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## Analyzing the Self-reported Experiences of Japanese English as a Foreign Language Pre-service Teachers with Listening Comprehension Skills

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ANALYZING THE SELF-REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF JAPANESE ENGLISH AS A  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS WITH LISTENING  
COMPREHENSION SKILLS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to analyze the self-reported experiences of Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers with listening comprehension skills in their teaching classroom as university students and in their learning classroom as EFL students. Currently, Japanese EFL education is changing rapidly and focusing on developing overall English skills that include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, pre-service teacher EFL education in Japan does not stress the importance of listening comprehension pedagogy. Moreover, there have been few studies about listening pedagogy from the perspective of pre-service teachers. Through analyzing pre-service teacher's self-reported listening learning experiences, the current study aimed to analyze the current listening pedagogy targeting elementary, junior, and high school EFL preparation.

Three participants responded to an interview conducted in Japanese regarding their experiences with the EFL listening pedagogy experiences in their teaching classroom as university students and in their learning classroom as EFL students. The interview data were transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed through a qualitative research approach. The findings revealed that the pre-service teacher training track focused mostly on developing the pre-service EFL teachers' language proficiency rather than their pedagogical knowledge. Several possible explanations for this trend that were Japanese-context specific were provided, as well as directions for future research on the topic.

*Keywords:* pre-service teacher education, EFL, Japan, listening education, Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI), Extensive Listening (EL), comprehension approach, shadowing

To my family

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Language skills typically show to what extent L2 learners are able to demonstrate their L2 proficiency comprises four areas: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. While each skill is dependent on and interrelated to each other, the listening skill may be considered the foundation of L2 acquisition. Krashen (1987) has theorized that second language learners need comprehensible input to acquire their target languages. There are two types of input, reading and listening, and both are not only beneficial but essential for second language learners to acquire their target language. However, listening input has the potential to be more beneficial than reading input in terms of developing fluency and rapid growth of language ability, especially where English is acquired as a second language and L2 learners use the target language daily (Shirai, 2012).

Listening comprehension skills have the potential to support second language learners in their acquisition of other language skills. For instance, numerous studies (Dunkel, 1991; Long, 1985; Rost, 1990; Vogely, 1999) have claimed that listening comprehension skills underpin the development of other English skills, such as reading and speaking. Danaher (1996) claims that especially for beginning L2 students, developing listening skills help them develop reading and writing skills later on. Moreover, Walter (2008) believes that an understanding of spoken English underpins an understanding of written English. Danaher (1996) states that lots of listening practice before speaking or reading may prepare the learner to acquire L2 effectively more than the study of reading, listening, speaking, and writing simultaneously. O'Malley and Chamot assume that language acquisition is an implicit process in which linguistic rules are internalized by extensive exposure to authentic texts and particularly to comprehensible input that provides

an appropriate level of challenge to the listener (1990). These claims support the idea that listening comprehension skills have a huge impact on L2 learning.

### Statement of the Problem

In Japan, there has been a preponderance of teacher-centered approaches, such as the grammar translation method, in teaching EFL. These approaches have focused on developing reading, grammar, and translation rather than overall language proficiency that includes oral skills. As a result, there are many language proficiency issues related to L2 listening and speaking for Japanese EFL students exposed solely to these methods of teaching.

Indeed, many international Asian students including Japanese students who learn English in those teaching contexts struggle with oral communication skills in English speaking countries. One example is provided by an examination of oral proficiency issues of Asian students in Australia, which has blamed the obsolete traditional Asian English teaching pedagogies (Sawir, 2005). Sawir has claimed that the traditional EFL methods in East and Southeast Asian nations are not adequate to meet the need for an expanded emphasis on oral communications (2005). Additionally, Yanagi and Baker (2016) have claimed that traditional grammar-focused pedagogy, which is teacher-centered, as well as insufficient exposure to authentic use of English both inside and outside of the classroom, are responsible for poor oral communication skills.

The reason why these methods have been and are still popular in Japan comes from the influence of standardized exams. Traditionally, these tests consist of grammar and vocabulary items in a multiple-choice format along with a variety of translation exercises ranging from words to sentences to short paragraphs (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Such discrete point tests still prevail today, especially in large-scale standardized entrance examinations used to

admit students to institutions of higher education around the world (Branwell, 1966; Spolsky, 1978, 1995). Currently, almost all entrance exams in Japan stress the importance of reading and grammar skills because of the practicality of the exams from the point of grading. It is not straightforward to score oral skills within a limited time amount, and the multiple-choice questions for reading and grammar skills save time to grade. Therefore, entrance exams have influenced L2 education as well as L2 students, as the most important goal to study EFL is to pass those exams.

However, the washback effect of the standardized testing alone might not explain why the grammar-translation, which is a teacher-centered approach, has been popular in Japan. Listening comprehension skills have somewhat impacted entrance exams, and therefore, to pass the exams, it is natural for English teachers to teach the skill. Additionally, some researchers have claimed that listening skills may support the development of reading skills (Danaher, 1996; Dunkel, 1991; Long, 1985; Rost, 1990; Vogely, 1999). Thus, to improve reading skills, it is beneficial to practice and improve listening comprehension skills. However, currently, listening comprehension skills are not emphasized. For example, extensive listening (EL) is one of the effective methods to develop listening comprehension skills (Renandya, 2011; Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Waring, 2008). Listening strategy instruction (LSI) is another effective method to develop listening comprehension skills (Graham & Macro, 2008; Renandya, 2012; Vandergrift, 1999; Wang, 2010). Some researchers believe listening comprehension skills can support the development of other language skills (Danaher, 1996; Dunkel, 1991; Long, 1985; Rost, 1990; Shirai, 2012; Vogely, 1999; Walter, 2008). EL is one of the listening practice methods (Renandya, 2011; Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Waring, 2008). EL requires L2 learners to listen to listening materials a lot of times and to

identify the essence of listening materials instead of identifying grammar points or minor details about listening material. L2 teachers should choose interesting and easily understandable listening materials. These materials should help them to keep listening. The next is LSI. Listening comprehension skills require a great deal of mental processes (Vandergrift, 1999). This burden causes L2 learners to feel anxiety about listening (Vogely, 1999; Gonen, 2009). Therefore, it is difficult for the students to understand listening material. Effective listening strategies instruction can lead L2 listeners to understand listening materials (Yang, 2002; Cross, 2009). Moreover, Goh claims LSI can improve confidence and reduce anxiety when listening (2008). As a result, the use of listening comprehension strategies can help L2 learners because these strategies have the potential to help them compensate for their limited proficiency (Kassem, 2015). To sum up, even though EL and LSI could be beneficial for L2 Japanese learners to pass their entrance exams, L2 teachers in Japan are reluctant to develop listening comprehension skills through these two methods.

#### Purpose of the Study

Researchers have claimed that EL and LSI are two effective methods that facilitate the development of listening comprehension skills in second or foreign language classrooms. University entrance exams in Japan emphasize the importance of reading and grammar skills. Consequently, these pedagogies are not utilized in Japanese EFL education as the washback effect of assessment still influences the extent of incorporating teaching listening methods in the L2 classroom. However, the negative washback effect of entrance exams is not the only factor that prevents these listening pedagogies from being utilized in Japanese EFL settings. Listening comprehension skills are also included in part of the exams even though their importance is not the same as reading or grammar skills. Additionally, the listening comprehension skill has the

potential of improving other language skills. There are other reasons in addition to the washback effect that prevents applying the two pedagogies to L2 education in Japan.

One of the reasons to explain the gap is represented by the EFL instructors in Japan. Students in Japan do not have enough opportunities to use English outside of their classrooms. Most of the time they use EFL only in their L2 classroom, and thus, the influence of their teachers has a huge influence on their English language acquisition. In Japan, K-12 public or private schools (except for private tutoring institutions called cramming schools), require EFL teachers to graduate from university with a teaching degree. Therefore, the listening experience of pre-service learning English teachers in university has an enormous impact on listening pedagogies. Their experience as pre-service teachers could predict how they will teach English to their future students, as well as the teaching methods they will employ in their EFL instruction. To find out this important information, the following research question will guide the study.

### Research Question

What are the self-reported experiences of Japanese English as foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers with listening comprehension skills in their teaching classroom as university students and in their learning classroom as EFL students?

### Methods

To answer this research question, it was necessary to interview Japanese university pre-service learning English teachers who aspired to become English teachers in K-12 schools in Japan. This current study investigated participants' experience related to listening skills (learning how to teach the skills as pre-service teachers and studying the skills as EFL students) and analyzed their answers. Therefore, a qualitative study design was employed. The study collected

data from semi-structured interviews that were conducted online. The language used in the interview was Japanese. By using their L1 instead of English there was no language barrier and the participants were able to understand the interview questions and express their experiences accurately.

### Importance of the Study

This study investigated what pre-service EFL teachers learned or experienced about teaching English listening during their professional preparation at the university level. It is possible that pre-service teachers might be influenced by in-service teachers at their workplaces, and as a result, the in-service instructors might influence the pre-service instructors in using grammar-translation methods. Specifically, in Japan, an experienced (in this case, an in-service teacher) teacher has more power than a novice teacher (in this case, a pre-service teacher) because of the influence of Confucianism. However, if pre-service teachers have adequate knowledge about teaching English listening, they might not be influenced by the other in-service teachers. Additionally, after the in-service instructors retire, pre-service teachers would be able to utilize listening pedagogies such as EL or LSI to reform the teaching of English listening skills. Therefore, the listening experience or learning of pre-service instructors has the potential to influence the future of teaching English listening skills in Japan.

If pre-service teachers do not have experience with teaching EFL listening pedagogies such as EL or LSI, they may not introduce these pedagogies in their classrooms. It is true they might have an opportunity to learn listening pedagogies from more experienced in-service teachers after they start to work. However, this positive influence stemming from more experienced Japanese EFL is not achievable in every case. Therefore, what they learn or

experience at their university as pre-service EFL teachers is essential. Without investigating the listening or learning experience of pre-service EFL teachers at universities, developing the Japanese English listening education at the university may not be achieved.

This study investigated whether there was a gap between teaching theory and the applicability in the actual setting of teaching English listening. Even if there are effective methods or theories and EFL teachers cannot use them, the methods or theories need to be refined. The most important point is whether or not the actual pre-service teachers can use teaching English listening methods and develop students' L2 proficiencies. This study investigated pre-service learning English teachers, instead of university teachers, so this study could identify what listening experience they had, or what they learned to become English instructors while they were studying at the university. In the current study, a pre-service learning teacher is a university student who is on an English teacher license track. A university teacher teaches a pre-service teacher an English pedagogy to process an English teacher license track.

Further, the current university entrance exam which is one of the most influential standardized exams no longer has a grammar section, and the test contains only reading and listening questions. In addition to this exam, each university has its own entrance exam. However, because one of the most influential standardized exams is changing the perspective on listening, future Japanese listening education would need to change as well. As a result, this research aimed to analyze listening experience in pre-service learning English teachers and, the influence of the experience towards their future listening pedagogies.

### Limitations

This current study sought to identify the listening pedagogical experience of a small number of pre-service learning English teachers in Japan by utilizing a qualitative design. This study included some limitations. The first limitation was the participants. The participants in this study were Japanese students only, and their cultural, racial, and educational background was homogeneous. Additionally, the number of participants was small. As a result, the applicability of the conclusions from this study was limited to that specific context, and thus, it would be difficult to generalize to all educational contexts and teacher preparation programs in Japan. The third limitation was related to a research design. The data from the interview and the process to interpret them were highly subjective. Therefore, socially desirable, question-order, and confirmation biases might have influenced the result of the current study. The fourth limitation was that this study itself could not draw conclusions related to the cause and effect relationship between their experience at university and their future listening education as in-service teachers.

### Definition of Terms

**Extensive Listening:** Learners listen to listening materials a lot of times and identify the essence of listening materials instead of identifying grammar points or minor details about listening material.

**First Language:** The language used as native/mother language.

**Foreign Language:** The language is not used to communicate in daily life and is used only inside of classrooms.

**Listening Strategies:** Strategies help language learners to compensate for limited proficiency to understand listening materials (Kassem, 2015).

**Macro Skills:** Linguistic competencies that involve language competence beyond the sentence level (discourse, pragmatics, rhetorical devices); as opposed to *microskills* (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

**Micro Skills:** Detailed, specific linguistic competencies that involve processing up to and including the sentence level (phonology, morphology, grammar, lexicon); as opposed to *macroskills* (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

**Pre-service Teacher:** A university student who is on an English teacher license track.

**Second Language:** The language is used to communicate in daily life except for the first language.

**University Teacher:** A teacher who teaches a pre-service teacher an English pedagogy to process an English teacher license track at university.

**EFL** English as a Foreign Language

**EL** Extensive Listening

**ESL** English as a Second Language

**L1** First Language

**L2** Second Language

**LSI** Listening Strategies Instruction

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Outline of Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter was to identify and contextualize the teaching listening comprehension skills in Japan. First, the chapter discussed the importance of listening comprehension skills and the components of those skills. Next, the chapter looked at listening teaching approaches and the current Japanese listening teaching approach. Then, the chapter analyzed some of the challenges of L2 listening pedagogy in the EFL Japanese context.

### Importance of Listening in Second Language Acquisition

To acquire a target language, second language learners need comprehensible input (Krashen, 1987). According to Krashen, reading and listening are two types of input, and both of them are not only beneficial but also essential for second language learners to acquire their target languages. Shirai (2012) claimed that listening input could be more effective than reading input to develop fluency and rapid growth of language proficiency. Further, he illustrated that listening comprehension skills could help an L2 speaker to live more effectively.

Numerous research studies have shown that listening comprehension skills can develop other language skills, such as reading and speaking more effectively (Dunkel, 1991; Long, 1985; Rost, 1990; Vogely, 1999). Developing listening comprehension skills faster than other skills can improve these skills later more effectively and rapidly. Danaher (1996) claimed that increasing listening comprehension skills would help especially a beginning L2 student to increase reading and writing skills later on. Further, Walter (2008) believed that an ability to understand spoken English can support an L2 learner's understanding of written English. Danaher (1996) stated that

practicing listening before practicing speaking or reading was a more effective learning approach than practicing the four language skills simultaneously.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) assumed that a lot of comprehensible authentic input could internalize linguistic rules into an L2 learner implicitly. English spoken by ESL or EFL teachers constituted input for the students that could facilitate the development of their overall language proficiency. However, if L2 learners did not have adequate listening comprehension skills, their L2 teachers might need to communicate with them in their native language during class. Therefore, L2 students might lose the opportunity to have access to input in English and therefore develop their overall language proficiency.

