

Language Learners' Belief Change

Sakae Suzuki¹

Shonan Institute of Technology

ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study is designed to provide an orderly account of how beliefs about English language learning change among seven high school students in Japan. Beginning when the students were first-year high school students (10th graders), the investigation takes a qualitative multiple-case-study approach that includes in-depth interviews, responses to open-ended questions, and written reports. Data gathering ended when each student, in the third year of high school, chose a university. Conclusions include: (1) factors that influence changes in learners' beliefs and (2) implications for teachers and educators.

INTRODUCTION

Learner beliefs are one type of individual learner difference (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2006). Researchers have investigated their potential effects on learners' strategies and motivation in the classroom (Horwitz, 1987; 1988 Wenden, 1986a, 1987; Yang, 1999), the process and outcomes of learning (Dweck, 2006; Schommer, 1994), and attitude change (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

One of the problems of belief studies is the lack of studies investigating the sources, development, and changes of learners' beliefs (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The results of previous studies have indicated certain tendencies concerning students' beliefs, but they did not explain why and how those students developed, held, or changed certain beliefs. SLA researchers have investigated individual difference variables that learners bring into the classroom, such as aptitude, anxiety, motivation, and working memory. Beliefs are not included in those categories, but they are a type of individual difference (Cotterall, 1999) that can influence the variables listed above; therefore, researchers should strive to shed light on the sources, development, construction, and change of learners' beliefs and their effect on learning. By knowing how beliefs change and what variables change learners' beliefs, teachers can create learning experiences that positively influence learners' thoughts and help them develop positive beliefs. One problem, however, is that detecting change requires the ability to discern "from" and "to" conditions: belief states that have recognizable forms and consequences. Also, with respect to changes of beliefs

1. Sakae Suzuki is a professor of English at Shonan Institute of Technology in Japan. She obtained a MA in TESOL from Teachers College, Columbia University and an Ed.D in TESOL from Temple University. Her research interests include learners' beliefs, motivation, and learners' stories. Correspondence should be sent to Sakae Suzuki, E-mail: sakaes@center.shonan-it.ac.jp

about foreign language learning, it is important to investigate how various factors bring about belief change (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). In addition, few studies have been focused on younger learners, such as secondary school students. Because adolescents must manage major biological, educational, and social role transitions (Bandura, 1997), I assume that their beliefs change. By knowing how and what can change learners' beliefs, teachers can create learning experiences that affect learners' thoughts and help them develop positive beliefs.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how learner beliefs change and what factors cause change. Change, as Bailey (1992) and Jackson (1992) pointed out, occurs in many forms, including knowledge, attitudes, understanding, and self-awareness. Change itself can have positive, neutral, and negative meanings: effective learners can change their attitudes and give up learning, while previously unsuccessful learners can focus their energies on the pursuit of worthwhile learning objectives. In this study, I investigate changes among high school students who find their own way of learning, make sense of their learning, and develop learning goals (Dweck, 1986). I investigate how their beliefs change through educative experiences (Dewey, 1938) at school and in social interactions and to what they attribute their learning.

METHOD

Multiple Case Studies

A case study is an exploration of a "bounded system" or multiple cases over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of rich information in a context (Creswell, 1998). Thus, multiple-case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from two or more cases within the same study. The bounded system is bounded by time and place and it is the case studied (Creswell, 1998). In this study, the bounded system is a public Japanese high school and cases are individual students. Yin (2003) indicated that multiple cases should be selected so that they replicate each other by either predicting similar results or contrasting results for predictable reasons (p. 5). In this study, the seven participants had the desire to study English in the beginning of the investigation. Some of them might follow a similar process of learning and others might not.

Research Site

The research site, Rokkaku High School (pseudonym) is located in Yokohama, a major port city close to Tokyo, in Japan. The school was founded eighteen years ago as an experimental and pioneer school with a credit system for classes which give students more choices than usual choice of classes. The school policy has been to accept a variety of students: regular students who graduated from Japanese junior high schools, returnees who lived abroad, foreign students living in Japan, and restarters who quit other high schools.

Participants

There are seven participants in this study. One of the students entered Rokkaku high school as a first-year student in 2005, five of them entered Rokkaku High School in April, 2006, and one entered as a second-year student in September, 2006 after quitting another private high school. The first-year students were chosen in order to investigate their English learning history before high school. The second-year student was included in order to observe how studying for entrance examination (*juken*-style learning), which emphasizes rote memorization, influences her beliefs. Table 1 summarizes the backgrounds of the seven participants.

TABLE 1
Study Participants

Name	Gender	Country of origin	Background before attending Rokkaku High School
Maiko	Female	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Montreal, Canada • Attended a preschool (8 months) and kindergarten (2 months) in Vancouver, Canada • Attended a kindergarten in Japan • Attended a public elementary school and a junior high school in Japan • English grade in junior high school: 5
Satsuki	Female	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Japan • Went overseas briefly every year since childhood • Attended a Japanese elementary school and junior high school • English grade in junior high school: 5
Kazuo	Male	Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Peru • Came to Japan at age 15 • Went to a Japanese school in Peru • Went to a cram school in Peru • English grade in junior high school: 5
Fumiko	Female	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Japan • Attended a Japanese public junior high school • Attended a cram school • Went to Canada for 2 weeks • English grade in junior high school: 5
Honey	Female	Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Myanmar • Attended a local kindergarten and elementary school • Attended an international school for 2 years • Came to Japan at age 14 • Attended a public junior high school in Japan • English grade in junior high school: 5
Rumiko	Female	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Japan • Attended a Japanese public elementary school and junior high school • Attended a cram school • No overseas experience • English grade in junior high school: 5
Natsuko	Female	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Japan • Attended a public Japanese elementary school • Attended a cram school • Attended a private Japanese junior high school • Attended a private Japanese high school

- Quit the private Japanese high school and entered a public high school
- Went to Asian countries briefly (5times) before starting junior high school
- Went to the Philippines to study English twice before attending the second high school
- English grade in junior high school: 5

Note. English grade in junior high school: 5 = highest possible grade, 1 = lowest possible grade.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was taken place both during and after data collection from 2006 to 2009, in line with Creswell's (1998) emphasis on a zigzag approach between data gathering and analysis. Interpretation of interview data was presented to the participants immediately after the first interview (Kanno, 2003). Each time I met a participant; I went over the previous data and discussed possible interpretations. After I finished each participant's story, I identified changes in their beliefs and factors that affected their beliefs. Those changes and impetus for changes were put into a matrix (see table 2).

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What factors influence changes in learners' beliefs?
2. What are implications for teachers and educators suggested by the present study?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question concerned what factors influence changes in their beliefs. The participants' stories indicated that their beliefs changed as they experienced personal growth and changes in their learning contexts. The belief changes found in the present study are summarized in Table 2.

Factors Leading to Belief Changes

TABLE 2
Summary of Belief Changes

From	To	Impetus for change
Natsuko Getting good grades and going to a prestigious university are the goals of study.	Doing whatever you like is best.	Studying for entrance examinations. Attending acting school/visiting the Philippines
Speaking like a native speaker of English is good.	English is spoken with different accents.	Experiences in non-English speaking countries
Studying English for tests is a	English is a tool for	Experiences in the Philippines

goal of study. Sitting at a desk and doing exercises is learning English.	communication. There is another way of learning English.	Class presentations
Making mistakes is shameful.	It is important to speak up without being afraid of what other people think.	Meeting people from different countries
Speaking is more important than writing.	My English is not good enough to communicate with people. <i>Juken</i> -type study might be important.	Speaking English with foreign people
Foreign cultures and going overseas are interesting.	Lack of knowledge of Japan.	Staying in Chicago as part of an exchange program
Going to a university in a foreign country is the best choice for study.	Going to a university in Japan to learn English and Japanese history is best.	Staying in Chicago as part of an exchange program
Decisions are made by someone else.	I must make decisions myself.	Forced learning at Sakura High School
Rumiko		
I am good at English because I get good grades on English tests.	I am not good at English anymore.	Experiences in high school/returnee students
Getting good grades means being good at English.	Being good at English means speaking English well.	Meeting with returnee students
Studying English is studying language.	Learning something through English is important.	An English teacher
Memorization is the only way to learn words.	There is another way of learning words.	Workshop by a professor.
I have to take English classes to learn English.	I can study English by myself.	Older students' advice
I want to be an English teacher like Mr. Oshima.	Maybe I do not want to be a teacher. My pronunciation is not good and I can not speak English well.	Meeting with returnees who spoke fluent English
Kazuo		
English is not fun. I don't like English.	Speaking English is fun.	Speaking English with a Korean woman on an airplane
Speaking English is more important than studying grammar.	Grammar is also important.	Talking with foreign students
Maiko		
Getting good grades means being good at English.	Being satisfied only with good grades is shameful. It is important to improve oneself constantly.	Inspiration from older students
I should not criticize what a	I can negotiate with a teacher.	OCI class with an American

