

Benefits of English Debate Practice for Japanese to
Be Effective in Inter-Cultural Communication and Collaboration

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BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

Abstract

This paper explores the benefits of understanding the process and methodology of acquiring skills in English debate for Japanese students and businesspersons who aspire to be effective communicators with a high level of English proficiency. Also included are typical English debate procedures, discussion of necessary skills and attitudes to be proficient debaters, educational effects, and practical use of debating methods for projects and achievement of business goals. Reasons why English debate is an effective tool to enable Japanese to be competent in communicating in English and to become productive performers and leaders in inter-cultural settings and collaboration. This article also contrasts Western communication culture with the uniqueness of Japanese social behavior and communication habits.

An underlying question that this paper attempts to answer is how Japanese people can succeed in getting jobs completed in inter-cultural settings? Debate practice in English immerses Japanese students in intense circumstances where they are expected to convince opponents and the public that their argument and proposed actions will bring desired results and solutions to the proposition at issue. Debate in English is an ideal instrumental verbal battlefield where Japanese students are immersed in English as well as Western communication culture at the same time. English debate not only helps make Japanese students proficient in English through total immersion experience but also provides them with a great opportunity to get to know and practice English communication culture and principles. English debating proficiency is a competence indispensable for Japanese to make themselves effective contributors to inter-cultural enterprises whatever they may be. The author's motivation for writing this paper is based on the positive impact his debate skills have had on communication effectiveness as witnessed by him firsthand over 30 years of work experience as a business person and top management executive of a \$400 million automotive parts manufacturing firm with operations in Northern Ireland, Mexico, and the USA, with a \$2 billion Japanese parent company headquartered in Hiroshima, Japan.

Keywords: Western Communication Culture, Oral Communication Skills, Global Collaboration, Assertiveness, Logical Presentation, and Debate '*Brain*'

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

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Japan is facing an urgent need and task to raise a young Japanese workforce and leaders who are effective in an inter-cultural environment. The country is working towards developing a project aimed at addressing this need. We may name this project “Global Human Capital Development for the Future.” This is not a new project, and has been a persistent proposition since the country opened its doors to the world community approximately 150 years ago. However, little remarkable success has been made toward achieving this goal, particularly in increasing proficiency in the field of verbal communication on the inter- and cross- cultural stages.

With the great need for “Global Human Capital,” the Japanese government recently hammered out new policies to address the issue of improving English communication. These policies include mandating certification in English proficiency for high level government officers and employees, requiring English education to start in 5th grade in elementary school, making it compulsory to undergo evaluation of English speaking ability as part of university entrance examinations, and studying abroad as a prerequisite for college graduation. The clear direction of the government certainly has potential for a nationwide turnaround in English education by seeking ways that successfully assist Japanese students to be assertive speakers/communicators, not just capable readers in English.

What are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that the Japanese young generation must acquire in order to be truly effective in communication, leadership, and collaboration in cross-cultural or inter-cultural projects both inside and outside of Japan? The author would like to present debating in English as one answer to this question as he sees great potential and benefit in English debating skills as an ideal instrument for training Japanese students to be proficient with practical English. Additionally, it is a means to help them be effective communicators/contributors by overcoming the peculiarities of Japanese communication style/culture that may interfere with collaboration on the inter-cultural and global stages.

Literature Review

Edward T. Hall points out in his book entitled "Hidden Differences" (1987) that non-verbal means of communication represent 80~90 percent of communication. Non-verbal communication is often beyond the range of people's awareness, but can cause tremendous negative impact if one does not pay attention to these elements of communication that are deeply impeded in one's culture. Hall declares, "Communication is culture." Hall recommends that learners of Japanese understand and follow the programs of the Japanese communication system so that the system works for those wanting to perform effectively in Japan. This, in turn, testifies to the fact that Japanese communication culture is distinctly different from that of the Western world.

Dr. Thomas B. Lifson stated in his July 15, 1993 lecture, "Communication, Collaboration, and Competition: Overcoming the Barriers" that from about 300 B.C. to the middle of the 19th century, some 80 to 85 percent of the population survived principally through rice agriculture and this form of subsistence formulated Japanese culture and its deeply collective and interdependent nature.

Edward T. Hall wrote in his book entitled "Hidden Differences" "Japanese, Arab, and Mediterranean peoples who have extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues, and clients, and who are involved in close personal relationships, are "high-context"(HC). As a result, for most normal transactions in daily life they don't require, nor do they expect, much in-depth background information."

During an interview conducted on August 7, 2014 on the subject of Turnabout of English Education in Japan, Dr. Sadatoshi Tomizawa, Professor of Ball State University, listed four features in American communication culture: (a) Assertiveness is a socially expected ability. One should demonstrate ability to present ideas and thoughts in order to prove oneself as a competent individual who participates and contributes to society. (b) In America everything is spoken out explicitly in the absence of commonly shared connotations of words and expressions due to America being a low context/individualistic society, unlike Japan which is a high context/collective society, which completes communication effectively without a lot of words and verbal expressions required. (c) Direct expression is not necessarily rude but is rather required to avoid misunderstanding. A blunt yes or no response is acceptable, whereas Japanese communication style prefers indirect and implicit expressions to avoid obvious conflict in public. (d) Seniority is not a critical element in communication and anyone is equal in effectively communicating, whereas the Japanese language requires paying attention to seniority to choose appropriate words and expressions in public communication.

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

Dr. Stephen R. Covey wrote in his book entitled *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, “Interdependence is a far more mature, more advanced concept; as an interdependent person I have the opportunity to share myself deeply, meaningfully, with others, and I have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings. Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make; dependent people cannot choose to become interdependent. They don't have the character to do it; they don't own enough of themselves.”

Michele Garrett, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor, Mansfield University, Pennsylvania, Lois Schoener, MS, RN, Assistant Professor, Elmira College, New York, and Lucy Hood, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor, St. Luke's College, Kansas City, Missouri wrote in their article entitled “Debate: A Teaching Strategy to Improve Verbal Communication and Critical-Thinking Skills” that during a time when higher education is calling for innovative teaching strategies that foster critical thinking and active teaching/learning processes, debate warrants serious consideration. Debate is a teaching strategy that permits students to become actively involved in learning course content while promoting critical thinking and enhancing verbal communication skills. Perhaps of equal or greater importance is the fact that students like debate. Students say that debate is exciting and fun, and shouldn't learning be fun?

Timothy Stewart states in “Debate for ESOL Students” that a survey of the language needs of nonnative English speakers in U.S. universities found that ESOL students ranked formal speaking and listening comprehension skills as their two biggest problem areas (Ferris, 1998). The results also indicated that art, humanities, and business courses are characterized by class participation, discussions, formal speaking and debates, and, moreover, that ESOL students found these activities difficult. In addition, Ferris discovered that these skills were more likely to be required in “classes with higher proportions of ESL students” (p. 300). Debate offers ESOL teachers a way to combine the practice of these important skills.

Discussion

- I. Effective Communication Gets the Job Done.
- II. Western Communication Culture is High Hurdle to Clear.
- III. What Skills to Acquire for Effectiveness in Inter-Cultural Communication?
- IV. Independence (Individualism) before Interdependence (Collectivism)
- V. English Debating Format and Tasks
- VI. What is English Debate Useful for?

I. Effective Communication Gets the Job Done

The exchange of information and ideas is an essential part of resolving conflicts in order to reach agreements and make decisions on what to do and how to do it, all of which initiate any business or project. This is because, in most cases, enterprises cannot be accomplished by one single individual but require a group of people from different cultures with different ideas working together. Furthermore, having leaders of the group who can touch people's hearts with values and vision to motivate and bond people is essential to successfully execute the group's decisions. Execution fundamentally means to put together people's efforts and actions, without which practically nothing can be accomplished. What is needed to make all these things happen? People's continuous exchange of ideas and information for discussion, agreement, and collaboration is the lifeblood that brings about the successful execution of human enterprises. In this endeavor, communication is necessitated, and its effectiveness is measured. In the end, effective communication brings about the desired results to carry out enterprise and complete projects.

When it comes to living and working abroad, Japanese need to clearly recognize that verbal communication is essential and group discussion is a common method for reaching agreement and decision. Western societies expect people to be explicit, and expressing one's ideas in public is perfectly acceptable and the very first step to make communication work. To Japanese, Western people speak with a lot of words at a fast speed and their expressions can be direct and sometimes blunt to get their points across. This style of communication is different from Japanese general psychology and socially expected behaviors, although it is all fine and essential in Western societies. Westerners expect Japanese to feel and act accordingly as well when in Western societies.

As mentioned previously, most communication is non-verbal (Hall, 1987). Referring to non-verbal elements of communication in Japan as a computer system program, Hall states:

If we do not pay attention to these elements, not only will we learn nothing of informatics, but the system of culture will not work for us, whether we are in our native culture or another. Culture can be likened to an enormous, subtle, extraordinarily complex computer. It programs the actions and responses of every person, and these programs must be mastered by anyone wishing to make the system work. (4)

Hall teaches that the communication system programs unique to a society are formulated over time through people's activities to “*survive, advance in the world, and*

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

gain satisfaction from life.” Hall goes on to warn us that failure to pay attention to these key elements of communication will possibly lead us into the errors listed below:

- 1) Leaving out crucial steps because one has not truly mastered the system.
- 2) Unconsciously applying one's own rules to another system, which never works.
- 3) Deliberately rejecting the rules - written or unwritten - and trying to force one's own rules on another system.
- 4) Changes and/or breakdowns of the system in times of political upheaval, economic collapse, war, and revolution. (4)

Guidance from Hall on the critical need to master the non-verbal communication system was given to American people and firms who want to successfully conduct their business in Japan. Conversely and ironically, however, Japanese must understand that the *enormous, subtle, extraordinarily complex* programs of non-verbal communication systems are not there to help Japanese when it comes to Japanese trying to conduct business effectively in Western societies or a different global setting. Japanese thoughts and ideas must be expressed explicitly, which is a prerequisite for effective communication in cross- and inter-cultural activities. Otherwise, Japanese will encounter the four errors Hall points out.

The whole point in this section is that effective communication is key to success for anything we pursue in business or non-business projects. In the inter-cultural environment, effective communication becomes even more critical to be successful. The Japanese unique non-verbal communication system is not the prevalent method of communication in non-Japanese communities. We Japanese, therefore, have a serious need to change our way of communicating with global societies.

II. Western Communication Culture is a High Hurdle to Clear.

Japan is an island nation geographically isolated from the rest of the world for a long period of time. The extreme high context (HC) society was formulated by exceptionally low diversity and high homogeneity, and its degree of HC intensity is high. Heavy dependency – 85% of the entire population survived – on rice agriculture for almost its entire history leading to the country’s highly collective and interdependent society. As mentioned previously, rice agriculture fed the huge population despite a scarcity of cultivable lands. Lifson lectured about the highly collective nature of Japanese communities and described its interdependency in this way:

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

A field has to be under water before you drain the water into the field below it. You have to go about it systematically. You have to get your neighbors to work on your field. And you work on your neighbors' fields. You all work together to maintain the ditches, the canals, and the ponds where the water is stored before it is brought to the fields. (Refer to Appendix A)

Dr. Lifson determined, “So in Japan, work is inherently a collective endeavor. Work is not something individuals do. Work is something that a community does together with all the people there.” Consensus and harmony must be there without question, along with collaboration in lifestyle to pursue the common survival goals shared among all the people. The livelihood of each and every individual can only be secured by collective endeavors, which has been evident in the long history of Japan and its people. Each and every one of us is for a society, and a society is for each and every one of us. The uniqueness of Japanese social behavior is rooted in the agricultural base. Japanese people place public needs and value in front of those of individuals, and the well-being of society as a whole is considered to be a direct cause of an individual’s welfare. Japan may be the most socialistic country among all democratic nations in this regard.

With such inherent social endowments as described above, Japanese people need not utilize a lot of words to communicate and to build consensus because their language and culture evolved with high context (HC) built in through the long history of sharing the common day-to-day work goals with underlying homogeneous needs and values. Therefore, public speaking skills and oral communication skills in general have not been a critical element of social life for Japanese throughout the major part of their history till the dawn of the 20th century.

In fact, even today, vocal people are not seen with much credibility just because of the fact they are outspoken. An individual’s assertiveness on behalf of his or her own interests and views is viewed as an obstruction against the existing unwritten consensus. Assertiveness has been considered to be a big annoyance in Japanese society. Therefore Japanese people need not be, and in fact are not trained well in “*assertiveness*” in any part of their education system. On the other hand, in low context countries that are a major part of the world, there are multiple races, faiths and cultures residing together and, therefore, reaching agreement is an essential process in which people are expected to express and exchange thoughts, information and messages through verbal communication and with assertiveness.

The four elements of American communication and culture described by Dr. Tomizawa can be big hurdles for Japanese to clear. Dr. Sadatoshi Tomizawa, however,

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

alerts us that unless Japanese students are well taught and trained in these elements, they won't be proficient in English verbal communication. Dr. Tomizawa is concerned about the fact that the Japanese government, industrial leaders, and English teachers are not always well aware of the critical US-Japan contrasts in communication, and these differences are not tactically addressed in the process of English education in Japan.

Japanese attach so much importance to reaching unanimous consensus and maintaining harmony in a group as perfectly as possible. Consequently, Japanese prefer not to resolve conflict in public, in order to allow a group member who loses in an argument to maintain face or prestige. With this social psychology, Japanese prefer not to have public debate or discussion to begin with. Instead, they prefer to have one-on-one dialogue with members in advance to find out about each other's positions on the issues prior to a meeting. By the time members sit down in a meeting, in most of the cases, consensus is practically formed and members have very good ideas beforehand on how the meeting will unfold. Even when resolving a conflict, members choose indirect expressions to avoid explicit conflicts surfacing officially. Harmony ("Wa" or "和") in a group must be secured by all means because harmony is imperative to effectively execute what is agreed upon in the end. Japanese cannot afford to have even a single individual be against the common goals and the way to go about them. Japanese are deeply acquainted in their heart and soul with the true effect of interdependence, and they adamantly believe that unanimous heartfelt participation by all members is the key to ultimate success. In Western societies, however, it is imperative to identify conflicts and where they are coming from so that people can resolve them and reach agreement in the group for action to move forward quickly. In such situations, one needs to be assertive and effective in expressing oneself to win the argument and to lead the group in the right direction.

The Japanese traditional spirit urges everyone to respect and honor parents, teachers, bosses, and elders. This tradition is said to have stemmed originally from Confucian teachings. (Japanese culture was historically influenced much by Chinese, in the same way much of the Western world was influenced to a certain degree by Latin.) The Japanese language is meticulous about rules for special words and expressions to show respect for seniority. In Western societies and languages, basically there is no such thing that equates to these rules. In contrast to Japan, out of respect for individualism, the equality of every individual is considered and incorporated in communication style, and importance is attached to effectiveness in communication rather than hierarchy. This gap in social psychology between two different worlds certainly makes Japanese perplexed when speaking in English. With uncertainty, Japanese people face problems in making normal conversation with Westerners due to its reliance on the right choice of words,

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

particularly when they are conversing with persons who are ranked higher than themselves.

If Japanese make a highly visible public victory in argument or even in one-on-one conversation, they can be seriously wrong according to the laws of Japanese social relationships, even if their argument is logically right. Simply put, Japanese are taught and trained not to talk a lot particularly in public, not to be explicit, to be respectful to senior persons above all, and not to be assertive in public communication. When Japanese talk, they are automatically bound to these principles of communication behavior. Japanese students must break these habits that have been built into their system through the process of 15~ 20 years of acculturation in such a unique society.

III. What Skills to Acquire for Effectiveness in Inter-Cultural Communication?

To be effective cross-cultural communicators, Japanese, no matter what social pursuits they may have, need to drop their inherent ways of communication for a moment and become active participants in vocal exchange of ideas and thoughts. The high context, non-verbal, conflict-avoiding ways of communication do not work but only push us out of the communication process in the inter-cultural global society. We first need to feel free and comfortable with talking openly in public and expressing thoughts and needs of our own. We need to know confidently that being assertive in our own views is perfectly all right. It is not that we must be egoistic, nor is individualism the final goal. Harmony and collaboration with associates still stands as the ultimate outcome that we are striving for. In order for us to secure harmony and build collaboration, we shall first understand each other, clarify reasons behind our thoughts and feelings, and establish common values and goals, which we did not have to consciously build in Japanese societies. In Japanese societies these are all given; we all know each other, where each one of us lives, what we need, why we need it because we fought for survival together on the same island for thousands of years. In multi-racial and inter-cultural societies, however, people have to go through the process to identify the common value and vision so that mutual trust and consensus are built and collaboration toward the common goals is initiated. How do they do that? It always begins with expressing thoughts sincerely but candidly, and understanding each other. The referendum that took place recently in Scotland on its independence from the United Kingdom is a prime example of public communication and a democratic procedure to realize consensus building.

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

According to Dr. Tomizawa's guidance, Japanese must learn to be assertive and use English to articulately convey messages, get used to direct and clear expressions, and position themselves equal to anyone whom they are communicating with. On top of these key communication culture and habits, there is another unique Western communication cultural element that Japanese need to learn. In a dynamically diversified society with multiple races and cultures, what Japanese face in the Western world is people with different values, religions, interests, and life goals. Where the value systems are different and there is no pre-existing trust or common goals, one's argument must have good reasons in order to be appealing. One's contentions may be heard, but if they are not backed up with reason and rationale, chances for one's arguments to be convincing are slim. Logic and reasoning are an essential part of effective Western communication. The author spent much time learning and practicing English debate during his collegiate days and one fundamental teaching as well as the most critical rule of English debate was "Make your statement, then prove it." When you make a statement, you have a burden of proof.

The author proposes that being logical be added as the fifth characteristic of Western communication culture that Japanese must be trained in. Again, in high context communication, when you say something, you can expect that most of the people in the group automatically understand why you say what you say and you may not need to refer to the reason and logic behind it. On the contrary, however, in low context communication, everyone looks for reasoning behind what you say or proof of your statement. This requires Japanese to break from their habits and to practice new habits of reasoning their statements almost all the time. Throughout a business career and with ample experience in business collaboration efforts abroad, the author has been fortunate to have had the aptitude of argumentation with reasoning to help tremendously with building consensus, motivating people, and getting things moving forward when working with American and European partners and associates.

To put this into perspective, the following are five inter-cultural communication principles that Japanese students need to consciously learn and be able to practice.

- (a) Assertiveness: Be positive and passionate in expressing your view and interest.
- (b) Articulation: Articulate your ideas with words.
- (c) Explicitness: Get used to direct expression to avoid misunderstanding.
- (d) Independence: Regard yourself as an equally important individual as anyone else.
- (e) Reasoning: Prove your statement with reasons to lead to the right direction.

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

On top of mastery of the English language, Japanese students need to be given opportunities to learn Western communication culture and its key features discussed above. Otherwise, the long years of effort to acquire knowledge and skill in English grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and composition are wasted. A large number of Japanese students end up with very little English speaking ability in spite of 8 to 10 years devoted to learning English. They need to be taught that the high context, non-verbal, avoiding-conflict ways of communication push them out of the communication process in the inter-cultural global society. A complete paradigm shift must take place somewhere in the English education process so that they come to be confidently aware that being assertive in expressing their own views and needs is perfectly all right and is rather expected in global community and enterprises. Japanese students should be trained in vocal practice of the language well and effectively so that they feel free and comfortable with talking openly in public. They should be eager to actively participate in vocal exchange of ideas and thoughts.

In his book entitled “The Classroom Where International Japanese are born”, Mr. Toru Nakahara, the principal of Osaka Izumi High School, who practiced law both in Japan and USA for 2 and 10 years respectively, states while “Silence is gold” is Japanese standard, “Eloquence is gold and silence is a loss of identity” by the world standard.

IV. Independence (Individualism) before Interdependence (Collectivism)

As touched upon earlier, however, getting used to and becoming capable of using Western ways of communication should by no means make Japanese just egoistic speakers about their own interests. While recognizing the values of individualism, they still need to know that the collective endeavor is imperative to accomplish truly desired results for the group.

Assertiveness is absolutely not equated with being arrogant or being aggressive for the sake of getting one’s point across or pursuing one’s own self-interests one-sidedly. Rather, it is just a process to be open and frank about mutual positions and interests so as to find differences in ideas and to ultimately find common causes and values, which naturally come out of respect for one another. Westerners are keen on and tolerant of individual needs and interests, and their fundamental philosophy on society is that people should work hard to ensure that the society works for the welfare and livelihood of the majority of individuals in society. And it does not end there. They, too, clearly recognize the need for collaboration to put together efforts of independent individuals in order to achieve something extraordinarily desirable for the society’s well-being, which is

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

the same goal as that of the Japanese rice agricultural society. Westerners just need to take a different process and route to get there due to the great societal diversity that is not in existence in Japan.

In the book entitled “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” Dr. Stephen R. Covey (1989) states,

Interdependence is a far more mature, more advanced concept. If I am physically interdependent, I am self-reliant and capable, but I also realize that you and I working together can accomplish far more than, even at my best, I could accomplish alone. If I am emotionally interdependent, I derive a great sense of worth within myself, but I also recognize the need for love, for giving, and for receiving love from others. If I am intellectually interdependent, I realize that I need the best thinking of other people to join with my own. As an interdependent person I have the opportunity to share myself deeply, meaningfully, with others, and I have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings. . Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make; dependent people cannot choose to become interdependent. Dependent people cannot choose to become interdependent. They don't have the character to do it; they don't own enough of themselves.” (Appendix C)

Dr. Covey articulately describes the benefits and necessity of being interdependent and defines the relationship between independence and interdependence. Below is another quote from Dr. Covey’s writing on independence and interdependence:

True independence of character allows us to act rather than be acted upon. It frees us from our dependence on circumstances and other people and is a worthy, liberating goal. But it is not the ultimate goal in effective living.

Interdependence is a more mature, advanced concept. As an interdependent person, you have the opportunity to share yourself with others and have access to the vast resources and potential of other human beings. And the success in self-realization will be elevated higher.

As shown in the diagram in Appendix C, Dr. Covey illustrates the growing process from Dependent, Independent, to Interdependent in relation to the 7 habits to make people and groups successful in ensuring the desired results. The lesson is that interdependency cannot be achieved by dependent individuals. In order for us to reach the truly interdependent status and reap its fruits, we shall be independent at first, i.e. we shall have our individualism firmly established. However, Dr. Covey warns Westerners that individualism by itself does not suffice, and they should seek the ultimate benefits of interdependence. This profound message, in turn, is a warning to Japanese society that

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

Japanese should learn to be independent (individualistic) in order to create in interdependence or collaborate on global projects.

The above two pieces of advice the author believes are provided to American and Japanese respectively by Dr. Covey interestingly represent the difference in basic approach in business pursuits between Americans and Japanese. These differences usually cause misunderstanding and sometimes serious conflict between the two in the workplace. Author often used to bring up Dr. Covey and the 7 Habits in the discussions with his cross-cultural management leaders.

For Japanese to be effective in a global society, they shall use their success formula, i.e. individuals for society, collective endeavor, and long-term planning. However, they ought to know that the success formula can only be used when it is effectively communicated to the rest of the world. Japanese should express and share their thoughts and ideas, and they need to be good in doing so.

V. English Debating Format and Tasks

Educational debate provides students with a format to exchange views on a certain topic from two opposing viewpoints: affirmative and negative to the proposition. The topics listed below are from English Speaking Examination of EIKEN Grade 1, which are appropriate to use as debate propositions. Debate topics should be carefully selected in consideration of educational opportunity for young students (age 15 ~ 22) to explore and develop their knowledge and critical thinking/analysis skills. The following are examples of suitable debate topics:

1. Is democracy the best form of government?
2. Can Japan's rural communities be revitalized?
3. Will religion have the biggest influence on global politics in the future?
4. Is globalization good for the world economy?
5. Can it be justified for one nation to interfere in the internal affairs of another?
6. Should advertising be more strictly regulated?
7. Will the gap between rich and poor people in Japan increase in the future?
8. Has human impact on the natural environment been exaggerated?
9. Does art make an essential contribution to society?
10. Is academic performance the best indicator of future success in life?
11. Can the costs of space exploration be justified?
12. Should the Internet be free from censorship?
13. Should countries have the right to possess chemical and biological weapons?

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

14. Should the government prioritize domestic issues over international issues?
15. Are the sciences more important than art in today's society?
16. Can violence ever be justified in support of a political case?
17. Should people be encouraged to buy more domestically-produced goods?
18. Is too much pressure put on children to conform to traditional gender roles?
19. Should contemporary politics be taught in schools?
20. Should Japan make more effort to achieve gender equality?
21. Is military strength the most important element of national security?

The topics for debate should have content that engages students personally, intellectually and sometimes emotionally. The content shall be current and relevant so that students can relate it to themselves. The deeper the engagement, the more critical analysis skills are developed.

Shown below are the format and flow of an English debate match that is from the author's collegiate days. It may not be the most current one but still covers the key components and the essence of English debating practice.

- (1) 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech: 5 minutes
- (2) Cross Examination by Negative debater: 2 minutes
- (3) 1st Negative Constructive Speech: 5 minutes
- (4) Cross Examination by Affirmative debater: 2 minutes
- (5) 2nd Affirmative Constructive Speech: 5 minutes
- (6) Cross Examination by Negative debater: 2 minutes
- (7) 2nd Negative Constructive Speech: 5 minutes
- (8) Cross Examination by Affirmative debater: 2 minutes
- (9) Preparation for Closing Arguments: 3 minutes
- (10) Negative Closing Argument: 3 minutes
- (11) Affirmative Closing Argument: 3 minutes

The icebreaker is the first affirmative speaker, whose role is to present definitions of key terminologies, to develop the main case, and to summarize salient points in such a way as to persuade the audience in favor of his/her position on the proposition. Then the first negative speaker stands up to ask a series of questions to the first affirmative speaker to clarify and establish the points of argument in such a way as to lead it to his/her favor, which will be useful for the first negative constructive speech to follow. In the first negative constructive speech, the debater can refute definitions, present the opposing case, rebut some of the affirmative arguments, and summarize key negative arguments. Next is the second speaker from the affirmative side to cross examine the first negative speaker. These exchanges are repeated between second speakers from the respective sides, whose mission is to respond to opposing arguments and reinforce their own contentions. After

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

the constructive speeches and cross-examinations are done by the four debaters, with a short intermission in between, one speaker from each of the respective sides stands up and presents closing arguments which summarize the crucial points and major contentions of each side. And that concludes one debating match.

The key components in the debating process are (A) Constructive Speech, (B) Cross Examination, and (C) Closing Argument from both affirmative and negative sides. The role and mission of the first affirmative constructive speaker is crucial as his/her speech sets the stage of the whole debating match. The typical first affirmative constructive speech consists of the following elements and logical path:

- (1) Definition of key terminologies in the proposition
- (2) Status quo analysis – key observations to lead into need for change
- (3) Need for changes – the core of affirmative contention
- (4) Reasons for changes – the core argumentation of the affirmative case
- (5) Advantages of changes – supporting arguments
- (6) Plan of actions to execute changes – complementary arguments

Debaters are expected to conduct in-depth research of the issue and to come to the debate match fully prepared. To that end, debaters examine relevant literature, analyze data, and develop a solution or hypothesis to justify both the affirmative and negative side argumentation. Yes, the debater is expected to take sides, affirmative or negative, when it comes to the formal debating match. This means having to put oneself in another's shoes and to gain an in-depth understanding of the essence of the issues.

Once students are engaged in debating, they are put into the situation where they are expected to make statements to convince the audience, to ask meaningful and quick questions to lead into their side's own argumentation, and to put the ideas into perspective to present a clear case of the side they are standing for. They have no other choice but to speak up and make sense. This remarkably represents traits of Western communication culture. Thus, English debate offers an ideal training session for Japanese to acquire command of English as well as to experience firsthand Western communication style.

VI. What Is English Debate Useful for?

Debate in English takes place in a learning environment where students are engaged in total immersion of English, using a genuine and meaningful processing of language and information, and problem solving practices. Above all, debate can be

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

considered to be a formula to experience the basics of Western communication procedures and culture.

When students stand to speak out in a debating match, they are expected to do only one thing, which is to become vocally explicit in presenting ideas and argumentations, i.e. to be an effective communicator in English. Throughout the 40-minute spoken communication and exchange of ideas and information, students are immersed in an English environment and forced to concentrate on explaining, informing, proving, persuading, discussing, questioning, and defending their opinions. This is nothing but a thorough practice of major language functions.

According to Timothy Stewart (2003), many Japanese students of English name debate as being a meaningful experience and useful medium to boost their English capability. The author was one of those students through his own debating experience in his collegiate life. Mastery of English, with English being a foreign language for Japanese, naturally and absolutely requires an immense amount of practice, particularly in the area of speaking. Practice, practice, and practice is the only way of being better and proficient; there is no alternative or shortcut. To continue practicing, however, is not an easy task because it is easy to get bored with repeating the same things time and time again. Fortunately debate offers a format of persistent practice and has strong motivating features. Debate provides students with continuous challenge to improve their English language functioning in the flow of argument on topics of their interests. Every phase of the debate process requires debaters to make immediate responses and provide input, which never lets them have even a single moment of being inattentive or bored. Subject matter can be chosen to be of intellectual and emotional interest to students, which makes them engaged even more deeply. Debate is a perfect total immersion environment and, therefore, it is the best and ideal instrument to foster English verbal communication competence.

Timothy Stewart (2003) referenced the results of a survey of the language needs of nonnative English speakers in U.S. universities and stated that English as a second language (ESOL) students ranked formal speaking and listening comprehension skills as their two biggest problem areas. They also described art, other humanities, and business courses to be characterized by class participation. ESOL students found discussions, formal speaking and debates difficult. Stewart indicated that debate offers ESOL teachers a way to combine the practice of these important skills.

Debate urges students to be explicit and clear on their views and ideas. It requires them to have their own views and ideas to begin with. Students are expected to express them well. It is perfectly all right to be individualistic and independent from others with one's own views, ideas and sense of purpose, and actually, one has to be that way. This

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

individualism is what is desired from Western societies and profoundly impacts the way verbal communication is carried out. Establishing one's own views and value of life is the lifeblood to actively participate in social activities as well as the base of Western communication culture. Japanese youth must be trained very well in formulating their views and opinions at first. Then foster their ability in verbal presentations through articulation of arguments, which are always supported by logic and reasoning. One must always present the reason why something is done in order to justify one's ideas on what to do and how to do it for the desired resolution to problems. Thus, debate is an ideal education platform to learn Western communication culture and principles.

Debate also urges students to be responsible for and to commit to diligent investigation, critical thinking/analysis and to bringing resolution to the issue. Debate offers a superb training field for students to be proficient in critical thinking and problem solving. Problem solving is defined as an investigation to explore a situation, phenomenon, question, or problem to arrive at conclusions or a hypothesis that brings solutions to the issues. A problem-solving formula allows one to determine what needs to be satisfied, how it should be carried out, and why it has to be accomplished. Simply put, through the problem solving process, we define what to do (Goal), how to do it (Method), and why to do it (Motivation). These three key elements of problem solving formulate a backbone of constructive speeches, and are the hitting points during cross-examinations in debate. In other words, 'the debating brain' is 'a problem-solving brain'.

Problem-solving capability is considered to be the most fundamental qualification for leadership in the Western world. The leader's role is to lead a group of people in the right direction with goals, roadmaps, and values clearly established and shared. The author engaged in series of inter- and cross- cultural business projects throughout long years of leadership roles in business management, during which his 'Debating Brain' has always been one of the most resourceful tools used to bring several key enterprises to success. This 'Debating Brain' allowed him to communicate effectively with Westerners and helped him to establish and share goals, determine roadmaps, and motivate people to participate in the enterprises. The author's experience as business leader in various projects from setting up the first US sales office in Detroit, accomplishing 40% productivity improvement, bringing in \$50 million worth of new business, and completing a feasibility study of new die cast plant operations in Mexico were all backed up by the aptitude of problem analysis and solving, as well as motivating people with logical reasoning, all of which were fostered by debating practices in his early days of learning the English language. The author is firmly convinced that debate assisted him to get totally familiar with Western communication processes and to be effective at it, which definitely has helped to mark some successes in his business career.

Conclusions and Future Actions

For Japanese to be competent and effective performers, goal-getters, and contributors in a global or inter-cultural environment whether it is for business, politics, or educational pursuits, or any other enterprises that involve working with people from other parts of the world, Japanese, first of all, must be clearly aware of the ways the rest of the world communicates. These ways may be opposite in most cases to those of Japanese and Japanese society. Unless we acquire ability to present our ideas and views, propose solutions of our own, resolve conflicts with logic, and build consensus through candid human interaction, it will be very difficult to accomplish anything and to be successful outside of Japan. English debate is one of the ideal and practical learning environments in which Japanese youth can experience the format and culture of Western communication. What debate requires from students is beyond mere proficiency in English language skills. Debate trains students to think critically, present ideas effectively with logic, identify conflicts and resolutions, and use various ways to convince and win approval for their ideas, all of which are indispensable skills for international and inter-cultural communications and collaboration. Through debating practice, Japanese students become owners of any issue in front of them, the authorities of the problems, the competent leaders and executors of the problem resolution, on top of becoming effective communicators of English.

The author sincerely believes that his mission is to be of assistance to young Japanese people who aspire to be active participants in global business and enterprises and who make an effort to be truly effective globally. Using English debate will definitely assist the author to accomplish this mission with young Japanese students of global human capital for the future.

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

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Appendices

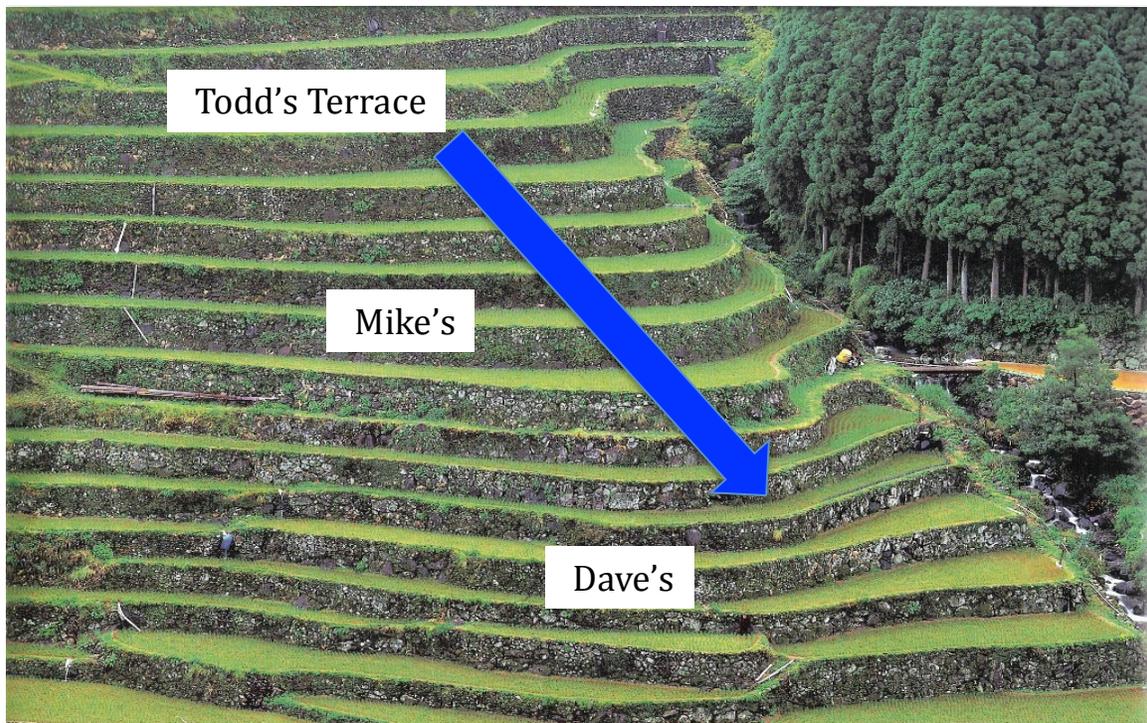
- A. Japanese Terraced Rice Fields
- B. Interview with Dr. Sadatoshi Tomizawa, Professor of Ball State University (2014). *Turnabout of English Education in Japan*
- C. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
- D. ESOL Debate Format

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

Appendix A: Japanese Terraced Rice Fields

- ◆ Irrigation system maintenance
- ◆ The entire village must work together assisting each other.
- ◆ INTERDEPENDENCE and HARMONY as the foundation

Rice Field Preparation - Water filling Sequence



“A field has to be under water before you drain the water into the field below it. You have to go about it systematically. You have to get your neighbors to work on your field. And you work on your neighbors’ fields. You all work together to maintain the ditches, the canals, and the ponds where the water is stored before it is brought to the fields.” Dr. Lifson (1993)

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

Appendix B: Interview with Dr. Sadatoshi Tomizawa, Ball State University

When: August 7, 2014
Where: Professor Tomizawa's office at Ball State University
Interviewee: Professor Dr. Sadatoshi Tomizawa
Interviewer: Kaz Hidaka, Counselor at KSD101 Counseling
Subject: Turnabout of English Education in Japan

Hidaka

Recently we are witnessing several remarkable signs of drastic directional changes in English education in Japan. The changes demand English education to shift its focus to raising more practical competency in spoken communications than having too much emphasis on writing. This seems an epoch-making turnabout that could possibly change the objective of English education in Japan. Professor Tomizawa, how do you see this recent development in Japan? Do you think this could bring some real changes that we have been waiting for for decades?

Dr. Tomizawa

Because of the high demand for globalization, Japan has no choice but to drastically reform its English education so that the English ability of the Japanese helps them conduct their businesses in global circumstances. This cannot be just a hope at this time but has to be a realistic and essential need that the Japanese government has been forced to address. With increased English speaking ability, the business and industrial communities of Japan could be better able to get work completed in the globalized business environment. This movement has been initiated by the hands-on reality of business, political, and diplomatic fronts. I think the Japanese government is serious about it, and as a result, it will make changes in the education system and teaching methodology toward creating global competitiveness by encouraging high levels of oral English competency. One recent example is that Hitotsubashi University made it official that all graduates must have a minimum credit of a 4 week-long experience in studying English abroad. Once this type of change has occurred at the university level, it is very likely to happen fast. Evaluation of English speaking ability will become an essential part of university entrance examinations. Then this testing will impact the entire 12 years of English education below university and college level. If that happens, it seems to me that it will be a real turnaround. I think that English has been used as a convenient tool for evaluating student aptitudes in both the sciences and humanities because the English tests can be used to evaluate reading, grammar, and vocabulary. Speaking ability, however, has been left out, and that has left a huge hole in the oral English proficiency of the Japanese young generation. Japan has no choice but to develop Japanese

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

global human capital and leaders who are effective in interacting with people in English in a global setting. What is desired is for Japanese to possess practical and dynamic communication skills in English.

Hidaka

Language ability with an emphasis on speaking is absolutely necessary as we see. What else do you think we need to learn in order to be an effective communicator of English?

Dr. Tomizawa

Verbal communication ability has been critically missing. How to talk effectively has not been a focus or a serious objective in English education in Japan. Japanese generally expect each other to understand what is being meant without explicit verbal expressions. Outside of Japan, however, making oneself understood through verbal communication is a highly valued skill. Japanese need to understand what kind of communication effectiveness is recognized by the rest of the world. This aspect of language competence is indispensable on top of mastery of speaking.

Here is what I recommend for Japanese students to do in order to become successful communicators in English.

- 1) Don't stick too much to accuracy of the language, but be focused on delivering messages. Small mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, and word choice are not a big deal when considering the objective is to get your point across. Japanese tend to be preoccupied with grammatical accuracy of the language over communication in it. That makes them lose focus on expressing what they want to convey. Get yourself more motivated to speak out and to express your views and opinions.
- 2) Learn the culture of the people you are speaking with, and master the way they communicate. There are four things that Japanese need to clearly understand in American communication culture:
 - a) Assertiveness is a socially accepted norm. One presents ideas and thoughts in order to present oneself as a competent individual who participates and contributes to society.
 - b) In the United States, many things are stated explicitly in the absence of many commonly shared connotations of words and expressions. America is considered a Low Context/Individualistic society unlike Japan, a High Context/Collective society, in which more communication takes place effectively without a lot of verbal expressions.
 - c) Direct expression is not necessarily rude but is rather required to avoid misunderstanding. A blunt yes or no response is acceptable whereas Japanese communication style prefers

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

indirect and implicit expressions to avoid visible conflict in public.

- d) Hierarchy in a given speech setting is not a critical element in communication, and anyone is equal in the name of effectiveness of communication, whereas Japanese need to pay attention to the given hierarchy in choosing appropriate expressions in public communication.

Knowledge of mechanics such as grammar and vocabulary of the English language by itself is not enough for Japanese to be effective speakers. They need to be aware of differences in communication style and be able to apply these differences to practicing speaking in English. I believe it is imperative that the recent movements in English education reform in Japan address the tasks of learning the culturally embedded features of the language, if the Japanese are to be effective in speaking in English in inter-cultural communication settings.

Hidaka

I clearly see the importance of leaning the differences in communication styles. The total immersion method is often brought up nowadays in Japan as an effective English learning environment. I think that by putting Japanese students in an intensive English environment, those cultural differences in communication that Professor Tomizawa pointed out, hopefully, could be experienced and learned by them.

Now I would like to bring up one more item, which adds to the different communication styles between America and Japan. I feel that logic and reasoning are an essential part of Western communication style. In the highly diversified and low context society like America, without a common value set or life goals being shared, logic and reasoning are critically important for communication. I have had the experience of spending a lot of time learning English through debating and I was often told, "Make your statement and prove it."

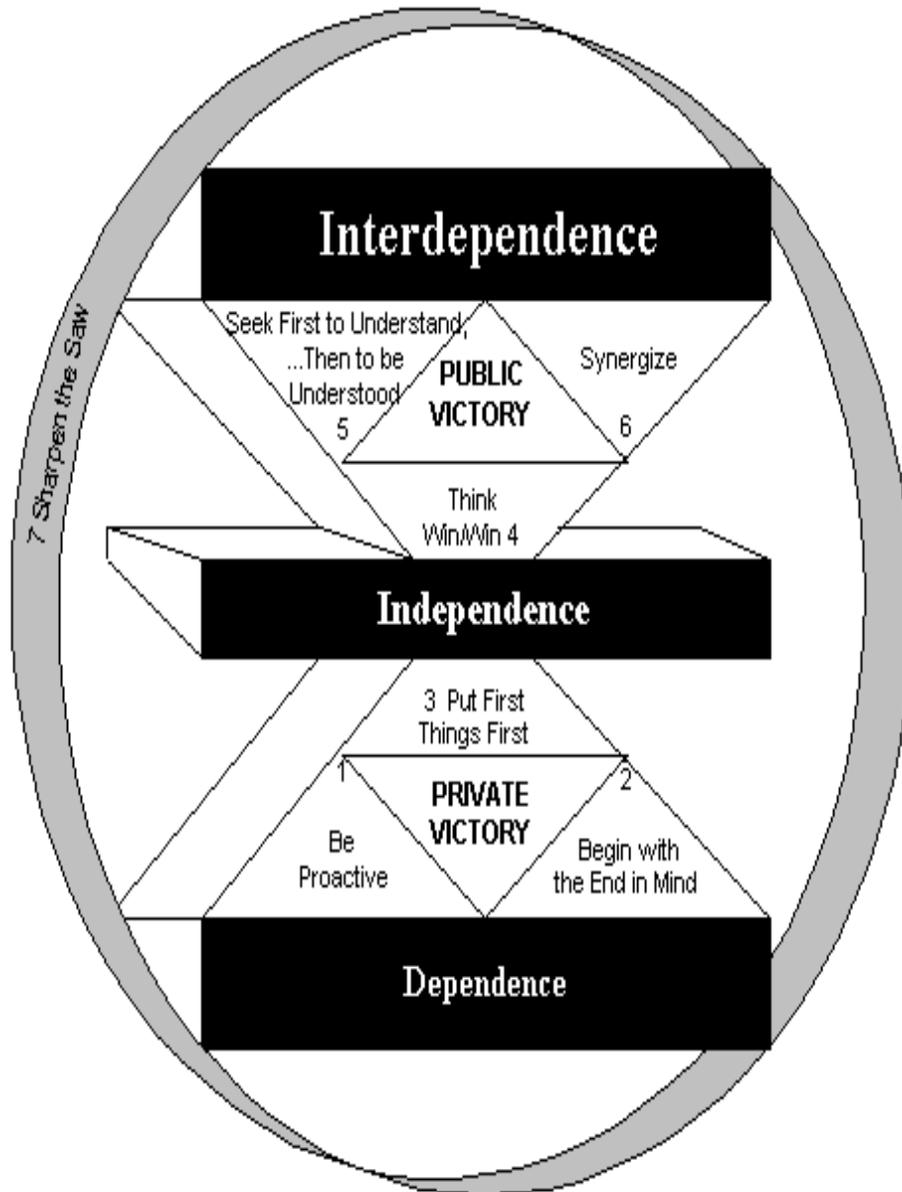
Professor Tomizawa, do you agree to take this up as fifth characteristic of American communication style?

Dr. Tomizawa

America is a country of debate. Any little conversation seeks logical explanation. The need for logic and reasoning stems from the nature of the low context society. It may be *herikutu* or excuses for the Japanese but reasoning is always important for Americans. Reasoning is definitely a part of American communication that Japanese need to get used to and be able to use.

BENEFITS OF ENGLISH DEBATE FOR JAPANESE

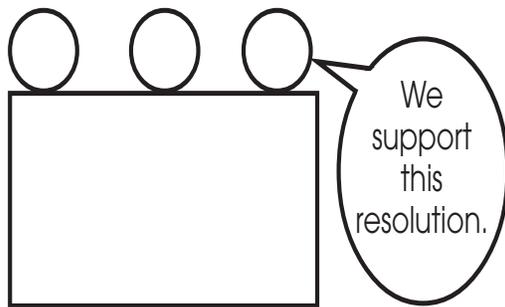
Appendix C: Growing process from Dependent to Independent, and to Interdependent with the 7 Habits of Effective People (Covey, 1989)



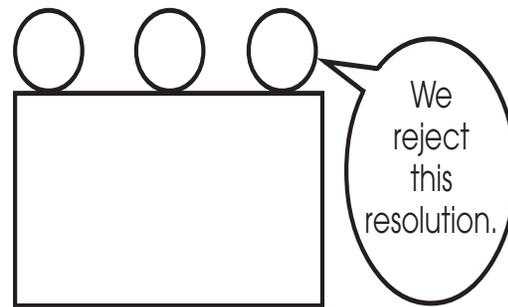
Appendix D: ESOL Debate Format, from “Debate for ESOL Students” Timothy Stewart (2003)

Resolution: Capital punishment should be abolished.

Affirmative Team



Negative Team



- ❖ One or more team members presents the team’s position and a brief overview of its arguments.
 - ❖ Each team member presents one major argument.
 - ❖ Each team member is chief note taker and respondent for one opposition argument.
 - ❖ All team members are assigned to ask and answer questions during cross-examination.
 - ❖ One or more team members presents a closing statement.
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Figure 1. ESOL debate format in a nutshell.