Several researchers have claimed listening comprehension skills are the most frequently used language skill (Ferris, 1998; Vogely, 1998; Morley, 1999). Productive skills, such as speaking and writing are always behind receptive skills, such as reading and listening. Before expressing an opinion, people need to receive information related to the topic of their opinion. Hunsaker (1990) has mentioned that a great deal of both formal and informal learning is acquired by listening, and 80% of what people understand is through listening.

Listening comprehension skills have an enormous impact on academic success. Rost (2013) has claimed that listening skills contribute more to academic success in an L2 environment than reading skills do. In a formal educational situation, the quality of listening input influences L2 students' learning outcomes significantly. Canpolat, Kuzu, Yildirim, and Canpolat (2015) have suggested that listening skills could influence L2 students learning behaviors. They have claimed without sufficient listening comprehension skills, some L2 learners might not be able to interact with their classmates or instructors. As a result, they might lose the opportunity to learn a second language effectively. In this situation, L2 students may

become passive and would not use listening strategies that encourage productive and permanent learning. By contrast, L2 learners who can listen effectively would ask questions and hold discussions. These active listening styles allow those L2 students to learn deeply. In contrast, L2 students who are uninterested and unengaged in an L2 classroom might want time to pass quickly and the class to end as soon as possible. To sum up, L2 listening skills are important in an L2 learning context. Without adequate listening comprehension skills, L2 learners might not adapt to their new L2 environment and attain academic success in L2 contexts.

### Micro and Macro Skills of Listening

Micro and macro skills consist of overall listening comprehension skills. Some of the major components of micro skills are the discrimination of sounds that may change meaning, identification of stressed and unstressed forms of words, recognition of reduced forms (*gonna* instead of *going to*) and word boundaries (where a word stops and another one begins), detect keywords, and identify main ideas or topics (Mihai & Purmensky, 2016). Also, some researchers (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019; Richards, 1983) regard microskills as focusing on the smaller bits and chunks of language, in more of a bottom-up process. They have identified several microskills: (1) distinguishing among the distinctive sounds of English; (2) retaining chunks of language of different length in short-term memory; (3) understand target language stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, intonation contours, and their roles in signaling information; (4) identifying reduced forms of words; (5) identifying word boundaries, recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their importance; (6) processing speech at different rates of delivery; (7) process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections, and other performance variables; (8) recognizing grammatical word classes, such as nouns and verbs, system (tense, agreement, and pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical

forms;(9) detecting sentence constituent and distinguishing between major and minor constituents; (10) recognizing that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms; and (11) recognizing cohesive devices in spoken discourse. Based on their claim that micro skills are related to the bottom-up processes, language learners who have developed the micro skills could utilize the bottom-up process effectively. Therefore, to develop listening comprehension skills, improving those skills is essential.

Researchers (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019; Mihai & Purmensky, 2016; Richards, 1983) have identified several macroskills: (1) recognizing the communicative functions of utterances according to situations, participants, and goals; (2) analyzing what listening intends to express, what is the background of listening situations, who are the participants of communication through real-world knowledge; (3) inferring links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as the main idea, supporting an idea, new information, given information, generalizations, and exemplification from events and ideas described to predict outcomes; (4) distinguishing between literal and implied meanings; (5) using facial, kinetic, and body language, and other nonverbal clues, to decipher meanings; and (6) developing and using a battery of listening strategies, such as detecting keywords guessing the meaning of words from context, appealing for help, and signaling comprehension or lack thereof.

#### Defining Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI) and Extensive Listening (EL)

Several researchers (Byrnes 1984; Mendelsohn 1994; Murphy 1985; Nagle & Sanders 1986; Young 1997) believe that L2 learners are active processors of information who make meaning from the listening passage by utilizing their prior knowledge of the world and of the second language. The L2 learners utilize information in their long-term memory and understand listening passages. In order to conduct conversations in L2, listening skills require the knowledge

of a target language to be retrieved or recalled quickly, unlike reading skills (Farinaz & Hamidah, 2014). L2 listeners do not have the same memory capacity as they have in their first language and they need to utilize different listening strategies to acquire, store, retrieve, and utilize information effectively (O'Malley, Chamot, and Küpper 1989; Richards 1983; Vandergrift 1997).

However, Farinaz and Hamidah (2014) have claimed that listening strategies might not help low-proficiency listeners. Anderson (1983, 1995) has shown that L2 listeners experience perception, parsing, and utilization to understand spoken formats. Farinaz and Hamidah (2014) implied when L2 listeners struggle with perception and parsing and if they do not reach utilization, they might not utilize listening strategies effectively.

### *Listening Strategy Instruction*

Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI), which reduces cognitive load and manages short-term memories from the discourse and access them effectively might improve the quality of listening. Several studies (O'Malley, Chamot, & Küpper 1989; Richards 1983; Vandergrift 1997b) show that because of the limitation of memory capacity for L2, L2 listeners use different listening strategies which are techniques helping them to acquire, store, retrieve, and utilize information. Regarding listening strategies, research in this area has shown that: (1) more advanced listeners use increasingly varied strategies than less advanced listeners (Chao & Chin, 2005; Chin & Li, 1998; Goh, 2002; Murphy, 1987); (2) the better a listener's proficiency, the more metacognitive strategies he or she uses (Vandergrift, 1997a, 1997b); (3) when encountering more difficult texts, listeners tend to use bottom-up strategies (Vogely, 1995; Bacon, 1992); (4) successful learners can use both linguistic and background knowledge at the same time, although poor learners may over-rely on one kind of knowledge (Rost & Ross, 1991; Vandergrift, 1997a);

(5) native speakers of English and advanced learners of English mainly use semantic cues, whereas intermediate L2 learners rely more on syntactic cues (Conrad, 1985); and (6) in relation to strategy instruction, no immediate effect on enhancing listening comprehension was found in most studies (Field, 1998; Mendelsohn, 1994, 1995; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift, 1999) except for Goh and Taib (2006), and higher listening proficiency was assumed to be needed to make the instruction effective.

L2 learners usually resort to word-level and memorization strategies to process information word by word. Most L2 learners are unable to identify the important information in an utterance as they try to individually comprehend every word of the sentence. This tendency results in a heavy cognitive load and may influence their high-level listening processes (Berne, 2004; Brown, 2008; Goh, 2000; Graham & Macaro, 2008; Graham et al., 2008; Hasan, 2000; Rubin, 1994; Shang, 2008; Vandergrift, 2004). By utilizing LSI, listening input can be easily comprehended by L2 learners. According to the Input Theory, Krashen (1987) has believed comprehensible input enables language learners to acquire target languages. Therefore, LSI might improve the quality of listening input, and language learners might acquire English more effectively.

Vandergrift (1999) has proposed many Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI) modalities, which teach language learners how to use listening strategies. Vandergrift (1997a) has shown that there are three types: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. The metacognitive strategies oversee, regulate, or direct the language learning process. The cognitive strategies utilize the material to be learned or use a specific technique for the learning. It is important to note that without adequate cognitive strategies, the potential of metacognitive strategies is curtailed. The socio-affective strategies enable language learners to

reduce their anxiety. Also, L2 learners co-operate with classmates or teachers to develop target language skills.

In the L2 acquisition field, there is some controversy related to the effectiveness of LSI based on learners' proficiency levels. Some research studies (Graham & Macro, 2008; Vandergrift, 1999) claimed that LSI could improve lower proficiency language learners. For example, Vandergrift (1999) claimed that the use of listening strategies could help beginning language learners comprehend authentic materials. However, he also cautioned that adequate opportunities to practice listening without any evaluation were essential. Only studying listening strategies cannot improve listening comprehension skills because evaluation or testing would cause anxiety for L2 learners. Graham and Macro (2008) have also shown that listening strategy instruction can develop lower-intermediate learners' French listening comprehension skills and self-efficacy.

Other research studies (Renandya, 2012 as cited in Wang, 2010) claimed that LSI cannot help lower proficiency learners to improve listening comprehension skills. Renandya (2012) claimed that only metacognitively-based listening strategies can help lower proficiency learners to improve listening comprehension skills, and the other strategies cannot be used effectively by this category of L2 learners. Wang (2010) reported that lower proficiency learners cannot utilize listening strategies because these L2 students cannot perceive phones effectively. As a result, this lack of perception skills hinders using listening strategies.

Besides these claims, other additional factors add to the controversy of LSI. The first factor is that the level of L2 proficiency of the participants in those studies is not strictly defined as there are no rules or the standardized criterion to divide the participants into lower, intermediate, and advanced language levels. The second factor is that depending on each

research study, the strategy instruction varied. Therefore, a correlation between language proficiency and LSI is not straightforward. To conclude, several research studies (Graham & Macro, 2008; Renandya, 2012; Vandergrift, 1999; Wang, 2010) have implied that LSI might develop at least beginning level learners' metacognitive listening strategies skills. Therefore, LSI should be regarded as one of the effective listening teaching pedagogies.

To utilize LSI in the classroom, Vandergrift (1999) has proposed six training methods. The first method is helping language learners to discuss what kinds of strategies they have. The second method is using the pedagogical sequence of pre-listening, listening, and post-listening activities which develop a mental process to acquire the metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating. The third method is using available information, such as what is a purpose for listening and background knowledge of the listening topic, to help language learners anticipate what they might hear. Also, as pre-listening activity, L2 teachers should discuss what preparation students can do for listening to foster autonomy. The fourth method is teaching students how to monitor their comprehension and make decisions about strategy use during a listening task. For instance, the students evaluate whether their prediction about listening passages is consistent or not. Besides, they analyze which listening strategies they need to utilize based on their comprehension of listening passages. However, a teacher cannot intervene in the listening process because of the ephemeral trait of listening. Therefore, constant practice in decision-making skills and strategy use improves L2 learners' inference and monitoring skills to understand spoken passages. The fifth method is evaluating the results of strategies use during a listening task and sharing individual methods to listen to English with their students. The sixth method is that utilizing listening comprehension checklists. This list contains evaluation criteria of *planning*, *monitoring*, and *evaluation* for listening. Other

checklists help language learners to reflect on their listening performance for the next listening training.

### *Extensive Listening*

To develop listening skills, listening to the target language is one of the most fundamental methods to develop the skill. Therefore, Extensive Listening (EL) which requires L2 learners to listen to comprehensible input in the L2 as much as possible might be one of the fundamental pedagogies for a listening education. EL requires L2 learners to listen to spoken texts to understand the essence or the gist of those texts (Renandya, 2011; Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Waring, 2008). Several researchers (Pamuji et al., 2019) showed ten principles for EL based on the principles of ten extensive readings by Day and Bamford (2002). According to the principles of Day and Bamford, first of all, listening materials should be easy to understand. Secondly, their topics must be highly varied. Thirdly, learners should choose listening materials which they want to use. Fourth, they can have adequate opportunities to listen to spoken language. Fifth, students can enjoy the activity and understand some information from the materials. Sixth, a listening process is individually guaranteed. Seventh, listening speed is adequate for listeners. Eighth, listeners can study autonomously. Ninth, teachers only help students to process an EL activity. Tenth, teachers can be a model for students.

In sum, Pamuji et al. (2019) have concluded that the most crucial point is that learners engaged in EL listen to many easy listening passages at the right level of comprehension. Therefore, based on the concept of comprehensible input, the only thing L2 teachers might need to do in their class is to tell their students to listen to English as much as possible in order to develop their listening comprehension skills.

However, this is not so straightforward. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) claim that listening is often said to be the most difficult skill to master for many of both second and foreign language students. EL seems essential to develop listening comprehension skills, but only utilizing EL would not be a sufficient condition to improve the skills. Therefore, the balance of quality and quantity of L2 listening input might have a huge impact on improving L2 listening skills. For example, EFL learners now have a lot of opportunities to listen to English as EL because of the Internet. Nevertheless, many L2 still seem to struggle with improving listening comprehension skills. These L2 learners might not listen to quality listening input. As a result, they may not develop their listening proficiency. According to the Input Theory, Krashen (1987) believed that comprehensible input is essential to acquire target languages. Therefore, the learners might not understand their listening input even though they believe they were able to comprehend it. As a result, they may not develop listening comprehension skills. To modify listening input to make it more comprehensible, L2 listeners might need to learn how to listen to a target language. To learn this, listening strategy instruction could be a path to developing effective L2 listening comprehension skills.

#### Teaching Methods in Japan: A Focus on Listening Pedagogy

In Asia, including Japan, there has been a preponderance of teacher-centered approaches, such as the grammar-translation methods in teaching L2. The grammar-translation method has emphasized the process of translating from L2 to L1 and L1 to L2 mostly in a written format, not in a spoken format. The pedagogy has required students to learn detailed grammar rules beyond practicability in the real world to understand written sentences accurately. This method does not intend to grasp the essence of passages. Moreover, grammar translation puts a very heavy

emphasis on L2 reading. As a result, in Japan, the opportunity to develop listening comprehension skills is quite limited.

In Japan, almost all English classes spend time developing reading comprehension skills. Therefore, utilizing reading pedagogy might influence how to proceed with listening training in a classroom. Batia (1981) has shown there are two reading approaches: extensive and intensive. To improve students' command of vocabulary, syntax and discourse, the intensive approach requires them to read short passages of one to three pages thoroughly per lesson. The British Council (n.d.) has explained that intensive reading which can be compared with extensive reading involves learners reading in detail with particular learning goals and tasks. The claim has implied that intensive reading does not focus on reading as many as possible books. Therefore, the grammar-translation method must be regarded as intensive reading rather than extensive reading. To translate target language sentences accurately, L2 learners need to read these sentences intensively and identify what grammar knowledge they should apply to translate accurately. Therefore, the learners may not have adequate opportunities to read many English texts. The trend to utilize intensive reading might influence listening pedagogy which uses intensive listening rather than extensive listening. As a result, an L2 teacher might not provide an L2 learner with adequate opportunities to listen to a lot of English sentences.

In Japan, even though the opportunity to study listening comprehension skills is limited, Japanese L2 students occasionally practice listening skills in their L2 classrooms because of university entrance exams that include an L2 listening comprehension section. However, L2 grammar and reading skills have a huge impact on entrance exams. Therefore, English teachers do not allocate much time to listening practice in their L2 classrooms. As a result, in Japan, teacher-centered approaches influence listening pedagogies.

In Japan, there has been a preponderance of a comprehension approach. According to Field, in this approach, an L2 teacher sets questions, checks students' answers, and decides which parts of the listening passage the students need to listen to again (2008). This approach can be an intensive listening approach, and Field (2008) has claimed that the approach is a teacher-centered methodology. This approach has advantages and disadvantages. In terms of advantages, this approach provides students opportunities to listen to English. To develop listening comprehension skills, second language learners need to listen to a wide range of voices, accents, text-types, and degree of 'authenticity', and they need some criteria to measure they understand those listening passages. In terms of disadvantages, this approach only provides learners with information about which questions are correct or not instead of providing remedies to answer those incorrect questions. Additionally, this approach does not reflect a real-world listening environment. In that environment, L2 listeners frequently have access to schema related to the L2 listening passages. By contrast, this approach does not provide learners with adequate opportunities to learn vocabulary or background knowledge about the listening passages the learners are going to listen to. Also, in an authentic L2 environment, interactive listening is more common. However, this approach requires second language learners to listen to L2 listening passages without interaction. A further concern is that the approach does not develop listening strategies. In authentic L2 contexts, low-level language learners need survival and compensatory techniques to overcome the gap between their language ability and L2 language complexity in connected speech. Unfortunately, the comprehension approach does not develop listening strategies to overcome that situation. For example, low level L2 learners who are exposed to simplified or slow speech and do not struggle with L2 comprehension do not feel the need to

utilize listening strategies (LS) and consequently, they do not feel encouraged to develop their own LS.

According to several researchers, the traditional comprehension approach stresses the products of listening rather than the cognitive processes that lead to those products (Field 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In other words, that approach requires students to focus on how many questions they can answer correctly instead of analyzing how to utilize the cognitive processes effectively to answer listening questions. Based on the theory by Anderson (2000), the cognitive process is essential for the listening process. However, the comprehension approach may lead English learners to focus on counting the correct numbers and not to think about the cognitive process. Some students might only check their answers and scripts of listening passages to identify what words or sentences that they cannot catch up with the sounds or grasp the meaning. The L2 students might not experience discussion or follow-up activity to learn how to listen to English as that approach has not guaranteed opportunities to interact with students and teachers.

The reason why the teacher-centered approaches such as a grammar-translation method and the comprehension approach have been popular in Japan might be a result of a negative testing washback effect. Traditionally, English proficiency tests have often consisted of grammar and vocabulary items in the multiple-choice format along with a variety of translation exercises ranging from words to sentences to short paragraphs (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Some researchers have claimed such discrete points tests still prevail today, especially in large-scale standardized “entrance examinations” used to admit students to institutions of higher education around the world (Branwell, 1966; and Spolsky, 1978, 1995). In Japan, almost all entrance exams have stressed the importance of reading and grammar skills because of the practicality of

grading the exams. It is not straightforward to score oral skills within a limited time amount, and the multiple-choice question for reading and grammar skills can save time to grade. Also, the EFL environment might be related to entrance exam problems. In Japan, English is EFL, not ESL. Therefore, English learners do not need to study English for daily communication. Hence, to compensate for the lack of a communication goal, they need to find other goals. One of the other goals is to pass high school or university entrance exams, and these exams focus on reading and grammar skills.

To develop students' communication skills in written and spoken formats, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in Japan (MEXT) (2014) made several changes in curriculum and pedagogy but with various degrees of success. To attain that goal, several issues need to be addressed. First of all, English textbooks in Japan still need to include more opportunities for oral communication. Yuasa (2010) claimed that textbooks used in Japanese and Korean middle and high school are somewhat different even though they share quite the same aspects of English learning. Both countries took steps to change their L2 pedagogy to reflect more communicative teaching styles. He claimed that the textbooks used in Korea focus more on developing function over grammatical knowledge. So, while both Korea and Japan have been shifting to communicative teaching, it seems that Japan is still behind Korea in that respect. Secondly, some EFL teachers in Japan hope to continue to use the traditional methods including the comprehension approach in L2 listening instruction. English instructors' attitudes towards English education might have a huge impact on what teaching pedagogies they choose. According to Amaki (2008) from a non-Japanese Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) point of view, regardless of the actual age of English teachers in Japan, older-style teachers tend to teach rote grammar memorization and sentence deconstruction. By contrast, newer-style L2

teachers provide lots of time to deal with interaction and pronunciation practice. Despite a renewed interest in oral communication, English instructors and many of their students still prefer the traditional or mechanical aspects of language instruction, such as the comprehensive approach.

To develop overall language proficiency that includes communication skills, listening pedagogies have an enormous impact. However, for listening practice, at least in Japan there has been a preponderance of the comprehension approach, and some researchers claim the approach does not develop cognitive processes (Field 2008; Flowerdew and Miller 2005). Based on the theory by Anderson (2000), the cognitive process is essential for the listening process and for the development of listening comprehension skills. Also, Pamuji, Waring, and Kurniawan (2019) claimed that extensive listening (EL) might not be popular in listening education in middle and high school. Even though there are some effective pedagogies, such as Extensive Listening (EL) or Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI) with the potential to improve listening comprehension skills and overall language skills, these pedagogies might not be utilized in the actual classroom in Japan frequently.

As previously mentioned, one of the problems of the comprehension approach in listening education is that this approach stresses the products of listening instead of cognitive processes that produce products (Field, 2008). Siegel (2013) has claimed this approach does not teach language learners to listen to the target language. Moreover, he has shown there are no directions, instructions, or methods that learners could use to develop their aural abilities. Some language teachers do not realize the importance of extensive listening (EL). Several researchers have claimed that the concept and effectiveness of EL might not be utilized in EFL classrooms, even though EL is considered one of the most essential to develop listening comprehension skills

(e.g., Pamuji et al., 2019). Here, there is a gap between theory and applicability in an actual L2 classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the teaching methods supported by empirical studies to L2 teachers. One of the teaching listening methods to help an L2 learner to learn the cognitive process is LSI. According to Siegel, there are two types of LSI: explicit strategy instruction and integrated strategy instruction. The author explained the explicit strategy instruction was taught in direct, explicit, and integrated ways. Strategies are named, demonstrated, taught, and practiced (2013). Regarding the integrated strategy instruction, Siegel has shown that strategies are instructed through curriculum and teaching materials. Firstly, the course content is made, then a strategic approach is applied (2013).

#### Research about Listening Strategies in Japan

Hahn (2018) showed that 20 hours of listening training cannot develop listening comprehension skills. The author examined 20 hours of listening training for Japanese university EFL students for one semester. The participants consisted of three groups. The first group studied how to listen to the connection between words that a native speaker develops naturally. The second group watched episodes of the TV show *Friends*. The third group was a control group. The pre-test and post-test have shown there were no significant differences among the three groups. The results implied that listening training, such as learning linking rules and dictation for 20 hours in one semester, was not adequate to develop listening comprehension skills.

Hamada (2016) examined the effect of shadowing training to develop L2 listening comprehension skills for L1 Japanese speakers. The author divided participants into two groups (a low group and an intermediate group) based on the result of their pre-test which includes the high-school-level questions and the university-level questions. Both groups experienced

shadowing training twice a week for a month, and this training required the participants to imitate what they heard from listening passages. After the training, the participants took the same test as the post-test. The result showed both groups improved their phoneme perception, but the low proficiency group improved their scores for the high-school-level questions. By contrast, low and high proficiency groups did not improve their university-level questions' scores. The author concluded that shadowing training develops phoneme perception, but the training itself cannot develop listening comprehension skills. The study has implied somewhat difficult listening questions or materials, such as university-level-questions should include various aspects of listening materials which only phoneme perception skills cannot deal with. In conclusion, shadowing training is an effective method to develop phoneme perception, but the training itself cannot develop overall listening comprehension skills.

Cross (2014) analyzed the case study of promoting autonomous listening to podcasts. A Japanese high proficiency English learning woman participated in the study and was exposed to metatextual skills and activities for metacognitive instruction. Then, outside the classroom, she chose English passages from podcasts based on the instructed knowledge. She listened to the passages and wrote a journal about what she thought for eight weeks. After listening and writing journals for eight weeks, the author interviewed her. The author concluded that even outside the classroom, the participant developed listening comprehension skills by utilizing the two instructed strategies.

Midon (2016) conducted a case study of three intermediate-level university students in Japan. The author interviewed the students and found they use several smartphone apps, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to learn English. The study concluded that by utilizing apps,

the EFL students had opportunities to learn English through authentic materials. This case study stated that students needed to become autonomous learners in order to use apps effectively.

Taguchi (2011) analyzed a relationship between studying abroad experience and listening comprehension skills. The study divided participants into three groups: low proficiency, high proficiency with studying abroad experience, and high proficiency without studying abroad experience. They took conventional and non-conventional implicature listening tests. The research study showed proficiency and study-abroad experience had important roles in nonconventional implicatures, and proficiency was a crucial factor for conventional implicatures for non-conventional implicatures. The study concluded that in order to develop listening comprehension skills, the studying abroad experience itself was not always essential; whether language learners had adequate opportunities to be exposed to target languages played a more crucial role.

Shimamune and Smith (1995) examined the relationship between pronunciation and listening discrimination of Japanese natives learning English. The participants studied two pairs of phonemes: /ɪ/-/I/ contrasts and /v/-/b/ contrasts. The study consisted of two groups, and both of them used minimal pair cards including the target phoneme contrasts. Group 1 practiced pronunciation of the phonemes, and Group 2 received listening skill training to identify the phonemes. The result of the study concluded that both pronunciation and listening skills were interrelated to each other. The study implied that to develop listening comprehension skills, only listening to English was not effective. Integrating pronunciation practice and listening to English had the potential to develop listening comprehension skills. The notion may support why shadowing activity was effective in developing listening comprehension skills. This was because, through shadowing practice, learners need to speak and listen to English almost at the

same time. As a result, shadowing practice might provide learners with the opportunities to listen to and speak English.

Ueno (2019) examined developing autonomy through conversation exchange partners. The participants were three Japanese wives whose husbands temporarily moved to the US because of a temporary transfer from Japan. The three women were busy, and they did not have adequate opportunities to use English even though they were in an ESL environment. The participants and their study partners, who both spoke English and spoke advanced level Japanese as a second language, participated in the study. The three women met their study partners once a week for thirty minutes to an hour for ten weeks. They alternated English and Japanese conversations each week, and therefore, all the three women and their study partners had opportunities to use target languages. After each session, the Japanese participants were required to write a one-page journal about each session in Japanese. At the end of the case study, the researcher interviewed Japanese participants. The study concluded that to foster autonomous learners, language educators needed to supply reflection time for students' learning and the time to study the target language under no anxiety.

### Summary

Listening comprehension skills have a huge impact on developing overall L2 proficiency. To develop listening comprehension skills in a second language, Extensive Listening (EL) and Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI) are shown to be effective. However, in Japan, because of the washback effect of university entrance exams, there has been a preponderance of teacher-centered approaches, such as the grammar-translation method and the comprehension approach, which minimize the importance of listening and listening instruction. The problem of these teacher-centered approaches is that on the one hand, L2 learners are not exposed to adequate

listening materials, and on the other hand, they tend to focus on how many questions they can answer correctly instead of analyzing how they listen to a target language passage.

Even though the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in Japan (MEXT) has implemented important changes to the Japanese traditional education system, some teachers and students still prefer to study English through the traditional teacher-centered approach. Moreover, some EFL teachers in Japan might not have adequate knowledge about listening pedagogy. Hence, EL and LSI are not utilized frequently, and teacher-centered approaches have been preponderant even though EL and LSI can be effective to develop listening comprehension skills. Therefore, introducing these approaches to L2 teachers, such as in pre-service teacher training might be problematic. Research studies about EL and LSI in Japan and pre-service teachers who are still university students are not extensive. Therefore, based on the current literature, this study sought to add to existing research by investigating pre-service teachers' pedagogical perspectives regarding teaching listening.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Theoretical Framework for the Study

Quantitative and qualitative designs are the most commonly employed research methodologies (Dornyei, 2007). Generally, quantitative research collects and analyzes numerical data while qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio). Dornyei (2007) claims that researchers need to analyze data through *categories* or *codes*, and the processes in quantitative and qualitative are different. Regarding quantitative research, researchers decide what *categories* or *codes* are utilized to analyze the data before launching research. Qualitative research frequently does not require set *categories* or *codes* before starting a study. A quantitative study takes a large enough sample, and therefore, idiosyncratic differences related to each individual tend to be ignored. A qualitative study questions the overall average results and focuses on individual cases. Therefore, quantitative research is highly regulated and presents a macro-perspective, while qualitative research is flexible, highly context-sensitive, and presents a micro-perspective.

There are some advantages of qualitative studies over quantitative studies. First of all, a qualitative study is an effective method to explore new areas. Specifically, if researchers do not have adequate knowledge about a phenomenon, a qualitative study is effective because researchers do not need to rely on pre-existing knowledge (Eisenhardt, 1989). Second, a qualitative research study has the potential to make sense of complexity. To produce research results, a qualitative study does not require researchers to reduce and simplify their analysis, as it may be the case with a quantitative study (Dornyei, 2007). Third, a qualitative study typically answers the why questions. The flexible and emergent nature of a qualitative method allows researchers to understand a phenomenon better than when using quantitative methods. A

quantitative method can generate unanticipated or contradictory results, but the method itself cannot explain why those results happened (Dornyei, 2007). Also, Merriam (1988) claims that a qualitative study focuses on process rather than outcomes or products. Finally, a qualitative study broadens researchers' understanding by providing a deep analysis based on the participants' experiences (Dornyei, 2007).

The current study aimed to analyze pre-service teachers' individual experiences with developing listening comprehension skills in a Japanese context. Previous studies have dealt with pre-service and in-service Japanese teacher training and Japanese entrance exams' negative washback effect. However, there have been few studies focused on listening comprehension skills and why listening education has not been popular even though listening skills could play a positive role in developing other skills.

Also, currently, Japanese EFL education is rapidly changing. For example, entrance exams are changing, and thus some part of them do not focus on explicit grammar knowledge any longer and focus on listening comprehension skills instead. Therefore, few research studies have reflected the latest Japanese EFL environment. To analyze this highly complex education environment, a qualitative method is preferable.

### Research Design

According to Merriam (1988), a research design is a plan for how to proceed with a research study. The most basic types of research design are experimental and non-experimental. Experimental research aims to find cause-and-effect relationships and thus requires controlling variables. Non-experimental research studies include survey research, historical research, and case studies.

Survey studies utilize questionnaires and often use statistical analysis. The studies generally assess a few variables across a large number of samples whereas case studies analyze a lot of variables across a single unit. The variables in survey research are selected for analysis from a theory or conceptual model before the research studies. Survey studies are led by hypotheses related to the extent, nature, frequency, and relationship. Historical research and case studies are to some extent similar. Yin (1984) discusses the differences and states that historical research deals with the “dead” past and requires researchers to analyze primary documents, secondary documents, and so on instead of participants.

Regarding case studies, Merriam (1988) claims that researchers are able to use direct observation, interviews, and primary and secondary documents. Bromley (1986) has written that case studies have the ability to investigate and observe participants closely and directly, unlike experimental studies and surveys. Also, case studies tend to extend focus, whereas other research designs have frequently a narrow focus. Therefore, case studies are the most appropriate design for investigating participants when researchers cannot control the participants as they would in a quantitative study. Moreover, case studies aim to provide a thick description instead of identifying *cause-and-effect* relationships. Since the current study did not aim to analyze self-reported listening learning experiences for the purpose of identifying a *cause-and-effect relationship*, controlling the participants was not essential. In terms of what research design could be applied for the current study, a case study was the most appropriate. Stake’s notion (1995) of what a case study supports the idea: the analysis focusing on the particular and complexity of a single case.

Regarding the definition of case studies, Dornyei (2007) has explained that everything could be a *case* if it has clearly defined boundaries, such as people, a program, an institution, an

organization, or a community. Merriam (1988) has claimed that the characteristics of constituting qualitative case studies are *particularistic*, *descriptive*, *heuristic*, and *inductive*. Concerning *particularistic*, the analyzed case itself is crucial for what it might show. *Descriptive* shows a case provides a rich description of the phenomenon after the case has been investigated. *Heuristic* increases the understanding of readers about the phenomenon behind a case. By analyzing a case, readers can extend their knowledge and confirm what they know. Concerning *inductive*, a case study discovers new relationships, concepts, and understanding. Regarding *particularistic*, the participants are all in the current study, and the setting is crucial for investigating the environment and for what it might shows. From the point of *descriptive*, *heuristic*, and *inductive* characteristics, there were few studies related to the self-reported listening experience data from pre-service teachers. Further, the English education context in Japan is changing rapidly. Therefore, there are no predetermined hypotheses and new ideas or concepts, and they should be founded and extended for future studies. In the current study, the case is easy to define: pre-service teachers. Also, the four characteristics of case studies are well matched to the research goals of the current study.

In addition to those four characteristics, Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980) have claimed that there are three preconditions for using a case studies approach. Firstly, case studies should be utilized when an educational object is to influence humanistic outcomes or cultural differences rather than behavioral outcomes or individual differences. Therefore, these studies can analyze the inner workings of change. Secondly, case studies aim to produce reasonable interpretations instead of “correct” or “true” interpretations. Thirdly, case designs investigate a unique environment. The second and third preconditions coincided with the current study: the study aimed to analyze the pre-service teachers' listening experiences as an L2 learner to develop

listening comprehension skills and as a pre-service teacher to learn a listening teaching pedagogy. The participants were easily defined because they were pre-service teachers. Also, in terms of uniqueness, there have been few studies that have analyzed self-reported listening experience and pre-service teachers in the current Japanese context.

Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980) have claimed that case studies are an effective way to conduct an evaluation. The study can evaluate educational programs holistically, can leave an account, and requires researchers to use a common language, unlike scientific or educational jargon. Therefore, non-researchers can read and understand the results easily. Sanders (1981) wrote that case studies were effective to reveal processes and context characteristics which will shed light on issues or objects.

To sum up, the current research study followed a case study design for several reasons. First, case studies have the potential to be one of the most effective methods of evaluating educational contexts. Second, in the current study, the researcher had the ability to survey participants directly, and thus a case study approach had the potential to generate very relevant and personalized educational data. Third, the characteristic of the approach, thick description resulting from a case study research design was needed for investigating an unknown dimension of the current EFL field in Japan since there had been few studies about Japanese EFL pre-service learning teachers and their self-reported listening experience.

### Context

In Japan, regardless of private or public schooling, English teachers need to take the same professional preparation track. According to Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2019), the Japanese teacher certificate law requires teachers to obtain a teaching certificate in order to qualify to be an English teacher in Japan. Typically, to earn the

certificate, a teacher-candidate needs to earn a bachelor's degree related to an English major admitted by MEXT and to complete teacher-certificate program credits including a practicum (MEXT, 2009).

Based on the guidelines established by MEXT, each university initially establishes a teacher-certificate program, and after that MEXT approves the university as one of the program schools. Based on MEXT guidelines, teacher-certificate programs in Japan are nationally standardized. MEXT (n.d.) updated the teacher certificate education program in 2017, and currently, pre-service teacher education for elementary, middle, and high school English teachers consists of two areas: English teaching pedagogy (around two credits for elementary school and around eight credits for junior and high school) and general knowledge about English (around one credit for elementary school and around twenty credits for junior and high school).

For elementary school English teachers, the English teaching pedagogy focuses on knowledge about English learning, English teaching, and student evaluation. This area of pedagogy has two subareas: knowledge and understanding for implementing an English lecture, and practicum knowledge. The first subarea, knowledge and understanding for implementing an English lecture, also consists of two micro-subareas. The first micro-subarea is to learn basic knowledge about foreign language education in elementary school. The second micro-subarea is to understand second language acquisition theory for children and to utilize it. The second subarea, practicum knowledge also has two micro-subareas. The first is to learn teaching techniques. The second is to understand how to use the techniques to proceed actual classroom. MEXT requires pre-service teachers to observe classes, to complete a practicum, and take classes in which their university teacher performs the role of a teacher in junior or high school and the pre-service teachers role-play junior or high school students.

For middle and high school teachers, the general goal of English teaching pedagogy is the same as the elementary school teachers. However, this area has five subareas. The first subarea is about curricula and syllabus. The second subarea is about teaching methods, approaches, and techniques. The third subarea is about producing a lesson plan based on an annual calendar for school and teaching English. The fourth subarea is an evaluation of students' English performance. The fifth subarea is to learn second language acquisition theories. MEXT requires pre-service teachers to observe classes, to complete a practicum, and take classes in which their university teacher performs the role of a teacher in junior or high school and the pre-service teachers role-play junior or high school students. Regarding general knowledge about English, there are four subareas. The first is to teach English in English and to develop English communication skills. The second subarea is to increase general knowledge about English from the point of phonology, English grammar, and English as a Lingua Franca. The third subarea is to understand and utilize cultural knowledge of English speaking-countries or regions through learning literature in English for an English classroom. The fourth subarea is to learn a foreign language and cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication behind the languages for interact with other people in society and the world.

MEXT (2009) states that after earning a teaching certificate, a teacher-candidate needs to pass an exam for employment as a teacher. Studying for this required exam influences pre-service teacher learning in Japan. While the professional preparation of EFL teachers in Japan is standardized, this exam is not. Each prefecture, each private school, and some major cities, such as Osaka, Nagoya, and so on have their own exams. They have the right to choose what knowledge and skills should be examined. For example, those examination areas include general knowledge, educational knowledge including educational law, English pedagogies, an aptitude

test, English conversation skills, a demo lesson, a discussion, and an interview. Therefore, the place where pre-service teachers hope to work influences what knowledge and skills those teachers focus on studying. However, almost all the exams examine some major knowledge or skills.

### *Data Collection*

The current study utilized an interview approach, specifically, a one-to-one semi-structured interview. Paton (1980) claims that in order to find out what researchers cannot directly observe, they should conduct an interview. Further, Dorney (2007) explains that this approach is a versatile research instrument, and this is the most frequently used method in qualitative studies.

The semi-structured interview has guidance and direction, and interviewees can elaborate their responses on a certain topic. Dorney (2007) claims that the interview is effective when the interviewer does not limit the depth and breadth of the participants' answers. In the current study, the interviewer had experience teaching EFL in Japan as a high school teacher. However, he was not aware of the latest EFL education trends in Japan. For instance, there are some entrance exams' differences between the time the interviewer took them and the latest exams. In sum, in the current study, the interviewer had some general knowledge of the research topic, but he needed to find out more by generating and analyzing the depth and breadth of the participants' answers. Therefore, a one-to-one semi-structured interview was utilized in the current survey.

Regarding the number of participants, the current study aimed to include six participants. Duff (2006) suggested that a case study should have between four to six participants. As previously mentioned, there are few research studies related to the topic explored in the present

study. Moreover, the background of EFL education in Japan is changing rapidly and the previous research does not reflect the current EFL environment. As a result, an in-depth analysis is needed for the analysis of data to be generated by the current survey. Considering Duff's and the current environment around the survey, the intended number of participants was six, but only three participants responded to interview requests.

### *Participants*

The research data was collected from university students in Japan. The participants were Japanese fourth-year undergraduate students studying in the Faculty of Education, teacher training, English. According to the University's website, the department of English aims to foster students to become competent and skilled English teachers in an era of globalization. Students are expected to improve their English proficiency, language awareness, and international sensibility through learning the English language. Their language perspective on the English language is further influenced by historical and social aspects, linguistics, the culture of English-speaking countries and regions, and English teaching methodologies. The university website written in Japanese lists the four core curriculum areas for pre-service teachers' preparation: the study of English, British and American literature, English pedagogy, and cross-cultural communication. The study of the English curriculum focuses on learning English and how English has become a Lingua Franca. The British and American literature curriculum concentrates on the literature of the UK and the US. Regarding the English pedagogy curriculum, students learn how to teach English in the Japanese K-12 system. The cross-cultural understanding curriculum helps students to learn basic knowledge about cross-cultural communication, beliefs associated with British and American culture, and English language expressions. To graduate from this university, writing a thesis in English is mandatory.

Therefore, students in this university need to develop strong academic writing skills. In sum, this university requires students to develop not only English language skills but also teaching skills applicable to the Japanese EFL context.

### *Instrumentation*

The interview instrument was administered in Japanese. Because all participants and the interviewer were native Japanese speakers, the interview was given in their native language to avoid miscommunication. The interview consisted of four-part of sections: Part 1 (Ice-breaker), Part 2 (Questions about participants), Part 3 (Interview questions), and Part 4 (Closing). An ice-breaker conversation, such as *where are you from in Japan* was needed before starting a question to establish rapport as Dorney (2007) claimed that establishing rapport was essential when collecting data through an interview. Part 2 of the interview asked for participants' gender, age, study-abroad experience, intended EFL teaching grade, and opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Part 3 of the interview contained the following questions:

**Question 1(as an L2 learner):** Please talk about your experience learning listening comprehension skills as an L2 learner in general before the start of your university program.

**Possible follow-up questions:** Before coming to university, what listening activities have your teachers used? Have they taught you specific listening comprehension skills or strategies? Have you learned any listening comprehension strategies on your own? What are they? Do you think they are effective? If yes, why? What is your preferred listening comprehension strategy?

**Question 2 (as a pre-service teacher):** Please talk about your experience learning listening comprehension skills as a pre-service teacher during your university preparation program.

**Possible follow-up questions:** What listening pedagogy have your teachers taught? How have they incorporated teaching listening skills in their classes? Are there any strategies or skills that you think are very effective? Have you ever learned about Extensive Listening in your teacher preparation program at the university? If yes, can you explain it to me? Have you ever learned about Listening Strategy Instruction in your teacher preparation program at the university? If yes, can you explain it to me?

**Question 3 (from a practicum perspective conducted during university studies as a preservice teacher):** Please talk about your listening comprehension skill experiences in your practicum.

**Possible follow-up questions:** How has your practicum addressed the teaching of listening comprehension skills? How have your teachers addressed teaching listening? How have students responded to listening skill instruction?

In addition to these questions, depending on the participant's answers, the investigator asked other questions.

After Part 3, in the closing question, the interviewer asked *Is there anything else you would like to add?* Dornyei (2007) emphasizes the importance of the final closing question and claims this type of question has the potential of providing rich data.

### Data Analysis

The interviews were conducted on different days to prevent the interviewer from being fatigued and distracted. The first step in data analysis was that participants' answers were recorded, transcribed in Japanese, and then translated into English. Dornyei (2007) states that written language and spoken language are not the same. For example, transcribing

suprasegmental or facial expressions is nearly impossible, and thus the transcribed data cannot express them accurately. Therefore, the researcher needed to take this fact into account. In the current study, the researcher took notes on subtle meaning, such as non-verbal cues or suprasegmentals. Second, Dorney (2007) shows that the data analysis process requires a pre-coding process. Therefore, the researcher read the transcripts many times and took extensive notes. Creswell and Creswell (2017) illustrate some example questions to grasp the essence of the overall transcripts: *What general ideas are participants saying?*, *What is the tone of the ideas?*, and *What is the impression of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information?* In the current research, the researcher utilized these questions to find the essence of the transcripts, and he took notes on the essence and salient context categories. The investigator went through the precoding process several times to identify salient content categories which may have been linked to the collected data. The third phase was coding. Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain that researchers should generate codes from three points of view. The first is that on what the researcher originally expects to find. The second category here is the words that astonish the researcher. The third is represented by the words that seem unusual. In the current study, the researcher conducted interviews related to four core topics: listening pedagogies, listening learning experience, Extensive Listening, and Listening Strategy Instruction. Therefore, these four categories were coded at the first coding phase. Next, unanticipated or unusual words were coded. Then, based on Tesch's (1990) guidelines, the coding was clustered together across each transcript to see whether they were similar or related to each other. Further, the investigator analyzed each transcript again based on this clustered coding to find whether there were undiscovered and unanticipated or unusual words that belonged to a new coding category. Next,

utilizing the coding process generated descriptions of the settings in the current study for analysis and themes or categories for further analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

### Establishing Trustworthiness

In a qualitative research study, there are four components to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility shows whether the outcome of a study comes from the observed components. If other components which are not observed influence the outcome, the credibility is low. Transferability refers to whether the findings of a study can be applicable to other contexts. Dependability shows the extent to which the results of a study are consistent. For instance, a study can show the same results even other researchers follow the same procedure of the original study. Confirmability illustrates how extent to which the result of a study is independent of a researcher's subjective perceptions. Generally, a qualitative study approach relies on subjectivity, and thus, confirmability tends to be not firm.

From the perspective of trustworthiness, the current study had both strengths and weaknesses. In terms of transferability, the current research did not have a large number of participants, and they were from the same university. Therefore, the participants and context were homogenous. As a result, the findings may be applied only to similar settings that mirror the current study. Regarding confirmability, since the current study used a qualitative approach, data analysis relied on the researcher's personal views and perceptions. As a result, the analysis was highly subjective, and confirmability was dependent on the accurate interpretation of context and collected data. Credibility was strongly established. The data of the current research were self-reported as the participants in this study conveyed what they learned and experienced in

school, and what listening pedagogy they utilized to develop listening skills. Consequently, socially desirable bias was minimized compared to interviewing their teachers. Also, the interview approach provided important insights from the participants directly. Dependability was firm, one of the reasons being that miscommunication was unlikely to occur, and thus the participants answered the interview questions accurately since it was conducted in Japanese, a language the researcher and the participants speak as L1.

In sum, the result of the current study will not apply to other contexts that are different from the current study, thus influencing transferability and confirmability. Credibility and dependability were firm because the study investigated the perceptions of EFL Japanese pre-service teachers accurately with minimized socially desirable bias. As a result, the results of the study would not be transferable to all EFL contexts, but they may be used for future studies to investigate other areas of listening pedagogy in EFL contexts.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was that analyze the self-reported experiences of Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers with listening comprehension skills. The research question addressed in this study was what were the self-reported experiences of Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers with listening comprehension skills in their teaching classroom as university students and in their learning classroom as EFL students?

This study utilized a qualitative case study design and used interviews as the data collection method. There were three participants. The interviewer used a semi-structured interview which allowed interview questions to be selected depending on the participant's answers. Further, the interviewer asked follow-up questions to the semi-structured interview questions. Lastly, the interview was conducted in Japanese (the participants and interviewer's L1) and recorded. The investigator transcribed the interviews and analyzed the data.

### Data Collection

The three participants were Japanese fourth-year undergraduate students studying in the Faculty of Education, Teacher Training, English in Chūbu region, which included the Chūkyō area, the third largest metropolitan area in Japan. At the interview time, the participants just graduated from university, and they were in-service teachers. Even though they were in-service teachers at the time the investigator interviewed them, from the point of teaching experience, they could have been categorized as pre-service teachers. In Japan, the academic year started in April, and the investigator interviewed the participants in June. Therefore, they had experience

working as an in-service teacher for approximately two months. However, they did not have a lot of teaching experience because of the COVID-19 pandemic on the one hand and a lot of other non-teaching assignments required at the beginning of the new school year on the other hand.

The investigator interviewed the three participants in Japanese through Zoom, and their interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then, the researcher utilized a coding approach and analyzed the three interviews. The coding approaches consisted of pre-coding, coding, and clustered together across each transcript. Regarding precoding, the researcher read the transcriptions many times to obtain a general understanding or the essence of the data. The next step, coding consisted of three parts. First, the researcher focused on the constructs that were the focus of this study, such as listening strategy instruction (LSI), extensive listening (EL), listening pedagogy, and listening learning experience were chosen. Second, the researcher concentrated on statements, phrases, and words that were unanticipated. Third, the researcher selected statements, phrases, and words which seemed unusual. Then, if there was a relationship between codes, they were connected with an arrow across each transcript. The relationship arrows generated descriptions that were utilized to address the research question of this study.

### Participants

The first participant was Kana. She taught English to junior high school students in second grade. She was twenty-two years old. She graduated from the Faculty of Education, Teacher Training, English. Her major was junior high school student teaching. She had a study abroad experience for two weeks which allowed her to see classrooms at kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high school in New Zealand and learn about teaching pedagogy and assessment. She did not have any opportunities to use English outside of her classroom when she

was a student. After starting to work as a teacher, she had not had any opportunities to use English outside of her classroom. She took a cross-culture research course for her senior thesis, and she did her practicum at junior high school. She liked English and initially hoped to become an elementary school teacher. When she entered her university, she was not exactly sure what she wanted to focus on, but she chose to pursue the junior high school teacher track instead of the elementary school one. She considered choosing the junior high school teacher track was a good choice because the track also enabled her to earn both junior high and elementary school teaching certificates. After participating in a practicum at junior high school, she realized teaching at junior high school was a good fit for her. Therefore, she decided to become a junior high school teacher rather than an elementary one.

The second participant was Iori. He taught English to elementary school students in fourth grade. He was twenty-two years old and graduated from the Faculty of Education, Teacher Training, English. His major was elementary school student teaching. He did not have study abroad experience and did not have any opportunities to use English outside of his classroom when he was a student. After starting to work as a teacher, he did not have any opportunities to use English outside of his classroom. He took an English education track for his senior thesis. Before entering his university, he hoped to become a social studies teacher at junior high school. However, he was unable to join the Social Studies track, so he chose the English teacher track for elementary schools. Based on one of the university entrance exam results, he reported that he was not good at using English at that time. He experienced practicum at elementary school, and the experience changed his mind to become an elementary school teacher. After studying English hard during his elementary school teacher professional preparation, he hoped to be an English teacher at junior high school in the future.

The third participant was Daz. He taught English to elementary school students in third grade. He was twenty-two years old. He graduated from the Faculty of Education, Teacher Training, English. His major was elementary school student teaching. He did not have study abroad experience. He did not have any opportunities to use English outside of his classroom when he was a student. After starting to work as a teacher, he had not had any opportunities to use English outside of his classroom. He took a British and American English literature course for his senior thesis.

### Data Analysis

The coding process consists of three aspects: a focus on what was expected to be found, the aspects that astonished the researcher, and the aspects that seemed unusual. The category of what was expected to be found contained four key terms: Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI), Extensive Listening (EL), listening pedagogy, and listening learning experience.

#### *Listening Strategy Instruction (LSI)*

Under this category, there were two themes: (1) few LSI instances as a learner at junior high school and (2) few LSI instances as a teacher at university.

As English learners, the participants had few opportunities to use LSI at junior high school.

According to the two participants, Iori and Daz:

(1) *A high school teacher taught me more LS than a junior high school teacher. (Iori)*

(2) *About LS, I cannot remember what my junior high school teacher told me, but my high school teacher told me that paying attention to the first three words was important. (Daz)*

From the point of pre-service teacher education, there were few LSI as a teacher at university.

The three participants reported:

- (1) *I was not able to remember what I learned about LSI at university. (Kana)*
- (2) *There was no instruction to teach a student how to listen to English. (Iori)*
- (3) *At university, there was no instruction to teach a student how to listen to English. My teacher taught me how to listen to English as a language learner. For example, I should understand subjects and objects. Also, I needed to listen to English without translating it into Japanese. (Daz)*

In sum, there were not very many LSI instances reported by the three participants. A high school teacher utilized LSI which taught L2 learners to focus on listening to specific words and inferring the essence of listening passages. Therefore, the LSI was related to bottom-up processing rather than top-down processing.

#### *Extensive Listening (EL)*

There were two themes: (1) listening many times was important and (2) few EL descriptions.

As L2 learners, the three participants reported that listening many times was important:

- (1) *As an English learner, I practiced the same listening question many times. Also, I listened to English from a CD and utilized the shadowing approach to listen to and speak the listened passage at the same time. (Kana)*
- (2) *As an English learner, my teacher used CDs to listen to English. I also listened to and repeated what my teacher said. So, listening many times was important. For a standardized test to enter university, I listened to the former test. I also listened to TED*

*Talks even though I did not understand what the speakers said. Getting accustomed to English was important, and so I listened to English when I did take a break from self-study. (Iori)*

*(3) As an English learner trying to enter university, I listened to and spoke easy English sentences many times and thus tried to get accustomed to English sounds. Listening to sounds and understanding words (were important). (Daz)*

As pre-service teacher training track students, there was no description and practice of EL from the system of pre-service teacher education. Iori and Daz reported that:

*(1) As a university student, there was no class about Extensive Listening but there was Extensive Reading. However, one of my professors used English in the class (to help me hear English many times). (Iori)*

*(2) As a university student, my professor taught me only Extensive Reading but there was not Extensive Listening. (Daz)*

In sum, to learn English suprasegmentals rather than understanding the essence of listening input, EL required an L2 learner to listen as much as possible regardless of the level of listening materials. Therefore, the importance of choosing comprehensible listening material was not taken into account. As a result, the implementation of EL in the classroom might have been less effective because of the absence of a solid theoretical and pedagogical foundation during pre-service teachers' professional preparation.

### *Listening Pedagogy*

There were two themes: (1) very few instructions about teaching listening pedagogy and (2) developing language proficiency rather than learning how to teach listening.

The three participants reported that there were very few instructions about teaching listening pedagogy from their university teachers. According to the participants:

- (1) *I had no experience learning teaching listening comprehension skills at university. There were more classes about grammar rather than listening. I could not remember what I learned about listening teaching at all. (At the end of this interview) I should have learned listening teaching pedagogy when I was a university student. (Kana)*
- (2) *As a pre-service teacher at university, I had no memory of learning how to teach listening pedagogy. (Iori)*
- (3) *I learned Total Physical Response (TPR) to teach listening comprehension skills. This approach was one of the most impressive. (Daz)*

Iori and Daz felt that developing language proficiency is more important than learning how to teach listening comprehension skills. They stated:

- (1) *I guessed that I needed to use my idea from my experience as an English learner at university. In an English pedagogy, I read a lot of literature, and I had a listening class when I was a freshman. This class was like a typical high school class. For example, I listened to a textbook and presented what I listened to. So, what I did was listen to English and understand what I listened to. The class seemed to develop my listening skills as an English teacher. I remembered the class focused on developing my listening skills rather than instructing listening teaching pedagogy because I would teach English so I should have somewhat good listening comprehension skills. There was no LSI at all. (Iori)*
- (2) *For listening education, we listened to BBC or TED Talks, like a high school class, and took notes on what words I listened to. However, what I needed to listen and write was*

*more than high school. For example, I needed to listen to and write two to three whole sentences (more than high school required). Also, I needed to understand the essence of listening passages. A professor said that first of all, it was necessary to listen to a native speaker's English, and then, a student needed to practice correct pronunciation. My professor did not teach me how to teach listening comprehension skills but taught me the importance of using the senses of visual and audio. My professor showed me teaching plans which the professor used at school, and they stressed the importance of using the senses of visual and audio. There was no LSI for students, but there was LSI to teach me (as a language learner) how to teach listening to English, such as focusing on listening to subjects and objects and no translation of English to Japanese. (Daz)*

In sum, opportunities to learn about teaching listening pedagogy were quite limited at university. Developing pre-service teachers' language proficiency, instead, was considered essential to become an English teacher.

### *Listening Learning Experience*

There were three themes: (1) shadowing, (2) dictation, and (3) listening a lot of times.

All participants reported that they had experience utilizing a shadowing approach as English learners. For example:

(1) *I listened to CDs and used a shadowing approach which required me to listen to and speak what I listened to at the same time. (Kana)*

(2) *I listened to a textbook on a CD. I listened to and repeated what my teacher spoke. I listened many times. I memorized what I listened to and repeated what I memorized.*

(Iori)

(3) *Before entering university, I listened to easy English sentences many times and spoke what I listened to many times. I used a shadowing method which required me to speak what I listened to. I also used a former standardized exam. After listening to the exam, I answered some questions. Then, I saw a script and checked what words I could not listen to. (Daz)*

The two participants, Kana and Daz had experience using a dictation approach as English learners. They answered:

(1) *Before entering my university, my teachers used a dictation approach. (Kana)*

(2) *At university, a professor used a dictation approach. A worksheet contained some blanks, and I needed to listen and fill in the blanks. Some blanks included one or two whole sentences. (Daz)*

Kana, Iori, and Daz considered listening a lot of times was beneficial to develop listening comprehension skills. Further, Iori and Daz reported that getting accustomed to English sounds or rhythms was important. According to them:

(1) *I listened and answered the question of the former standardized exam for a university entrance many times. (Kana)*

(2) *I listened to a former standardized exam. Also, I listened to TED Talks even though I did not understand. I tried to get accustomed to listening when I took a break. I did not make a conversation to communicate. I repeated what I listened to. My teacher asked me what a speaker said. (Iori)*

(3) *Before entering university, I listened to easy English sentences many times and spoke what I listened many times. The learning approach to getting accustomed to sounds was popular. I tried to listen and understand what words were spoken.* (Daz)

In sum, as English learners, the participants frequently utilized shadowing and dictation methods. Further, they believed that listening many times was essential to develop listening comprehension skills regardless of understanding the essence of a listening passage. Some of them reported getting accustomed to English suprasegmentals and sounds were essential.

#### *Unanticipated and Unusual*

the investigator found some unanticipated and unusual aspects that were grouped under the following themes: (1) study abroad experience, (2) English proficiency as an in-service teacher, and (3) opportunities to use English outside of classrooms.

All the participants were interested in studying abroad, but Iori and Daz were not able to go. The interviews reported:

- (1) *I had experience studying abroad in New Zealand for only two weeks.* (Her intonation seemed to say only two weeks was not adequate) *I visited a local school in New Zealand.* (The university websites explained what the study abroad program entailed. She observed classes at kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high school in New Zealand. Further, she took lectures about teaching pedagogy and assessment.) (Kana)
- (2) *I wanted to go abroad, but because of the pandemic, I had never been abroad.* (Iori)
- (3) *I had no experience studying abroad. In my opinion, a teacher who had experience traveling overseas or had enough experience related to language should teach English.* *When I was a senior at university, I wanted to go abroad. However, because of the*

*pandemic, I had no chance to go. After the pandemic would be over, I would like to go abroad or travel overseas. (Daz)*

Iori and Daz reported that having English proficiency was essential to be an English teacher and without proficiency teaching English might be difficult. In their interviews, they stated:

(1) *I supposed that English education at university aimed to develop our language proficiency rather than instructing English teaching pedagogy. About reading and speaking (skills), I felt the university required me to develop my English proficiency as an in-service teacher. I would like to study abroad, but I was not able to go. I was nervous if I was able to teach junior high school students English. (This was one of the reasons for the participant to choose an elementary school teacher.) (Iori)*

(2) *In my opinion, a teacher who had experience traveling overseas or had enough experience related to language should teach English. (Daz)*

The three participants did not have any experience using English outside of their classrooms.

According to them:

(1) *I had never experienced using English outside of a classroom when I was a university student. (Kana)*

(2) *I had the only chance to use English with a teacher from overseas when I was at university. (Iori)*

(3) *I had no chance to use English outside of a classroom when I was a university student. (Daz)*

In sum, the participants seemed to consider studying abroad or traveling overseas for a long time an important experience to be an effective English teacher. This was because they seemed to

believe that high language proficiency in L2 was essential in order to be a successful English teacher. However, they were not able to use English outside of classrooms at university. Therefore, to increase their opportunities to practice English, they were hoping to visit other English-speaking countries. However, it was unclear whether the participants regarded using English outside the classroom as a face-to-face communication experience. For example, online resources such as SNS, YouTube, or Netflix could provide the participants with opportunities to use English outside the classroom. The investigator did not ask follow-up questions to investigate the extent of using online resources to learn English. Therefore, this point needed to be investigated in further research studies.

### Findings

The three participants' interviews revealed that the preservice-teacher professional training aimed to develop the pre-service teacher's English proficiency rather than instructing them about English teaching pedagogy. There were two possible reasons that might explain the apparent pre-service teacher education problem at this university in Japan. First, from the point of pre-service teachers, a high English proficiency level was more important than knowledge of L2 teaching pedagogy. Second, the system of pre-service teacher education might not have had adequate knowledge of teaching pedagogy and how it related to second language acquisition or the teaching of English outside of Japan.

#### *Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of English Language Proficiency and L2 Pedagogy*

As previously stated, the participants' interviews revealed that the preservice-teacher training courses aimed to develop the pre-service teacher's English proficiency rather than instructing English teaching pedagogy. For example, regarding listening comprehension skills,

Kana and Iori could not remember what teaching pedagogies they learned as a pre-service teacher, and Daz was able to remember only the Total Physical Response approach which relied on physical or kinesthetic movement accompanied by language practice (Brown, 2014). Further, Kana learned EL as a pedagogy, but the explanation of EL from instructors in the system of pre-service teacher education was not adequate to understand the essence of the EL approach. She did not learn that comprehensible input was an essential component of EL, and her instructors in the system of pre-service teacher education professor did not teach how to choose listening materials that were appropriate from a listening proficiency level perspective. The three participants' interviews showed that the university pre-service teacher education courses did not aim to teach L2 pedagogy. This was not related only to listening comprehension skills but also to the overall L2 pedagogy. Further, the participants felt anxiety about having no study abroad experiences as well as their own L2 language proficiency rather than not learning about L2 pedagogy at university. Based on the theme of study abroad experience, all participants seemed to hope to study abroad or travel overseas to develop their language proficiency. Kana had experience visiting another country. However, she considered that her two weeks experience was not adequate for her to be an English teacher because of her intonation even though she did not clearly say the two weeks were not enough. Iori did not have confidence in his language proficiency, and one of the reasons he chose to teach in an elementary school was that he considered teaching elementary school students did not require high English proficiency compared to teaching junior high school students. Daz said that he wanted to study abroad or travel overseas. Also, he considered an English teacher should have some language experience or travel overseas experience. By contrast, only Kana seemed to regret not learning listening

teaching pedagogy at university. In sum, all participants had anxiety about their language proficiency, and only one participant, Kana, had anxiety about knowledge of L2 pedagogies.

### *The Overemphasized Importance of Language Proficiency*

There are three possible explanations for why having a high proficiency level is more beneficial than having a solid knowledge of L2 pedagogy for pre-service teachers in Japan. First, the overemphasized importance of language proficiency might penetrate the entirety of the Japanese language teaching education system. Therefore, the three participants could have been influenced by it without noticing it. The idea of the importance of language proficiency influences not only educational institutions but also the Japanese Government. For example, the JET PROGRAM application requirement illustrated this idea. MEXT supports JET PROGRAM which recruits people from over the world who want to work in Japan as an assistant language teacher (2015a). The JET PROGRAM website (2015b) considers that language proficiency is more important than knowledge of L2 pedagogy. One of the eligibility criteria is that applicants must have contemporary standard pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation and have excellent language ability. The website lists the following criteria for acceptance: (1) applicants have language teaching experience, (2) general teaching experience, and (3) high Japanese language proficiency. The application description could suggest the idea that the program considers language proficiency as a more important factor to be a language assistant teacher rather than knowledge of L2 pedagogy. The MEXT might also consider language proficiency more important than L2 pedagogy knowledge as MEXT is one of the institutions to support the JET program (2015a). Overemphasized importance of L2 proficiency is quite common in Japan and its language teaching institutions.

However, considering the importance of language proficiency, the three participants' actions were contradictory. The question was that the participants of the current study did not have any experience of communicating with English-speaking international students. If the participants believed language proficiency was quite essential to be an English teacher, they would have tried to communicate in English with international students to develop their own L2 proficiency. The university website showed that there was a dormitory for international students so, if the participants visited the dormitory, they would have a lot of opportunities to practice their English. However, in the interviews, the participants stated that they did not have any experience of using English outside of their classroom. Another example was that they were able to join an English club. If they had anxiety to speak with international students, they could practice their English with other Japanese students. However, they did not join the English club. Therefore, the participants' ideas of wanting to develop language proficiency and experience and their actual actions were contradictory.

#### *The Job Application Process in Japan*

The second explanation for thinking that having high language proficiency is more beneficial than knowing L2 pedagogy was related to the teacher job application process in Japan. This explanation consisted of two points of view: the pre-service teacher's and the university's. To be an English teacher in Japan, a pre-service teacher has to pass an exam which analyzes a lot of skills and knowledge, such as language skills or educational laws. Depending on each prefecture, major city, or private school, the contents of an exam may vary. However, almost all exams include language proficiency exams, and few exams include a demo lesson. Therefore, for pre-service teachers, language proficiency was more important than L2 pedagogy knowledge to pass an exam. As a result, from the point of the pre-service teacher, they might want their

university to focus on developing language proficiency rather than on L2 pedagogy. Universities also use passing rates to increase their reputation. As a result, in Japan, pre-service teachers and universities regard language proficiency skills rather than teaching pedagogy knowledge as an essential dimension of an English teacher.

### *Language Proficiency and Teacher-centered Approach*

The third explanation is linked to the teacher-centered approach popular in Japan. Currently, Japanese English teaching education focuses on developing grammar skills and the ability to answer multiple questions accurately to pass an entrance exam. The teacher-centered approach is effective in giving metalinguistic feedback related to grammar rules or answering multiple questions. By contrast, a student-centered approach focuses on giving feedback based on the idea of language used as a tool to communicate. In a classroom, generally, there are more students than teachers. For example, regarding a peer-review writing activity, if there are ten students in a classroom, each student can have the opportunity to receive nine peer-based feedback. Therefore, a student can receive a lot of feedback from different points of view to develop the contents of the paper. In a teacher-centered approach, the students would receive only one feedback from their teacher. Therefore, they would not discuss the contents of their writing from different points of view. In sum, when a student hopes to receive corrective feedback for grammar rules or answering multiple questions, a teacher-centered approach is preferable. When a student wants to receive corrective feedback for content (an essay question to writing a paper), a student-centered approach is beneficial. Currently, Japanese English education emphasizes grammatical accuracy or answering multiple questions to pass an English exam as a gatekeeper. As a result, the pre-service teacher education course at the university

emphasized the importance of developing the pre-service teacher's language proficiency rather than instructing pedagogy knowledge.

Even though MEXT hopes to change the traditional Japanese teaching pedagogy which focuses on teaching grammar and answering multiple questions, pre-service teacher education at university is not teaching L2 pedagogy yet. University focuses on developing pre-service teachers' language proficiency rather than teaching a new pedagogy. A pre-service learner would use a traditional Japanese teacher-centered approach when they start to work as an in-service teacher. The in-service teacher would not use another approach because a university pre-service teacher education does not teach L2 pedagogy that is not teacher-centered.

*The System of Pre-Service Teacher Education's knowledge of L2 Pedagogy, Second Language Acquisition, and EFL Teaching Outside Japan*

The second reason is that the system of pre-service teacher education might not have adequate knowledge of L2 pedagogy from a second language acquisition perspective or outside of Japan.

*Lack of L2 Pedagogical Knowledge and Struggling with Analyzing the Japanese English Education System*

There might be two explanations for this. The first explanation that the system of pre-service teacher education might not have a lot of L2 pedagogical knowledge consists of three parts. The second explanation is that the current practices might struggle with analyzing the Japanese English education system from the point of SLA or outside of a Japanese view.

### The Current Teaching Methods Were the Best

Regarding the first part of the first explanation (lack of L2 pedagogy knowledge), the system of pre-service teacher education might hold the belief that the current teaching methods which the participants' junior or high school teachers used were the best to develop the overall language proficiency. Therefore, the current practices did not teach other approaches to increase the pre-service teachers' teaching knowledge. For example, the participants showed that the practices utilized typical teaching approaches which the participants had used when they were junior, or high school students. Iori and Daz reported:

*About English education class, I read a lot of literature. Also, I had a listening class when I was a freshman. I used a textbook, listened to English, and present what I listened to. The class was like the class I experienced at high school. After all, what I did at university was to listen to English and understand what a listening passage said. (Iori)*

*About English listening education class, I listened to BBC and TED Talks. The activity was like an extended high school class. I took notes of what I listened to, but the number of words I needed to listen to and take notes on was huge. (Daz)*

The system of pre-service teacher education might have believed that these typical teaching pedagogies used at high school were one of the best approaches to increase language proficiency even though there were other listening activities, such as extensive listening (EL). Supposing that if the system of pre-service teacher education had had a lot of knowledge of teaching listening comprehension skills, then the system would have taught them to the participants. However, the current practices used only the typical high school teaching approaches instead of introducing other approaches. Therefore, it is possible that the system of

pre-service teacher education might not have had sufficient knowledge about L2 listening pedagogy.

#### The Pre-service Teachers Did Not Learn a Lot From Practicum Experience

Regarding the second area, from the point of what the participants learned during their practicum, the three participants did not learn any new teaching listening approaches from the system of pre-service teacher education. Based on the interviews, Kana who went to junior high school and Iori who went to elementary school did not learn a lot about teaching listening pedagogy during their practicum periods. Daz had no opportunities to teach English during his practicum. The methods Kana and Iori utilized during their practicum periods were quite similar to the methods the classrooms at elementary or junior high school already used. If Kana and Iori applied a new teaching approach they learned at their university, Kana's and Iori's students or instructors in their practicum would give some feedback. However, according to the two participants' interviews, the teaching method which Kana and Iori utilized during their practicum were not different from what the current classroom at elementary or junior high school already utilized and what the two participants learned at university. This showed that as pre-service teachers, Kana and Iori did not learn a lot from the system of pre-service teacher education. Kana's and Iori's teaching methods during their practicum have been based on their English learning experience which MEXT is currently trying to change. According to Kana and Iori:

*Before participating in a practicum, I did not know the approach to show a listening question before I had my students listen to a listening passage. Before participating in the practicum, I believed that the typical listening pedagogy was to have a student listen to English and then show a question to answer. Showing a question first can help students to understand the point to*

*pay attention to listen to. The practicum experience showed me that there was another approach.*

(Kana)

*(Through practicum experience) to practice listening comprehension skills, I thought face-to-face conversation is better than using a CD. The face-to-face conversation included gestures.*

*Also, the conversation can have a quiz to check student's understanding of the conversation. So students seemed to be somewhat excited (compared to using CD even though I had no experience observing a class with CD during the practicum).* (Iori)

These listening exercises reported by Kana and Iori were not different from the teaching exercise which they experienced at university as a pre-service teacher or at high school as a student. What the participants, Kana and Iori, learned at university was little. The English teaching methods which Kana and Iori used when they had been high school students were still used then without changing even though the MEXT had hoped to change those methods. In sum, the system of pre-service teacher education might not have a lot of other pedagogical knowledge, and thus pre-service teachers did not learn any other teaching approaches. As a result, a pre-service teacher would use the same approach when he/she would become a new in-service teacher.

There might be a possibility the two participants did not have opportunities to try some new approaches which the participants learned at university. For example, their instructors might decide their lesson plan, and in this setting, they needed to follow the lesson plan. However, it is difficult to deny the fact that the participants did not learn a lot about teaching pedagogy at university. Therefore, it is quite difficult to deny the possibility that the system of pre-service teacher education at university did not instruct teaching pedagogy because the current practices did not know a lot about teaching pedagogy.

### Lack of SLA Knowledge

Regarding the third part, the reported data in the current study showed that it was possible that the system of pre-service teacher education might not have had adequate knowledge about teaching pedagogy from the point of SLA. Three participants did not know the overall knowledge of EL even though using EL is one of the most fundamental ideas to develop language proficiency from the point of SLA. For example, two participants did not know what EL was at all. One participant knew some aspects of EL but did not know the importance of choosing comprehensible listening material. Therefore, the three participants did not have adequate knowledge of EL. Considering the possibility that the participants were highly motivated students (they joined the current study even though they were busy), they were unlikely to forget the essence of EL. Therefore, it was likely that the system of pre-service teacher education did not know SLA theories related to listening pedagogy, more specifically EL. According to the three participants:

(Have you ever heard EL? You may know Extensive Reading. Have you ever heard EL as a teaching theory?) *No, I have never heard.* (Haven't you ever heard listening many times is important?) *Oh, yes! I have heard listening many times, but I have never known the term EL.*

(Could you explain the theory of EL?) *My professor taught me that listening many times such as watching motion pictures was important to grasp and get accustomed to the English rhythm and intonation.* (Do you receive any instruction to choose a listening material?) *There was no instruction to choose what listening material a learner should choose.* (Kana)

(Did you learn EL when you were in the pre-service teacher education course?) *No, but I can understand the meaning of EL.* (So you mean, didn't your professor instruct EL pedagogy at all?) *No.* (Iori)

(Did you learn EL when you were in the pre-service teacher education course?) *No, EL but Extensive Reading.* (So you mean you studied the term Extensive Reading but did not study EL, listening many times?) *No, I did not.* (Daz)

Another example was that the system of pre-service teacher education did not recognize the importance of listening comprehension skills. Listening comprehension skills can transfer to other skills and consequently develop overall English skills. However, in pre-service teacher education, there were few listening classes about listening comprehension skills. For example, Kana stated,

*There were quite few classes about listening comprehension skills, and there were more classes about grammar skills.* (Kana)

To develop a pre-service teacher's English proficiency, the system of pre-service teacher education would utilize listening input in addition to reading input. However, according to Kana, there was little listening input. The result illustrated that the current practices in a pre-service teacher education course might not have L2 pedagogy knowledge based on SLA.

#### *Outside the Japanese Point of View*

Regarding the second explanation (teaching contexts outside Japan), the system of pre-service teacher education might struggle with analyzing the Japanese English education system from a broad point of view. There are two parts to support the idea. First, the university pre-service teacher education program itself might be problematic. Second, the system of pre-service teacher education did not require Master's or Ph.D. degrees from other countries.

First, the program policy of the Department of Education, English has some issues. Generally, a policy reflects the principles of the system of pre-service teacher education. Therefore, analyzing a policy can identify institutional knowledge or attitudes towards general pre-service teacher education. According to the department website, the English courses aimed to foster an English teacher who had not only an ability to use English, but also had firm knowledge about English, had firm knowledge about British and American culture, had firm knowledge about cross-cultural understanding, and had a sense of international context and language. The policy did not mention teaching English pedagogy. Therefore, the system of pre-service teacher education did not consider teaching L2 pedagogy important. Further, the policy did not reflect the current trend of English as a Lingua Franca. Studying only British and American literature instead of other English-speaking countries' literature did not match current educational trends. Therefore, the department did not consider English as a Lingua Franca to communicate with people from over the world, and the policy regarded British and American English as Standard English in the world.

There is another explanation why the system of pre-service teacher education might lack the perspective of analyzing English education from broader points of view. For example, according to the university website, major professors in the pre-service teacher education program received their degrees in Japan. Therefore, they learned their concentration from the perspective of EFL or Japanese views. Therefore, the whole Japanese system of pre-service teacher education has the advantage of analyzing and responding to EFL students' needs from a Japanese perspective. However, there are disadvantages as well. Considering the proposition that the typical Japanese point of view about English education established the current Japanese English education system, the system of pre-service teacher education might struggle with

analyzing the current system from outside of Japanese perspectives. Because they received degrees from a Japanese university, they might not have had adequate opportunities to use English as a tool to communicate. As a result, the system of pre-service teacher education might not consider English as a tool to communicate. It is true that receiving a degree from a Japanese university is advantageous when analyzing Japanese English education as it enables them to have a lot of knowledge about Japanese EFL students. However, these exclusively Japanese backgrounds might not allow the pre-service teacher education of analyzing English education outside of the Japanese view.

### Conclusion

The research question addressed in this study was what were the self-reported experiences of Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers with listening comprehension skills in their teaching classroom as university students and in their learning classroom as EFL students? To answer the research question, three subjects participated in the study. They were from the same university, the Department of Education, English and started to work as new in-service teachers. The first participant, Kana worked at junior high school as an English teacher in second grade. The second participant was Iori who worked as an English teacher at an elementary school in fourth grade. The third participant was Daz taught English from elementary school in third grade. The study utilized a qualitative research design and a semi-structured interview approach. The interviews were conducted in Japanese (the participants' and the investigator's L1), audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. To analyze the interviews, the qualitative research study utilized three coding approaches: pre-coding, coding, and clustered together across each transcript. In the pre-coding process, the investigator understood the essence of the interviews. In the coding process, the researcher chose

LSI, EL, listening pedagogy, listening learning experience, and interesting or unusual things as themes. In the final process, if these themes had relationships with each other, they were connected across each interview.

The investigator concluded that the current pre-service teacher education track displayed several features. The first one was that the English track did not teach teaching pedagogy. To work as an in-service English teacher, having language proficiency was more important than having solid knowledge of teaching. Another feature was that the system of pre-service teacher education did not analyze the current Japanese English education from broader points of view. Therefore, the current practices did not aim to instruct other L2 pedagogy and SLA theory. As a result, new in-service teachers would utilize the same L2 pedagogy which MEXT is trying to change in Japan.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The research question addressed in this study was what were the self-reported experiences of Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teachers with listening comprehension skills in their teaching classroom as university students and in their learning classroom as EFL students? The current study utilized a qualitative case study research method to interview three Japanese EFL pre-service teachers. The researcher collected data from semi-structured interviews that were conducted online in Japanese which the researcher and the participants spoke as L1. At the time the investigator interviewed the participants, they had already graduated from their university and started to work as new in-service EFL teachers for almost two to three months even though COVID 19 closed their school. Therefore, the participants were considered pre-service teachers rather than in-service teachers in this study.

The current study identified a problem with the EFL pre-service teacher preparation in Japan. It showed that the pre-service teacher training focused on developing the pre-service teachers' language proficiency rather than instructing them about L2 pedagogy, including listening comprehension skills. As a result, the new in-service teachers (the participants of the current study) would use the same L2 pedagogy which they had experienced when they were junior high school or high school students. In sum, even though the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in Japan (MEXT) is trying to change the current teaching pedagogy as well as changing the standardized exam university entrance exam, new in-service teachers would not use new teaching approaches, such as student-centered ones. This is in part due to the fact that the pre-service teachers' education track does not include new teaching approaches supported by the theoretical underpinning of second language acquisition (SLA).

## Connecting to the Current Study and Previous Studies on the Japanese Teaching Listening Context

There have been few previous research studies discussing listening comprehension skills in the Japanese EFL context. The current study has provided one possible reason as to why the importance of listening comprehension skills is not stressed in EFL teacher preparation in Japan. Further, as revealed in Chapter 4, it is possible that the system of pre-service teacher education might not have adequate SLA knowledge, and thus the system might not be aware of the importance of listening comprehension skills as listening input. Moreover, the current Japanese practices might not regard English as a tool to communicate, and thus they might not be to make the connection between listening skills and other skills, e.g., speaking. Therefore, the importance of listening skills has not been stressed in EFL pre-service teacher preparation in Japan.

The system of pre-service teacher education and the participants showed that some listening teaching pedagogies which the previous studies have identified were still popular. Hamada (2016) founded that shadowing was a popular and effective approach to develop listening comprehension skills. Also, Field discussed the comprehension approach, a teacher-centered approach (2008); the current study revealed that the comprehension approach was popular in Japanese high schools and universities.

In addition to shadowing and the comprehension approach, the current study discovered that the dictation approach was popular. By contrast, the study showed that extensive listening (EL) and listening strategy instruction (LSI) were not well utilized even though previous studies showed their effectiveness. Further, the current Japanese practices did not include EL in their training of pre-service teachers, since they might have not had a solid grasp of the theoretical principles of EL.

The current research reported that the system of pre-service teacher education did not regard listening comprehension skills as essential or beneficial for language learning even though the numerous previous research studies (Danaher, 1996; Dunkel, 1991; Long, 1985; Rost, 1990; Shirai, 2012; Vogely, 1999; Walter, 2008) demonstrated their effectiveness. Further, the current Japanese practices did not consider listening comprehension skills as an important language skill. To reiterate, the reported data showed that the system of pre-service teacher education might not have had adequate knowledge of SLA, especially when it came to the importance of listening and comprehensible input.

#### Analyzing the Reasons and the Impact of the Differences Between the Result of Previous Research and the Current Study

The difference between the results of the previous studies and the current study showed that the system of pre-service teacher education in Japan did not have sufficient knowledge of listening comprehension skills and SLA theory. In addition, the current research illustrated that the pre-service teacher training track did not take a deliberate approach to change the traditional Japanese pedagogy to address the direction of EFL pedagogy outlined by MEXT. The current study identified five issues. The first issue was that having high second language proficiency was preferable to having solid teaching knowledge. The second issue was that the system of pre-service teacher education did not regard English as a tool for communication. The third issue was that the system did not seem to have a firm knowledge of how to teach listening comprehension skills. The fourth issue was that the system taught L2 pedagogy that was not always supported by SLA theory. The fifth issue was that the system did not seem to be inclined to change the current Japanese teaching system. These issues can be divided into two groups: the first and second issues and the third, fourth, and fifth issues.

*The Issues of the First Group: Having High Language Proficiency and Regarding English as a Gatekeeper*

Regarding the first issue, the three participants reported that the system of pre-service teacher education focused on developing language proficiency rather than instructing teaching the overall English skills. There could be three reasons to cause the problem as mentioned in the last chapter. First, in Japan, the importance of language proficiency is very prevalent. As a result, the current practices might keep emphasizing it almost unconsciously. Second, because pre-service teachers' language proficiency is an important component of the teacher job application process in Japan, the system of pre-service teacher education has focused on the development of language proficiency rather than on having pedagogical knowledge. To be a prestigious university, the job passing rate of graduates is important. Third, the teacher-centered approach and corrective feedback for grammar need language proficiency rather than pedagogical knowledge. In the Japanese EFL setting, passing the standardized exam has a huge impact. The exam generally analyzes accuracy rather than other language aspects, such as fluency. The teacher centered approach and the direct corrective feedback are effective in developing English language accuracy. As a result, having language proficiency is preferable to having language pedagogy knowledge. It is clear that there is a tendency to dismiss having language teaching knowledge as essential, and thus this prevents the current Japanese EFL pedagogy from changing.

Beyond the first problem, the system of pre-service teacher education did not regard English as a tool to communicate with people. As a result, mainly independent listening approaches were utilized in the pre-service teacher training track. According to the three participants, the current practices used shadowing, dictation, and comprehension approaches which did not require the learners to employ multiple language skills at the same time. It is true

that shadowing or dictation approaches have L2 students write or speak what they listen to, and thus these approaches seem to be integrated approaches. However, the writing or speaking aspects in these approaches do not require L2 learners to produce original output in English. The learners only repeat the same spoken English, and thus the cognitive load of learners is low compared to integrated speaking or writing activities such as discussions. Therefore, shadowing, dictation, and comprehension approaches could be viewed as independent rather than integrated tasks. It is true shadowing and comprehension approaches develop L2 learners' language proficiency as Hamada (2016) and Field (2008) claimed. However, considering English as a tool to communicate with people, using only these independent approaches does not reflect the actual usage of English.

In my personal experience, I came to the US as an international student, I frequently needed to use more than two language skills at the same time. For example, active participation in a classroom required me to listen to my professor's question and respond to it in a spoken format almost at the same time. In an actual language-using setting, only listening and without responding is not common. Another idea is that speaking skills are connected to listening comprehension skills. Generally, to participate in a conversation, listening is essential. Without understanding the essence of a speaker's idea, a listener would not be able to speak. However, the system of pre-service teacher education in Japan did not address those points. For example, according to the participant, Daz, the system of pre-service teacher education at the university considered speaking as one of the top priorities to practice and listening not as important. His report showed that the current practices did not understand that speaking skills including listening skills, and they could not view English as a tool to communicate. A further example was that the policy of the university's Department of Education, English did not regard other

English variations other than British and American English as standard English. Considering more and more non-native English speakers use English as a tool to communicate, the idea that British and American English are the only acceptable standard does not reflect the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca. As a result, the pre-service teacher training track does not teach English pedagogy based on the concept of using English as a tool for communication.

The problem here was that the system of pre-service teacher education did not teach the pre-service teachers English as a tool to communicate with people rather than a subject to pass the standardized exam. Without changing this idea, the current Japanese English education would not change, and the pre-service teachers would utilize the same approaches. Actual classroom activities would not change even though MEXT is trying to change teaching practices. This is because pre-service teachers teach students English at school, and MEXT staff does not teach students. Therefore, altering the attitude of pre-service teachers is essential, and thus pre-service teacher education tracks at university have a huge responsibility to challenge the current Japanese EFL pedagogy. Reported data in this study showed that the current practices did not regard English as a tool to communicate. As a result, the pre-service teachers in the current study were not able to choose EFL pedagogy which would help their students to use English as a tool for communication.

In sum, the first group issues are that the pre-service teacher education system in Japan does not analyze language education from broad points of view. The system only focuses on accuracy aspects of language proficiency and does not consider other language aspects, such as fluency. As a result, the pre-service teachers would teach English to pass an entrance exam rather than to communicate with people even though the pre-service teachers need to balance the two

purposes. To have L2 students develop only accuracy, pre-service teachers need to have high language proficiency rather than instruction knowledge.

### *How to Address the First Group Issue*

To solve the issue, only teaching English as a Lingua Franca would not work effectively to change pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers would not try to balance the two goals, passing an entrance exam and using English as a tool for communication. Considering an EFL setting, for elementary, junior, or high school teachers, enabling their students to pass an entrance exam is a clearer purpose to teach English. Generally, the time to use English to pass an entrance exam would come earlier than the time to use English to communicate with people especially from other countries in an EFL setting. Therefore, the pre-service teachers would unconsciously tend to focus on passing an exam rather than using English as a tool. In my point of view, in an EFL setting, both goals are essential because teachers need to meet their students' demands. Therefore, to help pre-service teachers notice the importance of both goals, the pre-service teachers' training track needs to provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to use English as a communication tool. Then, the experience would notice the pre-service teachers the importance of using English as a tool. For example, in teaching EFL pedagogy, the system of pre-service teacher education could require pre-service teachers to learn English through integrated approaches. Another example is the system should require university teachers to speak English in a classroom. According to Iori, the pre-service teacher education system did not seem to enforce university teachers to speak English in a classroom. According to the university website, a university teacher from another country teaches only EFL conversation classes. The system of pre-service teacher education should require the professor to teach English pedagogy or SLA theory in English rather than only a speaking class. To submit assignments and take term

exams, pre-service teachers would need to use English as a communication tool. This experience would help them notice the importance of using English as a communication tool. The experience to use English as a tool might help pre-service teachers to notice the balance of accuracy and fluency. These experiences would teach pre-service teachers that focusing on developing only accuracy is not preferable for English education. Through these experiences, they would notice the fact that it is impossible to speak without grammatical errors, unlike written language and understood that accuracy is only one part of language proficiency. Therefore, pre-service teachers might cast doubt on the current overemphasized accuracy trends. Without a lot of opportunities to use language as a tool to communicate, pre-service teachers did not notice the idea in the current study. The three participants reported that without a classroom they did not have opportunities to use English at all. The lack of experience may potentially influence the current trend that overemphasizes accuracy in EFL pedagogy.

*The Issues of the Second Group: No Knowledge to Teach Listening Comprehension Skills, Teaching Pedagogy Not Supported by SLA, and Not Inclined to Change the Current Japanese Education*

The system of pre-service teacher education in this study did not seem to be either aware or employ listening approaches other than shadowing, dictation, and comprehension approaches. As a result, the pre-service teachers were able to develop only bottom-up skills even though listening comprehension skills consist of bottom-up and top-down skills. In addition to the three popular approaches, the system had opportunities to use the other approaches such as EL or LSI in the pre-service teacher training track. However, according to the three participants, the system only used the shadowing, dictation, and comprehension approaches which the participants' EFL teachers also used when the participants were junior or high school students. It is difficult to assume that the pre-service teacher training course track decided to use or instruct only those

three approaches. Rather, to broaden the pre-service teachers teaching pedagogy, the current practices needed to teach other teaching approaches. Shadowing, dictation, and comprehension approaches were indeed effective teaching pedagogy to develop listening comprehension skills (Field 2006; Hamada 2016). I suppose these approaches are specifically effective for standardized exams. The university entrance exam in Japan generally requires only listening to English passages and does not require test-takers to respond to and comment on what they listened to, and thus the ability to use multiple language skills at the same time is not needed. Independent tasks such as dictation, shadowing or comprehension approaches focus on developing only bottom-up listening comprehension skills. A bottom-up process is fundamental to develop listening comprehension skills. As without bottom-up process skills, using a top-down process is difficult. Therefore, for low proficiency students, such as junior or high students who hope to pass a standardized exam, dictation or shadowing approaches can be effective in developing bottom-up listening comprehension skills. However, for the pre-service teachers, using only the methods was not preferable because the teachers did not develop a top-down process. As a result, the pre-service teachers would not use a top-down process effectively. Unlike low proficiency learners such as junior or high school students who study English to pass an entrance exam, according to Iori, the system of pre-service teacher education aimed to develop the pre-service teacher's language proficiency. Therefore, to develop the top-down process, EL and LIS were needed to develop a top-down process. However, the current practices did not utilize them to improve the top-down listening comprehension process. As a result, the pre-service teachers would utilize only shadowing, dictation, and comprehension approaches, and the teachers would focus on developing only a bottom-up process rather than a well-balanced one with equal importance afforded to the two processes.

Another issue was that the system of pre-service teacher education did not have a solid knowledge of instructing listening comprehension skills supported by SLA theory. In my opinion, beyond listening comprehension skills, this problem could potentially influence the overall Japanese English teaching pedagogy. In an SLA theory, Krashen claimed that comprehension input was essential to acquire not only listening comprehension skills but also overall L2 skills (1987). However, the current practices did not teach about the importance of comprehensible input, and thus the participants did not learn about it as a fundamental component of extensive listening (EL). The interview data showed that no participants explained the principles of EL accurately. The participants did not identify the importance of comprehension input and reported that listening many times was important. Listening many times would indeed enable L2 learners to get accustomed to English suprasegmental and develop listening comprehensible skills compared to not listening to English as Iori reported. However, comprehensible input would develop the skills more effectively including getting accustomed to the suprasegmental aspects. Without the system of pre-service teacher education introducing the fundamental knowledge of listening comprehension skills supported by SLA theory, the pre-service teachers would not be able to use the principles of SLA theory to teach their future students at school. As a result, the teachers would not help their future students develop listening comprehension effectively. In addition, the misunderstood of the importance of comprehensible input would provide ineffective overall for English teaching education.

The next problem was that the system of pre-service teacher education did not have the desire to change the current Japanese English education system. The problem consisted of two areas.

First, in the pre-service teacher education track, the current practices covered quite a limited number of teaching approaches. Therefore, they were not able to broaden their view of instructing listening comprehension skills. One out of three participants reported that TPR was the only teaching approach he learned in the pre-service teacher training track. The other two participants did not remember any teaching pedagogy the system of pre-service teacher education introduced. If the current practices had any desire to change the current Japanese teaching system including listening comprehension skills, they would introduce other pedagogy such as LSI or EL to the pre-service teachers and have the students discuss the new approaches. Beyond introducing or discussing them, the current practices would be able to utilize them to develop the pre-service teachers' listening comprehension skills instead of the traditional teaching approaches (dictation, shadowing, and comprehension approaches). Utilizing LSI and EL would provide the pre-service teachers with opportunities to analyze whether the approaches would be beneficial to their future students. However, the system of pre-service teacher education did not instruct or utilize these approaches which the pre-service teachers never experienced. Therefore, the system decreased the opportunities to broaden the pre-service teachers' view of listening comprehension skills. As a result, the pre-service teachers would use only the traditional approaches even though MEXT had been trying to change the current Japanese education. Of course, the traditional pedagogy improves L2 proficiency, however, to make the education for the pre-service teachers better, introducing a variety of teaching methods or theories would be beneficial.

Second, the pre-service teacher education track did not challenge the state of the current Japanese EFL education. To change the current teaching education, changing would be impossible without analyzing the current Japanese English education. In my point of view, the

current problem is that there are two demands which seemed somewhat contradict each other. The first demand is enabling Japanese EFL learners to use English as a tool to communicate. MEXT is trying to address the problem by making accuracy only one aspect of language proficiency. By contrast, the second demand is that generally, in the Japanese EFL setting, students study English to pass the standardized university entrance exam. In this setting, accuracy is much more important than other language aspects. Therefore, to balance these somewhat contradictory demands well, a pre-service teacher training track at university needs to introduce effective teaching pedagogy including SLA theory as well as having candid discussions with students to discover how to balance the two goals. However, the system of pre-service teacher education did not teach any pedagogy or SLA theory to balance the two goals, and thus the discussion did not happen. As a result, the current practices did not do anything to challenge the state of the current Japanese EFL teaching education.

In sum, to change the current Japanese English education, the system of pre-service teacher education needs to teach other teaching pedagogy supported by SLA which is not familiar with the pre-service teachers. However, the current study revealed that the system did not develop the teachers teaching knowledge. In addition, the system did not provide any opportunities for the pre-service teachers to discuss the current EFL education issues in Japan.

#### *How to Address the Second Group Issue*

To solve the second group issue which centered upon the fact that the pre-service teachers did not have SLA knowledge including listening comprehension skills even though MEXT required pre-service teacher training tracks to include SLA. MEXT needs to verify whether the system of pre-service teacher education has a firm knowledge of SLA. For example,

MEXT requires a job application process to investigate SLA knowledge. In addition, the system needs to teach English pedagogy, which is supported by the SLA perspective, and discuss the problem of the current EFL issues in Japan with pre-service teachers. The reported data showed that listening as much as possible is important regardless of comprehension input or not in order to develop listening comprehension skills. However, from the point of SLA perspective, the approach is not so effective to develop the skills. The system should broaden pre-service teachers' teaching knowledge supported by SLA in order to change the current Japanese EFL education.

### Conclusion

The progress of changing Japanese English education has been slow even though MEXT is trying to implement change, reflected in the standardized exam as well. One possible reason was the system of pre-service teacher education instructors might not have had solid knowledge of teaching listening comprehension skills and SLA theory, and they might not have had the ability to analyze Japanese teaching education from a broader point of view. Therefore, the pre-service teachers in the study did not learn any teaching approaches which they had not experienced before. As a result, the pre-service teachers in the study would use the same approach which they were familiar with, and thus the new teaching approaches or other EFL pedagogy supported by SLA theory would not be utilized.

It is essential to emphasize the findings and discussions in the current study cannot be generalized. Further, the study cannot identify and conclude the cause and effect relationship about findings. The study aimed to investigate pre-service teachers (new in-service teachers) experience with listening comprehension skills in their teaching classroom as university students

and in their learning classroom as EFL students. Keeping limitations in mind, the result of the current study might be applied to entire Japan or other EFL settings with the same characteristics as Japan as far as their pre-service teacher training track.

The current paper might serve to introduce future research studies. To change Japanese English education, the study identified the problem of the current pre-service teacher education track at university as focusing on developing language proficiency rather than EFL pedagogy. A further question was whether the instructors of the pre-service teacher education in the current study might have had a firm knowledge of SLA even though MEXT required the pre-service teacher education track to teach SLA. Therefore, the instructors did not identify the importance of SLA and thus, they seemed to be focused on developing pre-service teachers' language proficiency. However, the university website showed that at least one university teacher's research interest was SLA. (The university website showed that the professor might not teach the participants when they were freshman, sophomore, and junior. However, it was difficult to identify another professor who taught SLA instead of that professor.) Therefore, the website showed that at least there was a professor who had a firm knowledge of SLA for the participants. However, the reported data showed that the participants did not identify any instances of learning about SLA. To investigate this claim, further research might be needed. In addition, some studies to investigate how SLA is considered in the pre-service teacher education track in Japan are needed. The reported data of the current study inferred that the system of pre-service teacher education does not recognize the importance of SLA. As a result, some traditional teaching approaches which are not supported by SLA might preponderance in the system of pre-service teacher education and in Japanese EFL classroom at school.

Future research about integrative approaches would be needed. The current study did not aim to identify the reason that might have caused some of the reported problems. To discover the cause-and-effect relationship, future studies need to analyze the application and effectiveness of other listening pedagogy and integrative approaches. The current study discovered some teaching approaches, such as EL and LSI were not utilized well even though they had been effective in developing listening comprehension skills. Further, other listening integrated approaches were not utilized in the current study. The current research could not identify the reason why they were not utilized. To address this, the applicability of the approaches (EL, LSI, integrative approaches) to the current Japanese EFL setting from the point of students and teachers might need to be analyzed further. First, future studies need to analyze whether in an EFL context (Japan), EL, LSI, and an integrative approach can develop English skills as a communicative tool and an exam tool as well. Second, in an EFL context (Japan), is it preferable to use EL, LSI, and an independent approach first and then use an integrated approach or vice versa? Third, what is the best ratio to use these approaches (integrative vs independent and EL, LSI, vs comprehension) for different proficiency learners?

Another direction is linked to motivation. Specifically, to identify the appropriateness of using integrative methods, future research studies need to compare different L2 instructors in different learning settings. The current study discovered that an integrative approach was not utilized in Japanese EFL classrooms because EFL teachers and the pre-service teacher education system in Japan did not consider English as a tool to communicate. To verify this point, some research studies would be needed. The first future study would analyze the differences between EFL teachers at Japanese schools and ESL teachers at Japanese schools in English-speaking countries. The second future study would investigate the difference between Japanese as a

Foreign Language (JFL) teachers at school and Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) students at school. The aim of the second future study would verify the idea that, unlike EFL and ESL differences, there might be slight differences between JFL and JSL about the pro and cons of utilizing integrated approaches. To watch anime without a subtitle, visit Japan, know Japanese culture, or communicate with Japanese, generally, almost all JFL learners might need to study JFL for communication purposes rather than to pass an entrance exam, such as JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test). JSL learners might want to study Japanese to be able to fully function in Japan. Of course, there is the possibility they might want to study JSL to pass an entrance exam like JLPT. However, the result of the second study might show slight differences between JFL and JSL. Further, the third research study could be conducted in different JFL countries. For example, the number of Vietnamese who come to work in Japan is increasing rapidly. To work in Japan as a specialist, passing a JLPT is essential although other jobs do not require workers to pass a JLPT while in the US, generally, JFL students study Japanese as a tool to communicate rather than as a gatekeeper.

Future research is also needed to investigate the reason why the pre-service teachers did not try to have any experience of using English outside of a classroom, such as communicating with international students. The current research study has revealed that having advanced language proficiency is beneficial and the pre-service teachers have not been able to study abroad even though they have hoped so. Nevertheless, they did not attempt to use English outside the classroom in Japan, even though they had access to English speakers. The investigator did not question the usage of the Internet to use English, such as watching an English movie with subtitles or using SNS. Further research needs to include questions about Internet usage, for example.

Finally, to scrutinize and estimate the relationship between the standardized exam to enter university (more listening comprehension focused) that is currently changing in Japan and the Japanese pre-service teacher education system more accurately, future studies need to concentrate only on pre-service teachers who would work at high school instead of elementary or junior high school. The current changes might have already influenced pre-service high school teacher education.

In conclusion, the current study discovered that the current Japanese pre-service teacher education system had some problems. The main issue was whether studying English was viewed as a tool to communicate or as a gatekeeper. To balance these opposite goals, the system of pre-service teacher education in Japan needs to teach pre-service teachers L2 pedagogy and SLA knowledge instead of focusing only on developing pre-service teachers' language proficiency. In addition, providing opportunities for pre-service teachers for discussing how to combine the two opposite goals is essential for the success of pre-service teacher education in the Japanese EFL setting.

## APPNDIX IRB APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Institutional Review Board**  
FWA00000351  
IRB00001138, IRB00012110  
Office of Research  
12201 Research Parkway  
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

June 1, 2021

Dear Akira Yamamoto:

On 6/1/2021, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	ANALYZING THE SELF-REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF JAPANESE ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS WITH LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS
Investigator:	Akira Yamamoto
IRB ID:	STUDY00002887
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRP-251- FORM - Faculty Advisor Scientific-Scholarly Review fillable form.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval;</li> <li>• Akira Yamamoto MA thesis for IRB.docx, Category: Other;</li> <li>• HPR-256 Form Translation Verification.pdf, Category: Translation Verification;</li> <li>• Interview Questions Revised 2 JP.docx, Category: Interview / Focus Questions;</li> <li>• Interview Questions Revised 2.docx, Category: Interview / Focus Questions;</li> <li>• IRB Yamamoto 2887 HRP-254-FORM Explanation of Research 05202021 JP.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• IRB Yamamoto 2887 HRP-254-FORM Explanation of Research 05202021.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• IRB Yamamoto 2887 HRP-255-FORM - Request for Exemption 05202021.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> </ul>

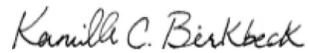
This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on

submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu). Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

**Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, in-person research is not permitted to begin unless you are able to follow the COVID-19 Human Subject Research (HSR) Standard Safety Plan with permission from your Dean of Research or submitted your Study-Specific Safety Plan and received IRB and EH&S approval. Be sure to monitor correspondence from the Office of Research, as they will communicate when restrictions are lifted, and all in-person research can resume.**

Sincerely,



Kamille Birkbeck  
Designated Reviewer

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