes. For example, Horwitz and Horwitz (1977) explain the value of learning from the experience of being misunderstood:

It is inevitable that students will sometimes be misunderstood, but it is how students deal with this misunderstanding that will in large part determine how communicative they will be (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.116).

This also suggests the value of one's spontaneous attitude of drawing on those experiences for new knowledge. Similarly, Philips (1972, p.262) explains that 'one will learn, and learn more effectively, through making mistakes in front of others'. Philips further encourages us to 'observe others performing successfully', 'practice' and 'decide for [ourselves] when [we] know enough to demonstrate [our] knowledge' in the process of acquiring communicative competence (ibid., p.262). This tallies with 'learning from one's own experience and practi[sing] the learning in the next context' and 'learning through socialising with others' as seen in Canagarajah's (2014) 'learning strategies' domain as mentioned above. It may be that willingness includes willingness for one's own language learning. This could serve as a good reason to include the 'learning strategies' domain (Canagarajah, 2014) in the theory of communicative competence.

Further, a report looking into students' reticence in class (Tsui, 1996, p.149) suggests a positive attitude towards our making mistakes increases confidence: 'students' level of *self-confidence* and their *willingness* to take risks are important factors that affect their readiness to respond' (my emphasis). Tsui's point is that a combination of self-confidence and a willingness to take risks helps students to respond to their teacher without resorting to "I don't know" as a safe way out' (ibid., p.149). As Teacher A mentioned willingness and confidence as her definitions of communicative competence as quoted above, these two factors might be closely related and complementary to each other.

To sum up, 'willingness' may be a factor related to sociocultural competence and possibly indicates a positive attitude towards others and towards our own making mistakes, which includes willingness for our own language learning.

#### 4.4.2 Empathy

In Figure 4.1, 'empathy' includes the ability to be considerate of others. The idea came from two group members, one of whom (Teacher C) mentioned the ability to understand others' feelings, as quoted above. Similarly, relevant literatures define empathy as follows; '[c]apacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas' (Savignon, 1997, p.274), and a 'process of taking the perspective of another person' (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.110). In order to take another person's view, Horwitz and Horwitz advise us to attend to the other's 'words', 'nonverbal communication' and feelings (ibid., p.110). This reminds us of the advice Savignon (2002) gives us to attend to the possibility of cultural differences in conventions of use for growing sociocultural competences including willingness, as mentioned above. This may suggest basic similarities between willingness and empathy. A difference between the two may be that while willingness may help us accept the other, ourselves and the possible differences between the two, empathy helps us choose 'a strategy which will help [us] achieve [our] communication goals' (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.110) by taking into account the differences we have perceived. In this sense, empathy may be a complementary factor to willingness. Gumperz (1979, p.274) describes this act of putting our perceived ideas about the other into our communication strategies as 'practise awareness'.

Because of its nature of helping us choose communication strategies, Savignon (1997, p.47) positions empathy as a factor related to strategic competence. This contrasts with Savignon (2002) which refers to 'general empathy towards other cultures' as part of sociocultural competence, as quoted above. Savignon (1997, p.47) identifies empathy with coping strategies which enable us to survive our knowledge limitation or restriction of knowledge use. In such circumstances, empathy, as the ability to '*empathize* with the perspective of others', helps us to 'adapt' appropriate communication strategies such as 'rephrasing' and 'repetition' (ibid., p.47, my emphasis). Horwitz and Horwitz (1977, p.110) also explain how empathy can help us choose a strategy towards communication goals, as mentioned above. However, they appear to attend to achieving sharedness between those involved, rather than complementing any deficiency in communication skills or managing unexpected circumstances as seen in Savignon (1997). Horwitz and Horwitz assume the 'gap' between people in terms of how they perceive the situation, and that they are 'destined' to communicate with each other without assured sharedness between them (ibid., p.111). It is empathy to close the gap and mitigate unsharedness or 'ambiguity':

*empathy* helps us to bridge our individualities by permitting us to anticipate those experiential similarities and differences which are relevant to the communicative situation (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.111, my emphasis).

The most characteristic role of empathy in helping us to bridge our individualities appears to be 'to limit the use of cultural stereotypes' which tend to rule our responses to each other (ibid., pp.111-115). Feeling free from stereotypical perspectives allows us to appreciate that another person 'happens to be a member of a different culture group', which can change the other's differences into uniqueness (ibid., pp.114-115). It also allows us to appreciate that both are responsible for structuring the situation through 'mutual perspective-taking' (ibid., p.111). In this way, empathy helps us avoid constructing borders between people. McDermott and Gospodinoff (1979, p.289) explain 'ethnic differences are turned into ethnic borders' by people themselves:

Our problem is not that people are different, but that the differences are made to make more of a difference than they must, that the differences are politicized into borders that define different kinds of people as antagonists in various realms of everyday life (McDermott and Gospodinoff, 1979, p.278).

Gumperz (1979, p.269) also advises us to be free from stereotypical perspectives in that if a speaker conveys his/her stereotypical perspective through his/her talk, the perspective 'tends to be reinforced' while dialoguing, which may lead to making borders between the other and himself/herself. This may suggest that differences in social conventions are not actually at issue, and that it is empathy that helps us position others as companions, not 'antagonists', and avoid transforming our differences into a border. I think this can apply to two people who may be from the same culture but still have their own differences. Further, although I have quoted the citations mainly from older literatures here, the relevance can be seen between the ideas quoted above and the ones in more recent literatures. For example, Canagarajah (2013) and (2014) also refer to the need to achieve sharedness between participants in multilingual communication. This may suggest that empathy is an essential factor in communicative competence regardless of times/context. Horwitz and Horwitz comment:

Without some degree of *empathy*, individuals would usually respond inappropriately to the demands of communicative situations (...) would still be unable to define (...) what the particular interpersonal context was and what kind of language it required at a specific moment in time (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.110, my emphasis).

One more point to be noted is the characteristic described as empathy here, which helps us achieve sharedness, is explained as 'openness to diversity' in Canagarajah (2014), as mentioned above. This may suggest similarities between empathy and openness which I explain below. I would distinguish empathy from openness, by stressing that empathy can limit the use of cultural stereotypes from Horwitz and Horwitz's perspective as mentioned above. This contrasts with one's 'preparedness' for unsharedness as seen in Canagarajah's (2014, p.94) explanation for openness to diversity.

From an educational perspective, Horwitz and Horwitz (1977, p.115) add the significance of teachers' empathy in students' learning for communicative competence, in that 'students are unlikely to reach levels of *empathic* communication greater than their teacher's' (my emphasis). It may be part of students' learning processes in class to observe how their teacher communicates with them '*empathically*', for example through 'reflecting back' his/her understanding of their messages (ibid., pp.115-116, my emphasis). This seems relevant to the idea of learning through socialisation (Canagarajah, 2014), and through observing others' performances, practising and deciding for themselves when they know enough to demonstrate their knowledge (Philips 1972) as mentioned above. Further, a study of Japanese university students and their Australian teachers in Australia (Ellwood and Nakane, 2009) discusses how teachers' lack of empathy, wherein empathy means being free from the use of cultural stereotypes (in Horwitz and Horwitz's (1977) interpretation), can disadvantage students' learning. Those Australian teachers assumed that Japanese students' silences in class were consequent of their 'culture of education' and perceived that they were not willing to speak, which 'misguided' their teaching; some teachers tended to 'leave silent students alone' in order to respect their desire to stay silent (Ellwood and Nakane, 2009, pp.215-223). However, the study reveals that those Japanese students themselves had desired to become more communicative in class and had struggled for that (ibid., p.217). The teachers appeared to have tried to understand and accept Japanese students' uniqueness.

However, they had practised a teaching method in their classrooms that was informed by their stereotypical perspectives, which had made them unable to become aware of those students' wishes, and had consequently contributed to '[reproducing] and [reinforcing] the silence of Japanese students' (ibid., p.227). Canagarajah and Matsumoto (2016, p.4) discuss this study, and argue that those teachers' stereotypical perspectives 'socially and ideologically' shaped those Japanese students' 'passivity'. This shows the danger of teachers' stereotypical perspectives towards their students. What those teachers could have done may be suggested in relation to the notion of 'openness' which I discuss in the next section.

To sum up, 'empathy' possibly indicates a capacity for being considerate towards others and avoiding a stereotypical perspective. It may be a factor related to sociocultural competence, in that it limits the use of cultural stereotypes, and strategic competence, in that it helps us choose appropriate communication strategies.

#### 4.4.3 Openness

In Figure 4.1, 'openness' includes the ability to listen to others carefully. This idea came from Teacher A, who also mentioned willingness and confidence. The attitude of 'paying more attention and *listening more attentively*' is discussed as part of communication strategies in multilingual communication where participants do not share assumed meanings (Canagarajah, 2014, p.83, my emphasis). Our perspective for openness appears to attend only to the content of what the other said, and possibly how he/she said it. In contrast, Savignon (2002, p.10) describes openness as a factor related to sociocultural competence, and refers to the need to learn 'openness toward other cultures', as quoted above. Savignon accordingly advises us to learn to become sensitive to social conventions concerning language use, such as taking turns, appropriateness of content, nonverbal language and tone, as also quoted above (ibid., p.10). This suggests one way of developing the capacity for openness towards other cultures. Relevant literatures also refer to these conventional non-linguistic elements: 'roles' of the participants, 'distance', 'posture', 'gestures', 'facial expressions' (Savignon, 1976, p.4), 'the tone of voice', 'voice inflection' (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.114), and '*back-channelled signals*' (responses such as 'OK' and 'that's right') (Gumperz, 1979, p.268, emphasis in original). Savignon (2002, p.10) explains how these elements 'influence how



messages are interpreted'. Further, Gumperz (1979, p.273) suggests that a cause of miscommunication may be that people tend to 'automatically' interpret others' signals, as seen in the conventions listed above, in light of their own conventions. This advice highlights the significance of learning social conventions concerning language use. On the other hand, it sounds impossible to be well versed in every possible social convention or to try to 'anticipate all the ways in which [we] might be misunderstood' (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, pp.115-116). On this point, I support Canagarajah's (2014) idea for openness to diversity, meaning one's preparedness for unsharedness, as mentioned above.

Canagarajah also suggests the idea for openness towards our own culture, as well as other cultures. He describes how one skilled migrant negotiates differences between her English and locals' English in the UK as follows:

It is evident that she is comfortable with using English in combination with local languages and even having influences of one's [her] own values and identities (Canagarajah, 2014, p.95).

That is, the 'diversity' which this person is open to includes the diversity belonging to herself, such as her own language, values and identities. The person is free from the idea of suppressing her own diversity for 'social harmony, or intelligibility' and feels 'comfortable with [her] own voice and difference' (ibid., p.95). In relation to this account, I consider the following discussion in the literature which appears to link some aspects of Japanese culture with difficulties in Japanese students' English language learning. Iwai, referring to Takanashi's (2004, p.9) perspective on Japanese people's style of communication, which values inferring what the speaker intended to say rather than one's ability to express himself/herself, writes:

In the Japanese culture, in which cooperation with others, respectful behavior, and implicit communication are highly considered as virtues, English teachers experience difficulty with cultivating their students' conversational skills in English (Iwai, 2009, p.94).

The idea as seen in this quotation itself appears to be bound by a stereotypical perspective towards communication styles in Japanese. In my view, the Japanese form of 'tacit understanding' through inferring what the speaker really intended to say (ibid., p.94) may help students '[take] the perspective of another person'

(Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p110), by extension growing their capacity for empathy. In fact, Takanashi (2004, p.9) explains this Japanese style of communication as understanding each other 'through *empathy* using intuitive skills' (my emphasis). Iwai (2009, p.94) further suggests fostering 'students' cultural awareness along with their language skills', which I presume implies explaining to students how the cultures of English-speaking countries are different from their (Japanese) culture, and encouraging them to become familiar with the cultures of English-speaking countries. However, it seems unlikely that learning the cultures of English-speaking countries would help Japanese students feel 'comfortable' with speaking English. That is because we retain our social conventions, such as the style of conversation, 'even when we learn a different language' and it is hard to change them (Gumperz, 1979, p.271). I would instead suggest encouraging students not to mind cultural differences, and explain that rather, being Japanese is somewhat advantageous to English language learning. In relation to this point, I return to the discussion in Ellwood and Nakane (2009) as mentioned above. Those Australian teachers practised a teaching method informed by their stereotypical perspectives towards Japanese students in their classrooms. The fact that they tried to understand and accept Japanese students' uniqueness might superficially show their 'openness toward other cultures' as suggested by Savignon (2002, p.10). However, the study suggests that just understanding and accepting students' cultural uniqueness does not mean that those teachers became well-prepared for teaching and interacting with them in class. What those teachers could have done might have been to try to negotiate and co-construct a new classroom culture and norms with Japanese students, which might also have presented a good opportunity for those students to negotiate differences. In this sense, I include 'patience to co-construct meaning' and 'an acceptance of negotiated outcomes in interactions' (Canagarajah, 2013, p.5) as part of the meaning of openness.

The idea for openness as seen in Canagarajah (2014) which indicates feeling comfortable with speaking another language even with the influence of one's own language and not minding language forms, as quoted above, sounds similar to the attitude of not minding making mistakes as being the interpretation of willingness, as discussed above. While willingness indicates a positive attitude towards making mistakes, the idea of openness discussed here may help us 'look beyond correctness of form' (ibid., p.93), and focus on an ongoing collaborative process of negotiating and co-constructing meaning. In this way, the three factors,

willingness, empathy and openness, appear to share some similarities. However, I think I have been able to give an account of how these three factors can help us communicate with others effectively in different ways in these three sections.

To sum up, 'openness' may be a factor related to sociocultural competence and possibly indicates the quality of being open-minded towards the other's and our cultural context. This includes openness to a whole communication process such as negotiating difference and co-constructing meanings. Openness may help us speak English with 'a relaxed attitude' by looking beyond correctness of form even while acknowledging influences from our own language (ibid., p.93).

#### 4.4.4 Creativity

In Figure 4.1, 'creativity' includes the ability to imagine what others think and try to understand them. The idea came from Teacher D who had to focus on facilitating his students' ability to accept different personalities in classrooms where there were some students with special needs (Teacher D, 2014a). It is also supported by Teacher C, as seen in extract 4.1. Having studied the idea of empathy, I now understand that the ability to imagine what people think and to try to understand them implies the development of empathy. In addition, through a review of relevant literatures, I have come to think of 'imagination' in a different way; as including one's capacity to develop one's language performance for active and successful communication:

Language use is *creative*. Learners use whatever knowledge they have of a language system to express their meaning in an infinite variety of ways (Savignon, 1997, p.28, my emphasis).

From this perspective, we are 'designers' (Gee, 2005, p.5) of our language use. In order to achieve our communication goals, we try to choose appropriate communication strategies by taking the perspective of another person, through exercising our capacity for empathy as part of strategic competence, as mentioned above. I think one's creativity may also be related to strategic competence which helps us design communication strategies. Specifically, my own view is that creativity may help us sustain conversations by using various types of active coping strategies. As examples of these, relevant literatures refer to 'paraphrase' (Canale and Swain 1980, Canale 1983, Savignon 1997), 'circumlocution,

'repetition', 'hesitation', 'avoidance (of words, structures, topics)', 'guessing', 'rephrasing', 'emphasis', 'seeking clarification' and 'message modification' (Savignon, 1997, pp.45-47). In my thinking on creativity, I focus more on using these coping strategies rather than taking the perspective of another person, which may distinguish creativity from empathy. These 'coping or survival strategies' complement our deficiency in communication skills or help us manage unexpected circumstances such as 'fatigue, distraction, and inattention' (ibid., p.45). Accordingly, they help us sustain conversation, so that we do not 'remain silent if [we] cannot produce grammatically accurate forms' (Canale, 1983, p.11). Sustaining conversation by using those coping strategies may sound like an advanced skill, given that we get used to managing conversations through experiencing complexity in language performance. However, relevant literatures advise us to encourage beginner learners to use those strategies (Canale and Swain 1980 and Savignon 1997); Savignon (1997, pp.49-50) explains strategic competence as 'an ever-present component of communicative competence', 'regardless of experience and level of proficiency'. This may suggest that teachers dismiss the 'old assumption that we first learn the language, then use it for communication' (Stern, 1981, p.438), and encourage students even at primary/junior high school level to use some simple coping strategies such as asking for repetition or speaking more slowly, and using gestures. Given that some studies on students' silence at various school levels have been conducted (for example Tsui 1996, and Ellwood and Nakane 2009), the use of coping strategies could be focused more in language classrooms. Further, participants in multilingual communication exercise different kinds of coping strategies. They use '*creative strategies*' such as 'listening more attentively' to each other, code-switching into alternative languages and accommodating new language into their 'repertoire' (Canagarajah, 2014, pp.83-84, my emphasis). Using these strategies not only enables them to manage the differences in varieties of English, but leads them to feel that they are able to 'still communicate' and to feel '*confident*' (ibid., p.83, my emphasis). This might suggest the interrelationship between creativity and confidence.

To sum up, 'creativity' could be related to strategic competence, and possibly indicates the ability to sustain communication through designing management strategies. This process of designing management strategies may enable us to become actively involved in ongoing communication rather than remaining silent.

#### 4.4.5 Originality

In Figure 4.1, 'originality' includes the ability to express ourselves in our own words. This idea came from Teacher D, who mentioned his own originality in using the English textbook more efficiently, in order to facilitate the development of students' originality in using English, as noted above. English language teachers at lower secondary level have to deal with the English textbook authorised by MEXT, whose focus is placed on practising all four English skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), within a limited number of classes (four fifty-minute classes a week). Considering they do not have enough time to practise them, it may be that teachers' originality in their teaching is vital to facilitating students' originality in using English.

Similarly, the Course of Study for Junior High Schools suggests:

students (...) should be able to perform language activities in which they have to think about how to express themselves in a way appropriate to a specific situation and condition (MEXT, 2012, p.3, as in original).

This refers to appropriateness to the situation, in addition to expressing themselves in their own words. I think that originality may include the spontaneous practice of adapting to the situation, as seen in this citation from the Course of Study, rather than just self-expression. In an argument against the reality of Standard English, Widdowson (2003) explains language as 'an adaptable resource for making meaning' as follows:

You are proficient in a language to the extent that you possess it, make it your own, bend it to your will, assert yourself through it rather than simply submit to the dictates of its form (Widdowson, 2003, p.42).

In my view, to 'bend' indicates adapting rules (such as linguistic or social ones), conforming to the situation and expressing oneself in one's own words in a way appropriate to the situation. These spontaneous acts of bending rules and adapting oneself so as to make meanings may be ways of demonstrating one's originality. Widdowson (2003, p.42) identifies such acts as 'proficiency', which

'only comes with nonconformity, when you can take the initiative and strike out on your own'.

For an example of this, Canagarajah (2014, p.84) explained as one skilled migrant's practice. When she could not make herself understood to the locals with a certain word, she studied how the locals pronounced it and adapted it in such a way that she could make herself understood. This shows that she broke her own rule by producing a particular sound to make herself understood. McDermott and Gospodinoff (1979) give an account of how a minority child and his teacher achieved mutual understanding by communicating with each other through breaking classroom rules and norms. In her interaction with the child who frequently gave her trouble, the teacher rewarded his behaviour because it drew her attention to other students' behaviours which had bothered him, in spite of the fact that he had broken classroom rules in order to get her attention (*ibid.*, p.286). By doing this, the teacher herself broke the classroom rules which she normally enforced on the children (*ibid.*, p.286). However, at the same time, the boy was able to pursue his aim and draw the teacher's attention to himself, and she was able to reward his behavior, which had not happened before. McDermott and Gospodinoff infer that this way of communicating with each other brought both of them a moment in which they were able to get away from the daily hassles between the teacher and the children, including the boy concerned, for a while (*ibid.*, p.287). Thus, they appeared to reach mutual understanding through communicating in an 'inappropriate' way (*ibid.*, p.286) in which both spontaneously broke classroom rules. McDermott and Gospodinoff explain that they miscommunicated functionally:

Juan and the teacher seem to have agreed unknowingly on how to miscommunicate with each other (...) Their choices are adaptive given their circumstances (McDermott and Gospodinoff, 1979, p.287).

It sounds contradictory to say that they communicated in an inappropriate way to adapt themselves appropriately to the situation. However, this miscommunication makes sense in that both of them '[turned] it to [their] advantage' (Widdowson, 2003, p.42).

To sum up, 'originality' possibly indicates the capacity to state our own opinions in our own words. This includes taking the initiative to adapt ourselves to the

situation. Originality could be related to sociocultural competence in that it attends to the appropriateness of the situation.

In these two sections, I have discussed the nature of 'creativity' only from the perspective of coping strategies, and the nature of 'originality' only from the perspective of adapting oneself to the situation: no doubt many other potential interpretations and insights may be found, but these ideas are most relevant to my study. This lack of discussion suggests to me that I should continue to study and develop my focus on each of the six factors in my ongoing research.

#### **4.4.6 Confidence**

In Figure 4.1, 'confidence' includes the ability to try to make ourselves understood by persistently using our own knowledge. The idea came from two of the research participants, and also from myself, as stated above. In my view, 'confidence' may not be a factor related to one specific component of communicative competence, but might be built up through mastery of each one. Savignon (1997, p.48) suggests that '*communicative confidence leads to communicative competence*' (emphasis in original). By comparing becoming confident in language learning with learning how to swim, Savignon illustrates that it is 'like learning how to relax with [our] face under water' (ibid., p.48). 'Having once known the sensation of remaining afloat' (the sensation of making ourselves understood or sustaining conversation), it is 'a matter of time' (ibid., p.48) until we get confident in language use. The term 'relax' tallies with the 'relaxed attitude' of skilled migrants who 'look beyond correctness of form' (Canagarajah, 2014, p.93) as mentioned above. This 'relaxed attitude to language ownership' (ibid., p.92) seems like the key to getting confident.

On the other hand, the dominant thinking on English language, which limits correct English to only 'American English' and 'British English', has narrowed Japanese people's tolerance of their own capacity in English. They have tended to put their own English 'in an inferior position' to the native speakers of English (Matsuda, 2003, p.722), which has led to the situation in which the term "Japanese English" has a negative connotation in Japan' (Chiba et al., 1995, p.84). This might have made Japanese students less confident in using English. In order to improve the situation and find ways of encouraging their confidence in using English, first of all it may be desirable to re-evaluate the goal of English language learning. This may require policy-makers to move away from the idea of assessing students'

communicative competence in English solely by scores in popular English proficiency tests targeted at standard English, because:

if native-speaker competence is used to set targets and define proficiency, the learner is left playing a game in which the goalposts are being perpetually moved by people they cannot often challenge (Rampton, 1990, p.109).

This tallies with one of my educational values as mentioned in chapter 1; Japanese English language teachers could act as model learners for Japanese students and their expertise rather than 'nativeness' (Rampton, 1990, p.109) ought to be appreciated. Further, Japanese English language teachers should also be required to:

encourage students to use the language more, feel more *confident* about their ability to communicate in English, and focus more on being effective than being native-like, which may overlap but are not the same (Matsuda, 2003, p.724, my emphasis).

This includes appreciating ourselves as users of English language, without 'trying to become exactly like the other person' (Gumperz, 1979, p.273), namely, native speakers of English. Thus, Japanese English language teachers themselves could be required to acknowledge varieties of English and study 'the current landscape of the English language' (Matsuda, 2003, p.725), as mentioned earlier. Accordingly, both policy-makers and teachers might shift their perspectives about Japanese English language teachers from non-native teachers to '*expert*' (Rampton, 1990, p.109, emphasis in original). The concept of expertise would also benefit Japanese students because it could enable them to know what they can aim for so that their learning becomes more 'accountable' (ibid., p.109), as mentioned earlier. Even if Japan is a monolingual country, we could find ways of sweeping away native-speakerism from the English classroom context through shifting teachers' perspectives about the nature of English language and themselves.

To sum up, 'confidence' possibly indicates the ability to try to make ourselves understood by persistently using our own knowledge. In Japanese classrooms, how to increase confidence may be closely related to how to deal with the dominant orthodoxy of 'native-speakerism'.



#### 4.4.7 Implications and my first provisional model of communicative competence

Having investigated each of the six factors shown in Figure 4.1 by comparing our descriptions of the factors with relevant literatures, I would claim that all of them have been discussed or might be possibly suggested in the literatures, and that the interpretations offered here in this thesis might also make a contribution to those literatures. This has helped me establish better grounds for supporting the joint perspective of our group. Here, I offer ideas about some possible implications of my study on communicative competence for use by other researchers.

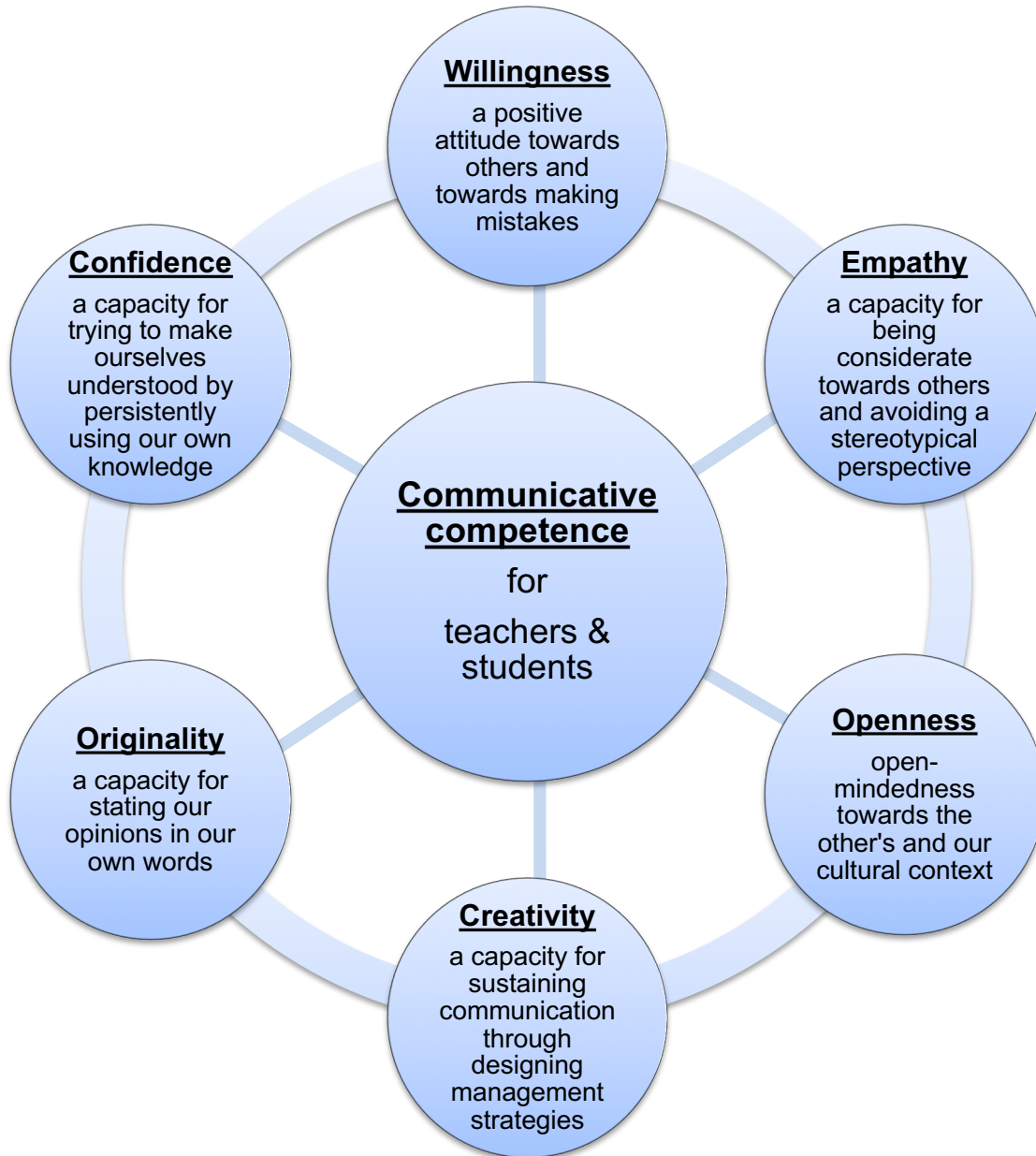
First, on reflection, what those six factors may indicate appears to be closely related to the ideas about students' communicative competence presented in the local policy as discussed in chapter 2. I quote them again with possible relevant factors from our group's perspectives in the brackets:

- the ability to open up to and listen to others (willingness, openness);
- the ability to state our own opinions rationally (originality);
- the ability to acknowledge different cultures and values (empathy);
- the ability to respect others and co-exist with one another (empathy);
- the ability to be unafraid of making mistakes in conversations, and interact with people from different cultures (willingness, empathy, openness)  
(Eigokyōiku o kangaeru konwakai, 2015, p.6, my translation).

This demonstrates that without the influence of MEXT policy, the local policy might express the same views about communicative competence as our group.

Second, Savignon (1997) and (2002) identifies the interrelationships between each component of communicative competence: an increase in one component interacts with the others to produce a corresponding increase in overall communicative competence, as mentioned earlier. I would like to add to this that factors within each component of communicative competence (for example, in sociocultural competence, 'willingness', 'empathy' and 'openness') may also be closely interrelated and enhance each other, as discussed above.

Finally, my study of each of the six factors through a review of relevant literatures has led to a revision of the initial model of communicative competence (Figure 4.1). I have produced Figure 4.2 which shows what communicative competence implies. The model demonstrates interrelationships between the six factors:



**Figure 2.2: Possible new understandings of the development of communicative competence**

#### **4.5 Reconsidering communicative competence**

As seen in Figure 4.2, our group did not see grammatical competence as a key component of communicative competence. This sounded reasonable to me, considering the criticism levelled against the grammar-translation method, which

English language education in Japan has relied on in the past, and ongoing efforts to facilitate students' speaking ability. Unexpectedly, the lack of grammatical competence in the model resulted in my being confronted with critical feedback from the participants in my presentations at the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 (see Appendix J and Kondo 2015a), and the panel of my upgrade meeting. The critical feedback inspired me to reconsider communicative competence through a wider review of relevant literatures in order to develop my then understandings.

#### 4.5.1 Feedback on Figure 4.2

The first time I had critical feedback on my own thinking was at the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014, which I co-organised with one of my supervisors on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in a Japanese city where our group members were working. As seen in Appendix J, the workshop aimed to raise Japanese English language teachers' awareness of varieties of English and sensitivity to policy, and encourage them to think for themselves about their professional development according to their local needs and contexts. The constitution of the fifteen participants was Japanese English language teachers at junior/senior high school, including the research participants, a head teacher of a junior high school, an ALT and university academics. I produced a consent form containing ethical guidelines for the conduct of the workshop (see Appendix K). The participants signed the form at reception. I video/audio recorded the workshop as a way of collecting feedback and analysing it later. In order to demonstrate the feedback clearly, I quote part of the discussion in English which took place at the workshop:

#### Extract 4.3

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##### Discussion of Figure 4.2

LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 (20/12/2014, as in original)

P/A = Participant A and so forth, TA = Teacher A and so forth, K = Author

---

- 1 P/A: six factors are kind of mental things, so to become a speaker of
- 2 English, actually, we have to learn sentence structures or word structures
- 3 to put our ideas (*considerations*) into words or phrases (...)
- 4 P/B: structure confidence ((*laughter*)) (...)
- 5 K: confidence will be divided into (...) grammatical confidence, structure
- 6 confidence (...) a new factor? (...)
- 7 P/B: yeah, because, there is not grammar structure (...) in your speech,
- 8 when you communicate ability, if you want to (*speak*), some kind of
- 9 structure, to communicate, and which is not in these six factors (...)

- 10 P/A: actually to keep our conversation, we must learn much more  
11 vocabularies (...)
- 12 P/B: (...) you need to have more, vocabularies, more understanding (...)  
13 just 'our own words' you are just, think of only this (...) that is not enough  
14 for communication
- 15 P/A: actually these six factors are, no these, none of these six factors are  
16 related to languages (...)
- 17 TA: (...) you put that, grammatical or structural factor thing in 'originality',  
18 yeah, no I mean 'in our own words' including knowledge of grammar or, I  
19 don't know (...) I don't feel like it's going to be the seventh factor, but  
20 somewhere ((*laughter*))
- 21 P/C: (...) grammar, the knowledge can be the base of all the six factors,  
22 so I would put a circle, big circle, as knowledge, and on that circle there  
23 are six [factors] (...) on this knowledge we have six factors (...)
- 24 TD: I have a different opinion, so, I lived in Prague so I don't know, didn't  
25 know Czech language, at all, but I could communicate with them, without  
26 language, speaking language, that is my communicative competence, it's  
27 not based on grammar (...) it's true, become easier by learning Czech  
28 language to communicate with them, but, without language we can  
29 communicate, so grammar should not be the basis (...)
- 30 P/D: (...) maybe knowledge and experience might be another factor,  
31 background (...) those kind of knowledge and experience, a little bit  
32 different, related to the six factors, maybe different

This extract shows the differences of opinion between our group members and other participants. On one hand, Participants A and B questioned the lack of grammatical knowledge in Figure 4.2. This tallies with the following idea:

it is challenging for Japanese students to make phrases or sentences without understanding basic English grammar knowledge (Iwai, 2009, p.88).

On the other hand, Teacher D's idea of communicative competence, as seen in lines 24–29, which is grounded in his own experience abroad, does not assume the need for attention to grammar. Similarly, as seen in lines 17–20, Teacher A called into question the idea of including grammatical knowledge as the seventh factor, and instead suggested that the term 'in our own words' (in the explanation of 'originality' in Figure 4.2) might assume language knowledge. What attracted my attention was Participants C and D's idea of 'background' (or 'a big circle') as seen in lines 21–23 and 30–32. Their comments suggested the need for further

study on the background of communicative competence, possibly symbolised as context.

The second time I received critical feedback was at my presentation at the Faculty Research Seminar at York St John University which took place on February 18, 2015 (Kondo, 2015a) and at my upgrade meeting at York St John University on March 16, 2015. Both observations suggested to me an idea of a hierarchical model of communicative competence. As a comment on my presentation (Kondo, 2015a), one participant suggested that 'creativity' and 'originality' might be more advanced factors than the others, in that they are not separable from the social and political context since people might break rules to adapt themselves to the situation. Although this appears to be contrary to the idea from relevant literatures that beginner learners should also be encouraged to use coping strategies as part of the development of their creativity, the participant's comment suggested to me an idea of theorising context for a better understanding of creativity and originality. This then encouraged me to study the concept of context, in the same way as the two participants in the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014, as mentioned above. The other comment from the linguistic viewpoint which I was given at my upgrade meeting assumed three dimensions of language performance: 'accuracy', 'fluency' and 'proficiency'. One member of the panel suggested that one can get proficiency through developing creativity and originality, on the basis of accuracy and fluency. This appeared to tally with the above-mentioned participant's comment on my presentation (Kondo, 2015a) which viewed creativity and originality as more advanced skills, and the two participants' comments at the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 which insisted on grammatical knowledge. The feedback confronted me with the fact that I was not ready to give a satisfactory explanation in my own words for why I do not see those six factors developing hierarchically, and why I do not assume grammatical competence as part of communicative competence.

Since my upgrade meeting was just before the fourth individual interview with the research participants, I decided to ask them for their opinions on these comments. In order to help visualise the feedback I had got, I produced the following two more provisional models of communicative competence (Figures 4.3 and 4.4): Figure 4.3 is a revised edition of Figure 4.2 and implies the relationship between communicative competence and context. Figure 4.4 reflects my new thinking based on the feedback I received, as mentioned above, and shows the development of communicative competence from a hierarchical understanding of

the growth of one's linguistic capacity. I showed them to the research participants during the interviews:

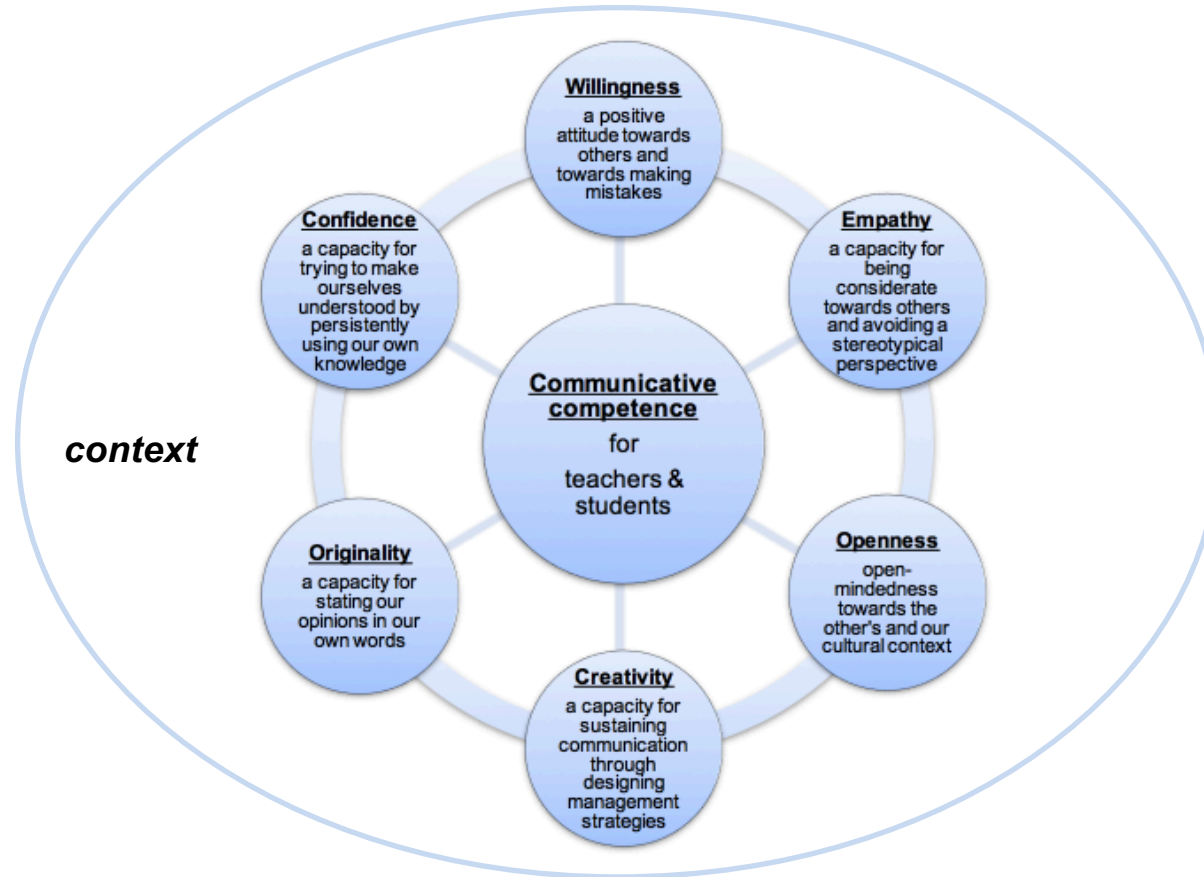
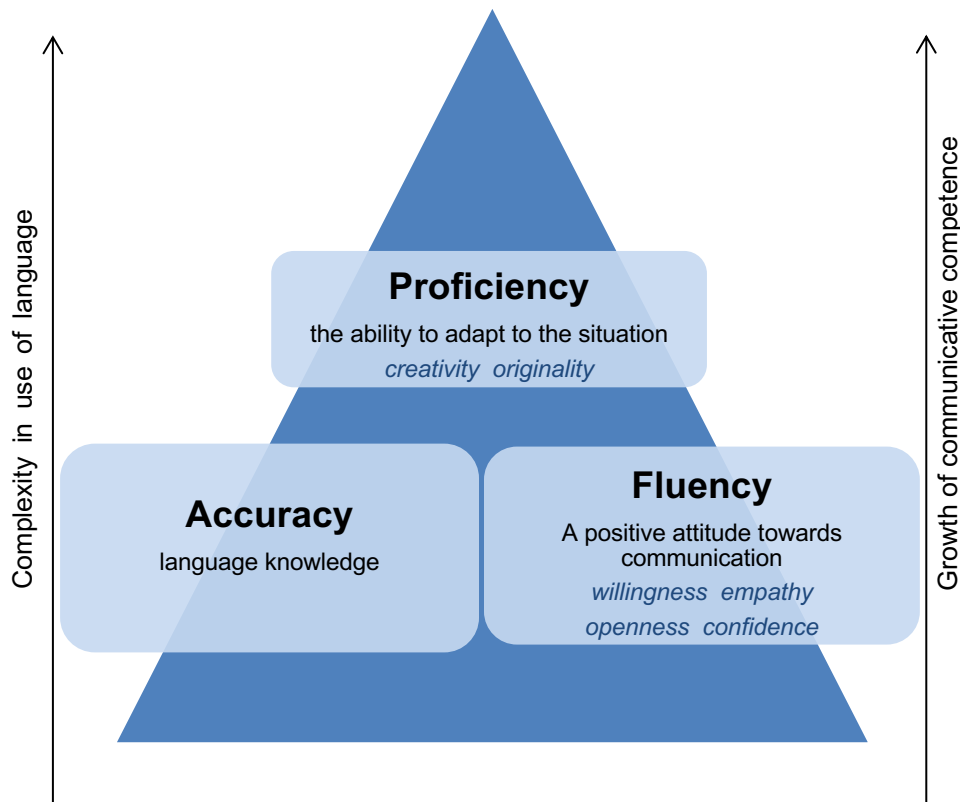


Figure 4.3: How one can become a competent communicator from a holistic view



**Figure 4.4: How one can become a competent communicator from a linguistic perspective**

#### 4.5.2 Feedback from the research participants

The following extract shows part of the feedback from Teacher B when I asked him for his opinions about Figures 4.3 and 4.4:

##### Extract 4.4

---

Teacher B's comments on Figures 4.3 and 4.4  
 Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2015a, my translation)  
 TB = Teacher B, K = Author

---

- 1 K: I have produced these two models through getting some feedback from
- 2 others, can you give me your honest view on these? (...)
- 3 TB: (...) I think it depends on the target group of people, well, we have
- 4 been discussing with a mind to our students, I am afraid that Figure 4.4
- 5 might demand a lot from my students (...) I feel I can use Figure 4.3 more
- 6 easily by comparing with my students (...) some teachers might have an
- 7 idea from Figure 4.4 that they should focus on fostering students'
- 8 accuracy and fluency first (...)
- 9 K: I wonder if creativity and originality may be more advanced factors,
- 10 different from [other factors], what do you think about this?



- 11 TB: but, rather than advanced, I think one can grow creativity and  
 12 originality as he/she develops other factors, although there might be some  
 13 levels [of creativity and originality] (...) but, I think the initial model [Figure  
 14 4.2] is very well-balanced (...) I have never thought that creativity and  
 15 originality are more advanced factors

In my view, Teacher B's comment that Figure 4.4 demands a lot from students, as seen in line 5, implies that students might feel there are many steps to be gone through before they can become competent in speaking English. This made me aware of the need to become conscious of 'whose interests' (McNiff, 2014, pp.24–25) the model represents, which Teacher B might have implied by saying 'depending on the target group', as seen in line 3. Having questioned a hierarchical idea for communicative competence as shown in Figure 4.4, Teacher B suggested the interrelationships between the six factors which corresponds to Savignon's (1997 and 2002) account of the interrelationships between each component of communicative competence, as quoted earlier. The next extract shows part of the feedback from Teacher D:

#### Extract 4.5

---

Teacher D's comments on Figures 4.3 and 4.4  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

---

- 1 K: I would like to have your comment [on these models] (...)  
 2 TD: (...) Figure 4.4 shows communicative competence assuming  
 3 language use, if assuming language use, it would be appropriate, but I  
 4 don't think we have discussed whether communicative competence  
 5 assumes language use or not (...) when two people, who don't have any  
 6 knowledge of the other's culture or language, are trying to communicate  
 7 (...) what makes communication possible might be not grammar, but  
 8 something like human natures we innately have in common (...) even if  
 9 we don't know the phonetic aspect of language, we might have some  
 10 knowledge concerning language use such as gestures (...) I feel Figure  
 11 4.3 is more consistent with my perspective (...) willingness for  
 12 communication would be the starting point even if we don't have language  
 13 knowledge (...) Figure 4.4 might give Japanese people the impression of  
 14 teaching grammar and vocabulary first before communication, which had  
 15 been the mainstream of English language education in Japan

Teacher D mentioned that we had not discussed before whether communicative competence assumes language use or not, as seen in lines 4–5. This meant that I should have discussed more about the concept of communicative competence with the research participants at the beginning of the project. As noted in lines 7–10,

what Teacher D valued in communicative competence was 'something like human natures we innately have' other than grammar. He made the same point at the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 where he said grammar should not be the basis of communicative competence, as quoted above. One other point to be noted is that both Teachers B and D were concerned about how Figure 4.4 might be interpreted by others including other English language teachers. As seen in the extracts above, the two teachers were concerned that Figure 4.4 might lead other English language teachers to focus on accuracy first, which is quite contrary to our group's perspective and my own perspective on English language learning/teaching. Subsequently, Teacher C gave me her feedback by email (Teacher C, 2015a). In Teacher C's thinking, accuracy and fluency are not the main foci in language learning, although beginners tend to focus on them. Teacher C accordingly wrote that she would support Figure 4.3 as a more natural and appropriate model. The research participants' critical feedback made me aware of the fact that what I was doing seemed to have started to digress from what I wanted to do (namely, to make a contribution to teacher professional learning and to support their teaching for the development of their students' communicative competence) and made me think about why that had happened. It might have been that I came to work on this study as a PhD researcher, rather than their colleague teacher and a collaborative researcher, while being away from the research participants and a Japanese school context. I then returned to the comment from Teacher D, 'willingness for communication would be the starting point', which reminded me of one of Teacher A's definitions of communicative competence, 'a desire to understand the other positively' as quoted above. It also made me recall what the starting point of my PhD study and our group practice was: the question about the mainstream policies which are simply seeking test scores, and our intending to challenge the mainstream, as seen here in Teacher B's comment, 'I would like to demonstrate something which cannot be measured by scores' (Teacher B, 2014b). Something which 'can' be measured by scores implies accuracy, which involves grammatical competence, so Figure 4.4, which assumes accuracy, does not fit our purpose. Further, the research participants, as well as relevant literatures, do not support a hierarchical idea for communicative competence which views creativity as a more advanced factor, although originality is not discussed in light of this view in the literatures as far as I know. Therefore, I decided to take Figure 4.3 as the provisional model, and reconsider communicative competence in relation to context through relevant literatures, based on the others' suggestion as mentioned

above. By doing this, I aimed to establish better grounds for my explanation of our perspective for communicative competence and of the reasons why it does not assume grammatical competence or a hierarchical process of learning language as seen in the idea of developing proficiency on the basis of accuracy and fluency.

### **4.5.3 Understanding communicative competence in relation to context**

Among relevant literatures, I looked mainly at Gee's (2005) view on context as the basis for my further investigation of communicative competence in relation to context. My reason for this decision is as follows. As discussed in chapter 2, the MEXT Course of Study appears to aim at helping students to produce 'Discourses', a term coined by Gee which means the combination and integration of language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing and valuing (Gee, 2005, p.21), as mentioned earlier. Therefore, I hoped that reviewing Gee's view of context and language underpinning the notion of Discourses would lead to an appreciation of the nature of communicative competence leading to the production of Discourses. Gee (2005, p.57) defines context as 'an ever-widening set of factors that accompany language in use'. It includes:

the material setting, the people present (and what they know and believe), the language that comes before and after a given utterance, the social relationships of the people involved, and their ethnic, gendered, and sexual identities, as well as cultural, historical, and institutional factors (Gee, 2005, p.57).

This suggests context is not a peripheral 'background' of communication, as I assumed earlier, but intricately intertwined with our everyday communication. On the other hand, we also shape context by bringing our 'language resources' and 'values' with us in communication (Canagarajah, 2014, p.85). Gee (2005) describes the relationship between language and context as 'reflexivity':

language and context being like two mirrors facing each other and constantly and endlessly reflecting their own images back and forth between each other (Gee, 2005, p.97).

Here are two examples that illustrate reflexivity between language and context. The first example is Gee's (2005, pp.64-65) notion of 'situated meanings'. We interpret meanings of words or utterances in relation to context, in that we 'assemble' meanings of words or utterances 'based on the context', and at the same time interpret the context 'based on the situated meanings we assemble' (ibid., p.65). Gee illustrates this with the following two utterances: 'The coffee spilled, get a mop' and 'The coffee spilled, get a broom'. When someone hears the former utterance, he/she may imagine coffee as a liquid and a wet floor to be wiped off. When hearing the latter, he/she may imagine grains of coffee to be swept up. These are situated meanings assembled 'on the spot' by the person based on the context which includes the person's experiences related to the thing coffee (ibid., pp.64-65). This suggests that meanings are 'not general' if we consider them 'in their actual contexts of use' (ibid., p.53). It also suggests that meaning itself is 'an active process' because it is 'negotiated by people in interaction' (ibid., p.65). Similarly, Gumperz (1992, pp.230-232) refers to a relevant notion of 'situated interpretation', and explains how it is 'intrinsically context-bound' as follows:

Situated interpretation of any utterance is always a matter of inferences made within the context of an interactive exchange, the nature of which is constrained both by what is said and by how it is interpreted (Gumperz, 1992, p.230).

Supposing meaning is not general, grammatical competence which indicates the recognition of 'sentence-level grammatical forms' and their use for interpreting and forming words/sentences (Savignon, 2002, p.9), does not appear to be general either. This may contradict a hierarchical understanding of viewing grammar knowledge as one of the bases of communicative competence, as seen in Figure 4.4. Also, this suggests that grammar knowledge may be increased through practice in actual communication, as seen in Savignon's (2002, p.8) idea of the interrelationships between the four components of communicative competence.

The second example of the reflexivity between language and context is Gee's (2005, p.32) other notion of moving a 'Discourse grid'. We have repertoires of Discourses, which Gee describes as a Discourse grid, on our own Discourse map (ibid., p.32). Based on the context of actual communication, we produce appropriate Discourse by moving the 'boundaries' of each Discourse by ourselves

or through being led to do so by the other (ibid., p.32). This suggests the following: first, our Discourses are not general but 'always relevant to the whole [Discourse] grid or [Discourse] map' (ibid., p.32). Second, our Discourse map may be an active process, in that we increase our Discourses through reflecting on our repertoire of Discourses and producing new Discourses by adapting Discourses in stock. Third, if we have more repertoires of Discourses, we may be able to cope with more varieties of context of communication. On this point, Gee explains giving students a 'bigger and better Discourse map' as teachers' fundamental role (ibid., p.32). In my view, giving students a bigger and better Discourse map may be relevant to developing each student into 'a whole person who participates in a wide variety of social relationships with others' (Horwitz and Horwitz, 1977, p.109). Fourth, it might be communicative competence that helps us become more flexible in moving our Discourse grid. This means that the six factors as seen in Figure 4.3 may help us move the boundaries of each Discourse by complementing each other according to the actual communicative situation, considering the interrelationships and complementarity among those factors as suggested above. This indicates that we cannot decide orders of priority among those six factors.

These two ideas, 'situated meanings' or 'situated interpretation' and 'a Discourse grid', clearly illustrate reflexivity between language and context. To use Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014, pp.27-28) term, the relationship between language and context might be 'a cline', 'the two poles of the cline'. 'Between these two poles' (ibid., p.28), we may interpret situated meanings, and produce appropriate Discourses by moving the boundaries of our Discourses on our own Discourse map. In other words, between the two poles, we may constantly negotiate meanings, practise awareness of differences between one another and adapt ourselves to the situation. This demonstrates that our everyday communication and our communicative competence are inseparable from context, as implied in Figure 4.3.

Considering the relationship between language and context has helped me become more confident in articulating our group's idea for communicative competence. As mentioned in chapter 1, in my view, communicative competence means how we can communicate with others more effectively towards mutual understanding. I think becoming a competent communicator indicates that in relation with others, we learn to understand them positively without stereotypical perspectives. It also indicates that in relation to ourselves, we learn to become confident with ourselves (including our way of speaking English) and state our own

opinions in our own words without minding making mistakes or correctness of form. It further indicates that in relation to interactions with others, we learn to become engaged in ongoing conversations with tenacity, to choose appropriate communication strategies for sustaining communication and achieving communication goals, and try to become more competent communicators through socialising with others. These qualities may be represented by the following six factors: willingness, empathy, openness, creativity, originality and confidence, as explained above. They help us communicate with others effectively towards mutual understanding interrelatedly, not on their own, as also explained above. We can develop the qualities represented by these six factors through practice in the context of actual communication. Our grammar knowledge can also be increased through gaining experiences of negotiating and interpreting situated meanings in the context of actual communication. In fact, assuming or insisting on grammar knowledge (accuracy) can be a barrier to the increase in communicative competence, because being concerned about correctness of form can discourage us from enjoying communication with 'a relaxed attitude' (Canagarajah, 2014, p.93). Therefore, I would claim grammar knowledge is secondary to the qualities represented by those six factors in developing communicative competence. Further, a relevant literature emphasises the significance of 'attending to both the standard and local Englishes' in conceptualising communicative competence (Leung, 2005, p.139). However, I do not necessarily stress that idea, although I have tried to conceptualise the meaning of communicative competence from a plurilithic understanding of English. That is because we Japanese do not have our local variety of English; conflict between standard and local varieties, choosing between them, acceptance of the other or blending them does not actually matter to us. Rather, we Japanese, and those who learn/use English as an additional language, may get a new repertoire of Discourses for another medium (English language) on our own Discourse map. However, while the medium (language) is different, what we are expected to do in actual communication may be the same; we are expected to produce appropriate Discourses through constantly reflecting on how we communicate with others and reflect back our reflections in our new Discourses. Thus, a process of developing communicative competence is a 'practice-based learning' (Canagarajah, 2014, p.85) process; similarly, Savignon (1976, pp.4-9) views communicative competence as 'not a method' but 'one of process'. It is not structured, linear or hierarchical but context-bound and discursive. It is 'socially constituted, interactively sustained, time-bound' (Goodwin

and Duranti, 1992, p.6). In this process, we learn to find ways of increasing our repertoires of Discourses, in order to produce appropriate Discourses and 'enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity' (Gee, 2005, p.21). Taking the above into account, I have decided to take Figure 4.3 as our conceptual framework of communicative competence.

The process of my investigating communicative competence turned out to contain the useful lesson that both critical feedback from others and my own reflection on it can inform new and more understandings of situations and practices. I do not think this presents my current best thinking and I recognise that I should continue to study communicative competence and develop my thinking. However, through reconsidering communicative competence in relation to context, I think I have been able to establish better grounds for my explanation of our perspective for communicative competence and of why it does not assume grammatical competence or a hierarchical process of language learning.

#### **4.5.4 Understanding communicative competence in relation to language**

As discussed in section 4.4.6 about the nature of 'confidence', the 'relaxed attitude to language ownership' which 'look[s] beyond correctness of form' (Canagarajah, 2014, pp.92-93) may be the key to developing confidence in communication. As shown here, our conceptualization of communicative competence as presented in Figure 4.3 accommodates language competence, which may include how we can effectively apply naturally occurring language as a source of language knowledge. This may suggest a need for the use of corpora, which means 'a large collection of written or spoken language, that is used for studying the language' (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 5th Edition), in language teaching and learning. A corpus includes, for example, 'everyday conversations, lectures, seminars, meetings, radio and television programmes, and essays' (Huang, 2011, p.481), which nowadays we can easily have access to online. Having recognised some debates around the use of corpora in the literature, it seems to be agreed that 'corpus data enrich our understanding of language use and are an important resource for language teaching and learning' (ibid., p.482). There may be need to research how we can create our own corpora in our use of English language, without using big corpora such as the British National Corpus, given that such large corpora are, inevitably, based on ideas about 'proper' English. One possible idea

would be that Japanese English language teachers who are interested in local uses of English can create our own corpora, using texts produced by Japanese users of English and users of English that our students might be interested in interacting with. This would suggest possible new pedagogical ideas for English language teaching in Japan and also help me develop our current conceptualisation of communicative competence as presented in Figure 4.3.

## 4.6 Summary

Heron and Reason (2001) explain 'how we know' in light of 'four different ways of knowing' as follows:

knowing will be more valid if our knowing is grounded in our experience, expressed through our stories and images, understood through theories which make sense to us, and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives (Heron and Reason, 2001, pp.183-184).

Our journey to investigate communicative competence started from sharing each other's thinking which had been established as a result of reflection on our experiences. Next, through giving a form to our joint perspective by diagramming it (Figure 4.1), as part of the reflective process within the group, we continued to inquire into communicative competence, which developed Figure 4.1 into our conceptual framework of communicative competence as the collective theory of the group (Figure 4.3). Further, we may have possibly moved into communicative action where we communicated what we did and valued to others in our lives, as mentioned earlier and about which I give details in chapter 5. Thus, we have followed four different ways of knowing which Heron and Reason explain can reach 'beyond the primarily theoretical, propositional knowledge of academia' (ibid., p.183). This may support our collaborative inquiring process to generate the collective theory of the group on communicative competence and its validity. Accordingly, I hope we have been able to suggest a possibly more appropriate understanding of the meaning of communicative competence for use in a Japanese context. I would further claim the following. First, the way of conceptualising communicative competence which I have explained in this chapter may meet with both 'internal credibility' ('meaningful' to the research participants)



and 'external credibility' ('convincing those uninvolved in the research that the outcomes are believable') (Burns, 2010, p.85), in light of the following process:

- '*triangulation*' of theoretical frameworks from relevant literatures, the thinking of the research participants and the feedback from others, which includes '*perspectives comparison*' between my reflections which have developed as the research was going on;
- '*member-checks*' between the research participants, by my asking them for their feedback on Figures 4.3 and 4.4;
- '*cyclical iteration*' of revisiting and revising the model of communicative competence, as seen in the developmental process from Figure 4.1, 4.2 to 4.3 (ibid., p.86, emphasis in original).

This process has also enabled me to 'build on previous evidence' and broaden my thinking, which has led me to further triangulation and worked as a 'guard against researcher bias' (ibid., p.86). Second, Figure 4.3 may be used not only in a Japanese context but regardless of contexts, in that it has been developed in light of:

- the thinking of the research participants and myself, who live and work in Japan (a monolingual country);
- relevant literatures some of which focus on multilingual communication;
- the feedback from others both in Japan and the UK.

Third, our conceptualisation of communicative competence as seen in Figure 4.3 may be used as both a 'theoretical' and 'practical' source (Savignon, 1997, p.16) for language teachers all over the world. That is, it may help those teachers reflect on and (re)design their class activities through reflecting back their own understanding and interpretation of communicative competence. It may also help each of them to think for themselves about how to develop as a 'language user' (Gießler, 2012, p.132) throughout their career.

Although my study of communicative competence arose from my questioning of government policy on the teaching and assessment of 'communication abilities', teachers are required to assess students' communicative competence in English. My study would suggest that observing students' attitudes towards communication, as represented by the six factors in Figure 4.3, may be one possible way of

assessing communicative competence, although further research and discussion on this are needed.

Having investigated the nature of communicative competence and established our group's perspective on it, in the next chapter I review how the research participants and I have worked together through presenting my provisional claims to knowledge. This has led to a recognition of what teachers' communicative competence may mean, and what the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might include, as my second research question.

## **Chapter 5**

### **My provisional claims to knowledge**

#### **5.1 Chapter preview**

The two-year project reported here, in which the research participants and I worked together, has led to my being able to make some provisional claims to knowledge. In this chapter, I outline these, as well as the standards of judgement and the evidence selected to support them, with the aim of ‘evaluating [my] practice’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.127) in the action research group, in collaboration with the research participants. Here is the summary of what I outlined in chapter 3, in terms of my data analyses and evidence generation in which I incorporated McNiff and Whitehead’s (2011) framework for doing content analysis. This means that I followed an action research framework, in order to present the evidence at the validation meeting:

- I identified my provisional claims to knowledge as coding categories, in order to show what I have done throughout this study;
- I set my standards of judgement to communicate how well my provisional claims to knowledge were being fulfilled;
- I selected data from my data archive that shows the instances of my standards of judgement so that they can stand as evidence, and did content analysis on them in order to turn the data into evidence;
- I tested the validity of my provisional claims to knowledge, in relation to these standards of judgement and the evidence generated at the validation meeting (ibid., pp.150-155).

As also mentioned in chapter 3, the process of analysing data in relation to standards of judgement, which is a key methodological procedure for generating evidence, was not a linear process. It was an ongoing process of revisiting selected data, comparing them with standards of judgment, rethinking standards of judgement and revisiting my data archive. Table 5.1 shows my provisional claims to knowledge and standards of judgement. Also, a note on terminology, I use the word ‘they’ for the research participants, and ‘we’ for the research participants and myself:

**Table 5.1: My provisional claims to knowledge**

<b>My provisional claims to knowledge</b>	<b>My standards of judgement</b>
(1). I have helped each research participant become a reflective teacher researcher.	Each research participant has recognised the significance of learning from their experience through reflective practice during our working together.
(2). I have co-constructed my original teacher education methodology with the research participants so that it is relevant and appropriate to their needs and contexts.	(a). I have produced their interview summaries in light of their ideas and feedback. (b). We have discussed how our group learning can be developed.
(3). I have contributed to the development of a new knowledge base of English language teacher education in Japan.	(a). I have explored the effectiveness of a person-centred dialogic form of teacher education. (b). I have investigated the effectiveness of collaborative learning in a teacher community.
(4). I have helped the research participants transform their communicative competence into communicative action.	They were encouraged to develop interpersonal communication in order to communicate their values and reach intersubjective agreement with others.
(5). I have developed my capacity for communicative competence into my Discourses.	I have developed the capacity for interpersonal communication to communicate my values and reach intersubjective agreement with LEEPs, teachers and the British Council.

I hope that presenting these carefully generated standards and accompanying evidence to show their fulfilment can contribute to the ‘trustworthiness’ of my study (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.161). I also hope that all evidence shown in this chapter demonstrates the development of my capacity as an action researcher and an independent researcher who is able to ‘undertake an educational enquiry in an appropriately critical and balanced fashion’ (McNiff, 2014, p.167), as well as supporting my provisional claims to knowledge.

## **5.2 My provisional claims to knowledge1**

Table 5.2 shows my first provisional claim to knowledge and standards of judgement:

**Table 5.2: My provisional claims to knowledge 1**

<b>My provisional claims to knowledge 1</b>	<b>Standards of judgement</b>
I have helped each research participant become a reflective teacher researcher.	Each research participant has recognised the significance of learning from their experience through reflective practice during our working together.

Most of the evidence shown in the next two sub-sections is cited in chapter 3 in relation to the action research methodology for this study. I cite it again as evidence to show the instances of my first provisional claims to knowledge.

### 5.2.1 Evidence 1

The following extracts show how Teacher A's thinking about learning from her experiences for further development has changed. The first extract shows part of the conversation between Teacher A and myself at the first group meeting:

#### Extract 5.1

---

Before going into the process of reflective practice  
 The first group meeting, 22/05/2014 (Teacher A, 2014a, my translation)  
 TA = Teacher A, K = Author

---

- 1 K: looking back through the last school year, are there any aspects you
- 2 want to improve (...) strengthen (...) change [in your English class]?
- 3 TA: I do not want to change very much, last year (...) I did my best in my
- 4 own way, although I was not able to produce good outcomes, I would like
- 5 to continue rather than change

As seen in lines 3–4, Teacher A appreciated her previous year's practices, apart from the quality of the outcomes. This might have made her unable to raise the issue in her practices, because she was not able to '[problematize] what appears to be unproblematic' (Tsui, 2009, p.434). Ignoring the process of 'problem setting' deprived her of the chance to reflect on 'what is wrong' and 'in what directions the situation needs to be changed' (Schön, 1983, p.40). Instead, it allowed her to 'continue' her practice rather than 'change', as seen in line 5. However, shortly after she read the transcription of what she had said during this interview, which I sent her, she emailed favourably to me as follows:

reading the transcription made me more confident and motivated (...) through reflecting open-mindedly on myself, I was able to accept what I could not do and remember what I wanted to value, with which I am very happy (Teacher A, 2014b, my translation).

It appeared that reading the transcription led Teacher A to accept the reality which was the consequence of her past practices informed by what she had valued. The fact that she reaffirmed her values which she would live out might have made her 'confident and motivated'. During the next interview, she referred to the significance of reflecting on her practices, a process that was triggered by seeing the same transcription which I had sent her again before the interview. My intention in sending the transcription of the previous interview again was to help the research participants reflect on what they had said and re-reflect on their practices, as mentioned earlier:

#### Extract 5.2

---

Moving towards the process of reflective practice

Interview with Teacher A (Teacher A, 2014c, my translation)

TA = Teacher A, K = Author

---

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | K: well, I sent you the transcription of the previous interview again, did        |
| 2 | reading it again help you reflect on this school term?                            |
| 3 | TA: (...) well, it is important to reflect on our practice isn't it?, I think an  |
| 4 | actual entity is important, well, reading [my reflection] by letters, yeah as I   |
| 5 | told you yeah (( <i>laughter</i> )) our thoughts do not remain, they are always   |
| 6 | rewritten right? (( <i>laughter</i> )) nevertheless our thoughts have remained in |
| 7 | the transcription, which means a lot (( <i>laughter</i> ))                        |

As discussed in chapter 3, reading the transcription again enabled Teacher A to reflect on her previous thinking which normally she would have forgotten. This allowed her current and previous thinking and practices to be related to each other, which might have helped her recognise her experiences as a 'continuous process' (Tamai, 2016, p.34), not a one-off event. Subsequently, the day after the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014, she emailed me as follows:

I can confirm that the value of this project is giving us the opportunity to reflect on ourselves (...) It is also what is great about this research that we are not always passive (...) I am afraid I might be getting exhausted again, but I am confident of saying that I know how to deal with that and where I can do that (Teacher A, 2014e, my translation).

In my view, 'how to deal with that' and 'where to do that' may denote 'practising reflectively' and 'in relation with others' respectively. Given that reflecting open-mindedly on herself at the first group meeting was the turning point for her thinking on reflective practice, dialoguing with others may play a significant role in teacher professional education. This tallies with Cook's (2009, p.286) account that sees '[keeping] conversations going' as the role of facilitators. In addition to this, helping teachers to see the relationships between their 'successive experiences' (Dewey, 1998, p.43) may also be part of the role of facilitators/teacher educators, as Tamai (2016, p.34) claims 'it is us, the educators, who are to facilitate the process of growth [of experience]'. In our project, reading the transcriptions/interview summaries seemed to provide this opportunity.

### 5.2.2 Evidence 2

The following three extracts show how Teacher B's thinking about reflecting on his practice for further development has changed. A significant difference can be seen between his responses to my usual first interview question (whether reading the transcription of the previous interview or interview summary helped them reflect on their practices). My intention in asking the question was to see what reflecting on themselves through reading transcriptions or interview summaries meant to them:

#### Extract 5.3

---

Before going into the process of reflective practice  
 Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2014b, my translation)  
 TB = Teacher B, K = Author

---

- 1 K: did reading the transcription help you reflect on this school term?
- 2 TB: ((*laughter*)) well, yes, it did yes yes yes
- 3 K: well, ah, well, regarding the fourth question in the questionnaire

As denoted in line 2, Teacher B laughed before answering my first question. Reading the transcription might have confronted him with the reality that his target for the school term ('students' mutual learning' which was documented in the transcription) still remained an issue, as he mentioned during the interview. Although subsequently he answered in the affirmative, he did not continue his words, which moved me onto the next question, as seen in line 3. This quotation may indicate that he did not yet 'allow himself to experience' the frustrating reality (Schön, 1983, p.61) that his target for the school term still remained an issue. It

appeared that the transcription worked just as a reminder of the frustrating situation. However, during the same interview, he started to face up to this, which led him to notice that his way of posing questions might have needed to be reconsidered. In the next interview, he told his story to me positively after responding to the same first question:

#### Extract 5.4

---

Moving towards the process of reflective practice  
 Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2014c, my translation)  
 TB = Teacher B, K = Author

---

- 1 K: did reading the interview summary help you reflect on yourself?  
 2 TB: yeah very I realised what I had said, yes I read it while remembering  
 3 what I had done  
 4 K: (...) have you found any changes in your thinking?  
 5 TB: (...) well, I mentioned I would change how to pose questions last time,  
 6 yeah, then, well, when asking new questions, I realised I had tended to  
 7 pose single-answer questions, yeah, I thought that was not good, during  
 8 this term, for example I tried to ask not 'What does it mean?' to make the  
 9 students guess the meaning, but 'How about making sentences with this  
 10 idiom?', 'What kind of sentences do you think of?', well, I mean self-  
 11 expression?, without simply giving answers, I was able to stay conscious  
 12 of encouraging students to make sentences with new knowledge during  
 13 the second term

Setting a problem (how to improve the way of posing questions) led him to notice that he had tended to pose single-answer questions, as seen in lines 6–7. He accordingly changed his way of asking questions so that instead he posed open-ended ones in order to better enhance his students' self-expression, as seen in lines 8–11. His positive response to my usual first interview question, as seen in lines 2–3, may imply that by setting a problem, the interview summary worked not as a reminder of the frustrating situation but as evidence of his learning from his experiences. During a later interview, he talked about reflective practice as follows:

#### Extract 5.5

---

Reflective practice as part of teachers' daily practice  
 Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2015b, my translation)  
 TB = Teacher B, K = Author

---

- 1 K: looking back on this year, do you think that it [reflective practice] was of  
 2 help to your professional development?



3 TB: yeah (...) teachers should reflect on not only their teaching but also  
 4 other practices (...) I often reflect on my way of conducting the school  
 5 band through watching the video, with consciousness of the points to be  
 6 considered and improved, this is the same [as reflective practice], right?,  
 7 in that I reflect [on my practice] for further improvement, beyond teaching  
 8 subjects, we teachers need [to reflect on ourselves]

As seen in lines 4–7, Teacher B came to realise that he had done reflective practice in his real-life context, as a conductor of the school band as well as an English teacher. This served to increase his familiarity with reflective practice, and helped him confirm the value of reflective practice, as seen in lines 7–8. Thus, I believe that I can reasonably say that I have encouraged and enabled Teachers A and B to come to recognise the significance of learning from their experiences.

### 5.3 My provisional claims to knowledge 2

Table 5.3 shows my second provisional claim to knowledge and accompanying standards of judgement:

**Table 5.3: My provisional claims to knowledge 2**

<b>My provisional claims to knowledge 2</b>	<b>Standards of judgement</b>
I have co-constructed my original teacher education methodology with the research participants so that it is relevant and appropriate to their needs and contexts.	(a). I have produced their interview summaries in light of their ideas and feedback.  (b). We have discussed how our group learning can be developed.

#### 5.3.1 Evidence 1 in terms of (a)

As mentioned earlier, I had been trying to find ways to summarise the interviews with the research participants, in order to save them time in reading the previous transcriptions, and so make it easier for them to find and learn something from their stories. It was then that I discussed the issue with Teacher D:

## Extract 5.6

## How to summarise interviews

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014c, my translation)

TD = Teacher D, K = Author

- 
- 1 K: they [the other research participants] told me that they appreciated  
 2 transcriptions (...) therefore, I would like to produce something like  
 3 portfolios, however, I have too much data, am trying to find ways to deal  
 4 with them (...) do you have any ideas?
- 5 TD: (...) I think that you can only narrow down the focus
- 6 K: narrow down the focus, well, I see
- 7 TD: to tidy them up, narrow down the focus, see how the person has  
 8 changed (...) changes in his/her thinking, some [changes] happen,  
 9 definitely (...) I think reading transcriptions helps me reflect on my  
 10 practice, however (...) this transcription says that I said I had changed,  
 11 comparing with what I had said in the previous interview (...) [because  
 12 I do not remember what I said before] if both are placed together, I  
 13 could see how my way of describing issues has been changing (...)  
 14 [analysing] why those changes happened might be a good point in  
 15 teacher education

Teacher D gave me three practical suggestions: 'narrowing down the focus' (line 5), 'finding their changes' (lines 7–8) and 'placing the same points together for making a comparison' (lines 12–13). He also suggested that I analyse the reason 'why those changes happened' as a key idea in teacher education, as seen in lines 14–15. This is based on his assumption that our thinking as well as our actions changes.

I accordingly started to produce their interview summaries to be updated after each interview and sent to share with them (see Appendix F). As seen in Appendix F, I have asked similar questions each time, in order to see the development of their thinking and practices. The column 'descriptions' shows Teacher D's action plans for the next term and, in addition, the fact that he actually carried out his action plans. The column 'notes' shows how Teacher D's main ideas on communicative competence have broadened. These aspects might have developed the interview summaries into records containing the evidence of the teachers' ongoing professional learning, not just the record of a series of reflective practices. During a later interview (Teacher D, 2015a), Teacher D told me: 'When I see someone who accepts the present situation, I have always told myself that I would not be like that' (my translation). He then appreciated the interview summary as follows: 'There is the evidence of my changes here, that makes me happy' (my translation). Another research participant appreciated their interview summary because:

It highlights what I am thinking now (...) I can see the development of my thinking and my practices very [well], seeing them written down makes my thinking very clear (Teacher C, 2015b, my translation).

As seen in these quotations, the interview summaries turned out to be a tool that enabled the research participants to visualise where they had come from and where they were currently as well as standing as evidence of the development of their thinking and practices.

### 5.3.2 Evidence 2 in terms of (b)

During the interviews, I asked the research participants for any ideas or suggestions that could contribute to developing our group learning, and occasionally discussed the issue. My intention was to develop our group learning to meet their needs and contexts through discussing ideas with them. I organised a forum and a shared folder on social networking spaces at their suggestion. While the forum was not actively used, the shared folder was used as a means of circulating my presentation slides, big data such as a sheaf of questionnaires and materials such as lesson plans. However, exchanges of those materials through the shared folder took place mainly between them and me rather than between themselves. This became a significant topic during one interview:

#### Extract 5.7

---

How to develop our group learning

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014c, my translation)

TD = Teacher D, K = Author

---

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | TD: you refer to our group as a community, but, at this moment, as a        |
| 2  | community, although each member is directly connected with you, we do       |
| 3  | not have [much] connections between us [the research participants]          |
| 4  | K: that is an issue, isn't it?  |
| 5  | TD: that might be an issue, how can we establish them?, to do so, we        |
| 6  | should do that without relying on you (...) [a group of LEEPs that I belong |
| 7  | to] has been developing as a spontaneous learning community, therefore,     |
| 8  | in the same way, for example (...) we are not using our forum [you have     |
| 9  | organised] effectively (...) if starting to exchange information [on the    |
| 10 | forum] and share materials in Dropbox, that would make a difference         |

Teacher D mentioned 'the lack of communication between the research participants' as an issue, as seen in lines 2–3. Comparing our group with a group

of LEEPs which he belonged to, he also suggested more effective use of the forum and the shared folder, as seen in lines 9–10. Consequently, this remained an issue throughout the project. The teachers' heavy workloads might have become an obstacle to such activities, considering that I sometimes had problems working out the schedule for interviews. Apart from this, I would claim that we have produced some positive results in studying communicative competence and working collaboratively through reflective practices, as shown in this thesis. Given that the group of LEEPs which Teacher D belonged to 'developed as a spontaneous learning community', these issues may be topics for my future research and professional practices.

In this way, I have tried to incorporate the research participants' ideas into our collaborative practice. This was based on the idea that teacher education programmes should be 'relevant, [and] tailored to needs' (the Council of the European Union, 2009, p.8), which I understand to mean that teachers and teacher educators explore teachers' needs and establish the relevance between their needs and the course of professional education collaboratively.

## 5.4 My provisional claims to knowledge 3

Table 5.4 shows my third provisional claim to knowledge and standards of judgement. Although the two standards of judgement look contradictory to each other, I would claim that the evidence below demonstrates the significance of 'a person-centred' and 'collaborative' aspect in teacher professional education:

**Table 5.4: My provisional claims to knowledge 3**

<b>My provisional claims to knowledge 3</b>	<b>Standards of judgement</b>
I have contributed to the development of a new knowledge base of English language teacher education in Japan.	(a). I have explored the effectiveness of a person-centred dialogic form of teacher education.  (b). I have investigated the effectiveness of collaborative learning in a teacher community.

### 5.4.1 Evidence 1 in terms of (a)

By the term 'a person-centred dialogic form', I mean that teachers practise reflectively while working regularly with a mentor who documents and analyses the development of their learning. In this context, a mentor helps teachers study their practices and find ways of improving them. This includes the four dimensions of teachers' professional learning: action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration as discussed earlier. While this idea assumes teachers in relation with others in a teacher community, it places its main focus on each individual teacher's professional development. By this thinking, 'the exchange of teaching ideas' (Matsuda and Matsuda, 2001, p.114) may not be at the core of teacher community learning. Teacher D explained as follows, how things go if the main focus of teacher community learning is placed on the exchange of teaching ideas:

#### Extract 5.8

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The difficulty of sharing teachers' life experiences  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014b, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | K: what do you think of the idea of focusing on your [research participants'] narrative reflections and sharing your practices? |
| 2  |   |
| 3  | TD: I think they are good (...) at the programme for LEEPs, we had a  |
| 4  | chance to demonstrate and share our communicative teaching materials,   |
| 5  | however, it was difficult for us to describe exactly how we had felt in class,  |
| 6  | how our students had worked on the materials (...) I think everyone felt  |
| 7  | irritated with demonstrating their practices, although we tried to  |
| 8  | demonstrate the class with the same material, we were not able to do very   |
| 9  | well (...) even if we use the same material, our classes might be very  |
| 10 | different (...) I wondered how I could keep the facts as records  |

As seen in lines 5–9, the LEEPs, including Teacher D, found it difficult to share teaching ideas in a form of lesson demonstration in the British Council-led programmes. This may show the limits of teacher gatherings which are only for 'the exchange of teaching ideas'. This also led him to think about the possibility of recording his practices and possibly how he had thought at the time, as seen in line 10. This encouraged me to document what each research participant said during interviews as the records of their thinking and practices. This form of teacher education assumes the existence of a facilitator. The idea was agreed by a research participant as follows:

## Extract 5.9

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The advantage of working with a facilitator

Interview with Teacher C (Teacher C, 2015b, my translation)

TC = Teacher C, K = Author

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- 1 K: do you think that a facilitator is necessary? (...) what do you think of  
 2 that?  
 3 TC: I think so (...) I need someone to talk with (...) by working with a  
 4 facilitator, I can design the cycle of reflective practice more easily, [during  
 5 my master's study] I practised action research without the idea of  
 6 collaboration, although I talked with my then supervisor (...) about real-life  
 7 classroom situations, I felt the gaps between the then supervisor's advice  
 8 [and my real-life context] (...) it is necessary for me to have someone in  
 9 my real-life context to facilitate [my reflective practice]

As noted in lines 5–9, Teacher C appreciated working with myself as an insider facilitator who was one of her colleague teachers, which appears to have arisen from a difficulty she had experienced during her master's study; she had felt the gap between her then supervisor's advice and her real-life teaching context. Working collaboratively in our group contributed to her learning about the collaborative nature of action research. Having received this supportive comment, I discussed the possibility of applying this person-centred and dialogic form of teacher education in the actual teacher education context as an aspect of my future practice, as follows:

## Extract 5.10

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The possibility of applying a person-centred and dialogic form of teacher education

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation)

TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- 1 K: I wonder if it would be possible to document teachers' reflective  
 2 practice in the actual teacher education context (...)  
 3 TD: peer-observation followed by discussion would be possible, but (...) it  
 4 would be meaningless if that results in simply praising each other,  
 5 documenting [our reflections] by ourselves sounds very difficult, doesn't  
 6 it? (...) I think that this approach is good, as a mentor, you ask the same  
 7 questions each time, and document and share what we said, which I think  
 8 is very good

Teacher D implied the advantage of working with a facilitator on peer-learning, in that both teachers and a facilitator may be able to work more objectively. This denotes that '[reflecting] on [our] own teaching through the eyes of [our] colleague' (Wennergren, 2016, p.268) might possibly narrow the scope of our professional learning. It may be reflecting on our own teaching through 'our' eyes while working

collaboratively that we aim at a person-centred and dialogic form of teacher education.

#### 5.4.2 Evidence 2 in terms of (b)

The value of collaboration in teacher professional learning is discussed as follows:

Individual teachers cannot significantly improve their practices in isolation without opportunities for discussion with professional peers and others operating in a significant role relationship to them (Elliott, 1993, p.176).

The following two extracts may show that the value of collaboration in teacher professional learning is not only about discussing matters with other teachers:

##### Extract 5.11

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The value of collaboration 1

Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2015b, my translation)

TB = Teacher B, K = Author

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- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | K: I have been wondering if the model of communicative competence                    |
| 2  | has influenced your practice and thinking  |
| 3  | TB: I think it has (( <i>laughter</i> )) (...) by working with and getting new ideas |
| 4  | from other teachers, I have changed myself, so, not only the relationship            |
| 5  | with you, but the relationships between us meant a lot to me (...) well,             |
| 6  | eventually, we don't have the opportunity to observe classes of, or                  |
| 7  | shared ideas with the teachers from other schools, so, I think this project          |
| 8  | became a good opportunity and a start.   |
| 9  | K: (...) what do you think of collaboration?   |
| 10 | TB: it is definitely indispensable (...) every student is different, my way of       |
| 11 | teaching does not always work, by developing my way of teaching                      |
| 12 | through learning from other teachers, eventually, my students, not                   |
| 13 | myself, can benefit from that, well, we cannot change ourselves without              |
| 14 | a chance of collaboration  |

As seen in lines 13–14, Teacher B emphasised the importance of collaboration for the changes he made to his practice. Specifically, he appreciated working with 'the teachers from other schools' who he normally does not have a chance to interact with, as seen in lines 6–8. Nagasaki (2012, p.18) discusses the value of cross-school cooperation in the prefecture where he has done his research where many schools are small-scale and teachers tend to lack the opportunity to interact with

other teachers. Considering that the city where the research participants and I have been working holds a number of large-scale schools, the value of cross-school cooperation may be a contributing factor for teachers' professional development regardless of the scale of a municipality. However, the presence of schools on a large-scale does not necessarily mean more interactions between teachers, and collaboration among teachers may be something that needs to be facilitated. Further, Teacher B added that his changes through collaboration could eventually benefit his students, as seen in lines 10–13. Another research participant supports Teacher B's idea:

#### Extract 5.12

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The value of collaboration 2

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015b, my translation)

TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | K: I learnt the need of collaboration in reflective practice from literatures,  |
| 2 | do you agree with that?   |
| 3 | TD: I definitely agree with that, I get stuck and bored if I do by myself (...) |
| 4 | when we can't be reflective, don't know well or don't know what to do, the      |
| 5 | clue can often be found outside ourselves, not inside ourselves                 |

This may be consistent with my discussion about the methodology in chapter 3; collaboration and reflective practice are two of the main principles which ground the action research methodology for this study. Teacher D also implied that collaboration gave him the clue to learning from his experiences, as seen in lines 4–5. This may support my thinking that the main focus of collaborative learning is placed on each individual teacher's professional development. Such evidence may demonstrate that both 'person-centred' and 'collaborative' aspects are essential to teacher professional learning. Considering that collaboration needed to be facilitated in the cascade project as discussed in chapter 2, it could be assumed that the existence of a mentor/facilitator may also be indispensable in teacher professional learning.

## 5.5 My provisional claims to knowledge 4

Table 5.5 shows my fourth provisional claim to knowledge and standards of judgement:



**Table 5.5: My provisional claims to knowledge 4**

<b>My provisional claims to knowledge 4</b>	<b>Standards of judgement</b>
I have helped the research participants transform their communicative competence into communicative action.	They were encouraged to develop interpersonal communication in order to communicate their values and reach intersubjective agreement with others.

Our collaborative practice which started by trying to understand the nature of communicative competence has led to our co-constructing a collective theory of the group's communicative competence. This has then led to our trying to communicate our understandings of our practices to others. In other words, this may be that we have developed our capacity for our own communicative competence. In my view, we may have started to take 'communicative action', in which we aim for:

intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus about what to do in this particular situation (Habermas 1996, cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.296).

Greenwood and Levin (1998, p.117) also explain that 'an arena', as the basis for communication between group members, 'allows communicative actions to take place'. The following extracts may show that each research participant has started to move into communicative action.

### **5.5.1 Evidence 1**

Teacher D started to communicate to his colleague teachers how he appreciated the 'empathy' that he valued most in his practice, and to try to influence their thinking. During an interview, he started to talk about his open class spontaneously, describing how our collaborative practice encouraged him to take this action:

## Extract 5.13

## Moving into communicative action 1

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015b, my translation)

TD = Teacher D, K = Author

- 1 TD: ah, this is a very different topic (...) I opened my class (...) I  
 2 organised the class as usual in such a way that strong students helped  
 3 weak students (...) the teachers of other subjects seemed likely to get  
 4 greatly amazed by the fact that my students were willing to go to help  
 5 other students when I suggested that (...) a younger colleague in the  
 6 same year, about one month later, told me, 'In my science class (...) a  
 7 student who finished the task quickly asked me if he could go and teach  
 8 his friend, when I said yes, he stood up, went to help the other student, I  
 9 experienced that for the first time' (...) my open class seems likely to  
 10 have given [the teachers of other subjects] the opportunity to think of how  
 11 they could apply pair activities in their classes (...) afterwards, other  
 12 younger colleagues told me that the students asked them, 'Can I go and  
 13 help other students?' (...)
- 14 K: well, good, if the circle of empathy has been growing in that way, they  
 15 would be a great year.
- 16 TD: (...) I have been practising this [speaking] activity for more than ten  
 17 years, feeling that it has been going better and better, then getting the  
 18 feedback [above] from other colleagues after my open class (...) I  
 19 decided to open my class to other colleagues because I have had the  
 20 opportunity to think a lot through talking with you

Teacher D has valued 'empathy' among the factors comprising the collective theory of the group on communicative competence, which meant the establishment of sympathetic relationships among students. His idea had a great impact on the teachers of other subjects, and possibly raised their awareness of building empathic relationships among students in their classes. The fact that his students practised 'empathy' outside his English class, as seen in lines 5–9 and 11–13, might have possibly supported his trying to reach intersubjective agreement about 'empathy' with his colleague teachers. Lines 19–20 suggests that working with me helped him become confident enough to communicate what he valued in his practice to his colleague teachers through an open class.

### 5.5.2 Evidence 2

Teacher C repeatedly mentioned 'empathy' as her primary focus in communication during the interviews. Her commitment to the development of students' communicative competence and her eagerness to learn as an English language teacher inspired her to participate in an exchange programme for Japanese English language teachers in the USA run by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign

Affairs in 2015. That turned out to be an opportunity for her to reaffirm the collective theory of the group on communicative competence. She emailed me as follows:

When joining a lecture about the diversity in English and cultures at a university [in the USA], I asked a question of what characteristics might be required in consideration of the diversity. [The speaker] answered 'Tolerance, expectance [expectancy], respect', which I think are relevant to communicative competence (Teacher C, 2015c, my translation).

On her return to Japan, Teacher C started to communicate the value of empathy outside classrooms, explaining her understanding of leadership, which she took as being able to respect and empathise with others, at a student leaders' meeting.

The following is drawn from email correspondence between us:

I think that your main focus in communicative competence is empathy, because you first mentioned 'consideration' at the first group meeting. Learning that the keywords for the current diversity are 'tolerance', 'expectance' [expectancy] and 'respect' through the programme, and finding that they are closely related to empathy, I think you have become more confident of your thinking. That led to your current practice in which you are communicating to your students the value of empathy confidently. Participating in the programme led you to reaffirm your values, right? (Taken from email to Teacher C, 8 October 2015).

Having received your great comment, I have become sure that the trials and errors which I had repeated were not useless! I appreciate that!! (Teacher C, 2015d, my translation).

Her action, in which she communicated what she valued outside classrooms in facilitating student leaders, has also made me recognise the significance of continuing to develop our understanding of communicative competence by practising it in our real-life context.

### 5.5.3 Evidence 3

Teacher A has started to think about the way of broadening sympathetic relationships ('empathy'), which she has valued most in her practice, not only within her English class but also at the school level. During an interview (Teacher A, 2014a), she mentioned increasing her students' smiles in class as one of the targets for the next school term. During the next interview (Teacher A, 2014c), she mentioned that she was able to see more students' smiles by introducing self-expression activities in class. Having recognised that increasing interactions in class led to a happier class atmosphere, she got the idea of spreading a circle of smiles within the school. The idea appeared to reflect her concern that the teachers' heavy workload might have influenced the teacher-student relationships in a negative way, which she mentioned during the same interview:

#### Extract 5.14

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Moving into communicative action 2

Interview with Teacher A (Teacher A, 2014c, my translation)

TA = Teacher A, K = Author

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1 K: what is your target for the next school term, in order to develop students'  
2 communicative competence?

3 TA: (...) besides focusing on the ability to sympathise with others (...) [for]  
4 the better relationships between [students and] teachers, well, in English  
5 classes, for example, offering more topics related to their teachers, including  
6 self-expression activities in which students introduce their school teachers,  
7 so that students see their teachers more positively through expressing  
8 themselves in English (...) [I am planning to] encourage students to  
9 communicate what this teacher is like, this is what I like about this teacher  
10 for example (...) I hope this will lead to more conversations [between  
11 students and teachers], this is communication, right?, I would like to broaden  
12 [their communication context] outside the English textbook

Linking her hope to make a happier school atmosphere with her commitment to find ways to develop students' communicative competence, she described a new class activity idea in which her students talk about their teachers, as seen in lines 5-8. Through this new activity, she aimed to contribute to better relationships between the students and other teachers, as well as broadening the students' learning context, as seen in lines 12-13. In this way, she decided to take action in order to communicate what she valued in her practice to others.

### 5.5.4 Evidence 4

Teacher B decided to communicate how he appreciated ‘empathy’, which he valued most in his practice, to new students. Since he mentioned forming good relationships between students through sharing their opinions as his target at the beginning of the project (Teacher B, 2014a), he had considered how to attain it. Having recognised the need to change his way of posing questions, as seen in extract 5.4 above, and tried to pose questions with an awareness of encouraging students’ self-expression, not single-answer questions, he came to see changes in his students. He said during a later interview, ‘They are helping each other well (...) even weak students have come to complete the task with others’ help’ (Teacher B, 2014c). This seems likely to have encouraged him to communicate what he valued to his new students:

#### Extract 5.15

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Moving into communicative action 3

Interview with Teacher B (Teacher B, 2015a, my translation)

TB = Teacher B, K = Author

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | K: upon being in charge of the first year students, what is your target for |
| 2 | the new school term, in terms of developing students’ communicative         |
| 3 | competence?   |
| 4 | TB: well, it is the first school term [for them], so, first I would like to |
| 5 | communicate to them what is important in English classes is helping each    |
| 6 | other through communicating in English (...) I would like to introduce more |
| 7 | interactive activities so that they can understand each other well          |

Thus, the research participants have possibly moved into or got ready to move into interpersonal communication in order to communicate what they value (coincidentally, all valued ‘empathy’) to their colleague teachers, students, the whole school and future students as well as increasing their students’ capacity for empathy in class. Heron and Reason (2001, p.179) explain that good research generates the ‘creative action[s] of people to address matters that are important to them’. The research participants’ actions as shown above which were generated through our working together might support the significance of this study. How the research participants have developed mutual understanding with others about the idea of ‘empathy’ may need to be further researched.

Also, the research participants’ taking the initiative as explained above might imply what teachers’ communicative competence may mean. In my view, it may be

teachers' ability to think 'what to do in this particular situation' (Habermas 1996, cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.296) and communicate what they have done to others towards shared understandings and the further development of these shared understandings and practices. In this thinking, it may be that the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might mean their becoming more confident with their thinking which informs their practices and with their taking the initiative in communicating their thinking and practices to others more positively. It may suggest that helping teachers' becoming more confident with their thinking is a significant role of teacher educators.

## 5.6 My provisional claims to knowledge 5

Table 5.6 shows my fifth provisional claim to knowledge and standards of judgement:

**Table 5.6: My provisional claims to knowledge 5**

<b>My provisional claims to knowledge 5</b>	<b>Standards of judgement</b>
I have developed my capacity for communicative competence into my Discourses.	I have developed the capacity for interpersonal communication to communicate my values and reach intersubjective agreement with LEEPs, teachers and the British Council.

### 5.6.1 Evidence 1

I sent out two kinds of open-ended questionnaires, as mentioned earlier, to LEEPs who participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014 (see Appendix D), and to teachers who participated in LEEP-led teacher education programmes in 2015 (see Appendix E). In the questionnaires, I asked the following questions, as seen in table 5.7 below, as well as for their reflections on those programmes. My intention was to encourage them to think for themselves and give their own opinions about the current English language education and teacher professional education, regardless of policy and popular discourses which tend to agree with policy:

**Table 5.7: Questionnaire questions towards intersubjective agreement**

<b>Extract from questionnaire for LEEPs (see Appendix D)</b>
(1). The Course of Study states, 'To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages' (MEXT 2012, p.1, as in original). What do you think 'communication abilities' means?
(2). Please describe your opinions about what MEXT (2013b) states: 1. About 'teaching English in principle in English at junior high school level'; 2. About MEXT's idea of introducing popular English proficiency tests into assessment of students' English ability and university entrance examinations.
(3). If you have ever attended a teacher education programme or workshop, please mention which one was most helpful in terms of professional development.
(4). Based on your experience, what do you think in-service teacher education programmes should be like?
<b>Extract from questionnaire for teachers (see Appendix E)</b>
(2). General opinion about English language teacher education: 1. What do you want (or need) to learn, for your professional development, on teacher education programmes? 2. What do you think would be useful and beneficial for your professional development? (For example, participating in seminars/workshops; learning in a 'teacher community'; in your school; learning by yourself; or something else?) 3. What do you think teacher education programmes should be like?
(3). The latest policy (MEXT, 2013b) identifies the pre-first grade in the STEP test or a score of more than 80 in TOEFL iBT as the minimum requirements for Japanese English language teachers. What do you think about this decision? You may wish to comment on the required level (pre-first grade/80), on the design of the tests, or on the relationship between English language level and good teaching.
(4). What do you think the needs of Japanese English language teachers should be, in this postmodern, globalised era in which varieties of English are spoken all over the world?

The answers of the LEEPs and the teachers to the questions above present the following similarity and contrast:

- In the same way as the LEEPs valued collaborative learning with other LEEPs as mentioned in chapter 2, 'learning from other teachers' experiences' was mentioned by the teachers most, as a form of desirable teacher education programmes;
- Ten out of the 15 teachers agreed with MEXT's idea that equates scores with the needs of English language teachers, while most of the LEEPs called it into question.

The contrast above might indicate that most teachers tend even reluctantly to follow top-down recommendations. This might be because previous teacher

education events made those teachers passive trainees, and did not given them the opportunity to think for themselves about their professional learning pathway. Levin (1998, p.139) suggests the idea of ‘strengthening the public mind on education to increase “resistance” to policy in order to prevent what policy communicates from spreading widely. In my view, continuing to give teachers the opportunity to think for themselves about their practices and their own professional development, not just critically looking at policy, may be relevant to strengthening their minds on education. Although I did not follow up those respondents, I at least tried to encourage them to do the same as we did: question the current educational context and think for themselves about their professional development.

### **5.6.2 Evidence 2**

As mentioned earlier, I held the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 with one of my supervisors (see Appendix J). One of the aims of the workshop was raising Japanese English language teachers’ awareness of varieties of English, and encouraging them to think for themselves about their professional development according to their local needs and contexts. The workshop gave me a chance to communicate this study to the local educational community members, who were mainly practising English language teachers in the city. The significant topics in my presentation were as follows:

- (1) what is action research?;
- (2) what does communicative competence mean?;
- (3) reviewing the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014, based on my questionnaire-based study on LEEPs;
- (4) reviewing how the research participants and I worked together;
- (5) my perspective towards English language teacher education.

In terms of (4), I explained the process of how the research participants and I had practised reflectively while working together. My presentation appeared to have given the workshop participants the idea of ‘studying ourselves’ through reflective practice, as seen in the following comments. Please note that I got the participants’ approval for possibly using their written reflections anonymously as data through previously distributing a consent form (see Appendix K):



I was really impressed by the presenter's words, 'I'm studying myself (...) This session made me realize we shouldn't take everything for granted and should try to find [a] 'new myself' (Participant 1, as in original).

It was a good opportunity to think of myself (Participant 2, as in original).

Another reflection may imply the significance of the workshop being led by me, as one of their colleague teachers:

I am VERY happy to attend a conference in which an INSIDER, someone who understands our situation is leading the discussion (Participant 3, as in original).

These positive comments encouraged me to communicate this study widely to practising teachers as my ongoing practice. Following my presentation, my supervisor explained how we can understand the current English language in this globalised era, explaining 'monolithic' and 'plurilithic' concepts of English (Hall and Wicaksono, 2017) as mentioned in chapter 2. Table 5.8 provides a selection of the workshop participants' written reflections in English. I organised these in light of the possible impact of the workshop on the participants' learning as coding categories:

**Table 5.8: Participants' written reflections on the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014**

Possible impact	Participants' written reflections on the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 (20/12/2014, as in original)
1. The workshop possibly raised awareness of varieties of English and the contradiction in MEXT's policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is [the] 'Standard' [for] teach[ing] English in EFL classrooms? (...) It was a good chance to think about this question.</li> <li>- I have a big question [for] the Japanese Government [about their] ideas for English language education [which] they are planning now. Because [their] goal depend[s] on 'Standard English' being tested by TOEFL.</li> </ul>
2. The workshop possibly identified what was really the issue and spotlighted their dilemma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I agree that the concept of 'Standard English' is useless (...) However (...) we need to teach them [students] what is correct so that they won't get confused.</li> <li>- Some of students' writings or words are 'acceptable' but still 'inadequate' as answer[s] for the exam. I feel, sometimes, it's limited to teach them language at school. I haven't found an answer yet.</li> </ul>
3. The workshop possibly encouraged them to challenge the existing reality positively and think for themselves about what they could do in their context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I realized today that teaching language has much more possibility than [what] I'm doing now.</li> <li>- Now I try to be a model English speaker [for] native Japanese.</li> <li>- I want my students to use English freely. Don't be afraid of mistakes and 'Standard English'.</li> <li>- We teachers are required to [have an] open mind toward the world and [to] keep studying what English is.</li> <li>- We can be flexible with our ideas and teaching methods, and for this we need to have many workshops.</li> <li>- Many people outside of the English education context strongly believe there is one 'Standard English'. How we can change their belief is one of the big challenge[s].</li> </ul>
4. The workshop possibly laid the foundation of a teacher learning community culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To make today's session [a] more useful experience, we will reunite again in the near future and share our experience[s].</li> <li>- We should share our ideas and communicate (...) We have to keep studying and [supporting] each other.</li> </ul>

My experiences at formal teacher education programmes revealed little attention being given to varieties of English: it can be said that the LIdIA workshop helped the participants open their eyes to the reality that varieties of English exist and accordingly increase their sensitivity to MEXT's policy. Their written reflections show their dilemmas between what they 'desire to see exist' (valuing varieties of English) and 'what actually exists' (the need to teach 'correct' English as a school subject or for exams) (Burns, 2010, p.81). On the other hand, the participants appeared to have started to think about what they could do to deal with the existing realities. This includes what they can do both inside and outside the classroom; such as becoming a model of an English speaker of native Japanese (in class), and continuing to learn about English language and thinking about how to influence others who believe in Standard English (outside the classroom). Thus, the written reflections may show that the workshop helped the participants reflect on the implications of what they gained at the workshop for their professional practice as we expected. I also hoped that the participants would start speaking about varieties of English and the equal standing among these varieties at school and in their English classrooms. By doing this, I hoped those small individual actions would make a difference in the local English classrooms in a transformational way, even if it was a small difference. Further, the workshop led one participant to introduce my study to all the junior high school English language teachers in the city through their annual journal 2015 (see Appendix K). This turned out to be an opportunity for me to communicate my practices to them in this way. The English translation of the extract from the article is shown below:

Ms Tamiko Kondo is currently studying at York St John University in the UK. While temporarily back in Japan in December last year, she held a workshop and made a presentation (...) Some members from the regional English language teachers meetings have been working with her, communicating what classroom teachers have to say. Having been shocked at policy, Ms Kondo began this study. At the workshop, she presented her perspective towards communicative competence including the following six factors, based on her study (...) The workshop participants got involved in active discussion, agreeing with the idea that communicative competence cannot be measured by tests. Ms Kondo also reviewed how the LEEPs, who participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014, responded to MEXT's policy (...) Ms Kondo is saying that she would like to contribute to the development of English language teacher education on her return to Japan. She is also saying that she has been researching how to support Japanese English language teachers. I am very proud to

have her as one of our colleague teachers (Shiba, 2015, my translation).

Thus, the workshop has led to the participant's further action, based on her decisions, and possible future connections between her, myself and other English language teachers in the city. This may imply that I have reached intersubjective agreement with this participant about the need for reconsidering the nature of communicative competence rather than following MEXT's policy, which led to her action towards further intersubjective agreement with others. This is significant in that it can encourage those involved to think for themselves about their practices and their own professional development, which could increase their 'resistance' (Levin, 1998, p.139) to policy and prevent what policy communicates from spreading widely.

### **5.6.3 Evidence 3**

Presenting this study at the British Association for Applied Linguistic Conference 2015 (Kondo and Wicaksono, 2015) gave me the opportunity to talk with the British Council Tokyo. That conversation took place because Board Member A from the British Council, who was among the audience, introduced to me board members from the British Council Tokyo, who had been responsible for MEXT's cascade project. This enabled me to communicate my practices to Board Members B and C at the British Council Tokyo on December 8, 2015. (My primary intention was to hold a forum on English language teacher education in the city in collaboration with the British Council Tokyo, however this did not take place because of other scheduling agreements.) I produced a consent form with information about ethical guidelines to be distributed at the meeting (see Appendix M), and the board members returned the signed forms to me. I recorded the meeting for later analysis of our communication. It proceeded as follows:

1. reviewing my questionnaire-based studies on LEEPs and teachers who participated in the cascade project;
2. my suggestions for the improvement of the cascade project;
3. reviewing my study as a PhD researcher;
4. the British Council's observation on the above;
5. discussion.

The outline of the communication with the British council is shown in Table 5.9:

**Table 5.9: Outline of communication with the British Council (08/12/2015, Tokyo)**

Issues	My perspective	British Council's perspective
(1). How to reflect on the cascade project	- Questionnaire responses from 10 LEEPs who participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014, and 15 teachers who participated in a LEEP-led teacher education programme in 2015	- Collecting feedback from LEEPs, teachers, the Board of Education officials - Observing LEEP-led programmes across Japan - Checking the LEEPs' video lessons which were submitted
(2). Background ideas of the cascade project	- MEXT (2013b), referring to 'teaching English in principle in English at junior high school level' (as teachers' general understanding)	- MEXT's idea of developing teachers' ability to improve students' 4 skills of English, more English use in class (as in the British Council's understanding) - British Council's idea that speaking and writing have not been focused on enough in class in Japan (from the British Council's experience)
(3). Objectives of the cascade project	- Improving teachers' ability to teach English in English (as teachers' general understanding)	- Developing teachers' ability to integrate speaking and writing in reading and listening lessons - Giving teachers practical ideas on how to use more English in class
(4). Teacher education methodology in the cascade project	<p>- Based on transmission approach</p> <p style="text-align: center;">British Council → LEEPs → Teachers</p> <p>- Limiting method (LEEPs have to follow the exact British Council method)</p>	<p>- Based on 'active' approach (LEEPs practice actively)</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph LR     BC[British Council] --&gt; L[LEEPs]     L --&gt; T[Teachers]     BC -.-&gt; T     T -.-&gt; BC     </pre> <p>(no transmission here)</p> </div> <p>- Adapting method (how to adapt the British Council method is the key part of the training, however LEEPs are required to communicate how they would modify the material to the British Council for quality control)</p>

(5). Trainers' background	- Outsider trainers (= the British Council)	- Insider trainers (practising teachers deliver training)
(6). Background belief of the project	- Native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005, p.6)	- Japanese teachers who speak English are a better model than native speakers of English to students
(7). Effectiveness of the cascade project	- LEEPs → networking and interacting with other LEEPs which took place outside the programmes - Teachers → getting new ideas (according to my questionnaire-based study as discussed in chapter 2)	- The cascade project is more powerful than teachers' attending British Council-led seminars, in that LEEPs deliver training by using their own experiences, with their identity (Japanese speakers of English) - The Board of Education can see what is going on in the actual teacher education setting
(8). Relevance between the cascade project and real-life teaching context	- 6 out of 11 LEEPs/12 out of 15 teachers mentioned the gaps between teaching strategies they learnt at the programmes and their real-life teaching context (in terms of level, time, relevance with the Course of Study or MEXT-authorized textbooks, language use, their expectation/needs), or between the programmes and their future practice (in relation to the new Course of Study, Can-Do lists)	- The cascade project was designed through checking the MEXT-authorized textbooks, linking with the Course of Study, in addition to plenty of experience of working with Tokyo municipal junior high schools, different Boards of Education across Japan
(9). The cause of the differences of perspective identified	- Policy (MEXT 2013b) has greatly influenced teachers' perspective on the cascade project, teachers have simply linked the policy (whose headline is 'teaching English in principle in English at junior high level') with the cascade project	- British Council-led programmes are monolingual, which might have led to misunderstanding that the programmes focus on a monolingual instructional strategy - Suggesting a different way of teaching might have led to the feeling of 'no relevance between the programmes and their teaching context' - 10 days are not enough for full mutual understanding between the British Council and LEEPs, which might have led to lack of communication - The program objective should be communicated beforehand (MEXT → the Boards of Education → teachers), it is also published on MEXT's home page

(10). About linguistic aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assumptions about 'dominant varieties' of English and 'native-speakerism' are greatly influencing policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no 'Standard English' any more</li> </ul>
(11). How to develop the cascade project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Systematising collaboration among LEEPs</li> <li>- The Board of Education officials/local university researchers could work with LEEPs, as mentors</li> <li>- Encouraging teachers to share their practices at LEEP-led programmes towards the creation of a teacher learning community</li> <li>- Raising teachers' awareness of what MEXT and policy requires them to do, as well as being well-informed of the programme objective</li> <li>- 'A reflective approach' (the Council of the European Union. 2009, p.8) could be promoted in the teacher education setting, in order to encourage teachers to learn from their experiences</li> <li>- Opportunities to learn and think about changing Englishes should be provided, according to globalisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organising 'reunion' meetings of the LEEPs for sustainable impact of the project</li> <li>- Agree with all suggestions given, although the British Council's sphere is limited</li> </ul>
(12). Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher education programmes should be person-centred, process-oriented</li> <li>- The cycles of (re)evaluation of teacher education programmes are significant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This meeting was a good opportunity to know how Japanese teachers have responded to policy</li> </ul>



The following significant points are identified:

- the differences of perspective between the British Council and myself on the background ideas and objectives of the cascade project can be seen in (2) and (3) in Table 5.9;
- as seen in (4) and (5), the British Council and I looked at the teacher education methodology and the trainers' background in the cascade project from the exact opposite points of view;
- the British Council's perspectives about the strength of Japanese English language teachers over that of native speakers of English, and their disagreement with the superiority of dominant varieties of English as 'Standard English' to other varieties of English, as seen in (6), (7) and (10), are consistent with my perspectives;
- the British Council have tried to make the programmes more relevant to the Japanese context, although the irrelevance between the programmes and real-life teaching context was identified, as seen in (8);
- the British Council have tried to consider the perspectives of Boards of Education, through getting their feedback and possibly including them in LEEP-led programmes, as seen in (1) and (7).

This meeting has led to my realising that what I thought were differences of perspective about the cascade project between us were in fact misunderstandings. It has also led to my recognising that the British Council and I share some perspectives, such as in realising the strength of Japanese English language teachers and insider trainers in teacher education, and in valuing varieties of English rather than Standard English. In terms of the teacher education methodology, the British Council do not assume a transmission approach in the cascade project; their intention was not to impose 'a passive role' (Wennergren, 2016, p.260) on LEEPs in the cascade project, although it was not recognised because of 'the lack of communication' between them and LEEPs, as they mentioned. Communicating these findings to LEEPs, teachers and the Boards of Education officials would help them appreciate the cascade project and contribute to its development. This may suggest that reaching intersubjective agreement about the outline of the project between those involved (trainers and trainees) could be a clue to its success. Further, the meeting also identified possible differences of perspective between the British Council and MEXT. That is, the

British Council do not intend to improve teachers' monolingual instructional strategy although their training programmes are monolingual, while MEXT (2013b) promotes a relevant idea ('teaching English in principle in English'). I would argue that this possible nuance of discourses between co-organisers needs to be redressed so that it would not lead to more confusion in the cascade project. Finally, these findings have led me to think about the potential of educational research for bridging the differences of perspective about education. I use the term 'educational research' to describe research concerned with the improvement of educational contexts and practices in relation to educational policy, in light of Whitty's (2006, p.173) idea:

One way of handling the distinction might be to use the terms 'education research' and 'educational research' more carefully. In this paper, I have so far used the broad term education research to characterise the whole field, but it may be that within that field we should reserve the term educational research for work that is consciously geared towards improving policy and practice (Whitty, 2006, pp.172-173, emphasis in original).

The observation that 'the British Council's sphere is limited', as seen in (11) in Table 5.9, may show the complexity of teacher education projects in which multiple stakeholders are involved. It may be the potential of educational research to bridge the differences of perspective among those involved, help them go beyond their usual spheres and make teacher education programmes more relevant to and contribute towards teachers' professional development. Doing this would help people reconsider the possibly general recognition that '[t]he role of an external agent in supporting teachers' professional development' has not always been beneficial to teachers (Wright, 2016, p.1).

Given that the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might mean their becoming more confident with their thinking which informs their practices and with their taking the initiative in communicating their thinking and practices to others, as suggested above, the evidence above may demonstrate that I have developed my capacity for communicative competence. Further, what I have communicated to others has become my Discourses, as the combination and integration of my language, actions, interactions and my ways of thinking, believing and valuing (Gee, 2005, p.21). Although the implications of my Discourses for

others' learning and practices needs to be researched, I think I have been able to take a step forward in order to reach intersubjective agreement about the current English language education and teacher professional education with those others.

## 5.7 Summary

The process of making my provisional knowledge claims, identifying and articulating standards of judgement and generating the evidence to support them eventually led to finding the answers to my second research question, which asks what the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might include. I would suggest that teachers' communicative competence may be their ability to think 'what to do in this particular situation' (Habermas 1996, cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.296), and communicate what they have done to others so as to encourage shared understandings and to possibly further develop these shared understandings and practices. I would also suggest that the improvement of teachers' communicative competence might mean their becoming more confident with their thinking which informs their practices and with their taking the initiative in communicating their thinking and practices to others more positively. Further, this may suggest the answer to my third research question: what form of teacher professional education may be conducive to the professional development of English language teachers, including the improvement of their communicative competence? It may be that a person-centred dialogic form of teacher education and collaborative learning in a teacher community, as has been the way the research participants and I have worked together, might be a form of teacher education conducive to the improvement of their communicative competence. In chapter 2, I proposed my provisional model showing how I understand a teacher professional learning process conducive to their professional development (Figure 2.2); it suggests the four dimensions of action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration to support teacher professional learning in a complementary way. Having made my provisional claims to knowledge, I would again refer to Figure 2.2 as my model: the data shown in this chapter may become good grounds for it.

Further, in chapter 4, I suggested that the model of communicative competence (Figure 4.3) may help other teachers think for themselves about how they can each develop as a 'language user' (Gießler, 2012, p.132) throughout their career.

Writing this chapter has led to my recognising how English language teachers may

develop the other two roles of 'language teacher' and 'language analyst' (ibid., p.132). They can develop themselves as language teachers through a learning process made of the four dimensions of action, reflection, autonomy and collaboration throughout their careers. In terms of becoming language analysts, relevant literatures require language teachers, as language analysts, to understand 'the forms and functions of language systems - grammar, vocabulary and phonology' (Wright, 2002, p.118). From a critical applied linguistic perspective, I would argue that English language teachers, as language analysts, should also understand ontologies of English and changing Englishes, specifically English language teachers teaching in a monolingual context such as Japan. This may help those teachers appreciate 'what [they]'re teaching', 'besides knowing how to teach it' (Xerri, 2015, p.5). In this way of thinking, English language teachers could develop themselves as language analysts through learning the status quo of English language throughout their careers. I understand that these three dimensions of professional learning may develop a Japanese English language teacher into '[a] linguistically aware teacher' (Wright, 2002, p.115).

Finally, writing this chapter has led to my recognition of the potential of educational research, as mentioned above. I had considered that educational research inspires people to change the way they 'conceptualize issues and frame problems' and their 'perceptions about what elements in a situation can be changed and which have to be accepted as given' (Weiss, 1991, p.312). I still consider this to be its significance. In addition, however, communicating with the British Council made me realise another potential of educational research, which is that it may bridge the differences of perspective among those involved, help them go beyond their usual spheres and contribute to the development of the educational context. This possibly suggests that researchers' roles may include encouraging people to think for themselves about what they value from an educational perspective and help them articulate what they value in the educational context. In fact, this may be indispensable, considering education is 'a value-laden practical activity' (Whitehead, 1989, p.44). As my first contribution to bridging the differences of perspective between the British Council and LEEPs/teachers, I reported my communication with the British Council to the local educational community members at a forum which I organised in the city where the research participants and I were working, which I explain in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### How did I test the validity of my study and my provisional claims to knowledge?

#### 6.1 Chapter preview

Through the ‘transformation of ontological values into epistemological standards of judgement’ and the generation of evidence to support them, I would claim that I have been able to demonstrate to myself ‘the internal validity’ of my provisional claims to knowledge (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, pp.155-161). I would also claim that this has helped me establish the ‘trustworthiness’ of my study and develop a ‘rigorous methodological procedure’ towards the establishment of the ‘external validity’ of my provisional claims to knowledge (ibid, pp.161-162). Having established my provisional claims to knowledge, I now move into the validation process of this study. In this chapter, I review the two validation meetings I convened for this purpose: the first one in Japan which took place on January 5, 2016 and the second one in the UK which took place on February 9, 2016. The aim of the first validation meeting was to place my research findings into the local ‘public arena’ (ibid, p.162) and get feedback from some critical friends from my ‘professional circle’ (ibid, p.165) in Japan. These participants other than the research participants were ‘not directly involved in [my] research or associated with [me]’ (ibid, p.165) but were involved in the local educational context. I hoped that incorporating their feedback into this study would enable me to show that my research outcomes were ‘more responsive to local conditions’ (Levin, 1998, p.136). The second meeting aimed at placing my provisional claims to knowledge into the academic arena in the UK where I have been studying, for public scrutiny. The participants of this meeting comprised academics mainly from the Faculty of Education and Theology at York St John University, who are some of the contributors to ‘the existing body of knowledge of [my] field’ (McNiff, 2013, p.138). I asked them to listen to what I had done, examine the evidence I had generated and consider the potential validity of my provisional claims to knowledge. I hoped that this would ensure the methodological rigour of my study. At these meetings, my own capacity for communicative competence while explaining what I had done throughout this study was tested. From this perspective, this chapter tells how I

have learned to develop my capacity for communicative competence to articulate the story of my study.

## 6.2 Validation Meeting 1

Although my primary intention to hold a forum on English language teacher education in collaboration with the British Council Tokyo did not take place, I still planned to convene a forum in the local educational context, as an extension of the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014 (see Appendix J). The aims of the forum were to share opinions about English language teacher education in response to my study, and develop deeper connections among the local educational community members. Some of the participants who attended the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014, as well as the research participants, joined the forum. This meant that the forum could be seen as a kind of ‘reunion’, and enabled me to ask for feedback from those who were able to comment on my study by comparing its then-current form with that of earlier stages. Moreover, having critical friends other than the research participants enabled me to test the validity of my study against others’ ‘critical assessment’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.162). Therefore, I viewed this forum as the first validation meeting for this study. With support from the Board of Education, I was able to convene the forum after I had communicated with the British Council Tokyo. I asked for and gained institutional approval for possibly using spoken comments from forum participants anonymously as data and I videotaped the forum for later analysis of their feedback. Table 6.1 gives an outline of the meeting:

**Table 6.1: Outline of the first validation meeting**

<b>Outline of the first validation meeting</b>	
Date	5 January 2016
Place	The Board of Education Centre, (the name of the specific place is anonymised to maintain ethical practice), Japan
How the audience was invited	- I directly contacted and invited people from my professional circle (see Appendix N) - One Board of Education official invited the other two
Participants	10 Japanese attendees - Constitution of the group of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Education officials (3)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University professor (1)</li> <li>• English language teachers (5) *primary 1 (LEEP for primary level), junior high 2 (including LEEP for junior high level), senior high 2</li> <li>• PhD researcher in the field of English language education (1)</li> </ul>
Proceedings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opening address (the Board of Education official)</li> <li>2. Participants' self-introduction</li> <li>3. My presentation Outline of the presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research summary</li> <li>• Reviewing MEXT's cascade project</li> <li>• Reviewing communication with the British Council Tokyo</li> <li>• Implications</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Discussion</li> <li>5. Closing address (University professor)</li> </ol>

Table 6.2 shows the outline of the participants' responses to my presentation:

**Table 6.2: Outline of the participants' responses at the first validation meeting**

<b>Outline of the participants' responses (Forum on English Language Teacher Education, 05/01/2016, my translation)</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Participants' responses</b>
1. LEEPs' reflection on the cascade project	<p>Reflection of the LEEP for junior high level (Teacher D) /</p> <p>(1). The content of the British Council-led programmes themselves were not bad. I have been affected by the project in that my English lessons have been changing.</p> <p>(2). I was not able to learn anything new at the British Council-led programmes, however, the teachers seem to have found something new at my (LEEP-led) programmes. This indicates that not all teachers could attain what they were expected to learn at the previous programmes, although MEXT has provided similar programmes repeatedly. This also indicates the need to change teacher education methodology.</p> <p>(3). When the programmes are implemented only in English, the teachers who are fluent in English tend to look big. I told them that what is important was the content of what they say.</p> <p>Reflection of the LEEP for primary level /</p> <p>(1). I found the content of the British Council-led programmes out-of-date, in that they used picture books, songs, card activities and phonics which we stopped using as communication has been emphasised. On the other hand, that enabled us to use those materials again, which was good for me.</p> <p>(2). The British Council's suggestion of linking English with other subjects was questioned by LEEPs. For example, we are sceptical about teaching the English names of internal organs to primary children in relation to science, which seems difficult for them.</p> <p>(3). The teachers who participated in my (LEEP-led) programmes seem to have enjoyed themselves.</p>
2. Differences of opinion between the British Council and the participants	<p>(1). In relation to the project objective All the participants assumed that the project objective was improving teachers' monolingual instructional strategy.</p> <p>(2). In relation to the project methodology Both LEEPs assumed that they had to follow the exact British Council method, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the LEEP for junior high level / I was told to follow the exact British Council method, although I adapted it when I found it difficult.</li> <li>- the LEEP for primary level / We were told to cascade what we were actually trained for.</li> </ul>



	<p>(3). Other responses</p> <p>a). These differences of opinion are serious.</p> <p>b). The differences of opinion between MEXT, the British Council and us are too big.</p> <p>c). These differences of opinion came to light as a result of your action.</p> <p>d). I appreciate your bridging the differences. I was able to clear up what was unclear to me. (The LEEP for junior high level.)</p>
3. Reflecting on the cascade project	<p>(1). If this cascade project does not suggest any new technology, LEEPs cannot pass anything new to teachers.</p> <p>(2). How can a small number of LEEPs cascade train all the English language teachers in the prefecture within five years? That shows the limitations of the cascade project.</p> <p>(3). It is unreasonable to introduce the British Council's communicative language teaching, for adult education at English conversation schools, into school education.</p> <p>(4). Examining past and current projects is significant.</p>
4. How to develop the cascade project from the LEEPs' viewpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the LEEP for junior high level / As you suggested at your presentation, I could have encouraged teachers to share their experiences at my (LEEP-led) programmes towards the creation of a local teacher learning community.</li> <li>• the LEEP for primary level / I have encouraged the teachers who participated in my (LEEP-led) programmes to open their English classes, so that I can see how they respond to my programmes.</li> </ul>
5. How to understand the current educational context	<p>(1). MEXT themselves are superficial, each time they just set a framework and ask outside experts to design things.</p> <p>(2). The English language education context is very political. The British Council has kept an eye out so that LEEPs do not adapt their method a lot, which would make it easier for them to assess the cost-effectiveness of the project.</p> <p>(3). Political and economic globalism in teacher education is revealed.</p>
6. What the participants expect me to do	<p>(1). Nothing will be changed if you [Author] do not disseminate your research widely in collaboration with the Boards of Education.</p> <p>(2). I would like you to design an effective teacher education model in your thesis. It is literally action research in that insiders pool their ideas and come up with a model, which is the most significant point.</p>
7. What the participants can do	<p>(1). We should not be at the mercy of policies.</p> <p>(2). I would like to act as a bridge between LEEPs/teachers and researchers. (The Board of Education official.)</p>

Table 6.2 above shows that the cascade project had a reasonably positive impact on the two LEEPs. The LEEP for junior high level (Teacher D) reflected that his way of teaching had changed through participation in the cascade project. Another LEEP for primary level mentioned that her LEEP-led programmes had a positive impact on other teachers. On the other hand, both of them as well as other participants referred to their concerns about the cascade project. Next, I discuss the responses shown in Table 6.2 above, and examine what they imply.

## 6.2.1 Implications

### 6.2.1.1 Implication 1

First, I recognised that the forum participants shared the same views about the cascade project as I did. This implied that there were misunderstandings between the British Council and LEEPs/teachers, since I recognised some of the same misunderstandings between the British Council and myself which are explained in chapter 5. I quote these again below. The perspectives I assumed are followed by (K), the perspectives the British Council assumed are followed by (BC):

- (1) in terms of the project objective, 'improving teachers' monolingual instructional strategy' (K), in comparison with 'developing teachers' ability to focus on students' four skills of English' (BC);
- (2) in terms of the project methodology, 'a transmission approach that LEEPs have to cascade the exact British Council method' (K), in comparison with 'an active approach that LEEPs adapt the method according to their context' (BC);
- (3) in terms of trainers' background, 'outsider trainers, namely, the British Council' (K), in comparison with 'insider trainers, namely, LEEPs' (BC);
- (4) in terms of the background belief of the project, 'native-speakerism' (K), in comparison with 'the strength of Japanese speakers of English as trainers over native speakers of English' (BC).

In terms of (1) above, Table 6.2 shows that all the participants assumed that the aim of the project was to improve teachers' monolingual instructional strategy, in the same way as I did. They agreed with my view that policy (MEXT, 2013b) has greatly influenced teachers' thinking in such a way that they have simply linked

what the policy communicates ('English should be taught in principle in English at junior high school level') with the cascade project, as mentioned in chapter 5. This suggests that there may be many teachers/LEEPs/Board of Education officials who view the aim of the project in the same way as the forum participants and myself. In terms of (2), the two LEEPs themselves recognised that they needed to follow the exact British Council method. Since the ten-day British Council-led programmes are the basis of the cascade project, knowing how to overcome this lack of communication and ensure a good trainer-trainee relationship in a short time might be key to the project's development. Considering that positioning all those involved equally as researchers led to good relationships among them (Nagasaki, 2012), as mentioned earlier, the first thing to do may be to reduce (or remove) the manner in which that the British Council transmit their teaching method to LEEPs in a top-down way. For example, the LEEP for junior high level (Teacher D) planned to ask teachers to have name tags at his LEEP-led programme in order that they might get to know each other better, as mentioned in chapter 2. This idea is a simple but useful strategy towards a good trainer-trainee relationship, in that just knowing each other's names can be the first step towards good relationships between trainers and trainees.