teacher does. I have to listen to my teachers.	I can make decisions myself.	teacher Studying for entrance examinations
I have to do <i>juken benkyo</i> to pass the entrance examination.	Studying only for entrance examinations is meaningless.	Yobiko (prep-school) experiences
Honey		
I am shy.	I am active.	Studying at an international school and learning English
Language is one of subjects at school.	Language is a weapon for survival.	Studying in an international school/Living in Japan
English is the most powerful language.	Japanese is currently more important than English.	Living in Japan
Satsuki		
English is useful everywhere.	English is not used everywhere, so I have to learn another foreign language.	Traveling in Mexico
Fumiko		
English is a subject at school.	Studying English would give me a stable identity.	Being bullied at junior high school.
English is an important school subject.	English should not be a compulsory subject.	Learning experiences and observation
I cannot speak English naturally with native speakers of English.	I can speak in English about topics I like (music).	Staying in England and talking with British students

Sources of belief change

What factors contribute to belief changes? Under what circumstances do adolescents resist change even though well-meaning adults try to promote belief change? The results of the present study indicate that adolescents' beliefs are rather fluid mental constructs.

The participants in this study changed their beliefs in different contexts. Some of their belief changes are consistent with the results described in earlier studies (Sakui, K., & Gaies, S. J., 1999; Suzuki, 2006; Takayama, 2003) in which beliefs are regarded as relatively permanent, existing before and after their elicitation by a research instrument and unaffected by the instrument itself. In the present study, however, beliefs seemed to exist most strongly at the moment of elicitation, and could be observed to undergo change, although the changes were not always acknowledged by the learners. Three factors leading to belief change were identified: experiential factors, interpersonal factors, and contextual factors.

Experiential factors

The stories of the learners in the present study indicate that overseas experiences give them chances to communicate in authentic ways in foreign languages and enhance their interest in

foreign cultures and people. Through those experiences, the participants become aware of the various roles of language, and the purposes and benefits of learning foreign languages. Overseas experiences were a trigger for some students to change their values and beliefs toward English. Natsuko went to the Philippines and changed her beliefs about school, learning, her values, and her choice of university. One of Kazuo's belief changes occurred when he met a Korean woman and talked with her in English on an international flight. The experience led him to believe that speaking is the most important element in language study. Satsuki believed that English was spoken everywhere in the world because of experiences speaking and listening to English in foreign countries before starting high school. However, in Mexico, she found that English was not understood. She changed her belief and thought that it is important to learn other foreign languages in addition to English.

Facing difficulties, problems, or crises that shake their identities and confidence can also cause learners to modify their beliefs or develop new ones. Natsuko's journey to the Philippines induced her to modify her beliefs about school and studying. Fumiko, who was bullied in junior high school, came to believe that studying would provide her with a stable identity and sustain her confidence. For them, hardships led to new experiences, which played a role in overcoming the hardships. In this, new beliefs emerged.

Interpersonal factors

People are sources of belief change. Previous studies of learners' beliefs suggest that they change their beliefs because of teachers and educators' use of a number of strategic means, or by input given by teachers (Woods, 1996, p. 218). In this study, however, the agents of change were often persons other than teachers and educators. For example, Maiko was influenced by older students in her high school who were her role models. Her "fixed mindset" (Dweck, 2006), a belief that getting good grades in school meant being good at English, was challenged by those older students. After listening to them, Maiko felt ashamed that she had thought that good grades at school were evidence of adequate learning. She then developed a "growth mindset" (Dweck, 2006) that she should not be satisfied with her current English proficiency and should constantly strive to improve. In this case, the older students were near peer role models (Arao & Murphy, 2001) who allowed the younger learners to identify with them, become inspired, and themselves become more effective learners (p. 9).

