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A Forum Paper

About the Changing Roles of Foreign Language Teaching/Learning in the Context of Globalization in Japan[1]

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Overview

In this forum paper, four authors discuss issues regarding the changing roles of foreign language teaching/learning, particularly in the context of globalization in Japan. The authors of this forum paper are four panelists who contributed to the International Student Colloquium, held at the University of Tokyo on November 16th and 17th, 2013. Each author will explain their Ph.D. research project then discuss some related issues, with special reference to teaching practice of second/foreign languages implemented in their respective contexts.

本稿では、4 人の筆者が日本のグローバル化時代における外国語教育・学習に求められる役割の変化について論じる。本稿の筆者は、2013 年、東京大学において開催された International Student Colloquium のパネリストである。各筆者の博士論文研究にについて論じた後、それぞれの教育現場において実施されている外国語教育についてそれぞれの観点を論じていく。

Introduction

The first decade of the 21st century has witnessed various kinds of socioeconomic changes in Japanese society. One remarkable example of this metamorphosis is represented in its recent rapid globalization. Economists generally define "globalization" as the open economic system that allows worldwide free access to money and human capital. Nevertheless, the influence of globalization already goes beyond these domains: it appears to be affecting almost all human activities, including foreign language education, in Japan.

Although the term is frequently overused, the true epistemology of globalization is being gradually recognized by many foreign/second language-teaching practitioners in Japan.. In this forum paper, the authors will discuss the changing roles of foreign language teaching in the context of globalization by referring to their own teaching practices. The four coauthors of the paper are: 1) Yoichi Sato, 2) Maiko Nakatake, 3) Yukinobu Satake, and 4) Joe Hug. All of them

[1] This forum paper was developed out of a joint panel presentation that the authors conducted at the International Student Colloquium in the University of Tokyo (Komaba Campus), Tokyo, Japan, on November 16th and 17th, 2013. It includes both the verbatim version of their lecture and the guided discussion.

are currently in the process of completing their Ph.D. research projects. Below is a brief biography of each author:

Yoichi Sato started his English teaching career at a junior high school in Kanagawa in 2009. After leaving this public school job, he engaged in corporate in-house English training programs, as well as college EFL teaching. Motivated by this teaching experience, Sato embarked on his doctoral dissertation research project at the University of Tokyo in 2011 in order to empirically investigate the socio-pragmatic functions of English as a Lingua Franca in Asian business context.

Maiko Nakatake is currently engaged in doctoral study at the University of Tokyo. She has also taught English at several universities since 2010 and currently works as a full-time lecturer at a private university in Tokyo. Her research interests include applied linguistics and second language writing. Her current research focuses on the effects of writing center tutorials on student writing, since she has worked as a tutor at the University of Tokyo writing center.

Yukinobu Satake originally majored in English literature, but he came to realize the importance of studying second language education through his experience teaching English to Japanese high school students. After he received an MPhil degree in education at Cambridge in England in 2009, he changed his major from English literature to second language education. Since then, he has been engaged in his doctoral research project in the University of Tokyo while teaching English at several Japanese universities as a part-time lecturer. His research focus is autonomous learning.

Joe Hug has lectured at several universities in Japan on numerous topics that cover the spectrum of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). He is interested in the evolution of English as a Foreign or Second Language, TESOL, and AEP programs and their effects on Business English instructors in Japan. His doctoral research is on Organizational Management of small- and medium-sized companies (SME), with an emphasis on Hidden Champions in order to unlock the stories of visionaries that drive success and how business lessons can be applied to effective Business English facilitation. He has also been involved in corporate training programs in a number of Japanese companies with Yoichi Sato.

Professional Positions and Teaching Practices

First, the authors will discuss their professional positions and teaching practices. The names of the speakers (**Yoichi**, **Maiko**, **Yukinobu** and **Joe**) are presented in different colors for easy reference.

Yoichi: The use of English for business purposes in non-English-speaking countries such as Japan is gradually emerging. Business English communication skills are becoming more salient not only in foreign-affiliated companies but also in a number of ordinary Japanese companies (e.g., Fujio, 2010; Tanaka, 2006, 2010). A statistical survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry in February 2012 indicated that the number of companies in Japan is approximately 4.21 million, wherein 99.7 % are small to medium sized companies. Among these companies, approximately 70% are eager to introduce corporate in-house English training programs to raise employees' awareness of global business communication, according to a statistical survey on global management and human resources development by Recruit in 2011. Hence, corporate language training needs are changing.

Interviews I conducted with trainees suggest that opportunities for Japanese businesspeople to use English for business purposes are gradually increasing (Sato, 2014b). There are a number of other studies that have provided supportive evidence for this idea (e.g., Fujio, 2010; Tanaka, 2006). Now, quite a few businesspeople in Japan are preparing for the English-speaking business discourse that they are likely to experience in the near future. I myself play a facilitative role in helping them develop their English-speaking business skills as a hired corporate foreign language trainer. In the course of my work, I gradually realized that what was truly needed for most of my students was development of their L2 English skills, rather than purely enhancing their L1-standard English proficiency. Today, however, most corporate in-house training is designed based on the L1-standard English proficiency assessment. Moreover, the consensus over the definition of L2-English competence has not been fully achieved, though the scientific exploration of this topic is highly recommended. This is the motive of my doctoral dissertation research project. Now, let us move on to Maiko's.

Maiko: How to provide effective feedback to students on their writing has been a key issue in the field of second language (L2) writing instruction. In current L2 writing instruction, feedback varies by whether it is provided by a teacher, a peer, or a computer and whether it is provided in written or oral form. In writing instruction in Japanese universities, writing centers have recently become widespread as a place to help students' English writing. Writing centers provide one-on-one tutorial sessions with instructors or tutors on student's writing, such as term papers, articles, and theses outside the regular curriculum. The mission of writing centers is "to produce better writers, not better writing" (North, 1984, p. 438). Therefore, instead of providing editing services, writing centers help students' writing through tutorial discussions.

Joe: Excuse me, Maiko? May I ask the origin of writing centers? Just curious.

Maiko: Sure. Writing centers originated in the U.S. in 1930s with the aim of first language (L1) English education (Carter-Tod, 1995). Since the 1990s, increasing numbers of L2 English writers with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds have begun to use writing centers to consult tutors about their English writing (Williams & Severino, 2004). Today, most major universities in the U.S. have their own writing centers, and the establishment of writing centers has taken root not only in the U.S. but also in Asian countries. In Japan, since 2004, several universities have established writing centers. The number of writing centers in Japan, with the growing demand for instruction in academic writing at universities, seems to be increasing. In Japan, although studies on writing center administration have been widely conducted, only a few empirical studies have so far been made on writing center tutorial practice in the Japanese EFL context (Hays, 2010; Sadoshima, Shimura, & Ota, 2009). As the number of writing centers in Japan continues to grow in the near future, studies on tutorial practices in Japanese writing centers will become necessary in order to provide effective tutorials for Japanese EFL students. In addition, as I, as a tutor, have been involved in tutoring practices at a writing center in Japan, I have come to wonder how writing center tutorials can affect students' revision processes and their writing and how they can contribute to fostering students' autonomy as writers, which led to my doctoral research. What about you, Yukinobu?

Yukinobu: The recent rapid globalization leads us to reconceptualize the roles of teachers in Japanese EFL classrooms. Traditionally, the teacher has been considered an “authoritative” person in the Japanese educational context; in other words, students have been expected to only follow their teacher (e.g. Robbins, 1996; Doye, 1997; McLean, 1998, etc.). However, there has been great demand for businesspersons who can speak their opinions clearly, especially in situations where they have to negotiate with foreign businesspersons. This type of business transaction is inevitable in the global business world now, so naturally this perspective is essential in the Japanese EFL education, too. Thus, the roles of teachers now have to be reconsidered from the viewpoint of globalization; teachers should provide a kind of “space” where students can enjoy their own creativity. The teachers should take control of the whole class, but only to a certain extent so that it does not spoil the students’ autonomous learning.

From this standpoint, I have been trying to introduce the concept of autonomy into my university writing classes. Breen and Mann (1997) contend that autonomy is a learner’s readiness to be involved in negotiation between his or her needs and the needs of other group members. In this respect, peer-review is very important. During their peer-review sessions, students read each other’s essays and give each other feedback. I also encourage them to do peer-assessment; I distribute Peer-Assessment sheet, which shows several important points to write an essay, and while the students read each other’s essays, they check whether the points can be achieved appropriately and tick the items which they think can be achieved. After that, the students revise their own essays according to the Peer-Assessment sheet returned from other students. The aim of these activities is to facilitate their ability to find their own mistakes and correcting them without the help of teacher. As stated above, Japanese students’ passiveness in their EFL classes has been pointed out by many researchers; they only follow their teachers. However, the results of some experimental research which has been done recently are contrary to this claim (e.g. Keim et al., 1996; Usuki, 2002, etc.). What kind of effects these classroom activities in their EFL writing classes have on the process of the students’ becoming an “autonomous writer” is now my doctoral research focus. Now, could I pass the floor over to Joe?