### 6.2.1.2 Implication 2

Second, as seen in Table 6.2, some participants pointed out the limitations of the cascade project in relation to the following points:

- (1) the difficulty of establishing the system of cascading the training to all the English language teachers in the prefecture;
- (2) the question about the British Council's perspective on language teaching, such as the idea of linking English with other subjects;
- (3) the differences between school education and adult education, which the British Council have been implementing at English conversation schools.

In terms of (1), a counterplan, such as the increase of the number of LEEPs, might be necessary depending on the progress of the project. Points (2) and (3) above might be related to the differences in 'two *cultures* in English language education' (Holliday, 1994, p.13, emphasis in original). One culture in English language education is referred to as 'BANA', the acronym for 'Britain, Australasia and North America', which means English language education in 'private language schools or

annexes to university departments' in those countries (ibid., p.12). The other one is referred to as 'TESEP', the acronym for 'tertiary, secondary, primary', which means 'non-commercial' school education (ibid., p.12, emphasis in original). The differences between these two cultures can be explained in the context of the purpose of language education. For example, in the TESEP culture:

the purpose of education is *primarily* not only to teach language skills according to the learners' sociolinguistic needs, but also to take students or pupils through a complex process in preparation for life in their society (Holliday, 1994, p.94, emphasis in original).

On the other hand, the purpose of language education in the BANA culture is seen as 'preparing students to be language users or as participants in the learning group ideal' (ibid., p.94). In other words, the BANA teachers assume 'instrumental language needs' (Okihara, 2012, p.20). This can be seen in the following British Council opinion on their webpage; they interpret MEXT's viewpoint on the cascade project as MEXT trying to shift Japanese English classrooms from 'the traditional focus on English as an academic object of study to a more skills-focused approach' (British Council, 2016). I would argue that this is inconsistent with the fact that we school teachers teach English language as part of school education. Okihara (2012, p.22) warns that 'technology transfer' between these different contexts can 'lead to an unreasonable demand on the education sites, resulting in confusion in school education' (my translation). Okihara refers to the current discussion surrounding the promotion of a monolingual instructional strategy in Japan as one such example of the confusion in school education (ibid., pp.22-23). In relation to this, the emphasis on a monolingual instructional strategy has given rise to undesirable effects in the cascade project. The LEEP for junior high level (Teacher D) was apprehensive that what qualities teachers should primarily be endowed with might be seen as less important than fluency in English, as seen in Table 6.2. I would argue that besides having recognised the differences between the BANA and TESEP cultures, MEXT and the British Council may need to re-negotiate the design of the cascade project. This re-negotiation process may be the only way to prevent confusion in transferring teaching practices from one perspective (BANA) to the other (TESEP).

### 6.2.1.3 Implication 3

Third, as seen in Table 6.2, some participants regarded the current educational context as political, in the same way as I did. The cascade project, as the first national collaboration between MEXT and the British Council, appears to be inseparable from its political and economic background, because:

although the technology transfer is initiated by both sides, it provides a major source of income, employment and status for the BANA professional-academic group, and maintains its expansion (Holliday, 1994, p.95).

In order to minimise political features, 'building partnerships among different stakeholders' (Whitty, 2006, p.170) and 'mutual learning' among those involved (Levin, 1998, p.139) are suggested. In light of these ideas, I would suggest that researchers act as intermediaries in building partnerships among the British Council, the Boards of Education, LEEPs, teachers and MEXT. Researchers could help relevant people/bodies negotiate what they value from an educational perspective; after all, it seems unlikely that those involved can learn from each other without sharing their values. Disseminating this study at the first validation meeting led the forum participants to recognise the potential misunderstandings between them and the British Council and reconsider the cascade project. This may support my discussion in chapter 5 that educational research could make teacher education projects more relevant to teachers' professional development, by bridging the differences of perspective of those involved. Through holding this forum in the city, I have possibly also helped the British Council extend their sphere.

### 6.2.1.4 Implication 4

Fourth, as seen in Table 6.2, some forum participants pointed out the need to examine both past and current teacher education projects. It seems that the previous teacher education programmes did not have the intended effects, as shown in the fact that the LEEP for junior high level (Teacher D) recognised that the teachers found something new in his LEEP-led programmes although he in particular did not find anything new in the British Council method. In addition, the

inconsistency in suggested teaching ideas such as using again the materials which had been abandoned for communication (picture books, songs and so on), might confuse practising primary school teachers. On the assumption that different stakeholders are involved in designing and implementing each teacher education project, in my view, projects need to be examined in collaboration with researchers. In addition, the policies under which projects were proposed may also need to be examined, because without examining the background behind these proposals, the same ideas might be reflected in future ones. On this point, Weiss (1991) suggests that:

policy surely should benefit from improved data on the status of current conditions, evaluation of the effectiveness of past and present programmes, and likely future consequences of alternative actions (Weiss, 1991, p.309).

In order to know the effectiveness of past and present programmes within the cascade project, it would appear that researchers need to listen to the live voices of LEEPs/teachers who have participated in the project. By doing this on a continual base, researchers can suggest possible alternative ideas towards the improvement of the project based on their findings and on what elements have been actually improved. Further, researchers could do follow-up research with those involved. For example, in terms of the positive feedback of the LEEP for junior high level (Teacher D) on the cascade project, as seen in Table 6.2, how his practices and thinking have changed through the cascade project could be researched as a possible case study. This could help policy makers/project organisers see the 'sustainable impact' of the project (Zehetmeier, 2015, p.169). Researching the impact of the project in this way could possibly provide the most beneficial data to policy makers and contribute most to the development of the teacher education project.

### **6.2.2 Impact**

Next, I outline the potential impact of my study on the participants of the first validation meeting. I would claim that:

- (1) I was able to help the participants reconsider the cascade project by suggesting that the differences of opinion between them and the British Council mostly came from misunderstandings between each other;
- (2) I was able to give the LEEPs the opportunity to reflect (again) on their (LEEP-led) programmes;
- (3) I was able to give the participants the opportunity to imagine what they could do to improve the situation, such as 'not being at the mercy of policies' and 'acting as a bridge between LEEPs/teachers and researchers';
- (4) I was able to raise their consciousness of themselves as practitioners, as seen in the following quotation:

I had considered a lot after the forum (...) now I have come to think more about how I can communicate my experiences and knowledge that I have accumulated to others (...) Recently, I have been more interested in action research as well as reflective practice. I think I should study them in order to outline my experiences and future actions, and communicate them to others. I am planning to record my practices and present them (Teacher D, 2016, my translation).

Further, I would emphasise that the forum participants requested me to disseminate my study widely, and suggest the design of a possibly more desirable teacher education model in my thesis, which I write about in chapter 7. Although I did not follow the normal validation procedure of presenting claims to knowledge, standards of judgement and evidence at this meeting, I would claim that their request for the design of a new teacher education model may demonstrate their trust in and appreciation of my practice. Considering that some of the forum participants attended the workshop which I had organised, they could have commented on my study by comparing its then-current form with earlier stages, which would have made the workshop resemble a validation meeting. However, I did not ask them for that, and the forum ended up being a meeting where views were exchanged. This point should be taken into consideration when I organise validation meetings by gathering the local educational community members in the future.

### 6.2.3 Summary

As discussed above, the first validation meeting appeared to have helped the participants to think about what they could do to deal with the existing situation. This shaped my thinking about the potential of 'educational action research' for developing one's communicative competence which can lead to communicative action. In chapter 5, I wrote about the potential of educational research that occurred to me throughout this study, which might be to bridge the differences of perspective of those involved, help them go beyond their usual spheres and make teacher education programmes more relevant to teachers' professional development. This suggests that educational research could have 'the potential to bridge the BANA-TESEP divide' (Holliday, 1994, p.13) and contribute to redesigning English language education in the TESEP context. In addition to these roles of educational research, 'educational action research' could also help people take a further step towards their professional development, by encouraging them to make their own decisions about what they do next. Then, their subsequent actions would possibly allow them to move into communicative action, which would '[open] *communicative space* between people' (Habermas 1996, cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 2008, p.294, emphasis in original). This may be the most significant contribution of educational action research.

## 6.3 Validation Meeting 2

Table 6.3 shows the outline of the second validation meeting:

**Table 6.3: Outline of the second validation meeting**

<b>Outline of the second validation meeting ('Faculty Research Seminar' at the Faculty of Education and Theology, York St John University)</b>	
Date	9 February 2016
Place	York St John University, York, UK
How participants were invited	Faculty research administrator advertised the meeting through staff email list
Participants	11 attendees - Breakdown of the constitution of participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 supervisors</li> <li>• 8 from the Faculty of Education and Theology (4 from Education, 3 from Theology, 1 Research administrator)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 from the Department of Languages and Linguistics</li> </ul>
Proceedings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opening address (my first supervisor)</li> <li>2. My presentation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1). Background</li> <li>(2). Research question</li> <li>(3). Methodology</li> <li>(4). Reviewing the cascade project</li> <li>(5). Towards teachers' professional development</li> <li>(6). How research was evaluated in the local context</li> <li>(7). Conclusions: Potential of educational action research</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Questions and answers followed by discussions</li> <li>4. Validation meeting</li> <li>5. Closing address (my first supervisor)</li> </ol>

In the letter advertising the event, participants were informed that I would audio record the meeting as a way of collecting feedback. I produced a consent form informing them of ethical guidelines (see Appendix O). The participants returned the signed forms to me at the meeting.

### 6.3.1 How the meeting participants responded to my research

Appendix P (Extract 6.1) is the transcript of part of the audiotaped proceedings in which the participants gave feedback on my study. In this section, in light of the feedback given, I explain what I learnt from the participants and my responses to their points.

First, the feedback as seen in the extract below led me to realise that my articulation lacked clarification of 'the gaps':

#### Extract 6.1a

---

Feedback from the meeting participants on my study 1  
The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)  
P/A = Participant A, K = Author  
Lines 3–8 of 44 (see Appendix P)

---

- 3 P/A: (...) you mentioned the gap between your perspectives and also from  
4 the British Council's perspective (...) you want to bridge the gap, it seems  
5 to me that you are working towards the British Council's perspective (...)  
6 my question, so, you want to bridge the gap is kind of towards mutual  
7 understanding rather than towards British [Council's] understanding?  
8 K: no, yeah, mutual understanding (...)

Participant A assumed that I was trying to bridge the gap between the British Council's perspective and my perspective by agreeing with the British Council's perspective. By using the term 'bridging the gaps' in my presentation, I meant considering together what caused the gaps (between the British Council and myself) and how we could improve the situation, namely, reaching mutual understanding. I also assumed that others thought in the same way as I did. The feedback turned out to be a good lesson in terms of how I needed to speak with 'guidance to the [listener] about how they should interpret it' (McNiff, 2014, p.70). I recognised that I needed to learn to speak for a listener, in the same way as learn to 'write for a reader' (McNiff, 2016, p.80), as my first supervisor has always advised me in terms of writing.

Second, the feedback as seen in the extract below led me to understand that my suggestion of building partnerships among stakeholders was itself superficial in that I had brought with me no concrete plans or assumptions of the blockage between stakeholders:

#### Extract 6.1b

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Feedback from the meeting participants on my study 2  
 The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)  
 P/B = Participant B, K = Author  
 Lines 9–29 of 44 (see Appendix P)

---

- 9 P/B: (...) you talked about building partnerships (...) because they  
 10 [stakeholders] are very different in nature and character (...) [they have]  
 11 different ways of operating, different cultural approaches (...) just hear a  
 12 bit more about that [building partnerships]
- 13 K: for instance (...) LEEPs can collaborate with researchers, university  
 14 academics, the Board of Education, they can become as like, kind of  
 15 mentors, and, because, at this moment, LEEPs design their own LEEP-  
 16 led programmes by themselves, so others, those others in the local  
 17 educational community, members could help LEEPs (...)
- 18 P/B: what do you think so far might be the sticking point (...) on the basis  
 19 of different cultural practices or backgrounds between the different key  
 20 partners (...) if you go to suggest partnerships, then (...) this may be a  
 21 blockage (...) on the basis of my research (...) you may not really get  
 22 there (...) this is a clash, isn't it? (...)
- 23 K: that might be, that might be the role of researchers
- 24 P/B: hum, yeah
- 25 K: as I clarified the gaps, researchers could be mediators, between,  
 26 among those stakeholders, researchers are the only, you know

27 P/B: OK (...) you are encouraging [the teachers] to be much more  
 28 reflective, but (...) because they tend often to be not so reflective (...)  
 29 government bodies, or organisations

My idea of 'building partnerships among stakeholders', as seen in lines 13–17, appears to lack a holistic view, because I did not include the British Council in the idea. Participant B mentioned 'differences in the nature, character, operation and culture' between stakeholders as the possible blockage in building partnerships among them, as seen in lines 10–11. While having agreed with my suggestion of researchers as mediators to relieve the blockage, she added the non-reflective nature of stakeholders as another possible blockage, as seen in lines 28–29. The feedback given made me aware of the need to make suggestions assuming the case that things do not go well for a researcher.

My responses to the points above are these: first, there may be basic similarities in the nature, character and culture among the Boards of Education, LEEPs/teachers, university academics and researchers, for the following reasons:

- the Boards of Education officials, specifically supervisors who are involved in teacher education were originally teachers;
- many university academics who teach on graduate courses designed for practising teachers worked as school teachers in their previous career, as far as I know, and they are also currently involved in teacher education programmes provided by municipalities.

Given that researchers, as stakeholders involved in teacher education, are from the field of education, the Boards of Education, LEEPs/teachers, relevant university academics and other researchers may in principle share their natures, characters and cultures. Moreover, university academics can benefit from working collaboratively within partnerships, in that they can return their learning and findings to their pre-service or in-service teacher education modules. These points could support my idea that local educational community members facilitate the design of LEEP-led programmes, as I said in response to Participant B. Then, how to involve the British Council in these decentralised educational partnerships would be the issue. Second, in terms of the 'non-reflective' nature of organisations, as Participant B mentioned, the British Council have, on the contrary, been trying to reflect on the cascade project for further development as explained in chapter 5, by:

- observing LEEP-led programmes across Japan to see how LEEPs respond to their training;
- collecting feedback from LEEPs, teachers and the Board of Education officials;
- checking the LEEPs' video lessons;
- organising a 'reunion' meeting of LEEPs to appreciate the potential impact of the project.

These points may indicate that the British Council have been working on the project reflectively. On the basis of these observations, in the next chapter, I will suggest the idea of developing the reunion meeting of LEEPs in the form of a collaborative action research project between the British Council and LEEPs. This might enable the British Council to be included in the decentralised educational partnerships.

Third, the feedback as seen in the extract below led me to see that any possible assumption I might make in offering suggestions should include alternatives. I also appreciated the need to grasp the situation of the actual educational context, while suggesting possible and desirable ideas:

#### Extract 6.1c

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Feedback from the meeting participants on my study 3  
 The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)  
 P/D = Participant D, K = Author  
 Lines 32–40 of 44 (see Appendix P)

---

- 32 P/D: (...) in many contexts, that would be teachers ignoring policy, or  
 33 subverting policy, or having an ironic attitude to policy (...) in many  
 34 jurisdictions, many countries where policy goes on here, and teacher goes  
 35 on here, and they pretend (...) sometimes policy (*does*) the same (...)  
 36 sometimes both sides or both groups pretend, uh, that is, in many  
 37 circumstances, that is the back strategy (...) have you considered that as  
 38 alternative strategy, saying, don't bother, pretend to collaborate, but  
 39 actually become creative, autonomous, independent (...)
- 40 K: (*laughter*) not yet, I didn't

As seen in lines 32–36, Participant D described the reality in which people are pretending to follow, but actually ignoring or subverting policy, and policy makers are also pretending not to see people pretending. He accordingly suggested an idea of facilitating each stakeholder's autonomy as an independent body rather than promoting collaboration, as seen in lines 37–39. In light of this feedback, one

meeting participant mentioned MacDonald's ideas about 'creative compliance' (MacDonald 1987, cited in McNiff and Whitehead 2011), which means:

a form of resistance that recognizes the constraints of a current situation, and finds ways of working within the constraints in order to achieve one's own aims (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.185).

As a possible alternative for building educational partnerships, I would suggest taking this strategy of 'adapting to imposed systems but working creatively from the inside' (ibid., p.185). This strategy could help us 'resist or alter policies to fit their own dynamics' (Levin, 2001, p.23). What researchers could do with this strategy may include encouraging people to think for themselves 'what elements in a situation can be changed and which have to be accepted as given' (Weiss, 1991, p.312). The existing situation, such as MEXT's monolithic assumptions about English language and people's thinking being influenced by what MEXT communicates may be regarded as that 'which have to be accepted as given'. On the other hand, the misunderstandings between the British Council and LEEPs/teachers in terms of the cascade project (as clarified in chapter 5) and some teachers' receptive attitude towards policy (as mentioned in chapter 5), may be regarded as 'elements which can be changed'. Working creatively while considering whether to accept or resist the situation and trying to adapt it appropriately to their situations seems likely to lead people to become 'creative, autonomous, independent', as seen in line 39 in the extract above. This may sound like a more powerful strategy than ignoring policy or pretending to follow it.

This feedback made me aware of what undertaking an educational enquiry in an appropriately critical and balanced fashion (McNiff, 2014, p.167) may involve. I mentioned in chapter 5 that presenting my provisional claims to knowledge, standards of judgement and appropriate evidence may demonstrate the development of my capacity to undertake independent research and educational enquiry in an appropriately critical and balanced fashion. However, the feedback from the validation meeting, outlined above, made me realise this was not enough. I have learnt that explaining my study for listeners with a mind to clarifying possible assumptions and suggestions without averting my eyes from the situation may also be expected of an independent researcher.

### 6.3.2 How the meeting participants responded to my provisional claims to knowledge and evidence base

Appendix Q (Extract 6.2–6.4) contains the transcript of part of the audiotaped proceedings in which the first three provisional claims and the evidence to support them were examined. (Please note that the fourth and fifth provisional claims to knowledge were not examined due to lack of time.) In light of the feedback given, in this section, I write what I learnt from the meeting participants, by considering the three questions which I asked myself.

The first question was, 'Did I prepare carefully for the validation meeting so that the meeting participants were able to understand the aim of the meeting and their role in it?' The answer was mostly 'No'. I was not able to help them engage in examining the evidence I generated in light of my provisional claims to knowledge. It seems that this resulted in making them feel as if they were examiners for my thesis. The next extract is the feedback from one participant when my second provisional claim to knowledge was being considered. Please note that Extracts 6.3a and 6.3b below concern my second provisional claim to knowledge:

#### Extract 6.3a

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Feedback on my second provisional claim to knowledge  
 The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)  
 P/G = Participant G  
 Lines 12–16 of 46 (see Appendix Q)

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12	P/G: it is also ( <i>relatively</i> ) difficult to really judge, rightness of your plans
13	without much ( <i>mutual</i> ) understanding of the context background (...) we're
14	now interested in your talk, pretty presentation, but I still feel, yeah, this so
15	much here, I don't know other contexts, it's difficult (...) to give sort of any
16	strong judgement

As seen above, Participant G became embarrassed by thinking that he was 'judging' my thesis without access to the whole thesis as context. Another participant made a similar comment as follows, 'we are looking at this and speaking in isolation [from the whole context of the thesis]' (see Appendix Q), which may indicate that she thought she was expected to judge my thesis only by reading the data provided. On the other hand, I informed them of the aim of the meeting, which was to examine whether the evidence I generated was strong enough to support my provisional claims to knowledge, in a written form (the initial letter advertising the seminar) and through speech (at the beginning of the

meeting). If this was the case, it might have been the issue of how to present the evidence that confused the situation. What I distributed to the participants at the meeting was the extract from the draft of this thesis. This might have led the participants to feel as if they were readers or judges of my thesis. The feedback made me aware that the method of presenting data can misdirect the course of meetings in a manner contrary to the intended objectives. Eventually, I encouraged the participants to identify their own role at the meeting as follows:

Extract 6.3b

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Feedback on my second provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/A = Participant A and so forth

Lines 32–46 of 46 (see Appendix Q)

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- 32 P/A: but, at the same time, (...) I can see some of the limited source, but  
 33 this is the small part of the whole thesis, so, we are focusing on your  
 34 interaction with the teachers, so, I think we need to think that way also  
 35 (...) focus on group discussion and interactions, so whether you have  
 36 changed your perspective and your approaches, you interacted with them,  
 37 and then they also changed their views, and so on (...) in that sense, I  
 38 think this is a (...) good material (...)
- 39 P/D: what we are doing is affirming, this is the evidence towards this claim  
 40 (...) we are affirming, this material is, I think useful evidence (...) maybe  
 41 counter evidence and maybe pro evidence are needed, this is, we are  
 42 affirming this is relevant evidence
- 43 P/I: (...) I have come across the idea of validation meeting elsewhere,  
 44 which was just people coming together and discussing, which was very  
 45 informal and unstructured, actually, the way this is going tends to be very  
 46 clear (...) really to me (...) well-developed

As seen in lines 33–38, Participant A suggested to the others that they focus on the interaction between the research participants and myself in the evidence given, on the assumption that this data given was a small part of the whole thesis. Similarly, as seen in lines 39–42, Participant D identified their role as ‘affirming’ (or negating) the evidence in relation to my provisional claims to knowledge. Both participants then accepted the evidence as appropriate. This may indicate that my ‘capacity to realize [my] values in practice’ was represented by the data I generated (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.155). Further, Participant I appreciated my way of organising the validation process, as seen in lines 45–46, which may suggest that my attempt to demonstrate the ‘methodological rigour’ (ibid., p.171) of my study was recognised.

The second question to myself was, ‘Could I “communicate the significance of [my provisional claims to knowledge] through an appropriate form of language that qualifies [them] to enter the public domain” (McNiff, 2014, p.186)?’ The answer was ‘No’. The meeting participants questioned my choice of words as follows, which means that I chose words without clarifying the basis of my decisions. The next extract shows the feedback from one participant when my first provisional claim to knowledge, ‘I have helped each research participant become a reflective teacher researcher’, was considered:

#### Extract 6.2

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Feedback on my first provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/D = Participant D

Lines 3–12 of 12 (see Appendix Q)

---

3 P/D: you have the phrase ‘a reflective teacher researcher’, to what extent  
 4 is that significant?, because I can see evidence that someone has  
 5 reflected on (*their*) practice, but that is as a teacher researcher or as a  
 6 teacher is not clear, do you have evidence for that?, sorry, whether they  
 7 have become reflective or whether they become a reflective teacher  
 8 researcher?, I am not sure the evidence of the (*researchers*), and, is  
 9 evidence that they had reflected?, ah, (*they’re*) a reflective practitioner?,  
 10 that suggests a whole identity more than an example of reflective practice  
 11 (...) good, very good example (...) of reflective practice, just whether, so I  
 12 think you’ve got a good evidence of reflective practice

As seen in lines 3–9, Participant D questioned the term ‘reflective teacher researcher’, because the data did not show the evidence of any of them being a teacher ‘researcher’. He further explained that the term ‘reflective practitioner’ suggests a whole identity rather than referring to the action of practising reflectively, as seen in line 10. On the other hand, he recognised the evidence as appropriate to prove the existence of reflective practice, as seen in lines 11–12. The next extract shows the feedback from two participants when the validity of my third provisional claim to knowledge, ‘I have contributed to the development of a new knowledge base of English language teacher education in Japan’, was tested:



## Extract 6.4

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 Feedback on my third provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/B = Participant B and so forth

 Lines 2–13 of 16 (see Appendix Q)
 

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- 2 P/D: what evidence seems to show to me was that you've found the  
 3 evidence that teachers found it more effective than the other (...) which  
 4 means not that you are a contributor to new knowledge base (...) it is  
 5 different in strategy (...) could be affirmed, even better, demonstrated  
 6 which is effective?, demonstrated which is preferred? (...)
- 7 P/B: again, back P/D's point (...) perhaps new knowledge to them (...) so,  
 8 in that sense, that claim is a bit ambiguous, isn't it really? (...) it could be  
 9 new to them (...) so this is the use of the word 'new', I think isn't it?
- 10 P/D: (...) we don't have evidence that it's original here (...) the thesis may  
 11 have evidence this is new knowledge, this is the evidence maybe to them  
 12 (...) we can't judge originality from this evidence, but the thesis may  
 13 demonstrate its originality

Participant D questioned whether I had contributed to a new knowledge base, in that the data showed that the research participants found working with me more effective than sharing ideas with others or working alone, as seen in lines 2–3. In response to his comment, Participant B mentioned the ambiguity of the term 'new', because my way of organising teacher education was new to the research participants, as seen in lines 7–9. Participant D further returned to my second provisional claim ('I have co-constructed my original teacher education methodology with the research participants so that it is relevant and appropriate to their needs and contexts'), and questioned the term 'original'. His point was that the data did not show the originality of my practice, as seen in line 12.

In this way, feedback was given to my choice of words rather than the evidence itself, which may explain the distance between the data and my interpretation of them. My broad interpretation of the data appeared to have led to the feedback given, which made me aware of the need to consider more what the data actually implies. In addition, I have learnt the need to become careful in using terms such as 'contribution', 'new' or 'original', and to explain the reasons why I decided to use those words. Considering the need for a reflective approach towards teacher education has not been emphasised in policies in a Japanese context, what I suggest in this thesis could be seen as new or original; however, this was not recognised by the participants. As mentioned above, my 'capacity to realize [my] values in practice' was represented by the data (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011,

p.155). However, my 'capacity to articulate and communicate' (ibid., p.155) my provisional claims to knowledge was not agreed upon.

The reflections above led me to answer 'No' to my third question to myself, 'Did I contextualise the evidence clearly in my presentation?' Extracts 6.3c and 6.3d show the feedback from participants when the validity of my second provisional claim to knowledge, 'I have co-constructed my original teacher education methodology with the research participants so that it is relevant and appropriate to their needs and contexts', was tested:

#### Extract 6.3c

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Feedback on my second provisional claim to knowledge  
 The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)  
 P/B = Participant B and so forth  
 Lines 21–29 of 46 (see Appendix Q)

---

- 21 P/E: (...) quite passive, teachers, it's implication that you are meeting their  
 22 needs, but they are not actively controlling (...) if you 'co-', the  
 23 relationships are stronger, you talked earlier you were encouraging, but  
 24 actually, take control over this training programme (...)
- 25 P/B: just picking up on that, that's an interesting point, P/E, because when  
 26 you were doing that sort of co-construction, researching together, and  
 27 trying to produce a new (...) knowledge, what impact had on you actually,  
 28 as a researcher? (...) what did it do to you as well?, because this is a two-  
 29 way learning process isn't it?

Participant E recognised the research participants as 'passive', with me as a controller, not a facilitator. Participant B's point, as seen in lines 27–29, implies that my presentation lacked evidence of my learning as a researcher, which might have led the meeting participants to recognise me as an outsider researcher who was conducting research on the research participants. Both questioned the term 'co-constructed' in the second provisional claim because of their impression of possible power relationships between the research participants and myself. Accordingly, other participants of the meeting suggested I phrase the sentence using alternatives such as 'I have constructed (...) through working (...) collaboratively with teachers' and 'we have constructed' (see Appendix Q). The feedback turned out to aid my learning of the importance of interrogating my positionalities and some of the dilemmas involved in the relationships with the research participants, as mentioned earlier. This inspired me to revisit the data, which led to my recognition that each member's taking the initiative in further actions might make it possible to shift our relationships from the facilitated/a

facilitator to collaborative researchers, as also mentioned in chapter 3. However, the feedback also made me recognise that I should have clarified the relationships between the research participants and myself more clearly; for example, I should have informed the participants in the validation meeting of the disconfirming data such as critical feedback from the research participants. That might have prevented the meeting participants from seeing the power relationships between us, or that I had simply presented the data to support my ideas. In terms of evidence, they questioned the credibility of evidence produced from only one research participant's reflection, as follows:

Extract 6.3d

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Feedback on my second provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/B = Participant B and so forth

Lines 8–11 and 17–20 of 46 (see Appendix Q)

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8 P/H: (...) we've seen this article with the evidence from a single teacher  
 9 here, that's the way, is there any contrary evidence from the other three  
 10 teachers you are working with? (...) wasn't it normal to bring the evidence  
 11 from more than a single person, if there is such evidence

17 P/B: I think I like to pick up that point as well (...) I know you're focusing  
 18 on the teacher here, but where is, the other people coming if you also talk  
 19 to? (...) that will be my challenge if I was sort of reading your thesis, I  
 20 think ((*laughter*))

As seen above, Participants H and B questioned the fact that the evidence to support my second provisional claim came mainly from one research participant. This appears to be relevant to the lack of contextualisation of the evidence. I should have explained that I chose the data carefully, while keeping the number of words down to a minimum because of the word limit (of the thesis). I should also have explained that the extracts I presented are just a small part of the dialogues between the research participants and myself, and my thesis tells the whole story of our collaborative learning which the extracts provided as evidence do not cover.

This unexpected feedback may be seen as disconfirming data, which confronted me with the difficulty in exercising 'provisionality' in my thinking (McNiff, 2014, p.190). In other words, they turned out to be good lessons for me about how to articulate my ideas and communicate the story of my study. In terms of the presentation of data, I have learnt the need to include both confirming and disconfirming data to strengthen the credibility of my study, to contextualise those

data and to present data so as to meet with the objectives of validation meetings. In terms of the use of words, I have learnt the need to choose words for right reasons. In terms of the organisation of a presentation, I have learnt the need to articulate what the study meant to me as well as what I think it meant to others. The ability to articulate a story of one's study in this way may also be expected of an independent researcher, which may lead his/her study to become 'a disciplined enquiry' (McNiff, 2013, p.136). On the other hand, I had some feedback that supported and encouraged me, such as the comment about appreciating my attempt to demonstrate the methodological rigour of my study. Both kinds of feedback helped me expand my thinking and prepare to 'stand up for what [I] believe in' (McNiff, 2014, p.190) as I look towards the next step of my career. Further, the validation meeting also made me aware of 'ongoing dynamics in relationships' (McNiff, 2010, p.106). As I have learnt through dialoguing with the research participants throughout the research process, it would seem that the participants in the validation meeting 'actively [engaged] with [my] ideas and [reframed] them as possible new actions and new narratives of action' (McNiff, 2014, p.70). The following comment from Participant H just after the meeting may show that the dynamics of the dialogues in the validation meeting led each of us to our own interpretation of the dialogues at the meeting, '[The meeting became an opportunity] to reflect on what to do myself as well'. It is my responsibility to interpret and analyse the dialogic context at the validation meeting and reflect my interpretation and analysis in my further practices.

### **6.3.3 Summary**

Through experiencing the validation meeting in the academic arena, I have learnt that the purpose of identifying my provisional claims to knowledge, standards of judgement and appropriate evidence was for myself to 'judge [my] practice and negotiate [my] judgement with [me]' and help others to see that (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.153). On reflection, the second validation meeting helped me recognise myself in the reality of my practice, which I hope could help me take a step forward towards becoming an independent researcher. How to develop my communicative competence to articulate my ideas and communicate the story of my study will be a continuing narrative. While I am still in the process of interpreting and analysing the validation meeting in the academic arena, I have gained some confidence in explaining this study in the public domain so as to

establish its 'legitimacy' (ibid., p.171). In the next chapter, I will reflect on my study, explaining its potential significance and implications.

## **6.4 My claims to knowledge**

Taking into account my reflections that appear above and reconsidering what the data actually implies, I have revised Table 5.1 which showed my provisional claims to knowledge. I use the word 'they' for the research participants, and 'we' for the research participants and myself, in the same manner as in Table 5.1. The instances seen in the column 'Evidence' correspond to the evidence which I presented in chapter 5. I hope this revised table helps the participants of the validation meeting and future readers of this thesis to understand more clearly my claims to knowledge, to what extent those claims are being fulfilled (standards of judgement) and the instances that show the realisation of standards of judgement (evidence). These are my personal theories of practice generated through my systematic educational enquiry. I would claim that they might develop from 'local knowledge' which supports the research participants' and my practices into 'public knowledge' (Ospina et al., 2008, p.426) which could contribute to the wider context:

**Table 6.4: My claims to knowledge**

<b>My claims to knowledge</b>	<b>My standards of judgement</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
(1). I have helped each research participant practise reflectively.	Each research participant has recognised the significance of learning from their experience through reflective practice during our working together.	- Teachers A/B have come to value reflective practice.
(2). I have constructed a teacher education methodology through working collaboratively with the research participants so that it is relevant and appropriate to their needs and contexts.	(a). I have produced their interview summaries in light of their ideas and feedback. (b). We have discussed how our group learning can be developed.	- Teacher D suggested focusing on the changes in their thinking, which Teacher C appreciated. - I have discussed the issues with Teacher D, and some ideas for further development were suggested.
(3). I have made a possible contribution to the development of a knowledge base of English language teacher education in Japan.	(a). I have explored the effectiveness of a person-centred dialogic form of teacher education.  (b). I have investigated the effectiveness of collaborative learning in a teacher community.	- The ideas of focusing on and documenting each teacher's learning, and working with a facilitator, were appreciated by Teachers C/D.  - Teachers B/D recognised the value of collaboration.
(4). I have helped the research participants transform their communicative competence into communicative action.	They were encouraged to develop interpersonal communication in order to communicate their values and reach intersubjective agreement with others.	- Teachers A/B/C/D have started to take action or think of taking action in the direction of their values. Further, Teacher D's students have started to practise what they learnt from Teacher D outside his English class.

<p>(5). I have developed my capacity for communicative competence into my Discourses (that is, 'ways of combining and integrating [my] language, actions, interactions, ways of [my] thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity' (Gee, 2005, p.21)).</p>	<p>I have developed the capacity for interpersonal communication to communicate my values and reach intersubjective agreement with LEEPs, teachers and the British Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I encouraged the LEEPs and the teachers who participated in the cascade project to think for themselves about their practice and professional development according to their local needs and contexts through questionnaires.</li> <li>- I communicated my practices to colleague junior high school English language teachers in the city.</li> <li>- I communicated with the British Council, and provided them with the opportunity to reflect on their practice.</li> </ul>
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## **Chapter 7**

### **Reflecting on the significance of this study**

#### **7.1 Chapter preview**

I have used this study as a process of enquiry for carrying out my research plan, as well as a process of trying to practise my commitment to challenge MEXT policy on English language education and English language teacher education in Japan. My three-year PhD study, including an additional year for writing up the thesis, took the form of a journey that started by attempting to find out the nature of ontologically, ethically, politically and professionally appropriate understandings of communicative competence. Along the way, I have developed my thinking on 'where, how and why teachers learn' (Llinares and Krainer, 2006, p.429), to reach the following conclusions:

- where - in classrooms through classroom-based research as individual and autonomous learners, in a teacher community by collaborating with other teachers as collaborative learners, and through other opportunities such as teacher education events and seminars;
- how - a cyclical process of action-reflection, which can but need not include working with a facilitator;
- why - for sustainable professional development, as 'language user, analyst, and teacher' (Gießler, 2012, p.132) in the case of language teachers.

Having presented my claims to knowledge, in this chapter, I explore the implications of this study for myself and others, and what it meant to both myself and the research participants. Further, I present a possibly more desirable English language teacher education methodology in a Japanese context, in order to accomplish my research plan and also as a response to a request from the local educational community members. Reflecting on this study and consolidating my thinking at this stage gives new directions for my next course of action towards the further development of a professional 'I'.



## 7.2 Possible implications of my study for other researchers

### 7.2.1 Possible implications of my study as an interdisciplinary study

This interdisciplinary study conducted in the context of language education, language education policy and teacher education draws both on educational action research and critical applied linguistics. This powerful combination of methodology (action research) and discipline (critical applied linguistics) is based on the following definition by Hall et al. (2011) of applied linguistics:

- collaborating closely with the people who experience ‘a real-world problem’;
- *‘pragmatically oriented’*;
- understanding language and people who use it ‘in their social context’;
- working with ‘a broader group of “stakeholders”’;
- valuing ‘a process’ in which we connect our practice with others’ practices;
- specifically, critical applied linguistics is ‘grounded in a concern for addressing and resolving problems of inequality’ (Hall et al., 2011, pp.17-19, emphasis in original).

Viewed from this perspective, applied linguistics and action research appear to share some basic similarities. Applied linguists may clearly benefit from adopting self-reflective practices. For example, through reflection on themselves as well as the people that they are researching, they might develop sensitivity about how they were exercising their influence on the dialogue, such as when negotiating with stakeholders. Conversely, using an applied linguistic approach might help action researchers develop sensitivity to the dialogic context which they are inevitably influencing. Specifically, it is my understanding that English language teachers/practitioners should conceptualise English from a critical applied linguistic perspective, such as from a plurilithic understanding of English language.

My study could also have implications for further interdisciplinary studies in action research and applied linguistics by:

- suggesting ways of theorising an action research methodology by attending to individual and collective meaning-making processes;

- suggesting ways of incorporating a critical applied linguistic approach into a classroom-based action research approach in English as an additional language class;
- suggesting ways of presenting and analysing data in the form of extracts from real-life dialogues in an educational action research text.

Another concept to be noted is a bottom-up applied linguistic perspective which challenges the existing ‘top-down transmission model’ of teaching and learning in applied linguistic studies (ibid., pp.19-20). I am hopeful for further discussion about the concept in the literature, which could be incorporated into more general action research studies. From the above, it may be worth studying action research in a research methods module in applied linguistics courses at universities.

### **7.2.2 Possible implications of my study for theories of communicative competence**

Communicative competence has been much debated in the literatures, and a related concept of ‘dispositions’ has been explored by Canagarajah (2013 and 2014), as mentioned earlier. Canagarajah (2013, p.5) further expects the discovery of more dispositions and to be able to formulate them systematically. As well as Savignon (2002), whose work I looked at for theorising communicative competence, he attempted to theorise communicative competence from the perspective of multilingual communication. My perspective (Figure 4.3) might be seen as original, in that I have attempted to theorise communicative competence by incorporating the perspectives of Japanese practising teachers who are living and teaching in a monolingual society, with reference to those relevant literatures assuming multilingual communication. Figure 4.3, which is designed with the aim of developing the communicative competence of both (language) teachers and students, may be used broadly in other fields such as:

- (1) for the purpose of nurturing professional dialogue, in fields of human resource development including teacher education;
- (2) as material for pre-service (language) teacher education modules at university;
- (3) as material for various linguistic modules at university, such as communication studies, sociolinguistics and language and identity;

- (4) as guidelines for developing students'/pupils' communication skills towards fostering autonomous users of language, in any school level.

In terms of (4), my model may be easily applied to even younger students/pupils, in that what the model shows (namely, the six factors) might not be beyond their reach, rather something they may feel familiar with and be able to work with. Given that how to develop communication with others is a life-long learning process (as Savignon (1997, p.50) explains 'one learns to communicate by communicating'), helping students turn into autonomous users of language may be the significant role of (language) teachers. I hope that my conceptualised model of communicative competence will be used by anyone interested without regard to the context and in a broader discussion. I will look at further studies on communicative competence, revisiting my perspectives for further development.

### **7.2.3 Possible implications of my study for teachers' professional development**

My understanding of teachers' professional learning towards their professional development (Figure 2.2) could possibly be used in designing teacher education programmes for any subject and any school level. The model reflects the idea of teachers as researchers who keep learning individually and collectively in teachers' communities of practice. It could possibly be used:

- (1) as a tool for practising teachers to reflect on their professional learning, as part of a teacher education programme or individually;
- (2) as a tool for pre-service teachers to design how they learn during a period of practice teaching;
- (3) as evaluation criteria for assessing the effectiveness of teacher education programmes.

Being used in any way would bring me back to the need for the further development of the model. I also hope to discuss with and learn from other researchers about this topic.

### 7.2.4 Other possible implications of my study

First, I have discussed my perspective on '[a] linguistically aware teacher' (Wright, 2002, p.115) of English language in a Japanese context in the previous chapters. My view is that throughout their career, a linguistically aware teacher tries to:

- develop their communicative competence as a language user;
- learn individually and collaboratively through a cyclical process of action-reflection as a language teacher;
- learn continuously the nature of changing Englishes as a language analyst.

Specifically, my view of teachers as language analysts challenges the dominant existing conceptualisation that the '*analyst* domain covers knowledge of language' such as 'understanding of the forms and functions of language systems – grammar, vocabulary and phonology' (ibid., p.118, emphasis in original) as mentioned in chapter 5. From a critical applied linguistic perspective, I would argue again, the analyst domain should cover understanding of ontologies of English, specifically for in-service/pre-service language teachers in a monolingual context. Those teachers may be required to learn changing Englishes throughout their careers. I hope that my understanding of the development of 'TLA [teacher language awareness] in its threefold dimension (language user, analyst, and teacher)' (Gießler, 2012, p.132) in a Japanese context would be considered for further discussions in this field.

Second, in relation to the first point, MEXT and relevant agencies are required to redesign the content of teacher education programmes, conscious of a teacher's language awareness (TLA) as language user, analyst, and teacher. According to Xerri's (2015, pp.4-6) account, 'TLA as part of CPD [continuing professional development]' is a developing topic that needs further research. I have positioned the continuing development of TLA as part of the longitudinal teacher education methodology which I present below. I hope that my idea could contribute to this topic, and be worthy of discussion.

Third, my study based on communication with the British Council has resulted in recognising their beliefs as teacher trainers. In terms of English language, they are against the concept of Standard English, and recognise Japanese English language teachers' expertise 'over nativeness' (Rampton 1990, p.109), as mentioned in chapter 5. However, these beliefs are not communicated outwardly,

which is consistent with the discussion that 'not enough attention has been paid to trainers' beliefs about TLA' (Xerri, 2015, pp.1-2). Xerri urges:

Given that in (...) a number of other countries in-service training is still centralized and imposed on teachers in a top-down manner, research on the beliefs of those responsible for such training is crucial (Xerri, 2015, p.2).

Communicating the British Council's beliefs about English language and English language teacher education led to clarifying misunderstandings between LEEPs/teachers and the British Council and reconsidering how to improve the situation, as explained in chapters 5 and 6. This made me better understand what Xerri is saying in the quotation above. My study could therefore possibly be useful for filling this research gap.

Fourth, examining issues from a different perspective could be a useful strategy for any research topic. This includes:

- a plurilithic approach to English language in comparison with MEXT's monolithic thinking on it;
- a person-centred dialogic form of teacher education methodology in comparison with a top-down transmission form of teacher education methodology.

The 2015 Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) Conference Committee reviewers appreciated what I said in the abstract of my presentation paper (Kondo, 2015b) on this point. One of the comments from the reviewers was about the 'unusual connection between action research and policy issue, juxtaposing bottom up with top down reform strategy'. I would suggest that taking account of different perspectives may lead to developing our perspectives in a complementary way and extend our discussions.

On reflection, the study of related topics might have made my study relevant to issues across wider domains. My study has therefore helped me develop a more comprehensive interpretation of my practices and experiences.

### 7.3 Our mutual learning in an action research group of the research participants and myself

This two-year project with the research participants might possibly have '[made] a difference in [their] lives' (Eby, 2000, p.55). The extracts in this thesis (including ones I quote below) illustrate the following stories:

- (1) Teachers A, B and D have recognised the value of reflective practice during our working together;
- (2) Teachers B, C and D have recognised the value of collaboration through our working together, specifically, Teacher C has recognised the value of collaboration in action research, which she did not think about during her master's study;
- (3) all the research participants have found ways of living in accordance with their values by communicating what they value, in their capacity for communicative competence, to others;
- (4) Teacher D has found ways of communicating his practices and experiences to others.

Specifically, (2) is significant, in that I could possibly have contributed to Teacher C's learning as a fellow action researcher.

This two-year project was also a mutual learning process. Reflecting on what the research participants had learnt through the project led to my learning, which helped me reflect on myself and my practices again. The citation below is taken from the text message sent from Teacher A just after she had read the transcription of her second interview:

I have found something I valued in your transcription. I valued 'being a facilitator' at a certain time, but I found I had forgotten the word completely these days (...) I remember that I said English language teachers should be facilitators, when presenting my practice at a meeting in my third year of teaching. I emailed you just to tell you the fact anyway (Teacher A, 2014d, my translation).

I used the English word 'facilitator' as equivalent to her Japanese words describing '(her) role to draw out students' ideas' in the transcription. This happened by

coincidence due to employing two languages (interviewing in Japanese and transcribing in English) in my practice. I would have seen this finding of Teacher A as a 'recycled' finding or just her remembering something she had forgotten, not actually a 'new' finding, if I had not read Dewey's thinking about Columbus's belief (that the world is round):

Even if his conclusion had finally turned out wrong, it would have been a different sort of belief from those it antagonized, because it was reached by a different method (Dewey, 1997, p.6).

From this perspective, Teacher A's finding ('teacher as a facilitator') may be seen as a new finding because she reached it 'by a different method'. In this way, reflecting on the research participants' learning developed my interpretation of the literatures and my understanding of what form their learning might take.

Contrary to the other three research participants, Teacher D, as a teacher and teacher educator of the same generation as myself, has given me some practical suggestions for further development of the project, as explained in chapter 5. I came to see my role as a supporter of teachers of a younger generation as the project went on, partly after being influenced by the following comment from Teacher D:

#### Extract 7.1

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Role as a supporter of teachers of a younger generation  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014c, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | K: what is the reason for and value of what you are doing?  |
| 2 | TD: (...) the most important reason is related to the objectives of foreign language education (...) which I think is developing students' ability to accept differences and understand each other, so, I have always told younger colleagues [the objectives of foreign language education], which is not only acquiring techniques or skills (...) it is the difference from [the objectives of] English conversation schools |
| 3 |   |
| 4 |   |
| 5 |   |
| 6 |   |
| 7 |   |

While communicating the aim of English language education for him (developing students' ability to accept differences and understand each other) to his younger colleagues, he has inspired them to think about the aim of foreign language

education as part of school education, as seen in lines 4–7. His experience as a LEEP, in which he had to cope with his dilemma which arose from the differences between the BANA (the British Council) and the TESEP (school education) cultures, might have encouraged him to do this. During a later interview, he said, ‘I have been doing what I am doing not only for myself but also to find ways to communicate it to others well’ (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation). This shows he has considered the way he communicates his practices and experiences, through his practices, which has inspired me to think about my role in our action research group and in the local educational community. It may be noted that the CARN Committee reviewers mentioned above also identified ‘supporting the next generations of action researchers’ as one of the strengths of the abstract of my presentation paper (Kondo, 2015b). Teacher D also made me aware of the significance of establishing my point of view, when I was in two minds about the nature of communicative competence. Besides giving me his critical feedback on the hierarchical model of communicative competence (Figure 4.4), he encouraged me to make clear what I intended to present with the model:

#### Extract 7.2

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Suggestion of establishing a viewpoint  
 Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2014c, my translation)  
 TD = Teacher D, K = Author

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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | TD: you can explain to others [other research participants] about the        |
| 2 | differences in those two models in such a way that it depends on how we      |
| 3 | view the matter  |
| 4 | K: that’s right, so, I myself have to make clear what I want to present with |
| 5 | a model [of communicative competence], right?                                |
| 6 | TD: yes (...) this is not a difference of opinion, but we view the same      |
| 7 | matter from a different angle  |

Teacher D’s explanation that the two models (Figures 4.3 and 4.4) show a different way of viewing communicative competence, not based on the differences of opinion, made me aware of the need to establish my firm ideas on communicative competence first of all. Moreover, he gave me encouraging comments as follows:



## Extract 7.3

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 Words of encouragement

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation)

 TD = Teacher D, K = Author
 

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- 1 K: each time I have got a lot of feedback [on my perspective on  
 2 communicative competence], my presentation has given rise to active  
 3 discussions
- 4 TD: I think giving rise to discussions shows that [your research] has been  
 5 going well (...) because that means you are raising questions (...)  
 6 because it includes the perspective which others do not think of, which  
 7 presents the originality [of your research]

Teacher D's comment on the value of raising questions, as seen in lines 6–7, proved to be encouragement for me when I got lost in formulating my ideas after getting some critical feedback from others. From this comment I also learnt the significance of seeing events from a range of perspectives. Further, Teacher D's commitment to the development of students' communicative competence developed into exploring a possibly new style of speaking test. This came from his critique of the existing tests:

## Extract 7.4

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 Exploring a possible new instrument to assess communicative competence

Interview with Teacher D (Teacher D, 2015a, my translation)

 TD = Teacher D, K = Author
 

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- 1 TD: as for a speaking test distributed by the Board of Education, the ALT  
 2 and I do not use it because we are not in favour of it
- 3 K: I have never used it either
- 4 TD: (...) the ALT and I have been trying to develop an interview test in  
 5 such a way that we can see how students can continue English  
 6 conversation, not seeing if they provide stereotyped answers, precisely [to  
 7 see] originality, consequently, we have reached [the current speaking  
 8 activity], as the next step, we are trying to find ways of doing interview  
 9 tests by using the same method [as we use in the current activity], it might  
 10 be a form of observing students' group conversation, not a form of  
 11 interview test (...) if the ALT talks to my students with empathy [as an  
 12 examiner], they can continue conversation with him (...) because he has  
 13 got used to [talking with my students] (...) [we thought it might be better  
 14 for him] to observe students' conversations

Lines 4–7 imply that Teacher D and the ALT intend to assess students' creativity (how to sustain conversation) and originality, although he mentions only

'originality'. This comes from Teacher D's critique of the existing tests in which students seem to be expected to provide canned answers. Towards the development of the instruments for a new speaking test, they first have established a method for speaking activities in class, as seen in lines 7–8. Lines 11–15 show their special attention to how communicative competence can be assessed objectively. His idea of positioning the ALT as an observing examiner seems consistent with Canagarajah's (2006, p.239) idea of 'having someone assess the interaction holistically'. A further suggestion in the literature is:

[t]o test negotiation skills effectively (...) the raters come from different English-speaking communities (...) This enables the raters to examine whether the candidate is able to negotiate the different varieties that they use (Canagarajah, 2006, p.239).

Having recognised this as a more ideal way of assessing communicative competence in English, it would be worth suggesting Teacher D's idea as a possible new way of assessing students' communicative competence in a Japanese context, where there is normally only one teacher (ALT) from an English-speaking country in the school. Thus, I was able to explore my thinking about the literatures through reflecting on what the research participants said. In the same way as I may have made a difference in the lives of the research participants, their learning and practices have made a difference to my way of thinking and practising. At the same time, I have recognised repeatedly that those individual practising teachers' practices have contributed to the development of school education, while policy seems likely to be continuing. I am very proud of them, and to be one of them. Further, through this study, I hope I can contribute to establishing 'a professional learning community (PLC)' (Wennergren, 2016, p.260) in the local educational context. Seeing PLC as 'a process rather than the end result' (ibid., p.263), exploring how I could contribute to the development of the PLC would be one of my possible forthcoming research topics.

## 7.4 What has this study meant to me?

While this whole thesis narrates my learning journey, in the next three sections, I write about the significance of my research for my own learning, specifically from the following perspectives:

- (1) I have learnt the significance of being flexible in changing my understanding;
- (2) I have come to frame my research context in a transformational way;
- (3) I have developed my understanding of reflective practice through being '[e]ngaged in scholarly enquiry' (McNiff, 2014, p.190).

These are the standards of judgement by which I examine my growth as an independent researcher. I now produce the evidence to show that I have realised them.

### 7.4.1 I have learnt the significance of being flexible in changing my understanding

My initial progress report, submitted to my supervisors in June 2014, shortly after coming to the UK, talks about a question which arose from an unexpected event. It was after receiving the research participants' positive feedback on the transcriptions of interviews with them which I had sent them earlier. They appreciated the transcriptions, in that they had another opportunity to reflect on their practices and themselves through reading what they had said, as mentioned earlier in this thesis. This led to my interest in studying the nature of narratives/transcriptions, and to asking myself the following:

what kind of latent power do they (talks and stories) have? Isn't this something I could take into my research methodology? (Taken from Author's initial progress report, June 2014).

At that moment, I had thought about studying and using narrative inquiry in order to explore narrative data: this, however, differed from my research focus.

Subsequently, my six months review meeting (20/11/2014) led to new ideas. The

panel pointed out the need to demonstrate methodological rigour, which included explaining how I analysed data using content analysis. This suggestion led to my exploring how to use transcribed data as evidence. It also became a turning point in this study, in that the transcriptions took on a new meaning as a 'theoretical entity' and therefore as part of the analysis (Gee, 2005, p.106). This has changed my understanding about narratives/transcribing/transcriptions in such a way that I have come to see them as part of a meaning-making process, not just data. That is, by transcribing interviews, I interpreted what they meant, and started to make meaning based on my 'judgements of relevance' (ibid., p.106). The research participants became part of the process by communicating their approval of the transcriptions to me. At the same time, they saw the transcriptions as a new entity, which encouraged them to reflect on what they had said and re-interpret what it meant to them. After all, these collective (such as meetings and interviews) and individual (such as transcribing, analysing data or reading transcriptions) meaning-making processes formed the foundation of the action research methodology for this study, as follows:

Based on the idea that communication covers most of an action research process, during the research process, I have attended to how the research participants and I have co-constructed meanings through collaboration by attending to our individual (such as transcribing, analysing data or reading transcriptions) and collective (such as meetings and interviews) meaning-making processes and linked those co-constructed meanings with relevant literatures (...) That is, theorising methodology has been interrelated with this study itself, which has led me to consistently focus on communication with others throughout the research process (Taken from Author's piece of writing, June 2016).

In this way, I realised in practice what I wrote about in my initial progress report (about incorporating transcriptions into a research methodology). Changing my way of understanding narratives/transcribing/transcriptions resulted in a form of writing in which I wove together my data (transcriptions), my reflections on the data (and how they changed) and my understanding of the literatures. What I now write about in the following two sections also seems likely to have resulted from developing my understanding.

### 7.4.2 I have come to frame my research context in a transformational way

The following are the opening lines of my initial progress report which I submitted to my supervisors in June 2014:

My research places the focus on in-service Japanese English language teachers' development through reflective practice, especially the development of their capacity to teach for students' communicative competence through reflective practice (Taken from Author's initial progress report, June 2014).

This quotation can be read as saying that I simply linked developing English language teachers' capacity to teach for students' communicative competence with part of their professional development. In addition, while communicative competence seemed like a key issue, I did not explain what communicative competence meant in the report. That is, I did not even raise questions yet because I had not changed 'a problematic situation' into 'a problem' in order to '*frame* the context' in which I had attended to the key issue (communicative competence) (Schön, 1983, p.40, emphasis in original). It was after hearing the research participants' ideas on communicative competence that I started to frame the context:

These six factors are exactly what we would like to strengthen in students' attitude towards communication. We agree with the overall objectives of the Course of Study (...) However, a positive attitude towards communication in our interpretation apparently cannot be assessed by scores in popular English proficiency tests. On this point, a significant gap can be seen between our interpretation of communication abilities and that of the government. Therefore, in order to clarify the interpretation of communication abilities, sharpen our ideas and define our research goal, I have reviewed some literatures (Taken from Author's piece of writing, August 2014).

It was not until I clarified the differences of opinion on communicative competence between MEXT and ourselves that I realised the need to study communicative competence. This also directed my attention to both the institutional/governmental

context for teachers' dilemmas and popular discourses about English language in society which teachers have to navigate:

not only the Japanese government but also many ordinary Japanese people have still been pursuing an 'ideal' model of English in 'American English' or 'British English' (...) we have to think about how we can get rid of the idea of distinguishing 'native' and 'non-native' to make our students more confident with their English (...) we need to start to enlighten them [Japanese English language teachers] on the perspective of 'World Englishes' and the value of their own English in the classroom (Taken from Author's six months progress report, November 2014).

Starting to think at a socio-political level led me to adopt a critical applied linguistic perspective, which informed my discussion in confronting MEXT's monolithic thinking as seen in chapter 2. At the same time, being able to read the social and institutional context enabled me to see my practice from a wider perspective. Accordingly, I have come to see my whole practice as part of a process of developing my own capacity for communicative competence to tell the story of my study, in order to help others explore and discover their capacity for communicative competence, not just finding out what it is like or talking about it to others. In this way, I have come to frame my research context in a transformational way.

#### **7.4.3 I have developed my understanding of reflective practice through being engaged in scholarly enquiry**

The opening lines of my initial progress report as quoted above show that my thinking was oriented towards finding out how to develop the research participants' capability in developing students' communicative competence, through the development of their pedagogical capacity by means of reflective practice. This seems likely to show the embedded assumption in my thinking that reflective practice is about developing practice and skills, rather than about developing understanding or about learning. In fact, as seen in my first supervisor's comment on my early writings (Email from my first supervisor, 29/08/2014), reflective practice took the form of a 'topic' which I wrote about, not as 'what I do' or 'a core value that permeates my study'. It was because I myself had not yet developed a good sense of the idea underpinning reflective practice and given a rationale for it.

I wrote about my thinking when receiving the research participants' positive feedback on the transcriptions as follows:

While reading the transcription sent by me, Teacher A developed a new understanding (...) and that led to her second reflecting stage, reflection-in-seeing how she had reflected on her practice (in this case, reflection-in-reading transcription) (Taken from Author's piece of writing, September 2014).

In a comment on this piece of writing from my first supervisor (08/09/2014), the lack of understanding of what processes are involved in these different aspects of reflection was pointed out. The lack of the relationship between my learning and the learning of the research participant whose learning I had been supporting was also pointed out. Finding clues to clarify these points was not easy, which led to my writing remaining at a descriptive level, as seen above. It was after I studied the potential correlation between communicative competence and context that I started to understand reflective practice in relation to its context. First, Gee's (2005, p.97) idea of 'reflexivity' between language and context inspired me to understand what the research participants said in relation to their real-life context including collaborative learning with me and other teachers, and the wider political context. Second, Eby's (2000, p.50) way of understanding the context as 'an amoeba', as mentioned earlier, helped me form a picture of this. It also gave me a clue to clarifying what processes may be involved in reflective practice:

How can individuals begin to make more sense of the world they work and live in when all of these factors are pushing and pulling and reshaping the context of their work? The amoeba analogy assumes that people have the ability, and significantly the opportunity, to adapt and change (Eby, 2000, p.50).

The amoeba is elastic and can be reshaped. While being influenced by 'societal, political and economic factors' (ibid., p.50), we constantly reshape whatever context we are in through making sense of our practice. By thinking this way, we can explain how multiple reflective practices can promote our meaning-making process. Also, this quotation assumes that we are reflective practitioners in relation with others and the world. This was a significant finding for me, in that I

came to realise that I am also part of a meaning-making process for others, who are also trying to learn from their experiences in the context they live in. This helped me understand the research participants' learning through reflective practice in light of what it meant to me and my learning. Accordingly, my writing has come to refer to 'I' as a learner:

Teacher A came to face up to the challenging realities and accept them (...) which I think shows her 'open-mindedness' towards the process of looking at the complexity of the situation and 'problem setting' (Schön, 1983, pp.40-41). With this open-mindedness, the situation becomes a 'problem' for Teacher A to solve, moving herself forward to reflecting on herself or her practice in a positive way. I understand that the energy or courage to face up to a challenging situation makes practitioners open-minded towards the process of problem setting (Taken from Author's piece of writing, June 2015).

In this way, I have developed my understanding of reflective practice through being engaged in scholarly enquiry. I would claim that I have been able to establish a solid theoretical foundation of reflective practice as a core value of this study, by explaining what reflective practice involves.

In these three sections, I have reviewed the significance of my research for my own learning by reviewing my early writings. On reflection, at the earlier stage, it appeared that I tended to simply place quotations from the literatures which were relevant to my ideas. As my research progressed, I think that my way of writing has developed from 'a descriptive account' to 'an explanatory account' (McNiff, 2016, p.62), which has helped me reflect on my writing and the way I communicate with readers. The data from those other than the research participants, such as from my early writings and email correspondence with and feedback from my supervisors, have also greatly helped me reflect on and develop my learning, thinking and writing throughout the research process. These have also developed through being engaged in scholarly enquiry from different aspects of scholarship in education, applied linguistics, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (known as TESOL) and health and science (Eby, 2000). Hall et al. (2011, pp.19-20) expect 'full engagement with colleagues in sister areas of applied linguistics and in other disciplines' of applied linguistics in order to make their research/learning outcomes more 'descriptive' and 'inclusive' than prescriptive', based on a bottom-up applied linguistic perspective as mentioned above.



Considering the relevance between applied linguistics and action research, as also mentioned above, we action researchers may also need to become fully engaged in relevant scholarly enquiry. This may include continuing to revisit and update my thinking on the topics which I have looked at for this study in relation to relevant scholarly enquiry. In the next section, to end this study, I will describe a possible idea for English language teacher education methodology in a Japanese context.

## **7.5 Designing a possible English language teacher education methodology**

In this section, first, I reflect on and evaluate the cascade project for the further development of English language teacher education. Next, I suggest possible 'crossover' (May, 2014, pp.20-21) ideas for English classrooms taught in principle in English in response to MEXT (2013b). Last, I suggest a possible idea for English language teacher education methodology for teachers' continuing professional development after the cascade project. By presenting these ideas as responses to the request for designing a better teacher education model in my thesis from the local educational community members mentioned in chapter 6, I would like to reciprocate their support and encouragement throughout this study, and the cooperation from the British Council.

### **7.5.1 How can we reflect on and evaluate the cascade project?**

First, as mentioned earlier, for the further development of the cascade project, I would like to suggest the idea of collaborative action research between the British Council and LEEPs in relation with other educational partnership members, during the remaining time of the project. This idea was inspired by a six-month action research project in which the British Council collaborated with primary school teachers in Singapore as seen on the British Council's website (British Council, 2016). In this project, both members from the British Council and practising teachers practised as researchers; they documented their professional learning and students' learning, and achieved positive outcomes in students' learning. By adopting the idea that both the British Council and LEEPs work together as researchers, and changing the focus of the research from students' learning to

researchers' (LEEPs' and the British Council's) learning, I have designed a possible model of an action research project within the framework of the British Council-led programmes. This idea is on condition that the British Council holds a reunion meeting of LEEP's annually, as they did in 2015. At the reunion meeting, the British Council and LEEP's could:

- (1) share their concerns in terms of the cascade project;
- (2) frame research question(s) to improve their practice, in the form of "How do I...?" questions' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.16);
- (3) sort out data in relation to the research question(s), respectively,
  - \*LEEPs review the feedback from teachers who participated in their LEEP-led programmes (and their reflective journals),
  - \*the British Council review the feedback from LEEP's, teachers and the Board of Education officials (and their reflective journals);
- (4) analyse the data and discuss how to improve their practice in collaboration with educational partnership members,
  - \*LEEPs to collaborate with the Board of Education officials, university academics or researchers,
  - \*the British Council to collaborate with university academics or researchers;
- (5) frame the next action respectively;
- (6) repeat cycles (1) – (5);
- (7) at the next reunion meeting, report and share their research, evaluate progress and modify the research question for the next year.

In terms of (3) above, researchers could help LEEP's or the British Council to document their reflections and learning on their behalf. This model of action research project may connect relevant stakeholders towards building partnerships and mutual learning. By doing this, the cascade project might shift from a 'knowledge transmission' model to a 'socially negotiated' model (Jonson and Freeman, 2001, pp.54-55) in which 'each side contributes to the project' (Wright, 2016, p.7). I would see this as the first step towards building partnerships and mutual learning among different stakeholders. The findings and suggestions given through the collaborative action research could be valuable resources to assess the effectiveness of the project. On the assumption that I am involved in the

collaborative action research as one researcher, I would suggest that any researchers involved would:

- (1) produce an annual progress report by summarising the findings and suggestions gained from the collaborative action research;
- (2) publish an annual progress report online so that relevant stakeholders including teachers can access it;
- (3) evaluate the effectiveness/impact of the cascade project based on evaluation criteria when it finishes;
- (4) present an overall review of the cascade project at a government liaison meeting as well as at conferences;
- (5) review the overall feedback given, and redesign evaluation criteria for assessing the effectiveness/impact of teacher education programmes.

Before moving into (3) above, I assume that researchers would share their ideas on evaluation criteria, examine them and decide which to use or produce by modifying them. I would offer my understanding of how teacher professional learning processes contribute towards their professional development (Figure 2.2) as one idea. The process of examining, producing and redesigning evaluation criteria, as seen in (3) and (5) above, could make up for the absence of effective evaluation of past programmes and reforms. That would be key to the further development of teacher professional education. Further, as suggested in chapter 6, follow-up research on those who participated in the cascade project, such as LEEPs and practising teachers, to identify the 'sustainable impact' of the project (Zehetmeier, 2015, p.169) would provide valuable data for the future course of teacher professional education.

### **7.5.2 How can we move forward to 'English classrooms taught in principle in English'?**

It is partly because of their statement concerning English classrooms taught in principle in English at junior high school level that MEXT (2013b) has given rise to some debate. The cascade project organised by the British Council has confused the situation, in that their completely monolingual training programmes are inconsistent with the statement above with regard to the term 'in principle'. On this point, one LEEP voiced his concern in the questionnaire as follows:

No matter how we interpret it, we should value the term 'in principle'. We should not interpret it broadly in such a way that we must use English throughout classes, although it is important to increase students' use of English (LEEP A, 2014, my translation).

The report of a research on English teachers' resistance to the monolingual instructional strategy in Japanese high schools (Noda, 2015) shows how the same approach (English classrooms taught in principle in English) has been implemented since the school year of 2013. Reporting on the reality that teachers tend to feel embarrassed with using Japanese in class, Noda argues that 'the governmental ideologies can distort foreign language teaching in Japanese schools, which is inherently a sociocultural practice'. Noda accordingly calls for 'bi/multilingualism within education' (May, 2014, p.25):

what is necessary for Japanese schools now is enhancing teachers' as well as students' positive view towards bi/multi-lingual alternatives (May, 2014) rather than transforming teachers into monolingual English speakers in the classroom (Noda, 2015).

Besides agreeing with this idea, I would add the idea of valuing teachers' bilingual 'linguistic repertoires' (May, 2014, p.24) and their initiative in making decisions in the crossover. This includes the following:

- based on not an "either-or" orientation' (i.e. monolingual or bilingual) but a "both and more" perspective' (Canagarajah, 2006, p.233);
- avoiding leading Japanese English language teachers at junior high school level to reluctantly follow a transmitted idea from the policy;
- leaving crossover design for a new approach (teaching English in principle in English) to each school's discretion;
- valuing teachers' own thinking on how to move from their current teaching approach to a new one.

Further, I would suggest that researchers look into the ongoing process of moving from a current teaching approach to a new one at school level. They could then publish what they have found out through the research as 'a research-informed

professional development resource' (May, 2014, p.22), so that teachers can know what is going on in other schools. This might contribute to mutual learning between schools. Researchers may have another important role, that of addressing the drawbacks of a new approach to MEXT, according to their findings. Further, MEXT might need to reconsider schools as places for 'a sociocultural practice' (Noda, 2015), not places to teach English language for 'a clearly instrumental purpose' (Holliday, 1994, p.12). As one example, Teacher D mentioned during an interview (Teacher D, 2014b) that his class management focusing on empathy led strong students to accept weak students and stop teasing them, which he valued more than facilitating his students' communicative competence. In my opinion, this should be expected of teachers.

### **7.5.3 How might I design a possible English teacher education methodology?**

In the next three sub-sections, I suggest a possible English teacher education methodology for supporting English language teachers' sustainable professional development which may be applicable to the current teacher education schemes in Japan. Based on my learning through this study, I incorporate into its design the idea of teachers as autonomous and collaborative learners who learn through a cyclical process of action-reflection. I also incorporate the idea of continuing to learn English language as a language user, analyst, and teacher. These are the core ideas:

- (1) conducting mandatory teacher education programmes in the first and tenth year (MEXT, 2014a) based on a reflective and person-centred approach;
- (2) providing teachers with the opportunity to learn about reflective practice at regional English teachers meetings;
- (3) providing teachers with the opportunity to share their stories at regional English teachers meetings;
- (4) providing teachers with the opportunity to learn about changing Englishes and think for themselves about their own capacity for communicative competence in English for the development of teacher language awareness.

### 7.5.3.1 In terms of mandatory teacher education programmes

In terms of (1):

- Considering that new English language teachers work with their mentors, who are appointed by the Board of Education (MEXT, 2014a) throughout the year, those mentors may support their reflective practice in their first year of teaching;
- English teachers work with a mentor again in their tenth year of teaching. The mentor could be appointed from experienced teachers inside or outside schools. The mentor supports the teacher's reflective practice.

This idea is that mentors are given the opportunity to learn what reflective practice includes before working with (new) teachers. This requires the Board of Education to focus on both teacher professional education and teacher educator education. It is also expected that '[h]igher education institutions providing initial teacher education could be strengthened as hubs for educating both teachers and teacher educators' (the Council of the European Union, 2014, p.23). In the same way as the cascade project in which new LEEPs as 'insider trainers' are appointed every year, it is anticipated that experienced teachers could take the initiative in facilitating younger colleagues' practices. Moreover, based on my findings through this study, I would suggest that teachers set up their research questions, and that mentors document the summary of teachers' practices. This may enable both teachers and their mentors to reflect on teachers' learning afterwards, and know where they have come from and where they are now. If a mentor is a school colleague of the teacher, their collaboration could contribute to building 'a trusting environment at the school level' (Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou, 2015, p.137). This environment may have a positive impact on other colleagues' learning, as seen in the RELEASE project in Cyprus as mentioned in chapter 2.

### 7.5.3.2 In terms of regional English teachers meetings

In terms of (2) and (3), regional English teachers meetings, outside the remit of the Board of Education, can be expected to function as a local teachers' learning community. In our municipality, besides research activities within the meetings, regular study meetings are held twice a year at ward level. They consist of mainly observation of a demonstration lesson and post-lesson discussion. However, it is

the current situation that teachers attend them in turn due to their daily heavy workloads. I would suggest that regional English teachers meetings could organise:

- a) workshops on reflective practice, so that teachers can learn from their experiences and practices on a continuous basis;
- b) informal gatherings in which teachers share their stories and ask other teachers for comments or feedback on their practices.

These could be scheduled during school holidays. In terms of (a), workshops could be organised by researchers or university academics in the relevant field. Suggestion (b) comes not only from the idea of enhancing teachers' collaborative learning. I would position (b) as collective reflective practice, as part of 'critical dialogue with others' (Finlay, 2008, p.2). The gatherings could be organised in either a structured or an open-ended way. Supposing that teachers' stories would unfold as the meetings went on and produce rich teacher discourses, then researchers could join with teachers in collecting discourse data. Analysing those data might lead to clarifying what is at issue, forming a new research question to be explored.

### **7.5.3.3 In terms of the development of teacher language awareness**

In terms of (4), my experiences as an English language teacher at the previous teacher education programmes, which focused mainly on language teaching, might be a contributing factor to this suggestion. I posit a way of developing Japanese English language teachers' awareness of English language throughout their career, based on my idea of a linguistically aware English language teacher in a Japanese context. As suggested earlier, English teachers' professional learning may need to be designed from the three dimensions of 'language user, analyst, and teacher' (Gießler, 2012, p.132) to develop their 'sensitivity to (English) language' (Wright, 2002, p.115). It may be desirable to provide teachers with those opportunities 'on a recurrent basis', with due regard to the nature of applied linguistics as 'an ongoing process' (Xerri, 2015, pp.4-5). Given that what was suggested in the previous two sections was concerned with the 'language teacher' dimension, I focus on the other two 'language user' and 'language analyst' dimensions here. As for studying changing Englishes, workshops could be

provided both as part of mandatory teacher education programmes and regional English teachers meetings. One idea is that university academics or researchers specialising in World Englishes could speak about the status quo of English language and lead discussion on it, in such a way that teachers reflect on the implications of their talk for their professional practice. The other idea is that Japanese English language teachers and ALTs might share their ideas on how to 'arouse students' attention to world Englishes'; Chiba et al. (1995, p.85) describes this as an 'arduous task'. In my view, changing ALTs' perspectives for themselves and their Englishes might make this an easier task. The meetings of Japanese English language teachers and ALTs can be organised by their own initiative or led by university academics or researchers specialising in World Englishes. As the only native speakers of English at school, ALTs might see their role as 'correct' models to students. Therefore, Japanese English language teachers, with the help of university academics or researchers if necessary, could help ALTs recognise that their English is one of many varieties and communicate that to their (Japanese) students. This might help Japanese students broaden their ideas for English language and lead to their becoming interested in various varieties of Englishes. Considering that ALTs come from different countries, it may be possible to provide students with the opportunity to interact with some ALTs who speak different varieties of English in class at a tie-in event with the ALTs from other schools. Relevant literature suggests advocating 'the rationality of ideology behind the development of world Englishes' in order to increase Japanese students' 'tolerance' to 'non-native varieties' (Chiba et al., 1995, p.85). This is because the result of their questionnaire-based studies on Japanese university students revealed that the increase of students' exposure to many varieties of English did not guarantee the increase of their tolerance of non-native varieties (ibid., p.85). Learning the rationality of ideology behind the development of world Englishes may help university students understand varieties of English more, although it is a tough topic for junior high school students. I would suggest that if those university students had developed more knowledge about varieties of English and found more opportunities to interact with people who spoke different varieties of English in their younger days, they might have found it easier to accept non-native varieties. It may be that Japanese English language teachers and ALTs at junior high school have a significant role in laying the foundation of students' English language awareness.



Meetings of Japanese English language teachers and ALTs as suggested above could be another opportunity for them to think for themselves about their own capacity for communicative competence in English. If I joined the meetings as a researcher, I would like to suggest my conceptualised model of communicative competence (Figure 4.3) as one way for them to reflect on their communicative competence in relation to it and develop their own ideas for communicative competence. Japanese English language teachers and ALTs could share their views on communicative competence and discuss how they could interpret and develop it. In my view, being a native speaker does not mean being a competent communicator in a certain language and both Japanese English language teachers and ALTs could learn from the others' perspectives. Their shared ideas may be reflected back in their team-teaching lessons for the development of students' communicative competence.

The suggestions as seen in sections 7.5.3.1-7.5.3.3 are my responses to the request from the local educational community members who asked me to design a possible English language teacher education methodology. I hope to receive their comments on these ideas in order for me to examine their feedback. I believe writing these ideas has helped me give greater meaning to this study.

## **7.6 Summary**

Ultimately, my PhD study has been a journey of studying myself in relation to others, exploring who I am as a teacher, a teacher educator, an action researcher and an applied linguist. I would claim that the whole thesis communicates that I have done my best to live my values, which I spoke about in chapter 1, 'in practice', and show my 'commitments' to the values 'in action' (McNiff, 2014, p.113). I would also claim that I have come to appreciate and articulate what I was not sure about at the beginning of the project; for example, I have come to appreciate and articulate my educational values which have informed my thinking with more confidence through working and interacting with others. Those changes which I have observed in myself may be the significant outcome of this study. I am not so optimistic as to think that my ideas could influence education policy formation and implementation in Japan. However, I could possibly become involved in the process of shaping our local educational context, through exercising

my educational influence (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, p.64) in the learning of the research participants and others.

This three-year PhD study has made me recognise repeatedly that societal, political and economic factors have shaped popular discourses. We teachers have to navigate the ideological commitments such as a belief in the dominant varieties of English, a belief manifested in popular tests targeted at standardised British or American English and native-speakerism which were originally incorporated in MEXT policy. On the other hand, we have the ability, and significantly the opportunity, to adapt and change the context (Eby, 2000, p.50), as mentioned earlier. Tamai (2016, p.43) encourages us to 'be open to our own possibility of getting involved in a power game', because 'none of us is free from this'. What we can do may be to continue to practise reflectively and think for ourselves about our professional development, with the hope that this might lead to reshaping the social and political context, popular discourses and ideological commitments. I would like to be a researcher who does not look away from the existing contradictions that exist in popular discourses, and constantly asks myself 'what I do', without pretending to be indifferent or being an obedient follower of popular discourses.

Nearing the end of this study, I exchanged emails with a Board Member from the British Council Tokyo, who reflected on our communication of December 2015 in his email, which I quote below with his consent. He wrote about my findings through this study which I communicated to them as follows:

they have informed our thinking when communicating with teachers on this, the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the programme (Taken from an email from a Board Member from the British Council to Author, 27/05/2016).

This quotation may show how their values have been reshaped and transformed into their new Discourses through our communication, which has led them to move in new directions with the cascade project.

In chapter 3, I wrote that I aimed to evaluate my work in terms of how my practice might have made a positive contribution to the improvement of the situation in which the educational values that inform my practices and thinking have been denied, and in which my fellow teachers have not been satisfied with the current

educational context. I would claim that the email from the British Council might stand as the evidence of my possible contribution to the improvement of the situation. Furthermore, I was awarded 'The EAR/CARN Award' which was given to 'a promising action research writer presenting at the CARN 2016 Conference' (EAR is short for '*Educational Action Research*', a name of a refereed international journal). This has become a good incentive for my further practice. This study has already given me the focus of my next practice or possibly post-doctoral research, exploring how collaborative practices grounded in a values-oriented perspective can encourage people to move into communicative action, as mentioned in chapter 3. I think I am now ready for another journey towards exploring the development of new knowledge.

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**Appendix A****Notation symbols for transcription**

<i>(talk)</i>	a guess for what was said, if the recording is not clear, shown in italics in brackets
(...)	omission
[ ]	anything added by the author to make the sentence more understandable, any supplemental information
<i>((laughter))</i>	anything difficult to write down, shown in italics in double brackets
?	sounds like a question
,	pause

## Appendix B

### Letter of invitation to the research project

(The section written in Japanese is followed by an English translation.)

York St John University におけるリサーチ・プロジェクトについてのお願い  
Request for your cooperation in a research project at York St John University

この4月より、3年間の長期研修休暇を取り、英国の York St John University で学ばせていただくことになりました。研究のテーマは、アクションリサーチの手法を利用して神戸市の日本人英語教員の授業をより生徒の **communicative competence** を高める授業にすることを旨とする、及びその過程をサポートさせていただきながら、英語教師のためのよりよい **on-the-job training** の開発を旨とする、の2つです(…)アクションリサーチを簡単に言うと、「教師が自分の教室で起きている指導や学習についての問題の原因を探り、解決を図る小規模な実践的研究」です。個々の先生方が、授業改善のための行動<action>を計画→実行→観察→内省というスパイラルを繰り返しながら、よりよい授業を旨とするというものです。なので、先生方が日頃無意識に行っている授業の振り返りを、より焦点化して継続的に行うだけだとも言えます。一人で継続的に実施するのは難しそうに思えますが、他の先生方と問題点を話し合ったり、学びや気づきを共有し合ったりすることで、より継続的に取り組んでいくことが可能になるように思います。もちろん現場の先生方は多忙なので(自分自身よくわかっている)、その点にも配慮しながらプロジェクトを進めていきたいと考えています。

プロジェクトの内容として、

- 参加していただける先生方とコミュニティを作り、生徒の **communicative competence** を高める授業研究を一緒に進める
- 忙しい先生方の負担にならないように、例えば下記のようなシンプルな形でプロジェクトを進めていく(スケジュールはまだ未定)；実践を行うクラスを決める(4月)→現状を把握し、実践のテーマを決める(5～6月)→実践(2学期)→振り返り(2学期末)など、また、実践についてはアンケートにお答えいただくようなシンプルな形で報告していただくか、メール、あるいはスカイプで話すこともできる
- 個々の先生方の学びをコミュニティ全体の中で共有できるようにこちらから個々の先生方に発信し、コミュニティ全体で英語授業がより生徒の **communicative competence** を高めるものとなることを目指す
- 生徒のコミュニケーション力については、来年度から各校で設定する **can-do** リストで到達度を見ることで、**can-do** リストの有効性についても検証できる

というようなことを考えています。もちろん、先生方の意向で途中でプロジェクトから離れられても問題はありません。このプロジェクトに参加していただくことは可能でしょうか。近いうちに返信をいただけるとありがたいです。参加していただくことが可能でしたら、またあらためて具体的な連絡をさせていただきたいと思います。

金藤 多美子

I am starting my PhD study at York St John University, and will be taking a three-year leave period from this April. The purpose of the study is to contribute to the development of professional education for English language teachers using an action

research approach, while supporting Japanese English language teachers' teaching for the improvement of students' communicative competence (...) Action research can be explained as small-scale practical research in which teachers inquire into their classroom issues and teaching practice, and try to improve them. They do this through the cyclical process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Through using this action research approach, we can reflect on our practices, which we do involuntarily on a daily basis, but continuously and in a more focused way. Although working on research by ourselves sounds demanding, discussing issues with other teachers and sharing our learning and findings would help us work on it progressively. I am planning to conduct this project with due regard to your daily heavy workload (which I appreciate very much).

As the outline of the project, I have the following ideas:

- starting up a teacher community with the teachers who approved of the aim of the project, and researching together how we can improve students' communicative competence;
- conducting the project in a simple way as follows, taking account of your daily workload (the schedule not fixed): decide the class(es) in which you do research (April)→understand the circumstances and decide the research theme (May-June)→do research (September-December) →reflection (December), etc., and producing a report in a simple way, for example in the form of questionnaires, by means of email and Skype;
- sharing each member's learning with other members, and working together to improve English classes for the improvement of students' communicative competence;
- possibly examining the effectiveness of can-do lists that each school is supposed to set the next school year, through measuring students' achievement in improving communicative competence after using them.

You are entirely free to decide to leave this project midway. Would it be possible for you to join the project? It would be very helpful if you could reply quickly. If you are interested in joining, I will contact you again with more specific information.

Tamiko Kondo

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire for research participants in March 2014

1. What do you value in your English class?

2. Looking back through the school year of April 2013–March 2014, are there any aspects that you would like to improve in your English class? If so, what are they?

3. The Course of Study for Junior High Schools Foreign Languages (English) states that the overall objective of the study of English as a subject is as follows:

To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages (MEXT, 2012, p.1, as in original).

What are 'communication abilities' in your opinion?

4. Which student skills do you want to strengthen, regarding communication abilities?

5. What kind of class materials or activities do you want to try out in order to strengthen students' communication abilities in the next school year?

## Appendix D

### Questionnaire for LEEPs who participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014

(Each section is followed by its English translation.)

英語教育推進リーダー中央研修に関するアンケートご協力をお願い  
Request for your cooperation in filling out the questionnaire

英語教育推進リーダー中央研修 参加者の皆さんへ

私は、市立中学校の英語教員の金藤多美子と申します。現在3年間の長期研修休業を取得して、イングランドの **York St John University** 大学院博士課程に在籍しております。この度は、アンケートへのご協力をお願いしたく、市の同僚教諭を通じてこの文書を配布させていただきました。

私の研究についてですが、4人の英語の先生方とコミュニティを作り、以下のテーマで研究を進めています。

- (1) **Reflective practice** による授業実践の振り返りの過程をサポートさせていただきながら、よりよい英語教員研修の開発を目指すこと
- (2) 日本人生徒のコミュニケーション能力を高める授業研究を一緒に進めること
- (3) 文科省の提言等を分析するとともに、英語教師の観点から、真のコミュニケーション能力とは何かについてまとめ発表すること

特に、上の(3)については、ここ最近の文科省の提言内容 (TOEFL 等の外部検定試験の導入等) が本当に日本人生徒のコミュニケーション能力向上につながるのかなど、疑問視する声を周囲からも聞きます。今回、市の先生方だけでなく、もっと幅広く多くの先生方から、特に英語教育推進リーダーとして活躍されている先生方からご意見をおうかがいしたいと思っています。また、今回の中央研修に関するご意見や、現職教員の研修のあるべき姿についてのお考えをお聞きすることで、私の研究テーマのひとつである、よりよい英語教員研修の開発の参考にさせていただければと思っています。

つきましては、以下を読んでいただいて、アンケートにお答えいただきたく思います。どうぞよろしく願いいたします。

- 1、先生方からいただいたご意見は、私の研究のデータとして、今後の学会での発表や博士論文の資料として使わせていただきたいと思います。
  - 2、1に関して、データや資料として使わせていただく際には、先生方のプライバシー保護のため個人名は一切掲載いたしません。
  - 3、研究終了後は、アンケート用紙をこちらで責任をもって破棄いたします。
- 以上の内容に賛同していただき、アンケートにお答えいただける場合には、下にお名前を書いていただいて、次頁のアンケートに進んでいただければと思います。

金藤 多美子

York St John University

お名前 ( )

Signed

Dear LEEPs,

I am Tamiko Kondo, an English language teacher at a municipal junior high school, and I have taken a three-year leave period to do my PhD study at York St John University in England. I am passing on this paper to you through one of my colleagues in order to ask your cooperation in filling out a questionnaire.

I have convened a teacher learning community with four Japanese English language teachers, working on research with the aim of:

- (1) finding ways of developing English language teacher education methodology, through facilitating teachers' reflective practice;
- (2) finding ways of developing Japanese students' communicative competence;
- (3) investigating and presenting from the perspective of English language teachers what true communicative competence means, while analysing MEXT's policy.

In terms of (3) above, there has been some debate amongst teachers themselves about the credibility of MEXT's decision to introduce popular English proficiency tests such as TOEFL into Japanese classrooms. I am hoping to ask the opinions of LEEPs as well as other English language teachers, which will provide me with valuable ideas for the development of professional education for English language teachers.

Therefore, I would like to ask for your cooperation, after reading the following:

1. Any of your opinions may be used as data in my conference presentation or my thesis;
2. In terms of 1, if I report any of your opinions, they will be anonymised;
3. Any data will be discarded on completion of the research.

If you are happy with this, would you please add your signature below and fill out the questionnaire? Thank you.

英語教育推進リーダー中央研修に関するアンケート

Questionnaire about the British Council-led teacher education programmes

先生ご自身について 教職経験年数 ( ) 年  
About yourself Years of teaching experience

(1) 学習指導要領には「外国語を通じて、言語や文化に対する理解を深め、積極的にコミュニケーションを図ろうとする態度の育成を図り、聞くこと、話すこと、読むこと、書くことなどのコミュニケーション能力の基礎を養う」とありますが、先生ご自身は「コミュニケーション能力」とは本来どのような能力のことだと考えられていますか。

The Course of Study states, 'To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages' (MEXT 2012, p.1, as in original). What do you think 'communication abilities' means?

(2) 昨年12月に出された提言（「グローバル化に対応した英語教育改革実施計画」）では、以下の内容に言及されていますが、それについての先生方のご意見をお書きください。

Please describe your opinions about what MEXT (2013b) states.

1、「中学校の授業を英語で行うことを基本とする」ことについて、次のアーエのいずれかを選んで○をつけていただいてから、下にご意見をお書きください。

Please describe your opinions about 'teaching English in principle in English at junior high school level', after choosing one of the four.

(ア) 賛成 (イ) どちらかという賛成 (ウ) どちらかという反対 (エ) 反対  
Agree Maybe agree Maybe disagree Disagree

<ご意見>

Your opinion

2、生徒の英語力検証や大学入試において資格・検定試験の活用を普及・拡大することについて（例：中学校/CEFR A1-A2・英検3級-準2級、高等学校/CEFR B1-B2・英検2級-準1級・TOEFL iBT 57点以上等）

With regard to MEXT's idea of introducing popular English proficiency tests into assessment of students' English ability and university entrance examinations (e.g. junior high school level/A1 to A2 in CEFR or the third to pre-second grade in the STEP test, high school level/B1 to B2 in CEFR, the second to pre-first grade in the STEP test or a score of more than 57 in TOEFL iBT)

<ご意見>

Your opinion

<もし外部試験を取り入れるとしたらどの試験がいいと思われますか。その理由もお書きください。>

If using them, which English proficiency test do you think is preferable? Please also give a reason.

(3) これまでに参加された様々な英語教員のための研修プログラムやワークショップ等の中で、特に自分のキャリアにとって意義深い研修だったと思われるものがあればお書きください。

If you have ever attended a teacher education programme or workshop, please mention which one was most helpful in terms of professional development.

(4) これまでの経験をふまえて、現職の英語教員研修プログラムはどうあるべきだと思いますか。

Based on your experience, what do you think in-service English teacher education programmes should be like?

(5) 今年度の「英語教育推進リーダー中央研修」を受けられた感想やご意見をお書きください。

Please describe your general opinion about the British Council-led teacher education programmes.

ご協力大変ありがとうございました。アンケート用紙を下記までメール添付で送ってくださるとありがたいです。よろしく願いいたします。

Thank you for your cooperation. It would be helpful if you could return this to me.

Thank you very much in advance.

## Appendix E

### Questionnaire for teachers who participated in LEEP-led teacher education programmes in 2015

(The section written in Japanese is followed by its English translation.)

英語教育推進リーダー域内研修に関するアンケートご協力をお願い  
Request for your cooperation in filling out the questionnaire

英語教育推進リーダー域内研修に参加された先生方へ

私は、市立中学校所属の金藤多美子と申します。昨年4月より3年間の長期研修休業を取得して、イングランドの **York St John University** 大学院博士課程に留学しております。この度は、アンケートへのご協力をお願いしたく、英語教育推進リーダーと教育委員会のご理解、ご協力を得て文書を配布させていただきました。

私の研究についてですが、4人の英語の先生方とコミュニティを作り、以下のテーマで研究を進めています。

- (1) 文科省の提言等に対し、英語教師としての観点から、真のコミュニケーション能力とは何か、どのようにそれを育んでいくのかを考える
- (2) 授業実践の振り返りを通した、個個人の先生方と向き合う英語教員研修の開発を目指す
- (3) 外部試験にたよらない、コミュニケーション能力の評価方法について考える

以上の取り組みを通して、自分自身も英語教師としてより成長できればと思っています。特に、上の(2)のテーマ(英語教員研修)については、**British Council**の中央研修を受けられた LEEP の域内研修に参加された先生方のお声をお聞きし、それを分析することで、**British Council**の中央研修の有効性や、現場の先生方のニーズとの関連性を明確にしたいと考えています。またそれにより、英語教員研修はどうあるべきなのかということをもとめていきたいと考えています。

つきましては、以下を読んでいただいて、アンケートにお答えいただきたく思います。どうぞよろしく願いいたします。

1、先生方からいただいたご意見は、私の研究のデータとして、今後の学会での発表や博士論文の資料として使わせていただきたいと思います。

2、1に関して、データや資料として使わせていただく際には、先生方のプライバシー保護のため個人名は一切掲載いたしません。

3、研究終了後は、アンケート用紙をこちらで責任をもって破棄いたします。

以上の内容に賛同していただき、アンケートにお答えいただける場合には、下にお名前を書いていただいて、次頁のアンケートに進んでいただければと思います。

金藤 多美子

York St John University

お名前 ( )

Signed

Dear teachers,

I am Tamiko Kondo, an English language teacher at a municipal junior high school, and I have taken a three-year leave period since April last year to do my PhD study at York St John University in England. I am passing out this paper to you with the support



of the LEEP and the Board of Education in order to ask your cooperation in filling out a questionnaire.

I have convened a teacher learning community with four Japanese English language teachers, working on research with the aim of:

- (1) analysing MEXT's policy, investigating from the perspective of English language teachers what true communicative competence means and how we can develop it;
- (2) finding ways of developing a person-centred English language teacher education methodology through facilitating teachers' reflective practice;
- (3) finding ways of assessing students' communicative competence without using popular English proficiency tests.

I am also aiming to develop myself as an English language teacher through this research. Specifically, in terms of (2), I am hoping to examine the effectiveness of the British Council-led programmes and the relevance to your needs, by analysing your opinions. Accordingly, I would like to summarise what English language teacher education should be like.

Therefore, I would like to ask for your cooperation, after reading the following:

1. Any of your opinions may be used as data in my conference presentation or my thesis;
2. In terms of 1, if I report any of your opinions, they will be anonymised;
3. Any data will be discarded on completion of the research.

If you are happy with this, would you please add your signature below and fill out the questionnaire? Thank you.

## Questionnaire about LEEP-led teacher education programmes

\*Please fill in this questionnaire either in English or in Japanese.

About yourself: Number of years of teaching experience ( ) years

(1) About LEEP-led teacher education programmes as part of the MEXT 'cascade' project:

1. What did you expect from LEEP-led teacher education programmes (before participating in them)?
2. Please describe your general opinion about the programmes.
3. What did you find very useful and beneficial?
4. Please describe the 'gap' between the content of the programmes and your expectation/needs in your real teaching context (if any).

(2) Your general opinion about English language teacher education

1. What do you want (or need) to learn, for your professional development, on teacher education programmes?
2. What do you think would be useful and beneficial for your professional development? (For example, participating in seminars/workshops; learning in a 'teacher community'; in your school; learning by yourself; or something else?)
3. What do you think teacher education programmes should be like?

(3). The latest policy (MEXT, 2013b) identifies the pre-first grade in the STEP test or a score of more than 80 in TOEFL iBT as the minimum requirements for Japanese English language teachers. What do you think about this decision? You may wish to comment on the required level (pre-first grade/80), on the design of the tests, or on the relationship between English language level and good teaching.

(4). What do you think the needs of Japanese English language teachers should be, in this postmodern, globalised era in which varieties of English are spoken all over the world? Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## Appendix F

### Interview summary of Teacher D

<b>Date/Theme</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Descriptions / (Descriptions in brackets are added by the author)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
22/05/2014 At the beginning of the new school year	What I value in my English class	Students' sense of achievement comes first of all, then communicative competence	confidence
	What I value in students' ability	- Sympathising with others - Sharing ideas and thoughts with others	empathy openness
	What communicative competence is	- Consideration for others - Being able to imagine what people think and try to understand them	empathy
	My challenge from year 2013/2014	More efficient use of the textbook, teaching English 'with' the textbook	
	Targets for year 2014/2015	- Developing students' ability to accept different personalities - Developing students' ability to help each other through cooperative learning	empathy openness willingness
25/07/2014 Reflecting on the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	What I value in my English class	Facilitating students' communicative competence overall	
	What I focused on in the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	- Encouraged students to accept differences - Encouraged students' cooperative learning	empathy openness willingness
	Students' changes during the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	- Strong students stopped teasing weak students - They came to help each other more positively	empathy openness willingness
	Why students changed	Strong students accepted weak students and their efforts	empathy
	My challenge from the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	Some strong students did not try to help weak students spontaneously, because they lacked confidence in themselves	confidence

	My dilemma	Weak students' positive attitude towards communication is not reflected in test scores, that is, a positive attitude cannot be tested	willingness
	Targets for the next term	- More efficient use of the textbook by redesigning materials in it, in order to develop students' ability to express themselves in their own words - Rethinking a method of assessment which is clear and encouraging to students	Teachers' & students' originality creativity
	What contributed to my professional development during the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	Being a mentor for a new teacher	
	How that worked	- Enhanced my reflection on what I had done more than what the new teacher had done - Became more conscious of the reason for and the value of what I do in class	
08/11/2014 Reflecting on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	What I value in my English class	- Caring class atmosphere - Explaining the objectives of class activities beforehand	empathy
	What I have focused on for these 10 years	Constantly trying to improve worksheet so that students can reproduce and recite the text of the textbook	
	What I have found through these 10 years' practices	By setting easier goals in the worksheet, students can finish the task more quickly, regardless of the number of tasks	
	Where my students are now	Students can reproduce and recite the text of the textbook if someone reads its Japanese translation	
	Change in me during the 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Used the textbook more efficiently by modifying the material in it	Teachers' originality creativity
	Target for the next term	Encouraging students to communicate in English by recycling the knowledge which they have obtained from the textbook	originality creativity
	How reflective practice worked	I was able to consolidate my ideas and thoughts	
27/03/2015 Reflecting on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> term	What I value about the current speaking activities in my English class	- The atmosphere in which students are not afraid of making mistakes - Recycling the knowledge which they have learned	willingness originality creativity

	How that affected students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students are not reluctant to speak in English</li> <li>- Students have improved at expressing themselves in English, through repeating the same activity with different partners</li> </ul>	willingness originality confidence
	My challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to make students realise their progress</li> <li>- How to get students' feedback on the speaking activity</li> <li>- How to develop the current speaking activity into a speaking test for testing their originality</li> </ul>	originality
	Targets for the next term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing the current speaking activity so that students talk about a topic provided, in order to enhance their originality and creativity</li> <li>- Developing my class management so that students can improve themselves by stages according to their level</li> </ul>	originality creativity
	My view of communicative competence	Both teachers and students should improve communicative competence	
	My understanding of reflective practice	Continuing to question current practice, noticing some points to be considered, considering why they occurred and trying a new approach	
31/07/2015 Reflecting on the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	What I focused on during the 1 <sup>st</sup> term	Developed the speaking activity into a writing activity, by making students write down their findings and comments on the activity (at the same time, it became possible to collect their feedback)	
	Students' change	Some students became able to sustain conversation by asking additional questions, as 'words', not just 'signals'	originality creativity
	Target for the next term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping students sustain conversation</li> <li>- Developing the current speaking activity in such a way that students talk about a topic provided, in order to enhance their originality and creativity</li> </ul>	creativity originality
	Reflecting on my practice in light of developing communicative competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trying to develop students' communicative competence has made me realise the significance of developing originality and creativity in communication, which is not that easy</li> <li>- However, empathy is still my main focus in communicative competence, because empathy helps us understand others and make ourselves understood</li> </ul>	creativity originality  empathy
	Reflecting on my reflective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I have developed my teaching philosophy and teaching style</li> <li>- I have found the value of collaboration in reflective practice</li> </ul>	

## Appendix G

### University of Leeds Research ethics form

Everyone who does research in the University is required to submit their projects to ethical screening. If the results indicate that the proposed research could raise ethical issues it must be approved before it can begin. Students (and staff doing supervised research as part of a University programme) can have their research approved by their supervisor, provided it does not raise substantial ethical issues. Staff research must be peer-reviewed and must be submitted to a faculty ethics committee for approval.

This form enables students and staff to carry out ethical review of a proposed research project. All researchers must complete Part One of the form, which will indicate if there are any ethical issues than need to be addressed before the project can be approved. If there are, and they can be dealt with by standard actions, these can be reported in Part Three of the form. If the research raises substantial or unusual ethical issues, approval will require a full ethics proposal which will be scrutinized by a faculty research ethics committee.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University [Guidelines on Ethics](#). All research activity must adhere to the University's Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy. The principal investigator or student supervisor is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

This form must be completed before the research begins. It is in four parts:

Part One: **Initial Screening Checklist**. Everyone completes this.

Part Two: **Decision Tree**. This is completed if Part One indicates that there are ethical issues with the proposed research, but they may not require a full proposal.

Part Three: **Mitigation of Ethical Concerns**. This is completed if there are some ethical issues which can be dealt with by following standard procedures.

Part Four: **Ethics Proposal**. This is completed if there are substantial ethical issues in the proposed research that require vetting by your faculty research ethics committee.

#### **PART FOUR: Research Ethics Proposal**

*You must complete this part of the form if either:*

*You answered a 'red' **YES** in the Initial Screening Checklist in Part One of this form. OR  
You gave one or more non-red YES answers in the Initial Screening Checklist and the Decision Tree indicated that a full proposal was required.*

*You have to complete this form because what you propose to do raises substantial ethical issues. This proposal will be seen by a committee who will want to know clearly and precisely what you intend to do and how you will ensure that you follow best ethical practice. Make sure that you specially address the issues identified in the checklist and/or decision tree.*

<b>Title of project</b>	How do I help Japanese English teachers to develop their capacity to teach for students' communicative competence?
<b>Name of researcher</b>	Tamiko Kondo
<b>Status</b>	Student: Postgraduate research program (e.g. PhD)
<b>Supervisor (if student research project)</b>	Jean McNiff, Rachel Wicaksono
<b>What needs authorising by committee?</b>	Full Proposal for Student Research
<b>Objectives:</b>	
<i>A few bullet points to indicate what questions you want to answer.</i>	
How can I support Japanese English teachers' capacity to teach for students' communicative competence?	
<b>Please give a brief justification of your proposed research project:</b>	
<i>How it relates to previous research, why the questions are important, and what benefits might it offer. This helps to show that the research is worthwhile, even if it raises some ethical questions.</i>	
I worked as a teacher educator for new Japanese English language teachers, which my MA study was based on, and I found ways to help them develop capacity to educate themselves through reflective practice. On the basis of that experience, now I would like to contribute more to the professional development of in-service English language teachers, especially their capacity to teach for students' communicative competence because there is some debate about the quality of English classes taught by Japanese teachers for the reason that there is insufficient emphasis on oral communication. I would also like to suggest a more effective teacher education system through my research.	

**Please outline the proposed sample group or research material:**

*Is this a random sample, or will you be recruiting only certain sorts of people or accessing certain sorts of material. If the sample may be vulnerable people, or the material particularly sensitive, show how you will deal with the ethical issues this raises.*

All of my research participants are Japanese English language teachers in the city where I work. Four of them are the members of a research meeting I belonged to. The other one was a participant in my MA study as well.

**Describe how the proposed sample will be recruited:**

*Indicate if you will be recruiting directly, or if you will use a 'gatekeeper'. If the latter, how will they be trained and instructed?*

I will be recruiting directly.

**What will your participants be required to do:**

*Include an indication of the time they will need to give to the study, and whether or not the activities required might be physically or psychologically stressful. How will you deal with this if it is likely to happen?*

I will send them questionnaires to fill in and feedback forms occasionally, and ask them to send me their outcomes (pictures or any materials). When I return to Japan temporarily, I will organise a meeting with them, observe their English classes and have post-class discussions. I will inform them that they will be free to decide to join or leave this research.

**Specify how the consent of participants will be obtained. Please include within this a description of any information which you intend to provide the participants:**

*If the participants fall into the 'vulnerable' category, or there is a question whether informed consent is possible, you need to justify why you should be doing research on such participants, and show that what you want them to do is in their best interests, or the best interests of society.*

I will send a Letter of Permission to each participant and the headmasters of their schools to obtain their consent.

**Indicate any potential risks to participants and how you propose to minimize these:**

Because I understand their heavy work load, I won't rush them into filling in the forms, for example. I will ensure that my project won't make their work load heavier.

**Describe the procedures you intend to follow in order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants:**

*You may not be able to collect data anonymously (e.g. in longitudinal studies) and in some cases participants may not wish what they contribute to be either anonymous or confidential. You need to show you are aware of these issues and have thought how to deal with them.*

I will name them anonymously in my thesis, Teacher A or Teacher B for example.

**How will the data be handled and stored:**

*This is particularly important if there is a possibility of individuals being identified from the records you keep. Paper questionnaires must be kept locked away and online data must be in password protected folders.*

All my data will be kept locked in password protected folders.



## Appendix H

### Consent form for research participants

Dear

I am writing to you for two reasons:

1. I want to inform you that I intend to carry out a research project at York St John University for my doctoral dissertation. The topic I intend to explore is about supporting Japanese English language teachers' capacity to teach for students' communicative competence through reflective practice and developing teacher education methodology using reflective practice;
2. In order to write up this project, I will need to gather evidence through working together with you. For this I need your permission.

In order to be clear I will outline the ethical guidelines that I intend to apply to my work as well as a brief description of some of the issues I intend to explore in the research. The work I will be carrying out will come under the category of teachers' professional development. The following guidelines will apply to my work.

In order to explore the issues of teachers' professional development through reflective practice, I will look at the following:

- questionnaires;
- interviews and meetings (recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research);
- classroom observation (videotaped if appropriate, recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research);
- a variety of other related materials.

Confidentially will be completely preserved. All teachers will be referred to in a general way in my doctoral dissertation, for example 'Teacher A'. I would refer to your name in my presentation at conferences inside and outside Japan with your consent.

You are entirely free to choose whether your data will be included or not, and decide to join or leave this project. Your choice will not alter our relationship.

If you wish to access material you have produced in relation to this project, I will gladly show it to you.

Please contact me if you have any questions in relation to this project.

I would be grateful if you would sign this letter whether you wish your material to be used or not.

Yours truly,

金藤 多美子

I do/do not wish to have data from my work included in the above research project.

Signed:

## Appendix I

### Consent form for head teachers

Dear head teacher,

I am writing to you for two reasons:

1. I want to inform you that I intend to carry out a research project at York St John University for my doctoral dissertation. The topic I intend to explore is about supporting Japanese English language teachers' capacity to teach for students' communicative competence through reflective practice and developing teacher education methodology using reflective practice;
2. In order to write up this project, I will need to gather evidence through working together with your employee \_\_\_\_\_. For this I need your permission.

In order to be clear I will outline the ethical guidelines that I intend to apply to my work as well as a brief description of some of the issues I intend to explore in the research. The work I will be carrying out will come under the category of teachers' professional development. The following guidelines will apply to my work.

In order to explore the issues of teachers' professional development through reflective practice I will look at the following issues:

- questionnaires;
- interviews and meetings (recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research);
- classroom observation (videotaped if appropriate, recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research);
- a variety of other related matters.

Confidentiality will be completely preserved. The teacher will be referred to in a general way in my doctoral dissertation, for example 'Teacher A'. I would refer to the teacher's name in my presentation at conferences inside and outside Japan with his/her consent.

The teacher is entirely free to choose whether his/her data will be included or not, and decide to join or leave this project. His/her choice will not alter my relationship with him/her.

If you wish to access material the teacher has produced in relation to this project, I will gladly show it to you.

Please contact me if you have any questions in relation to this project.

I would be grateful if you would sign this letter whether you wish his/her material to be used or not.

Yours truly,  
金藤 多美子

I do/do not wish to have data from his/her work included in the above research project.

Signed:

## Appendix J

### Letter of invitation to the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014



Are we teachers of English or English as a lingua franca?:  
 Breaking away from the 'Non-native English teachers' myth and heading for  
 Japanese students' and our communicative competence in English  
 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Dear fellow English language teachers and academics,

We are very pleased to invite you to our first LIdIA Overseas Workshop to identify ways to help ourselves grow professionally as practitioners in the educational field. This workshop is organised by Dr Rachel Wicaksono (Head of Department, Languages and Linguistics) and Tamiko Kondo (Faculty of Education and Theology) in partnership with the LIdIA, Language and Identities in InterAction Research Unit, within York St John University. LIdIA is an interdisciplinary research unit focusing on various research areas with active and international researchers and educators in linguistics, languages and language education. During the workshop, first, we will focus on the issues of World Englishes and English as a lingua franca, which will stimulate you in such a way that you will consider yourselves NOT 'non-native English teachers' but 'teachers of English as a lingua franca'. The issues will also breathe a new perspective into Japanese English classrooms, which will lead you to dynamic conversations as confident speakers of English, not hesitant ones. Next, we will focus on the issues of the everyday English classroom situation and Japanese students' communicative competence in English, which will spotlight the challenge for Japanese English language teachers and the dilemma for the governmental policies. We will also focus on teachers' collaborative action research, which will lead to a new perspective for in-service English language teacher education methodology. Both sessions will be followed by active and interactive discussions. You will hear plenty of diverse opinions and suggestions which will motivate and encourage you to reflect on and change your teaching after those discussions. By the end of the workshop, you will identify a way to develop yourself and your practice in your teaching context. There will be a 'Sticky Wall' corner available so that we can share our reflections throughout the workshop. Shall we find out what we can do as members of this revitalising teachers' community for the development of English language education to secondary level in Japan?

Your voices are critical to the success of the workshop and the further development of not only our research unit LIdIA but also the English language teachers' community in your local context. This workshop will be also an excellent chance to foster good connections between English language teachers and academics in Japan and the UK. Participation in the workshop is free of charge and drinks/refreshments/lunch will be provided.

For further information about the workshop, please email Tamiko Kondo. We are looking forward to welcoming you on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December!

Yours sincerely,  
 Rachel Wicaksono and Tamiko Kondo

The workshop will take place on:  
 Date: Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014  
 Time: Venue open: 9:00 – 16:00  
 Workshop: 10:00 - 15:00

Agenda;

Time	Programme	Particulars
9:00 - 10:00	Reception starting at 9 Social talking time	Drinks and refreshments available Enjoy conversing among participants
10:00 – 12:00	Morning session: “Exploring English language”	- Opening address: - Talk and discussions 1: ‘Changing Englishes – What do World Englishes, Japanese English and English as a Lingua Franca mean for English language teachers in Japan?’, presented by Dr Rachel Wicaksono, followed by interactive discussions and reflection session (see details below)
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch Social talking time	Lunch provided Enjoy networking lunch Share reflections on the Sticky Wall
13:00 – 15:00	Afternoon session: “Exploring English teaching and teacher development”	- Talk and discussions 2: ‘How do we develop our capacity to teach for our students’ communicative competence through collaborative action research?: our challenge to English language education policy in Japan’, presented by Tamiko Kondo, followed by interactive discussions and reflection session (see details below) - Closing address:
15:00 – 16:00	Social talking time	Drinks and refreshments available Enjoy conversing and sharing reflections among participants

About the talks:  
 (Both talks will be presented in English.)

‘Changing Englishes – What do World Englishes, Japanese English and English as a Lingua Franca mean for English language teachers in Japan?’

Dr Rachel Wicaksono

Head of Department, Languages and Linguistics, York St John University

Keywords: World Englishes, English as a lingua franca, Native-speakerism, English language teaching

Abstract:

English, like all languages, is constantly changing. But in these globalising times, it is changing at a faster pace and in a greater number of contexts of use than ever before. Non-native users, including learners and teachers, are the agents of much of this dynamism, bringing to English the rich influences of their local languages and cultural contexts. They are also re-crafting English to serve as a lingua franca between users of different first languages. The idea of English as a *foreign* language, belonging to native speakers only, is rapidly passing. And referring to English in the singular – which has always misrepresented its diversity – is no longer adequate.

*Changing Englishes* is an urgent issue for teachers, so in this workshop I will invite you to consider the following questions:

- What is *English*?
- How is English *used* beyond the classroom?
- How is English *learnt* in the classroom?
- How is English *learnt* beyond the classroom?
- How can English be *taught* in the classroom?

The aim of the workshop is to help further raise your awareness of the variable and dynamic nature of global English and to reflect on implications for your professional practice, according to your local needs and contexts. I *do not* aim to supply you with

classroom activities or materials. Neither will it tell you how to teach English as an international language or English as a lingua franca. But I will make one or two practical suggestions and I hope that you will be able to think of some of your own!

'How do we develop our capacity to teach for our students' communicative competence through collaborative action research?: our challenge to English language education policy in Japan'

Tamiko Kondo

Faculty of Education and Theology, York St John University

Keywords: Action research, Reflective practice, In-service teacher education methodologies, Communicative competence, English language education policy

Abstract:

'*Who are we studying?*' Our students? No. We are studying OURSELVES. We are doing action research to learn from our own experience for our personal and professional development, which we believe will lead to changes in our students and their development. We are heading for the development of our students' communicative competence. However, an issue has stood in our way: '*What is communicative competence? Can it be assessed as written in MEXT policy?*' The journey of our action research community is up and running... This is a teacher research project conducted by in-service Japanese English language teachers to secondary level and my PhD research as well. As the main researcher, I will present the journey of our project and my PhD research in the UK to date. I would like any critical feedback that will guide me in my ongoing enquiries.

**Appendix K**  
**Consent form for the LIdIA Overseas Workshop 2014**

Dear Participants,

Thank you very much for joining us today. We hope you will have a good time here. We would like to have your name, organisation name and e-mail address if appropriate please. We are intending to videotape this workshop as a way of collecting your valuable feedback on our project. The recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will not be watched by anyone except us. Any comments may or may not be used as data in our project. If we report any of your comments, they will be anonymised. If you are happy with this, would you please put your signature in the first space from the right. Thank you.

Name	Organization name	E-mail address	Signature

## Appendix L

### Extract from Shiba (2015) in the annual journal for junior high school English language teachers

今、イギリスの York St John 大学で金藤多美子先生が研修をされています。昨年 12 月に一時帰国され、'How do we develop our capacity to teach for students' communicative competence through collaborative action research?: our challenge to English language education policy in Japan' と題するワークショップを開きました。彼女の研究には、中学校英語教育研究会のメンバーが協力し、現場の声を届けています。金藤先生は、文科省の方針に、強いショックを覚え、この日のプレゼンテーションでは、'What is communicative competence?' との問いかけに、次の 6 つの要素から成るのではないかと、これまでの研究成果とともに発表されました。(...) ワークショップの参加者からは、様々な意見が出されましたが、誰もが、テストでは測れないものだと言う考えに深くうなずいていました。また、金藤先生は、昨年の 10 月に催された中学校英語教育推進リーダー研修（文科省主催）の参加者への文科省の方針についての調査結果も紹介してくれました (...) 金藤先生は、研修を終えて帰国した後は、英語教員の研修などに貢献したいとおっしゃっております。ご自身の研究は、まさに日本の英語教員を支えるためのものであるとのこと。彼女のような仲間がいることを心から誇りに思います (Shiba, 2015).

## Appendix M

### Consent form for the British Council

Name of researcher
Tamiko Kondo, York St John University
Title of study
Towards sustainable English teachers' professional development in the Japanese context

Dear

The research project I have been carrying out for my doctoral dissertation comes under the category of teacher education methodologies. In order to explore the issue, I have been collecting data by the following means:

- interviews with research participants (Japanese English language teachers);
- feedback from the participants in a workshop for English language teachers in 2014;
- questionnaire for the LEEPs who participated in the British Council-led teacher education programmes in 2014;
- questionnaire for the teachers who participated in a LEEP-led teacher education programme in 2015.

The interview with you which I will conduct today will be of great value and will offer significant suggestions for my study. I would like to inform you that the following ethical guidelines will be applied to this work:

- a) Any recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of this study;
- b) Confidentiality will be completely preserved. You will be referred to in a general way in my doctoral dissertation, for example 'Board Member A from the British Council, Tokyo'.

If you wish to access material you have produced in relation to this project, I will gladly show it to you. Please contact me if you have any questions in relation to this project. I would be grateful if you would sign this letter if you wish your material to be used.

Yours truly,  
 Tamiko Kondo  
 金藤 多美子

I wish to have data from my work included in the above research project.

Signed:



## Appendix N

### Letter of invitation for the Forum on English Teacher Education

(Each section is followed by its English translation.)

#### 英語教員研修について考える会 Forum on English Teacher Education

- 日時 平成28年1月5日(火) 15:00-17:00
- 場所 市総合教育センター
- 内容
  - 1 はじめに
  - 2 出席者自己紹介
  - 3 研究発表「文科省の cascade project についての考察: British Council Tokyo とのインタビューを通して」  
発表者: 金藤多美子 (York St John University)
  - 4 ディスカッション
  - 5 おわりに

\*会に引き続きまして、新年会(兼親睦会)を予定しております。お手数かけますが、「考える会」及び「新年会」にご出席いただけるかどうかを、12月25日までに金藤までご連絡いただけるとありがたいです。よろしくお願い致します。

- Date: Tuesday, January 5, 2016 15:00-17:00
- Place: City Education Centre
- Proceedings:
  1. Opening address
  2. Participants' self-introduction
  3. Research presentation 'Reflecting on the MEXT's cascade project through an interview with the British Council Tokyo'  
Speaker: Tamiko Kondo (York St John University)
  4. Discussion
  5. Closing address

The forum will be followed by a New Year Social Dinner. It would be very helpful if you could inform me whether you will attend the forum and/or the dinner by December 25, 2015. Thank you very much in advance.

## **Appendix O**

### **Consent form for the second validation meeting**

Dear Participants

Thank you very much for joining today's seminar. I am intending to audio record this seminar as a way of collecting your valuable feedback on my research. I would like to inform you that the following ethical guidelines will be adhered to:

- a) The recorded data will be used solely for research purposes and will not be listened to by anyone except me. The recording will be stored securely and on completion of my thesis it will be destroyed;
- b) Any comments that you make during the seminar may be used as data in my thesis. If I report any of your comments, they will be anonymised;
- c) If you wish to access material which I will produce in relation to this seminar, I will gladly show it to you.

If you are happy with this, would you please put your signature below? Thank you.

Yours truly,

Tamiko Kondo

金藤 多美子

I wish to have data from my comments included in the above research project.

Signed:

Date:

## Appendix P

### Feedback from the meeting participants on my study at the second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

#### Extract 6.1

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Feedback from the meeting participants on my study  
The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)  
P/A = Participant A and so forth, K = Author

---

- 1 K: I would appreciate any comments or feedback on my research please  
2 (...)
- 3 P/A: (...) you mentioned the gap between your perspectives and also from  
4 the British Council's perspective (...) you want to bridge the gap, it seems  
5 to me that you are working towards the British Council's perspective (...)  
6 my question, so, you want to bridge the gap is kind of towards mutual  
7 understanding rather than towards British [Council's] understanding?
- 8 K: no, yeah, mutual understanding (...)
- 9 P/B: (...) you talked about building partnerships (...) because they  
10 [stakeholders] are very different in nature and character (...) [they have]  
11 different ways of operating, different cultural approaches (...) just hear a  
12 bit more about that [building partnerships]
- 13 K: for instance (...) LEEPs can collaborate with researchers, university  
14 academics, the Board of Education, they can become as like, kind of  
15 mentors, and, because, at this moment, LEEPs design their own LEEP-  
16 led programmes by themselves, so others, those others in the local  
17 educational community, members could help LEEPs (...)
- 18 P/B: what do you think so far might be the sticking point (...) on the basis  
19 of different cultural practices or backgrounds between the different key  
20 partners (...) if you go to suggest partnerships, then (...) this may be a  
21 blockage (...) on the basis of my research (...) you may not really get  
22 there (...) this is a clash, isn't it? (...)
- 23 K: that might be, that might be the role of researchers
- 24 P/B: hum, yeah
- 25 K: as I clarified the gaps, researchers could be mediators, between,  
26 among those stakeholders, researchers are the only, you know
- 27 P/B: OK (...) you are encouraging [the teachers] to be much more  
28 reflective, but (...) because they tend often to be not so reflective (...)  
29 government bodies, or organisations (...)
- 30 P/C: extremely political (*question*).
- 31 P/B: it's a political question, isn't it, yeah (...)

- 32 P/D: (...) in many contexts, that would be teachers ignoring policy, or  
33 subverting policy, or having an ironic attitude to policy (...) in many  
34 jurisdictions, many countries where policy goes on here, and teacher goes  
35 on here, and they pretend (...) sometimes policy (*does*) the same (...)  
36 sometimes both sides or both groups pretend, uh, that is, in many  
37 circumstances, that is the back strategy (...) have you considered that as  
38 alternative strategy, saying, don't bother, pretend to collaborate, but  
39 actually become creative, autonomous, independent (...)
- 40 K: *((laughter))* not yet, I didn't
- 41 P/D: because I think in many policy situations, people do actually their  
42 ways of subverting or ignoring policy in small organisations (...) it is the  
43 issue, possibility, isn't it?
- 44 K: I, I don't know because we teachers are influenced the most by policy

## Appendix Q

### Feedback from the meeting participants on my provisional claims to knowledge and evidence base at the second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

#### Extract 6.2

---

Feedback on my first provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/D = Participant D, K= Author

---

- 1 K: now I would like you to read evidence one, later, give me some  
2 comments on if the evidence is strong enough to support this claim
- 3 P/D: you have the phrase 'a reflective teacher researcher', to what extent  
4 is that significant?, because I can see evidence that someone has  
5 reflected on (*their*) practice, but that is as a teacher researcher or as a  
6 teacher is not clear, do you have evidence for that?, sorry, whether they  
7 have become reflective or whether they become a reflective teacher  
8 researcher?, I am not sure the evidence of the (*researchers*), and, is  
9 evidence that they had reflected?, ah, (*they're*) a reflective practitioner?,  
10 that suggests a whole identity more than an example of reflective practice  
11 (...) good, very good example (...) of reflective practice, just whether, so I  
12 think you've got a good evidence of reflective practice

#### Extract 6.3

---

Feedback on my second provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/A = Participant A and so forth, K= Author

---

- 1 K: any comments or feedback please (...)
- 2 P/E: this is like 'a partnership', that is, become a partnership, dialogue is  
3 informing as the research is going on (...) then get back to you in terms of  
4 (...) the relationship of the construction (...)
- 5 P/D: it seems it is either 'I have constructed an original teacher education  
6 methodology, through working with, collaboratively with teachers'
- 7 P/G: 'we have constructed' (...)
- 8 P/H: (...) we've seen this article with the evidence from a single teacher  
9 here, that's the way, is there any contrary evidence from the other three  
10 teachers you are working with? (...) wasn't it normal to bring the evidence  
11 from more than a single person, if there is such evidence (...)
- 12 P/G: it is also (*relatively*) difficult to really judge, rightness of your plans  
13 without much (*mutual*) understanding of the context background (...) we're  
14 now interested in your talk, pretty presentation, but I still feel, yeah, this so  
15 much here, I don't know other contexts, it's difficult (...) to give sort of any  
16 strong judgement (...)

- 17 P/B: I think I like to pick up that point as well (...) I know you're focusing  
18 on the teacher here, but where is, the other people coming if you also talk  
19 to? (...) that will be my challenge if I was sort of reading your thesis, I  
20 think ((*laughter*)) (...)
- 21 P/E: (...) quite passive, teachers, it's implication that you are meeting their  
22 needs, but they are not actively controlling (...) if you 'co-', the  
23 relationships are stronger, you talked earlier you were encouraging, but  
24 actually, take control over this training programme (...)
- 25 P/B: just picking up on that, that's an interesting point, P/E, because when  
26 you were doing that sort of co-construction, researching together, and  
27 trying to produce a new (...) knowledge, what impact had on you actually,  
28 as a researcher? (...) what did it do to you as well?, because this is a two-  
29 way learning process isn't it?, so, and probably back to P/G's thing,  
30 because we are not seeing [the whole context of your thesis] (...) we are  
31 looking at this and speaking in isolation, anyway
- 32 P/A: but, at the same time, (...) I can see some of the limited source, but  
33 this is the small part of the whole thesis, so, we are focusing on your  
34 interaction with the teachers, so, I think we need to think that way also  
35 (...) focus on group discussion and interactions, so whether you have  
36 changed your perspective and your approaches, you interacted with them,  
37 and then they also changed their views, and so on (...) in that sense, I  
38 think this is a (...) good material (...)
- 39 P/D: what we are doing is affirming, this is the evidence towards this claim  
40 (...) we are affirming, this material is, I think useful evidence (...) maybe  
41 counter evidence and maybe pro evidence are needed, this is, we are  
42 affirming this is relevant evidence
- 43 P/I: (...) I have come across the idea of validation meeting elsewhere,  
44 which was just people coming together and discussing, which was very  
45 informal and unstructured, actually, the way this is going tends to be very  
46 clear (...) really to me (...) well-developed

## Extract 6.4

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Feedback on my third provisional claim to knowledge

The second validation meeting (York St John University, 09/02/2016)

P/A = Participant A and so forth, K= Author

---

- 1 K: any comments and feedback please (...)
- 2 P/D: what evidence seems to show to me was that you've found the  
3 evidence that teachers found it more effective than the other (...) which  
4 means not that you are a contributor to new knowledge base (...) it is  
5 different in strategy (...) could be affirmed, even better, demonstrated  
6 which is effective?, demonstrated which is preferred? (...)
- 7 P/B: again, back P/D's point (...) perhaps new knowledge to them (...) so,  
8 in that sense, that claim is a bit ambiguous, isn't it really? (...) it could be  
9 new to them (...) so this is the use of the word 'new', I think isn't it?
- 10 P/D: (...) we don't have evidence that it's original here (...) the thesis may  
11 have evidence this is new knowledge, this is the evidence maybe to them  
12 (...) we can't judge originality from this evidence, but the thesis may  
13 demonstrate its originality
- 14 P/C: and what context
- 15 P/A: (...) evidence (a) and (b), in a sense, it seems to me a bit  
16 contradicting to each other (...) some contradicting kind of evidence