A developmental trait of adolescents is that they question adult authority. In the present study, Maiko at first accepted the advice of well-meaning teachers that she should study for examinations in order to gain entrance to a prestigious university. She later rejected this idea as stereotypical and not applicable to her personally. She experienced stress in disregarding the strong advice of a teacher, but she did it. Parents as well as teachers also experience rejection by their adolescent children, as in the case of Satsuki, who no longer wanted to accompany her parents on overseas trips.

In spite of an inclination to question the conventional wisdom of many adults, the students in the present study readily accepted the advice of a few highly trusted adults. Rumiko was influenced by her cram school teacher, who was a good teacher who showed that he cared about his students. By observing what he did and being impressed with his attitude as a teacher, Rumiko developed a belief that teaching can influence students positively and thus teaching is rewarding. She also changed her perceptions toward English by teachers. For a student to trust an adult seemed to require two perceptions: The adult sees the student as an individual rather than a

stereotype, and the adult is pursuing no personal agenda but has only the student's best interests at heart.

Influence by others sometimes led to a loss of confidence. For example, Rumiko had never been abroad. She had studied in EFL contexts in Japan and described herself as a product of Japanese English education. She attributed her lack of speaking ability to her lack of overseas experience. Meeting with students who had lived in foreign countries and spoke English fluently reinforced her belief that studying abroad was the only way to improve her speaking ability. This belief was not shaped by her own experience but by a second-hand belief. Such beliefs can be changed by more experience. Rumiko was just one of many Japanese learners who believe that only going abroad will make them fluent speakers of English. Maiko's belief that students majoring in international studies are shallow was developed through Maiko's observations on students at Rokkaku High School.

Contextual factors

This study also shows that the context in which learners are living and staying can cause beliefs to develop and change. This notion is in accord with sociocultural theory, which states that ideas begin as an external social activity and eventually become internalized (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 48). Students such as Honey, who are put into foreign language communities without sufficient preparation, tend to look for survival skills by themselves, through involvement with the target language. Honey acquired English and Japanese by collaborating and interacting with other speakers. Her strategy for learning foreign languages was based on her personal beliefs of learning, which was very much a response to the situation she found herself in. Natsuko, changed schools, and in doing so changed her beliefs about learning. All of the participants changed their beliefs because of the environment at Rokkaku High School, where they met many returnee students and foreign students. Those students were inspirations for Maiko, Kazuo, and Natsuko, who themselves had lived overseas. On the other hand, Rumiko, who did not have foreign experiences at all, felt intimidated in front of returnee students. The school context was certainly one of the factors that caused Rumiko to overestimate the importance of speaking English while observing returnee students who could speak: Rumiko developed a belief that she would be able to speak fluently if she went overseas. Rumiko's low sense of speaking self-efficacy caused her to develop a stereotypical fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006), a belief, that people who speak English fluently are superior.

Direction of belief change

According to Walsh (2004), high school students in general have not developed concrete beliefs about self or identity. They are easily influenced by peers and external factors, such as the media. Thus, they often develop second-hand beliefs (beliefs not developed through their own experiences), and are easily swayed. Beliefs that emerge from their own experiences are stronger and resist modification. For example, Natsuko, Kazuo, Maiko and Satsuki's belief that English is interesting was shaped by their foreign experiences. This belief remained unchanged throughout the study. Being a teenager is typically a process of finding one's own identity in a particular social context. Teenagers often listen to older students, not to their parents, as Rumiko did when she decided not to take English classes because of the advice she received from older students. She later changed this belief about the unimportance of English classes. In general, as Walsh

suggested, adolescents change from holding vaguely formed beliefs about self to more mature beliefs.

While high school students are developing cognitively, they change their beliefs and their perceptions. Kazuo's decision that knowledge of grammar is important is an example. Such decision-making, according to Howard (2006) is one sign of maturity.

In the present study, many belief changes were in the direction of greater maturity in terms of decision-making. For example, Maiko decided not to take an entrance exam to a national university recommended by her teachers and Natsuko decided to go to a university in Okinawa even though her friends did not agree with her decision. Honey changed her belief when she faced the reality that she could not be a doctor. At that time, Honey made a decision about her future by herself.

The results of this study show that well-meaning teachers and other adults are not always influential in changing students' beliefs. It is, however, encouraging to find that students themselves, taking charge of their own assessments, usually change their beliefs in the direction of beneficial beliefs. Autonomy is something many adults encourage at least in theory; however, adults are not always comfortable when they find that their influence over adolescents is diminished as they pursue greater autonomy. This finding does not suggest that teachers should retreat from implementing their teaching beliefs. On the contrary, as Rumiko's case suggests, teachers' belief are a springboard for some learners to become aware of their deficiencies in learning and to become more independent learners.

Belief changes can be summarized with three observations. First, adolescents often resist deliberate attempts by adults to change their beliefs. They seem to suspect adults of trying to impose ideal or stereotypical beliefs when their own desire is to establish beliefs valid for their unique personalities and situations. Second, even while resisting the efforts of adults to influence their beliefs and behaviors, adolescents seem to be on the alert for circumstances, experiences, and interpersonal encounters they can regard as valid and significant sources of beliefs. Often these are chance encounters: adolescents change their beliefs although people encountered outside of one's circle of friends and acquaintances do not intend to change one's intentional states. Third, in general, beliefs about learning English change positively, that is, in the direction of greater effectiveness in governing language-learning activities.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The second research question concerned what implications for teachers and educators the present study suggest.

As this study suggests, teachers can learn a great deal from students' stories about themselves. In this sense, learners themselves contribute to the development of the field (Breen, 2001). Teachers should consider students' backgrounds and how they came to be where they are. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron described "learner factors" (p. 151) that each learner holds such as previous learning experience, aptitude, and gender. By doing so, teachers are able to avoid making hasty judgments (Kanno, 2003, p. 141) about students and to thereby avoid narrowing their potential. The present study suggests that students have a great deal to teach us if we chose to learn (Bailey, 2001).

One consequence of a longitudinal study is that the researcher has sufficient time to reflect on the relationship between the emerging findings and the nature of the learning context. In the present study, such reflection has led to six implications for teachers and schools.

First, it is important that teachers get to know their students' skills, preferences, and experiences, particularly the changes they have experienced in different learning contexts. Quite a few Japanese students quit one school and reenter another. They bring their learning backgrounds and beliefs about learning with them when they arrive at the new school. They do not often talk openly about the reason(s) why they quit a school. If I had not had chances to talk with Natsuko, I would have never known why she quit the previous private high school, and this knowledge was beneficial for me as a teacher responsible for providing Natsuko's career guidance. As doctors need to know detailed information about their patients, such as their habits, occupation, age, gender, and previous illnesses, teachers should know about their students to better understand their situations and facilitate their becoming good learners. In order to know more about learners' backgrounds, language learning histories (LLH) (Murphey & Li-Chi, 2004, p. 83; Murphy & Carpenter, 2008) are helpful. Teachers can also encourage learners to write journals or reflections about the class and their learning. It is beneficial for teachers to have students record their experiences, as this allows the teachers to see how learners develop and change their beliefs about language learning. These days teachers are not always allowed to know students' personal backgrounds because of a concern for student privacy. Teachers do not always know where students have lived, what their family is like, how many brothers and sisters they have, or what their parents do. I believe that teachers should know what stories students bring to the class in order to enhance learning.

Second, teachers should know about students' overseas experiences, as such experiences can strongly impact young learners. The beliefs they develop during their stays in foreign countries are strong and often resist modification. Students with and without overseas experiences differ in terms of their beliefs about foreign language and cultures; thus, teachers and school administrators should consider what programs and classes can best enhance their curiosity and motivation to learn English. Students who have lived overseas are often more comfortable in communicative classrooms and they typically do not find memorization-oriented study meaningful. Thus, teachers should, as far as possible, offer varied classroom experiences. The students' narratives show that Japanese schools do not function to maintain students' foreign heritage experiences. Teachers and schools might well develop methodologies to do so. Students like Kazuo and Honey, who acquired English by using English, arrived at junior high schools in Japan far ahead of their fellow students in terms of their speaking proficiency of English. Japanese schools were prepared to accept those students only if they conformed to what other students did. School administrators might consider the higher proficiency levels of returnee students and develop curricula for them.

Third, teachers should introduce various activities and learning strategies in foreign language classrooms so that learners with different characteristics (Sternberg, 1996) can try them and find their own preferred strategies, as this can help empower the learners and allow them to find meaning in studying English. Otherwise, learners, especially high school students, have little interest in English aside from its being a graduation requirement (Tweles, 1996). Teachers should keep in mind that small events can sometimes generate a chain of reactions that produce a significant change. By implementing various ways of teachings and offering various experiences and learning opportunities for students, teachers can hope that learners will find aspects of

English that engage them. It is a teacher's responsibility to provide as many learning opportunities as possible (Shimoyama, Isoda, & Yamamori, 2002).

Fourth, considering the centrality of university entrance examination in the educational culture in Japan (Gorsuch, 2000, p. 699), teachers and educators who are involved with English education should consider meaningful goals of learning English and implement teaching that inspires learners to enjoy learning and helps them find meaning in learning English. The students in the present study felt considerable stress when studying for entrance examinations as they were required to memorize a great deal of information. Students with foreign backgrounds seem especially to dislike studying for entrance examinations. Studying for entrance examinations should not be the only goal of studying English. Teachers and educators can implement exchange programs, for example, so that students can learn to use English as a tool for communication. In classrooms, teachers can include communicative activities such as journal writing, discussions, and presentations. Through those activities, students can better understand how English is used and what they should do to convey their thoughts in English.

Fifth, students need experiences that enhance their curiosity to learn English and find meaning in learning English. The present study demonstrates that no one can tell a child's future potential from his or her current behavior. Adolescent learners, especially, can change their beliefs, goals, and dreams. As Dweck (2000) wrote, "we do not know exactly what someone is capable of with the right support from the environment and with the right degree of personal motivation or commitment" (p. 155). Thus, I think teachers need to offer learners as many opportunities as possible to interact with the global community via English. They can create classroom conditions for learners to engage in communities of practice (Menezes, Barcelos & Kalaja, 2008, p. 228) so that the learners can exchange their ideas via group work or cooperative learning. Examples include exchanging e-mail in English with foreign students attending sister schools overseas, editing English news (introducing school events in English) in English classes and English Day Camp, visiting local international schools, and inviting their students to take part in extra-curricular activities. Those opportunities are "educational experiences" (van Lier, 2004, p. 5). In order to identify experiences that are educational for certain learners, teachers can listen to stories of their past and the present and find out what experiences they need. This study also suggests that teachers should be tolerant of young learners' confused behavior and support them in their efforts to change their interfering beliefs.

Sixth, this study suggests that learners' decisions should be respected. Young learners are often hindered from following their inner voices. They negotiate their tentative ideas with parents, teachers, and others in their lives; however, this process causes frustration and uneasiness among some learners. Learners find their best learning paths when their motivation has an internal locus (Taylor, 1992). In the present study, if Natsuko and Maiko had been allowed to be themselves, they might not have wasted so much time and effort before finding their destinations. Thus, teachers should pay attention to learners' voices and provide them with opportunities to make their own decisions. Teachers can help students foster a sense of personal identity by encouraging them to make decisions for themselves and by helping them express their individuality in constructive ways.

CONCLUSION

The present study indicated that adolescent learners' beliefs change over time, and this change appears to be a natural and healthy tendency of teenage minds. Many beliefs change as

learners become older and change learning contexts. Some beliefs change rapidly, and others begin when learners initiate learning English and remain stable for many years.

Learners develop personal theories about learning English within which beliefs are idiosyncratic rather than predictably patterned. Individual differences and changes of beliefs are consistent with a dynamic systems view within developmental psychology (Thornton, 2008, p. 566), which allows that different children follow subtly different paths, even if they all end up at a similar destination.

Finally, three limitations of the present study deserve comment. First, a primary limitation is the representativeness of the participants of this study. They were high school students in Japan who were motivated and who succeeded at learning English. Six of the seven participants were girls, and six of them had overseas experiences before coming to the research site. While the findings can not be generalized to other students and other sites, it is my belief that the findings can help teachers plan treatments for discouraged and disaffected students, primarily by widening their acceptance of nonstandard beliefs and means.

Second, I chose the participants from within my teaching context, Rokkaku High School. It is possible that a study of participants from other educational institutions might have produced different conclusions given the characteristics defining those institutions.

Third, considering data collection, the concentration in the present study was on the students themselves. Data were not systematically collected from parents, siblings, peers, or cram school teachers. Doing so would have permitted an investigation of students' beliefs from different perspectives and triangulation would have been possible. This would have provided corroborating evidence for the findings (Creswell, 1998, p. 202) and greater breadth to the results.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, K. M. (1992). The process of innovation in language teacher development: What, why and how teachers change. In J. Flowerdew, M. Brock, & S. Hsia (Eds.), *Perspective on second language teacher education* (pp. 253-282). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Polytechnic.
- Bailey, K. M. (2001). What my EFL students taught me. *The PAC Journal*, 1, 7-31.
- Breen, M. P. (2001). *Learner contributions to language learning*. New York: Longman.
- Cotterall, S. (1999). Key variables in language learning: What do learners believe about them? *System*, 27, 493-513.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. *The Kappa Delta Pi lecture series*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Dweck, C. S. (1986). Motivational processes affecting learning. *American Psychology*, 10, 1040-1048.
- Dweck, C. S. (2000). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Gorsuch, G. J. (2000). EFL educational policies and educational cultures: Influences on teachers'

- approval of communicative activities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(4), 675-710.
- Howard, P. J. (2006). *The owner's manual for the brain: Everyday applications from mind-brain research*. Austin, TX: Brad Press.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1987). Surveying student beliefs about language learning. In A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129). New York: Prentice Hall.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72, 283-294.
- Jackson, P. W. (1992). Helping teachers develop. In A. Hargreaves & M. G. Fullan (Eds.), *Understanding teacher development* (pp. 62-74). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kalaja, P., & Barcelos, A. M. F. (2006). *Beliefs about SLA*. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic.
- Kanno, Y. (2003). *Negotiating bilingual and bicultural identities*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (Rev. ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Menezes, V., Barcelos, A. M., & Kalaja, P. (2008). Narrativising learning and teaching EFL: Concluding remarks. In P. Kalaja, V., Menezes & A. M. Barcelos (Eds.), *Narratives of learning and teaching EFL* (pp. 199-231). New York: Palgrave.
- Murphey, T., & Carpetner, C. (2008). The seeds of agency in language learning histories. In A. Barcelos, P. Kalaja & V. Menezes, (Eds.). *Narratives of learning and teaching EFL* (pp.17-34). New York: Palgrave
- Murphey, T., Jin, C. & Li-Chi, C. (2004). Learners' constructions of identities and imagined communities. In P. Benson, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Learners' stories* (pp. 83-100). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Murphey, T., & Arao, H. (2001). Reported belief changes through near peer role modeling. *TESL-EJ*, 5, 1-15.
- Sakui, K., & Gaies, S. J. (1999). Investigation Japanese learners' beliefs about language learning, *System*, 27, 473-492.
- Schommer, M. (1994). An emerging conceptualization of epistemological beliefs and their role in learning. In R. Garner & P. A. Alexander (Eds.), *Beliefs about text and instruction with text* (pp. 134-141). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Shimoyama, Y., Isoda, T., & Yamamori, K. (2002). Learner beliefs in language learning in the CALL environment. *JALT Journal*, 24(2), 155-165.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1996). Matching abilities, instruction and assessment: Reawakening the sleeping giant of ATI. In I. Dennis & P. Tapsfield (Eds.), *Human abilities: Their nature and measurement* (pp. 167-181). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Suzuki, S. (2006). A study of Japanese high school students' beliefs about learning English. *English Education Study*, 42, 10-21.
- Takayama, Y. (2003). Japanese learners' beliefs about learning English. Paper presented at Rikkyo University English education open seminar.
- Tanaka, K., & Ellis, R. (2003). Study-abroad, language proficiency, and learner beliefs about language learning. *JALT Journal*, 25(1), 63-85.
- Taylor, L. (1992). Relationship between affect and memory: Motivation-based selective generation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62, 876-882.
- Thornton, S. (2008). *Understanding human development*. New York: Polgrave MacMillan.
- Tweles, B. (1996). Motivational differences between Chinese and Japanese learners of English as

- a foreign language. *JALT Journal*, 18(2), 210-228.
- van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer.
- Walsh, D. (2004). *Why do they act that way?* New York: Free Press.
- Wenden, A. (1986a). Helping language learners think about learning. *English Language Journal*, 40, 3-12.
- Wenden, A. (1987). How to be a successful language learner: Insights and prescriptions from L2 learners. In A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 103-117). London, UK: Prentice-Hall.
- Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching: Beliefs, decision-making and classroom practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yang, N. D. (1999). The relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and learning strategy use. *System*, 27, 515-535.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.