

【Articles】

Yakudoku today: Investigating the use of *yakudoku* in Japanese Secondary Schools using the COLT observation scheme

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Abstract

The most recent set of policies issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MEXT, 2011a) provided the strongest commitment yet to implementing a communicative curriculum in English education in Japanese secondary schools that advocate for the adoption of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) practices in place of the traditional focus on grammar and translation (*yakudoku*). This comes at a time when the ideological monopoly of CLT is being questioned, particularly by those working in an Asian context and the role of translation in second language learning is also being re-assessed. Using an adapted version of the COLT observation scheme, nine lessons were observed with five dif-

ferent teachers in one public secondary school in Tokyo. This study found that a new type of *yakudoku* was being practiced that incorporated elements from traditional grammar translation and audiolingualism, combined with the interactive, oral output-focused approach of CLT. As well as providing evidence for the practice of a more nuanced variety of *yakudoku*, the study also found that activities were engaging, motivating, and could be said to be providing useful skills for the global age.

Keywords: *Yakudoku, CLT, Japanese secondary schools, COLT observation scheme*

1 Introduction

English education in Japan has long been criticised for its adherence to traditional pedagogical methodologies and lack of interactive and communicative activities in the classroom (Seargeant, 2008; Toh, 2019). In an ongoing effort to address these perceived shortcomings, approximately every decade since the 1980s, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MEXT), has issued Course of Study guidelines for teachers in public elementary and secondary schools to adhere to, with the most recent being issued in 2018 (MEXT, 2018a, 2018b). Although issued over ten years ago now, the most recent set of full guidelines to specifically address language education (MEXT, 2011a), represent the most strident effort yet to encourage teachers to teach using English and to embrace aspects of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). At the same time as the Course of Study, MEXT also issued a document titled “Five Proposals and Specific Measures for Developing Proficiency in English for International Communication” (MEXT, 2011b), designed to offer an honest assessment of the perceived problems inherent in the education system in Japan, and to offer solutions. These solutions included making greater use of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), Japanese teachers with overseas experience and increased use of oral-based communication activities. These points were built on and re-iterated in a shorter document in 2014 that decreed that classes should be conducted in English “in principle” at the junior high school level and in English completely at the high school level (MEXT, 2014).

As CLT methodology swept through the global English Language Teaching (ELT) industry in the 1970s, the previously prevalent grammar-translation method was gradually replaced, or at least pushed into the shadows. However, in Japan, the particular form of grammar-translation known as *yakudoku* continued to thrive, despite the Course of Study guidelines and various top-down decrees from the Japanese government. Therefore, as MEXT struggles to implement its most recently issued courses of study, which advocate communicative approaches through English-only use in the classroom and an emphasis on oral communication, this paper investigates the practices of *yakudoku* in a secondary school in Tokyo, in order to establish what methodologies are being employed in the classroom. These findings are viewed in relation to current beliefs surrounding cultural bias in CLT

(Holliday, 2005, 2006), the use of translation skills and L1 in the classroom (Cook, 2010; Woolard, 2013), and ideas around L1 use and identity (Lawrence, 2023).

2 *Yakudoku*

2.1 Historical overview of *yakudoku*

The origins of *yakudoku* are thought to go back over 1,000 years to the time when the Japanese began to read Chinese texts and documents for the first time. The word *yakudoku* itself is derived from the characters 訳 (translation) and 読 (reading) and is defined as “a technique or a mental process for reading a foreign language in which the target language sentence is first translated word-by-word, and the resulting translation reordered to match Japanese word order as part of a process of reading comprehension” (Hino, 1988, p. 46). This three-stage (word by word translation, re-ordering into Japanese word order and expansion into a fully correct Japanese sentence) process was very mathematical and explicit in its coding, utilising symbols to illustrate the correct word order. The same system was transferred to the study of Dutch in the 19th century and eventually to English some decades later. As the technique evolved, the code symbols were replaced with a simpler numerical system (using Japanese kanji characters) to indicate word order to learners (Hino, 1988).

2.2 *Yakudoku* today

Since the 19th century, as *yakudoku* has become firmly established in the Japanese consciousness, the explicit codes and numbers have become obsolete in what is now an “implicit mental process” (Hino, 1988 p. 48), whilst the basic process has remained the same. However, the traditional numerical style as described above can still be found in the thousands of exam-oriented evening schools (*juku*, sometimes translated as “cram schools” in English) attended by many secondary school students across Japan. With this in mind, Smith and Imura (2004) identify the current method not as *yakudoku*, but as *hensoku* (“irregular”) in contrast to its opposite *seisoku* (“regular”) according to the following definitions from Brinkley’s *Unabridged Japanese-English Dictionary* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1896):

Seisoku, n. A method of learning a language by studying the correct pronunciation as well as the meaning (opposite of *hensoku*)

Hensoku n. A method of learning a foreign language which consists in translating the meaning without regard to the correct pronunciation of the words, and without paying much attention to the rules of syntax. (Omura, 1978 p. 94 cited in ; Smith and Imura, 2004)

When seen from this historical perspective, it appears that what is referred to by the term *yakudoku* in the present time is not the systematic procedure it was in the past, but is used “in a more general sense, to refer to the overall focus on sentence-by-sentence translation of con-

nected texts into Japanese” (Smith and Imura, 2004 p. 31).

More recent research has found a wide variety of approaches to *yakudoku* from traditional practices to more innovative and experimental methods. In a traditional representation of *yakudoku*, Humphries and Burns (2015) found evidence that teachers were deliberately avoiding “communicative” activities in newly assigned CLT-focused textbooks in favour of lessons that were “teacher-led, highly structured, conducted in Japanese, and focused on recurring language structures” (p. 242). They also reported a focus on word-level translations and activities that provided students with transcriptions of listening texts that the teachers then translated for the students. These practices can be seen as contrary to the communicative approaches as prescribed by MEXT, and they seem to constitute *yakudoku* as it is commonly understood in its modern form. Following on from this, a slight evolution of the approach is given by Gorsuch (1999). One of the key tenets of *yakudoku* is that texts are translated from English into Japanese only. However, in her observations (which she describes as *yakudoku*) Gorsuch (1999) finds evidence of translations both from English into Japanese and from Japanese into English. Additionally, in their collaborative action research study, Thompson and Yanagita (2015) attempt to invert the traditional *yakudoku* approach by placing English texts in context and exploring them for meaning, before finally translating into Japanese as a form of review. They refer to this approach as “backward *yakudoku*”, which represents an innovative approach that shifts the role of translation to a secondary position.

These three studies all point to a wide variety of what may be thought of as *yakudoku* and suggest that the methodology is evolving and changing (albeit very slowly and incrementally) to meet new demands and new conceptions of language teaching.

3 The problematisation of ELT in Japan

The history of the discourse on English teaching and learning in Japan, whether from academic journals or government policy documents, comes from a default position of there being a “problem” or “problems” to be addressed (Hino, 1988; MEXT, 2011b), even when appearing to empathise with Japanese teachers (Humphries & Burns, 2015; