# New Approaches to ELT in Japanese Universities

# 大学英語教育への新しいアプローチ

Hideo KOJIMA*

小　　嶋　　英　　夫*

## Abstract

In recent years, most universities in Japan have started implementing ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum innovation. This paper aims to discuss the features of new approaches to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning and teaching that I have been applying to my ELT in higher education. Following Ramsden's (2003) theories of university teaching, I presented four new approaches: reflective teaching, autonomous EFL learning, cooperative EFL learning, and strategies-based EFL instruction. I found that the integration of these approaches could develop learner autonomy in language learning and communicative competence in English. University teachers should help their students understand their own abilities and capacities well and autonomously engage in systematic efforts within and beyond the classroom to reach self-determined goals of acquisition.

Key words: university teaching, reflective teaching, autonomous learning, cooperative learning, strategies-based instruction

## 1. Introduction

Higher education in Japan is currently facing its biggest turning point ever. This is a result of changes in current social, economic, and political stream of thought, and in particular, the educational policies of Monbukagakusho. Since the University Council (Daigaku Shingikai), composed of representatives of the universities and the business community to begin concrete planning for reform, submitted a report calling for drastic reform of the university curriculum in 1991, Japanese universities have been expected to achieve the goals of university reform: a) to enhance quality of education and research, b) to secure universities' autonomy, c) to improve the administrative structure, and d) to promote individualization of universities and continually improve education and research.[1]

With regard to ELT in higher education, Japanese universities should conduct their activities to enable students to develop learner autonomy and communicative competence at the university level. This paper aims to develop effective approaches to EFL learning and teaching in Japanese universities and discuss the features of new approaches to ELT: a reflective approach, an autonomous approach, a cooperative approach, and a strategies-based approach, in light of my research question: How can autonomous and communicative EFL learning and teaching be promoted in Japanese universities?

## 2. Ramsden's theories of university teaching

In order to improve Japanese university teaching, I need to present a coherent model for

＊弘前大学教育学部英語教育講座
Department of English, Faculty of Education, Hirosaki University

Table 2.1　Ramsden's theories of university teaching

|  | Theory 1<br>Teaching as telling | Theory 2<br>Teaching as organizing | Theory 3<br>Teaching as making<br>learning possible |
|---|---|---|---|
| Focus | Teacher and content | Teaching techniques<br>that will result in<br>learning | Relation between<br>students and subject<br>matter |
| Strategy | Transmit information | Manage teaching<br>process; transmit<br>concepts | Engage; challenge<br>imagine oneself as<br>the student |
| Actions | Chiefly presentation | 'Active learning';<br>organizing activity | Systematically<br>adapted to suit<br>student understanding |
| Reflection | Unreflective; taken<br>for granted | Apply skills to<br>improve teaching | Teaching as a<br>research-like,<br>scholarly process |

developing the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Ramsden (2003) introduces three theories of teaching, each of which describes a way of experiencing and understanding university teaching.[2]

Table 2.1 describes three generic ways of understanding the role of the teacher in higher education, each of which has corresponding implications for how students are expected to learn. Each of these theories can be applied to Japanese university education including ELT.

Theory 1 assumes that content knowledge and fluent presentation are enough for good teaching. Many Japanese university teachers implicitly or explicitly tend to define the task of teaching undergraduates as the transmission of authoritative content or the demonstration of procedures. The traditional didactic lecture represents a perspective on teaching taken from the point of the teacher as the source of undistorted information. The mass of students are passive recipients of the wisdom of a single speaker. This has been the case in Japanese universities for a long time. This may be called a teacher-centered approach in which teachers play the central role in transmitting knowledge.

Theory 2 complements this picture of Theory 1 with additional skills focused principally on student activity and the acquisition of extra teaching techniques. These days some Japanese universities seem to be developing a similar kind of new teaching method based on a student-centered approach. In this theory, activity in students is regarded as the panacea. There is a finite set of rules that may be infallibly applied to enabling them to understand; they imply that students will learn through reacting and doing. This theory represents in many ways a transitional stage between Theories 1 and 3.