Joe: Sure thing. Scholarly response to the current need of Japan’s populace and the lack of English ability, what few would argue against is that change is crucially required. There are currently two main drivers, business competitiveness and a changing Japanese population distribution (in age and ethnicity), that petition for innovative design of ESP courses inside schools and brick-and-mortar industries. While methodological considerations are numerous, the academic and business worlds have not found common ground. Some organizations have taken steps to amend weaknesses to aid employees who are struggling in a global business arena. In addition, many universities have conceded to the growing need for ESP courses and implemented plans, seldom considering the credibility of course facilitators. However, the aims are clearly driven towards meeting the demands of a global economy. Meeting the needs of students or employees has been Japan’s historical struggle and not from a lack of trying. What has gone unnoticed has been the quality of an instructor’s experience and familiarity with ESP subjects, although it can be a highly debatable topic if approached from a theoretical view. Undoubtedly, effective instructors have the important role of covering linguistic, textual, and pragmatic aims of expectations placed upon them. The basis of my discussion will be a departure from theory and rather move towards the relevance of several points of consideration. That is to say: (1) acknowledge that the pupils are not all equal, although the ultimate goal may be the same; (2) differentiate between academic research and real-life application of ESP courses; and (3) examine the attributes of ESP facilitators.

Fostering autonomous L2 learners

Learner autonomy has been considered an important element that determines the success of language learning. In this section, the authors introduce their views on learner's autonomy in their own teaching context.

Yoichi: In my understanding, there is a burgeoning interest in the issues of learner's autonomy in the field of SLA. An increasing number of researchers have agreed that what determines the success of L2 learning is not only the effectiveness of L2 instruction, but also learners' individual passion toward learning; in other words, learners' autonomy. Maiko has been interested in the issues of fostering autonomous L2 learner/writer by focusing her attention on a writing center in a university.

Maiko: That's right. In L2 writing research, although a large number of studies have been conducted on the effects of teacher or peer feedback on student revision, little is known about the relationship between writing center tutorials and student revision. Therefore, my doctoral dissertation study investigated the effects of writing center tutorials on students' revisions. However, the study is a case study in a specific writing center setting in Japan. In the future, a large-scale study with a larger corpus of varied writing center tutorials will be required to contribute to providing a complementary perspective to my current study and then to identifying the effective practices in writing center tutoring, which can be adopted in tutor training. Future research also needs to investigate the effects of writing center tutorials on revision success. In addition, it is necessary to examine the long-term effects of writing center tutorials on the improvement of students' writing. Furthermore, I would like to explore how we can apply the findings regarding writing center tutorials to writing instruction and peer-review in classrooms.

Yoichi: That's very intriguing. I wonder if you could share with us a little bit of the result of your analysis, Maiko?

Maiko: Of course. The results of my doctoral dissertation study show that the students mostly incorporated what was discussed during the sessions but also made revisions that were not discussed in the sessions. It was also indicated that tutorial interactions can bring some positive changes in students' revision processes: internalize what was discussed during the session, reflect on their texts critically, and become conscious of the importance of reader awareness. These internal changes within students are important, and to make student writers self-conscious about such attitudes for writing is one of the key roles of writing center tutorials. Additionally, students are encouraged to discover how to solve the problems in their texts and improve their texts effectively by themselves through interactions with tutors, which eventually can help to foster autonomous writers. I believe that studying the effects of writing center tutorials on students' revision processes sheds light on the importance of interaction in the process of writing and can suggest a new perspective and possibilities in writing instruction in future English education in Japan.

Joe: Sounds like Maiko's study has more or less overlapped with Yukinobu's?

Yukinobu: Yes, I think so, too. As I mentioned earlier, globalization unavoidably affects the relationships between teachers and students in Japanese EFL classrooms. However, I think that this change has not been progressing enough to produce any favorable fruits, especially compared with other countries. Autonomous learning has its origin in the Western educational context, but it is spreading to Asian countries. Actually, last year, I went to Taiwan and observed EFL classes in National Cheng Kung University, which is one of the top national universities in Taiwan. I was very shocked to see and know how active and autonomous the students were and how well and effectively the teachers promoted autonomous learning in their classes. In the future, I want to compare autonomous learning in Japan and that in other countries, especially Asian countries, and identify what is needed to introduce autonomous learning into the Japanese EFL classrooms. I would also like to make Japanese people, especially those involved in teaching English, realize how useful and effective the concept of autonomy can be in facilitating their students' learning. I hope that autonomous learning will be more prevalent in Japanese EFL classrooms and more and more Japanese teachers will be engaged in promoting autonomous learning.

Yoichi: I think fostering autonomous L2 learners is a significant issue not only in college EFL classroom discourse but also in that of corporate training programs. As I mentioned earlier, an increasing number of Japanese companies are eager to introduce corporate training programs as a part of their globalization policies. In such business contexts, a pecuniary interest is an inevitable factor; that is, maximizing the efficacy while minimizing the training period and cost. Now, human resources managers in many companies are interested in developing a corporate training curriculum where autonomous learners can be fostered. To do so, corporate trainers including Joe and me myself could learn a great deal from studies in SLA, such as Maiko's and Yukinobu's.

Bridging between SLA and IBD

Issues of teaching English in school contexts have held the attention of numerous applied linguists. Nevertheless, few researchers have tackled language teaching outside school contexts, including corporate in-house training. In this section, Maiko Nakatake and Yukinobu Satake will interview Yoichi Sato and Joe Hug about their educational experience outside academia in order to construct a bridge between second language acquisition and intercultural business discourse.

Maiko: So, if my understanding is correct, Yoichi and Joe have tackled the issues of language teaching not in the sphere of school discourse but in that of business contexts. Yukinobu and I were very thrilled to find out that we have shared our academic and vocational interests in various parts. On the other hand, we were also surprised to learn that researchers from our field have not fully communicated with those who are from business backgrounds.

Yoichi: It is very sad to say so, but I think it is true. Joe and I have agreed to understand that school-based studies can potentially suggest quite a few insights to business studies and vice versa. So, they are not mutually exclusive at all; rather, there are so many things that we can learn from each other.

Joe: That's absolutely right, Yoichi. I couldn't agree with you more.

Yoichi: And, bridging between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Intercultural Business Discourse (IBD) is what Joe and I would like to achieve as our academic vocation in the long run. Now, let me summarize my study. The changing roles of foreign language teaching/learning should be considered not in the sphere of classroom discourse as was discussed above by Maiko and Yukinobu, but also in that of human resources development in a corporate in-house training situation. Research on business administration as well as marketing strategies is often assumed to address the issues of how to produce company profit effectively. Nevertheless, what determines the effective organizational management should also include human resources development through the implementation of effective corporate in-house training (Sato, 2014a, 2014b). In order to design and develop curricula for such purposes, more communication between researchers of business administration and second language studies would preferably be achieved. In this light, my ongoing doctoral dissertation project bridges second language acquisition (SLA) and intercultural business discourse (IBD). This endeavor, I believe, will offer a significant insight toward the consideration of the paradigm shift pertaining to the future roles of foreign/second language teaching/learning in the context of globalization.

In my previous study (Sato, 2013), I conducted a media discourse analysis based on a TV program about Rakuten's Englishnization policy and discussed how Good Language Learners (GLLs) are being fostered through their language management policy. This study revisited the TV program, "*Kanzen eigoka iyoiyo*" broadcasted by *World Business Satellite* by TV Tokyo, on June 18th, 2012, and critically reassessed the effect of Englishnization. In this TV program, Tetsuya Iida, a 39-year-old employee at Rakuten, represented a role model GLL developed as a result of the Englishnization policy. To assess his English proficiency, three different data sets were presented: 1) his retrospection of his own learning history, 2) his TOEIC scores (before and after Englishnization), and 3) his English speaking performance in a business meeting.

The critical reassessment suggested that, although the efficiency of Englishnization as a part of their globalization strategy could be acknowledged, there was a high possibility for perceptional discrepancy among corporate trainers, trainees, and human resources regarding what GLLs are supposed to be like. This perception made me reach a critical conclusion that Tetsuya could not really be a role model of successful L2 learning. Besides, it was also indicated that the emerging English speaking environment somehow creates the situation in which Japanese English is being used and shared exclusively by Japanese workers: non-Japanese workers could not follow the pragmatic discourse of Rakuten English due to its accidental linguistic exclusivity. That is, English spoken in the context of Rakuten could be highly intelligible, comprehensible, and interpretable among Rakuten workers, while it is becoming less accessible for those who are not familiar with Rakuten's corporate culture as the number of its speakers increases.

Furthermore, this corporate in-house language management could potentially develop a negative attitude of those who are working fairly globally outside the realm of English-speaking business. Since there are quite a few business people who have proudly been involved in "global" business without speaking English, it is not politically correct to identify global business as English-speaking business. Nevertheless, in the Asian context, particularly in Japan, there is a strong tendency to automatically and non-critically consider English as the symbolic competence prerequisite in global business.

Yukinobu: That's a very interesting point. Can you also see similar situations in other Japanese companies?

Yoichi: Well, pretty much! In my other study, I compared the globalization policy of three major Japanese companies located in Tokyo and analyzed the discourse of how the employees evaluate their in-house English training as part of their globalization strategy (Sato, 2014b). In this report, I argued that the globalization strategies of these three companies have still only been implemented on a very superficial level due to their nature as pilot projects. Because of this exploratory nature, the policy appears to lack of specific goals, which could potentially result in imposing unnecessary stress on participating employees.

Furthermore, my personal interview, which I conducted with a couple of employees in another fashion wholesales company in June 2012, also provided supportive evidence for this possibility. Yasuharu, a 35-year-old Japanese male sales rep, commented on job stress resulting from his company's globalization strategy in relation to English-speaking policy. He is fairly advanced in his Chinese proficiency, while lower intermediate in English. He says:

> 会社の方針で、中国人のお客さんを相手にする場合でも、ビジネスは英語でするんですよね。で、あとで中国語で話すとビックリされるんですけど。(This is our Company's policy. Even with the Chinese counterparty, we have to speak English for business purposes. They are surprised when I talk to them in Chinese later.)

Yasuharu graduated from a Chinese university, where he studied issues of marketing and business administration in China for approximately six years. Originally, he obtained his current job position in order to utilize his deep understanding of Chinese business. However, the company implemented English-speaking policy when dealing with business with their Chinese counterpart as a part of globalization strategy, which eventually deprived him of opportunities to fulfill his original occupational desire.

Likewise, Ryoichi also feels a bit frustrated in his current working situation in a foreign business context. He is a 33-year-old male Japanese sales rep, with near-native proficiency in Cantonese and lower intermediate ability in English. He commented:

> 僕は昔香港に結構長く住んでて、なので広東語は全然しゃべれるんですけど、うちの会社では日本人社員扱いになってるんで。僕、北京語はできないので、中国人のお客さんとは英語で話すんですけど、むしろ広東語しゃべった方が通じるん

じゃね？とか思いますよね。(I used to live in Hong Kong for quite a while, so I can speak Cantonese. But, I am seen as Japanese in this company, and I cannot speak Mandarin, so I usually speak English with my Chinese customers. But, I sometimes feel doing business in Cantonese is much better for me.)

This interview suggests that Ryoichi's potential competence in dealing with Chinese businesses has been overlooked due to the introduction of an English-speaking policy in his company.

The above two interview excerpts indicate that, though English-speaking policies could potentially be appreciated as a part of globalization strategies in many Japanese companies, the influence that its implementation has on the company’s policy making may trigger some frustration in those who are competent in global business in non-English-speaking discourse, including Yasuharu and Ryoichi. For further information, please read my doctoral dissertation.

Maiko: Though I am a layperson in corporate training, I still understand that language training should be implemented separately from business training, since they are two different skills.

Yukinobu: Yes, that’s a very interesting point. Well, I am just curious. Is there any “Golden Ratio” of BELF teaching practice?

Yoichi: Well, I think there’s a better person to answer this professional enigma. Is that correct, Prof. Hug?

Joe: Yes, sir! Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) has a rather difficult aim that has become more difficult in recent times. The fundamental aim of BELF is to prime learners with communication skills necessary to conduct business globally. However, the current trends in BELF instruction align antiquated methodology with contemporary needs. Principally, there is the attitude that educators with language acquisition education possess the innate ability to teach multidisciplinary subjects simply by applying recognized language teaching practices. In this report, I will identify three distinct groups of learners for whom education and training plans should be modified in accordance with their current English language level. In fact, it may resemble the Common European Framework (CEF).

The oversight of organizations and administrators who appoint language instructors to teach BELF lessons reflects a misunderstanding for the urgency to bring about change and goes against the understanding that BELF learners are already able to operate business proceedings in two or more languages. Successfully teaching BELF protocols must include the recognition that learners are already effective business participants in their own native language. Thus an effective approach towards BELF instruction means that instructors must realize that not all learners necessarily need to study traditional English skills as a majority of their learning experience. In short, BELF program administrators should avoid the attitude that BELF learners cannot be effective global business practitioners unless they become native English speakers. The most recent approach to BELF has been an introduction of rudimentary business-like skills such as lectures in negotiations, debate, business presentations, meetings, telephone and email communication, and conducting meet-and-greet role-playing. While these abilities are required, the difficulty arises once such situations are crucial to a company's financial future or legal standing in the given environment of advanced-level learners. Surely, we should not assume that minimal tutorials are sufficient given that the needs are greater.

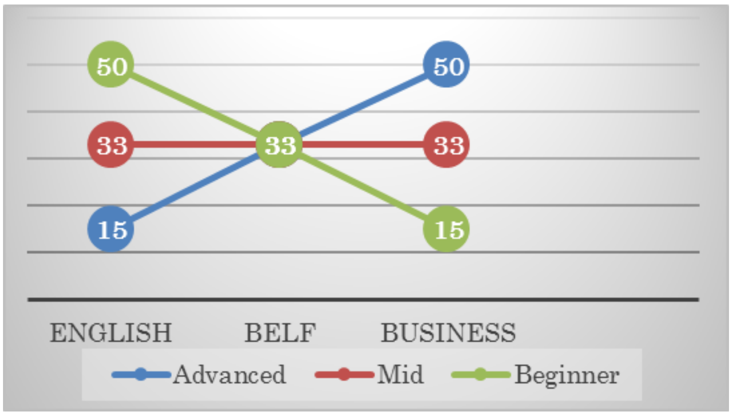

Figure 1: *Leaners and BELF instructional approach*

My experience has brought clarity of three types of distinct BELF students. Furthermore, I've learned that each requires its own special approach. The first group are advanced students that prefer and flourish in lectures given by business-educated instructors on topics that are relevant to complex business foci. While this group may occasionally request instructors to correct flaws in native English pronunciation, grammar, or writing skills, such requests are limited and not crucial to the learning process of business principles per se. The second group is the developing mid-range group whose English skills are equitable yet require guidance with business lexis and whose skills cannot completely grasp MBA-level topics with complete depth. This group, once again, requires business-educated instructors, though, such instructors will require some experience in ESL doctrines. The emphasis seems to be more on reading and understanding new vocabulary and business writings as opposed to advanced lessons on business cases or MBA-level curricula. Finally, there are the beginner students who require intense English lessons and struggle to find clear understanding of advanced business subjects yet thrive in business-like role-playing scenarios and basic business etiquette sessions. In order to differentiate these three groups, I would like to approach each group from the perspective of the student, instructor, and finally the organization and explain why some learners appear to thrive while others struggle or fail.

Following the Golden Rule of mathematics, $(a+b)/a=a/b\equiv \varphi$, there seems to be a parallel in both language and business skill acquisition if applied proportionally in the same sense. The time spent on individual skills separated into three sections—business, culture, and language—can make the learning process efficient (see Figure 1). In the figure, you will note that advanced learners require less time focused on language acquisition skills such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Advanced learners prefer theoretical learning in order to develop advanced business skills in order to both understand and utilize new business skills. Therefore, it is imperative that the appropriate facilitator possess profound business education.

Advanced courses will typically cover the understanding of financial statements; drafting marketing plans; developing employee and HR policies; understanding of present value of goods and services; quantitative techniques in project management; valuation of stocks, bonds, and other financial investments; and business law. The average ESL instructor should not be assumed to possess the ability to teach these topics and hold the credibility required and expected by the advanced learner. Thus, the organization designated to monitor educational programs has the responsibility to balance class sessions between ESL and ESP instructors. The opposite holds true for beginner students, for whom learning sessions should have an emphasis on the skills that L2 learners require before taking ESP courses. This means highlighting target language difficulties. Most L2 learners will produce syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical pattern errors. This should be the focus of introductory BELF courses and not advanced lessons.

Organizations who have the educational responsibility to introduce Business English programs can become more effective if the approach is one in which business skills and communication are at the forefront rather than native English speaker fluency and proficiency. Pragmatic fluency of native English programs should therefore be the main focus of beginner-level learners and not for advanced-learners. In Japan, business communication has become an extremely broad and interdisciplinary research field. Thus, the assimilation of basic oral and written components with general English comprehension has brought about the complexity which some learners face. The complexity is that ESP courses are often planned as general English lessons and the concept of Business is shrouded in a title of Business English as meaning "something that is somewhat related to business." Yet, there are several programs that understand the need for change. One such study took nonnative-English-speakers (NNS) and allowed them to interact with native-English-speakers (NS) under a business English framework (Delk and Hoger, 2011).

Certainly, business studies under any framework is a difficult discipline to approach. This reality is further complicated when taking on the task to either teach or learn business in a foreign language. Although Japan is not alone in this endeavor, it does fall far behind other Asian nations.

Maiko: Well, there are so many things we as SLA researchers could learn, or more accurately we *should* learn, from IBD.

Yukinobu: Yeah, I totally agree with you, Maiko. I was just curious what SLA researchers can suggest to IBD, if there is any.

Yoichi: Of course, there are numerous things we should learn from your area of inquiry. As I mentioned earlier, for running a corporate in-house training program from the viewpoint of HRD (human resource development), "maximizing its benefit while minimizing the relevant cost" is a key aspect. To achieve this goal, having trainees learn only during the training time is not enough; trainees are also expected to study on their own, even outside the training session period. The thing is, how can we make this happen?

One possible answer is to help corporate trainees become autonomous learners. Actually, most studies on the efficacy of corporate training are conducted from the viewpoint of HRD, to the best of my knowledge. Future studies on corporate training, hence, should focus more attention on trainees, particularly their learners' autonomy. To do so, researchers of IBD are advised to learn more from the research achievements of SLA. Let me emphasize here once again that SLA and IBD are not mutually exclusive; rather, researchers in these two fields can learn quite a deal from each other.

Future perspectives

Lastly, the authors will explain their perspectives on the issues of foreign language teaching and/or learning in the future, as their concluding remarks.

Yoichi: Our common sense shows that traditional sectionalism in each academic discipline has prevented the researchers of SLA and IBD from fully communicating with each other, though not always. However, our panel discussion today has suggested the possibility of achieving interdisciplinary science communication among the researchers in these two fields, because they have shared not a fewsome common academic and vocational interests. Our attempt today has been meaningful, particularly for young scholars like ourselves, because it could potentially be a permanent referential point to remind us of the importance of exploring new academic frontiers and staying open-minded.

Maiko: Through today's panel discussion, I found that although SLA and IBD are independent disciplines, there are many overlapping parts and also many things to learn from each other. Today's panel discussion was valuable in that it shed light on the importance of communicating with each other. Sharing research findings and collaborating with each other can trigger new perspectives and lead to future development of both SLA and IBD as well as of foreign language teaching in Japan. The two main topics of today's panel discussion "fostering learner's autonomy" and "bridging between SLA and IBD" are both really important for thinking about the future role of foreign language teaching and learning in Japan, and we need to discuss them further. I hope today's panel discussion will serve as a basis for further discussion.

Yukinobu: Actually, I have [generally] been interested in only SLA, more specifically in how autonomy facilitates second language learning in EFL classroom discourse. However, when we consider the nature of autonomous learning very carefully, [we see that] it should be applied to corporate training programs, as Yoichi has indicated. In both fields, autonomous learning has been recently considered more and more important, although the ways the two fields place focus on it may be different. SLA focuses on it because it is closely related to human development, whereas corporate training programs do so to the extent that it facilitates corporate profits. Through this panel discussion, I can realize the importance of discussing autonomous learning from the perspective of corporate training programs.

Joe: As a final note, I would like to see more emphasis on specific studies that center or concentrate on the need for a more diverse application of studies in established programs whose graduates may undertake facilitation of specific purpose education. MBA programs appoint specialists such as CPAs who teach accounting, CFAs who teach finance, and lawyers teach business law. Such instruction forms the foundation [of the program] while allowing room for more specific views in a particular MBA concentration. English or TESOL programs can also transform or improve on the manner in which they prepare graduates to teach ESP classes that resonate with the needs of the students being taught. While this study requires more research, I believe it to be evident that the need for a broader view beyond one discipline is sought by organizations hoping to enrich the education of students or employees in order to meet their mission and vision of target goals.

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