If Theories 1 and 2 focus respectively on the teacher and the student, Theory 3 looks at teaching and learning as two sides of the same coin. In this conception, teaching, students, and the subject content to be learned are linked together by an overarching framework or system. Teaching is comprehended as a process of working cooperatively with learners to help them change their understanding. It is about making student learning possible. This approach to teaching takes learner needs, motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies into account in formulating a teaching method to realize the potential of students. Moreover, learners are given the opportunity to become involved in the process of content formulation and study methods. This makes them feel responsible for their study and hopefully turns them into active learners.

In order to encourage students to undertake self-study at a higher level, the role of the teacher as a facilitator is becoming increasingly crucial.

We see by now what it means to say that good teaching including ELT in higher education may be defined by the quality of learning it encourages. Japanese university EFL departments are expected to make efforts to follow Ramsden's theory 3. Ramsden (2003) concludes, "Good university teaching is focused on the relation between students' experiences and the content to be learned. Good university teaching is based on trying to understand student learning." [3] It might be said that what we need in the long run is the political will and leadership to implement evidence-based progress.

## 2. Reflective university teaching

In Ramsden's university teaching theory 3, the assumption that the primary aim of teaching is to make student learning possible leads to the assertion that each and every teaching action, and every operation to evaluate or improve teaching, should be judged against the simple criterion of whether it can reasonably be expected to lead to the kind of student learning which teachers desire.

This in turn leads to an argument for a reflective and inquiring approach as a necessary condition for improving university teaching, where reflection is not just about self-improvement and self-development but also about understanding and questioning the contexts in which teaching and learning take place. Teaching and learning in higher education are inextricably and elaborately linked. One of the fundamental purposes of reflecting-on-practice is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in educational contexts.

Getting the most from reflecting-on-practice means having a consistently reflective approach to university teahcing; it is a whole way of being. It cannot just be picked up and put down on a daily basis. A reflective practitioner is a professional practitioner. Critical reflection is not a process of self-victimization, rather it is about taking a questioning stance toward what teachers and universities do. It questions the means and ends of education. It needs to be a judicious blend of sensitive support and constructive challenge.

The interdependence of reflective research and teaching is a foundation stone of Japanese higher education. Precisely because research into student learning has studied and described the conditions that are necessary for changes in student understanding, it provides a promising source of ideas for university teaching. These insights, when harnessed together with our own experiences as university teachers, can help us to decide on the best ways to organize the curriculum, evaluate teaching in order to encourage improvement, and plan satisfactory programs for helping lecturers teach better.

Furthermore, Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) list around ten principles of reflective practice that together form a holistic model of the teacher as a reflective practitioner. They suggest that reflective practice can usefully be understood as "a discourse, energized by experience, involving a reflective turn, a way of accounting for ourselves, a disposition to inquiry, interest-serving, being carried out by critical thinkers, a way of decoding the symbolic landscapes of school/university and classroom, at the interface between practice and theory, and a postmodernist way of knowing." [4]

Becoming a university teacher who teaches in a confident, competent, creative and ethical manner is a challenging and complex learning process. Central to this process is our ability to reflect constructively and critically on our teaching intentions, the ends we have in mind and the means we might use to achieve them. A reflective conversation is a medium through which we

are able to learn from our teaching experiences and question the educational values that give a shape, form, and purpose to what we do. A focus on values is at the heart of the personal and collective improvement process. The reflective conversation provides a focus on educational values, moves from the private to the public, takes a question and answer form, looks back to what has been, looks forward to what will be, is located in time and space, makes sense of teaching and learning, interrogates teacher's experiences, and has the potential to enlighten and empower the teacher.[5]

The reflective conversation, together with reflection on the links between values and practice, is at the heart of efforts to improve teaching and learning in higher education. We should take into consideration the roles of reflection in research-based practice, profile development, and the interpretation of standards for newly qualified university teachers.

## 3. Autonomous EFL learning in Japanese universities

In the large scale Japanese educational reform, stretching from primary to tertiary, terms such as learner autonomy and self-directed learning have earned a place in the discourse on learner-centeredness. In particular, each educational institution in Japanese higher education is expected to conduct its activities by emphasizing the importance of motivating students to learn autonomously and helping them develop abilities to learn how to learn, to discover and solve problems, and to act independently through interdependence in response to social changes.

It seems to be true that none of us can escape entirely from the cultural assumptions and practices that have shaped us, but at the same time we might believe in the existence of human universals. As for learner autonomy and cultural differences, Aoki and Smith (1996) identify specific forms of autonomy that are supported by Japanese society, and detect desires for autonomy that contradict the stereotype of the passive, teacher-dependent Japanese learner. Their conclusion is that the important issue "is not whether autonomy itself is appropriate, but how negotiated versions of autonomy can be best enabled in all contexts, in varying ways, in educative counterbalance to more authoritarian, teacher-dominated arrangements."[6] We Japanese teachers should neither simply accept nor simply reject the outcomes of the discussions about autonomy that have taken place in the West. Rather, we should examine these discussions in relation to our specific contexts and try to match different aspects of autonomy with the characteristics and needs of our learners.

### 3.1 What is autonomous learning?

Ryan (1991) sees the achievement of a sense of autonomy as one of the most fundamental needs and purposes of human beings. Another fundamental need is for what he calls "relatedness", that is, for "contact, support and community with others." If this contact with others is felt to be "instrumental or controlling," it can lead us to lose our sense of autonomy. However, if the contact is supportive, it does not interfere with autonomy but facilitates it. Ryan uses a term that is especially significant for my study: "autonomous interdependence". Ryan's ideal "facilitating environment" for autonomy includes the following factors: concrete support through the provision of help and resources, personal concern and involvement from significant others, opportunities for making choices, and freedom from a sense of being controlled by external agents.[7]

Although the development of autonomy through pedagogical practice is mainly a psychological issue, it is also inescapably political because "the psychological argument challenges traditional educational structures and power relationships."[8] Little and Dam (1998)

remark [9]:

> The learner must take at least some of the initiatives that give shape and direction to the learning process, and must share in monitoring progress and evaluating the extent to which learning targets are achieved. The pedagogical justification for wanting to foster the development of learner autonomy rests on the claim that in formal educational contexts, reflectivity and self-awareness produce better learning.

I, too, have practiced the concept of learner autonomy under banners such as "humanistic language teaching," "collaborative learning," and "the learning-centered classroom."

Autonomous learning within an institutional context in Japanese higher education is the means as well as the aim for the development of learner autonomy. Setting up an autonomous learning environment, which is not teacher-centered but learner-centered, puts certain demands on university teachers as well as students. Autonomous learning may be described as what takes place in situations in which the teacher is expected to provide a learning environment where the learners are given the possibility consciously to be involved in their own learning and thus become autonomous learners. Evaluating autonomous learning needs to include an evaluation of the process as well as the outcome.

## 3.2 Evaluating autonomous EFL learning

In principle, every factor or element involved in the EFL learning process is open for evaluation. Evaluating autonomous learning in Japanese universities may involve the following types of evaluations:

### a) Learner self-evaluation

Checking one's own performance on an EFL learning task after it has been completed or checking one's own success in using English.

### b) Peer evaluation

When groups or individuals present their projects in the "together" session, peers are asked individually to write down their opinions of the outcome as well as the presentation of the projects.

### c) Portfolio evaluation

A portfolio is a purposeful selection of student work usually collected and selected by the students themselves. The portfolio exhibits the students' efforts, progress and achievements over a period of time, and includes a description of its purpose, goals, and criteria for selection and assessment. Preferably, it contains the students' own reflection and evaluation of both the selected work and the processes of studying and learning.

### d) Answers to teacher's questionnaires

From time to time, "open" self-evaluations are combined with or replaced by questions or questionnaires posed by the teacher in order to get an insight into specific elements in the learning process. It is useful to have a more extensive evaluation based on questionnaires as a tool for "what happened" and "planning ahead" for learners as well as the teacher.

### e) Teacher observation

Observing students' classroom behaviors and actions is common practice for most teachers, but in the process of action research the daily personal experiences of "just looking" are made more systematic and precise. The cumulative effect of recording observations and reflections through notes or journals is very illuminating. Audio or video recording is a technique for capturing in detail naturalistic interactions and verbatim utterances.

Evaluating autonomous EFL learning should be a natural and integrated part of the learning

environment in higher education for the benefit of its participants. Evaluation will vary and be open to experimentation as part of the learning process. University teachers should also consider a wider variety of evaluation techniques, such as task-based evaluation, criterion-referenced evaluation, continuous evaluation, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation.

## 4. Cooperative EFL learning and teaching in Japanese universities

Today, Japanese university students are increasingly being asked by faculty to work cooperatively and learn collaboratively. This increased emphasis on group learning is partly a reaction to societal changes including a new emphasis on team work in the business sector coupled with a realization that in a rapidly changing information society communication skills are increasingly important. At the tertiary level of education, the reasons include an increasingly diverse student population who need to develop ways of learning together in order to achieve, the increased use of teaching and learning that emphasize learner-driven approaches such as peer-learning, the growth of online courses that may include a computer-mediated conferencing component requiring online dialogue, and student projects that often require a team approach because of their scope, depth and type.

### 4.1 What is cooperative learning?

With regard to cooperative learning (CL), no one has yet proposed a universally accepted definition, but this section uses Olsen and Kagan's (1992) definition [10]:

> Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.

While there are differences among the models of CL, Johnson and Johnson (1999) and other researchers suggest that the following are key elements of CL:

**a) Positive interdependence**

Positive interdependence, which is the heart of CL, is the perception that you are linked with others in a way so that you cannot succeed unless they do (and vice versa).

**b) Individual accountability**

Each individual is accountable for his or her own learning and is also accountable to the group.

**c) Face-to-face promotive interaction**

For CL to be effective, the members of the group need to be in very close physical proximity, face-to-face.

**d) Social skills**

Contribution to the success of a cooperative effort requires interpersonal and small group skills (leadership, decision-making, trust- building, etc.)

**e) Group processing**

Group processing exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships.

Research on CL has been conducted in numerous countries and cultures. Different cultures seem to have different meanings. Even if we are given the hundreds of studies that have established the basic theory of cooperation, there is a need for considerably more research not only in the West but also in Japan in order to establish the cultural nuances of how CL is conducted.

Not only Japanese students but also Japanese teachers are often resistant to learner-centered approaches to learning because of its novelty. Japanese students are accustomed to teacher-centered, direct instruction in which students are provided with the content they need to know. Another major reason for apprehension is that they often do not know how to work together and are not given any help in making their groups functional. Equally important is the impact of group learning on teachers. Teachers face many instructional and institutional challenges when implementing cooperative learning into their classrooms. These include the changing role of the instructor from lecturer to facilitator or coach, the shift in authority from the individual instructor to shared authority with the group of learners, careful planning of the instructional setting such as timing and efficiency concerns, and assessment issue such as group versus individual grades. Cooperative EFL learning should be evaluated as a culture-sensitive approach to developing communicative competence and cooperative autonomy in Japanese higher education.

## 4.2 Reactive/Proactive autonomy and cooperative/collaborative learning

I am inclined to suppose that the strong attachment of members of Japanese culture to their in-groups and the importance they attach to mutual support might provide ideal interpersonal environments for the development of autonomy. Littlewood (1999) proposes five generalizations about autonomy in the East Asian context and how it might develop in the context of second or foreign language learning [11]:

Proposal 1: Students will have a high level of reactive autonomy, both individually and in groups

Proposal 2: Groups of students will develop high levels of both reactive and proactive autonomy

Proposal 3: Many students will have experienced few learning contexts which encourage them to exercise individual proactive autonomy

Proposal 4: East Asian students have the same capacity for autonomy as other learners

Proposal 5: The language classroom can provide a favorable environment for developing the capacity for autonomy

In the above proposals, Littlewood proposes a distinction between two levels of self-regulation: the first regulates the direction of activity as well as the activity itself (*proactive autonomy*) and the second regulates the activity once the direction has been set (*reactive autonomy*). This distinction between proactive and reactive autonomy is mirrored, in relation to group work, in Flannery's (1994) distinction between *collaborative* and *cooperative* learning strategies. In Flannery's distinction (in Littlewood 1999) [12]:

a)  with collaborative learning strategies, learners have a greater degree of choice and discretion about what and how they should learn. The process of learning is as important as the product.... It is thus, in part at least, the students themselves who set the agenda for learning.

b)  with cooperative learning strategies, learners work independently on tasks, but it is still the teacher who sets the agenda for learning. It is the teacher who defines what counts as relevant knowledge, selects learning methods and controls evaluation. Thus, cooperative learning is designed to complement rather than challenge the traditional structures of knowledge and authority.

If we adopt this terminology, *collaborative* learning is a group-oriented form of *proactive* autonomy; whereas *cooperative* learning is a group-oriented form of *reactive* autonomy.

Considering the general educational contexts in Japan, it might be better for me to use "cooperative learning" to avoid confusion, but in higher EFL education I would like to develop my own students' proactive autonomy as much as possible.

Judging from the above proposals, we might expect Japanese students to develop high levels of autonomy when they are engaged in group-based forms of learning such as cooperative/collaborative learning, experiential learning, and problem-based learning. Littlewood (1999) suggests that at the individual level there are no intrinsic differences that make students in one group either less, or more, capable of developing whatever forms of autonomy are seen as appropriate to language learning. The crucial factors that underlie whatever differences might be perceived are cultural and educational traditions, past experiences, and the contexts in which learning takes place.

## 4. 3 Cooperative learning and computer-assisted language learning

CL and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) afford students the opportunity to develop a range of cognitive, metacognitive and social, as well as linguistic skills while interacting and negotiating.

The role of computers has now become an important issue confronting many language teachers in the world. Some benefits of adding a computer component to language instruction are pointed out by Warschauer and Healey (1998): multimodal practice with feedback; individualisation in a large class; pair and small group work on projects, either collaboratively or competitively; the fun factor; variety in the resources available and learning styles used; exploratory learning with large amounts of language data; and real-life skill-building in computer use.[13]

In particular, with the advent of the Internet, the computer has become a tool for information processing and communication both in society and in the classroom. Learners can now communicate quickly with other learners or speakers of the target language all over the world. The numerous search engines on the World Wide Web (WWW) enable them to access to an unprecedented amount of authentic target-language information.

## 5. Strategies-based EFL instruction in Japanese universities

Strategies-based instruction is relatively recent addition to the pedagogical storehouse of classroom teaching options. It has long been recognized that the most successful learners of languages are those who understand their own abilities and capacities well and who autonomously engage in systematic efforts within and beyond the classroom to reach self-determined goals of acquisition.

Individualization, which is now highly valued in higher education in Japan, involves the organization of learning and teaching in such a way as to allow the ability, interests, and needs of the individual learner to be enhanced as effectively as possible. Under a major impetus to adopt a learner-centered view of pedagogy, the mention of the organization above leads us to consider strategies-based instruction to develop learner autonomy.

### 5.1 Defining learning stategies

The concept of strategy seems to be somewhat fuzzy. A distinction is often made among three types of strategies: production, communication, and learning. According to Tarone (1980), a productive strategy consists of an attempt to use one's linguistic system efficiently and clearly, with a minimum of effort. Communication strategies consist of attempts to deal with problems

of communication that have arisen in interaction, and a language learning strategy is an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.[14] Ellis (1994) suggests that these distinctions are important, but they are not easily applied as they rest on learners' intentions that are often not clear or easy to establish.[15]

Chamot (1995) thinks learning strategies can help learners with language-related tasks, such as listening to or reading a text, speaking, or writing, or with tasks related to subject matter, such as information and processes in science, mathematics, social studies, literature, art, and music. Chamot and O'Malley and colleagues studied the use of some 24 strategies by learners of English as a second language in the U.S. Chamot and O'Malley (1990) divided their strategies into three main categories [16]:

a) Metacognitive strategies, which involve executive processes in planning for learning, monitoring one's comprehension and production, and evaluating how well one has achieved a learning objective.

b) Cognitive strategies, in which the learner interacts with the material to be learned by manipulating it mentally (as in making mental images, or elaborating on preciously acquired concepts or skills) or physically (as in grouping items to be learned in meaningful categories, or taking notes on important information to be remembered).

c) Social/affective strategies, in which the learner either interacts with another person in order to assist learning, as in cooperation or asking questions for clarification, or uses some kind of affective control to assist a learning task.

Oxford (1990) remarks, "Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence."[17] Language leaning strategies contribute to the main goal, communicative competence; allow learners to become more self-directed; expand the role of teachers; are problem-oriented; are specific actions taken by the learner; involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive; support learning both directly and indirectly; are not always observable; are often conscious; can be taught; are flexible; and are influenced by a variety of functions.[18]

Furthermore, Oxford's strategy system differs in several ways from earlier attempts to classify strategies. It is more comprehensive and detailed; it is more systematic in linking individual strategies, as well as strategy groups, with each of the four language skills; and it uses less technical terminology. Her strategies are divided into two major classes: direct and indirect. These classes are subdivided into a total of six groups (memory, cognitive, and compensation under the direct class; metacognitive, affective, and social under the indirect class). The six groups are subdivided into a total of nineteen strategy sets, and these sets are subdivided into a total of 62 strategies.

## 5.2 How to teach strategies in the classroom

Several different models of learner strategy training are now being practiced in language classes around the world.

### a) Informal self-check lists

Through checklists (e.g. Oxford's 1990 Strategy Inventory for Language Learning), tests, and interviews, teachers can become aware of students tendencies and then offer advice on beneficial in/extra-class strategies.

### b) Impromptu teacher-initiated advice

Another form of getting students to think about strategies is through frequent impromptu

reminders of "rules" for good language learning and encouragement of discussion or clarification.

**c ) Teach strategies through interactive techniques**

Teachers can embed actual strategy practice into their techniques and materials, such as communicative games, process writing, role-play, semantic mapping, and so on.

**d ) Textbook-embedded training**

Ellis and Sinclair (1989) get intermediate EFL learners to look systematically at successful learning strategies through readings, check lists, and various techniques in all four skills. Chamot, O'Malley, and Kupper's (1992) series take a similar approach. CALLA designed by Chamot and O'Malley embeds training in learning strategies within activities for developing both language skills and content area skills. Brown's (2002) twelve brief, simply written chapters offer a systematic program of strategies that will span most courses of study. About thirty minutes of reading weekly give students information about successful language-learning styles and strategies.

**e ) Learning centers**

Learning centers typically make available to learners a number of possible types of extra-class assistance in writing, reading, academic study skills, and other oral production.

## 5.3 Learner strategy training and strategies-based instruction

In an era of interactive, intrinsically motivated, learner-centered, and strategies-based university instruction, learner strategy training seems to be very important. The general goals of learner strategy training are "to help make language learning more meaningful, to encourage a collaborative spirit between learner and teacher, to learn about options for language learning, and to learn and practice strategies that facilitate self-reliance." [19] Wenden (1985) also regards the facilitating of learner autonomy as one of the most important goals, and expects learners to activate their autonomous learning skills both inside and outside the classroom. [20] Moreover, in learner training Ellis and Sinclair (1989) aims to help learners consider the factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best so that they may become more effective learners and take on more responsibility for their own learning. [21] Tudor (1996) suggests that strategy development should not be seen simply as a matter of teaching specific skills or techniques, and that it has more to do with fostering learners' understanding of language, of learning, and of their own subjective interaction with the processes of language use and learning. [22]

Strategies-based instruction may be difficult for many university teachers to implement. Questions like the following are essential: How do I teach learners to become aware of their styles? How can I get learners to practice good strategies? What are some effective classroom techniques for strategy training? One effective approach is to encourage cooperation, a social affective strategy to develop learner autonomy, in university EFL education in Japan. Cooperative learning can integrate a variety of learning strategies to develop communicative competence as well as learner autonomy. Training should not be restricted to a one-time workshop. Students may also need the experience of practicing in structured groups whereby the teacher can monitor and give feedback on how the groups are functioning. Once students have internalized the skills and the ethos of working together, they will be more likely to be successful working collaboratively with less faculty-imposed structure inside and outside the classroom. In strategies-based instruction, students learn more than just a set of gimmicks for getting through a language course; they develop academic techniques that help them learn the

language or any other subject.

In order to enhance the quality of strategies-based instruction, the specialized training of university students and teachers should be developed, and more collaboration among ELT practitioners needs to be promoted. In Japan the teaching of learning strategies is of comparatively recent growth, but it is very important for university teachers to make the necessary efforts to overcome a variety of problems, such as attitudinal, methodological, and organizational difficulties.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the features of various new approaches to ELT in Japanese universities, such as reflective teaching, autonomous learning, cooperative learning, and strategies-based instruction. These new approaches should be applied to the learner-centered communicative classroom. It is essential for university EFL teachers to recognize the interaction among these approaches.

The answers to my research question are:

- University EFL learning and teaching should be focused on the relation between students and the content to be learned, and be based on trying to understand student learning.

- University teachers should take learner needs, motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies into account in formulating a teaching method to realize the potential of students.

- University teachers should reflect constructively and critically on their teaching intentions, the ends they have in mind and the means they might use to achieve them.

- University teachers should provide a learning environment where the learners are given the possibility consciously to be involved in their learning and thus become autonomous learners. Evaluating autonomous learning should be open for experiments as part of the learning process as well as the outcome.

- There should be the changing role of the instructor from lecturer to facilitator or coach, the shift in authority from the individual instructor to shared authority with the group of learners, careful planning of the instructional setting such as timing and efficiency concerns, and assessment issue such as group versus individual grades.

- Japanese students are expected to develop high levels of autonomy when they are engaged in group-based forms of learning such as cooperative/collaborative learning, experiential learning, and problem-based learning. Cooperative EFL learning should be evaluated as a culture-sensitive approach to developing communicative competence and cooperative autonomy in Japanese universities.

- Cooperative and computer-assisted learning afford students the opportunity to develop a range of cognitive, metacognitive, and social, as well as linguistic skills while interacting and negotiating.

- Skilled university teachers can help their students develop an awareness of learning strategies and enable to use a wider range of appropriate strategies. In strategy instruction, students can learn more than just a set of gimmicks for getting through a language course; they can develop academic techniques that help them learn the language or any other subject.

In Japanese universities, we will be able to find one of the best ways to develop learner autonomy and communicative competence through the interaction of new approaches that I have proposed in this paper. University teachers should be assert their own autonomy in the practice of teaching so that they can foster autonomy among their students.

## Notes

1) University Council. 1991. *The Standards Reform for the Establishments of Universities.* Tokyo: Monbukagakusho.

2) Ramsden, P. 2003. *Learning to Teach in Higher Education.* London: Routledge Falmer. 108-115.

3) *Ibid.,* 252.

4) Ghaye, A. and K. Ghaye. 1998. *Teaching and Learning through Critical Reflective Practice.* London: David Fulton Publishers. 19.

5) *Ibid.,* 23.

6) Aoki, N. and R. Smith. 1996. "Learner autonomy in cultural context: The case of Japan." Abstract for paper presented at the 11th World Congress of Applied Linguistics, Jyväskylä, Finland, August 1996.

7) Ryan, R. M. 1991. "The nature of the self in autonomy and relatedness." In J. Strauss and G. R. Goethals (Eds.), *The Self: Interdisciplinary Approaches.* New York: Springer. 227.

8) Little, D. 1996. "The politics of learner autonomy." Learning Learning: JALT Development. N-SIG Forum 2 (4), 8.

9) Little, D. and L. Dam. 1998. "Learner Autonomy: What and Why?" *The Language Teacher* 22 (10), 7.

10) Olsen, R. E. W-B and S. Kagan. 1992. "About cooperative learning." In C. Kessler (Ed.), *Cooperative Language Learning.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.:Prentice Hall. 8.

11) Littlewood, W. 1999. "Defining and Developing Autonomy in East Asian Contexts." *Applied Linguistics* 20 (1), 87-88.

12) *Ibid.,* 76.

13) Warschauer, M. and Healey, D. 1998. "Computers and language learning: an overview." *Language Teaching* 31, 59.

14) Tarone, E. 1980. "Communication strategies, foreigner talk and repair in interlanguage." *Language Learning* 30, 419.

15) Ellis, R. 1994. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 530.

16) O'Malley, J. M. and A. U. Chamot. 1990. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 197.

17) Oxford, R. L. 1990. *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers. 1.

18) *Ibid.,* 9.

19) *Ibid.,* 201.

20) Wenden, A. 1985. "Learner strategies." *TESOL Newsletter* 19 (5).

21) Ellis, G. and B. Sinclair. 1989. *Learning to Learn English: A Course in Learner Training.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1.

22) Tudor, I. 1996. *Learner-centredness as Language Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.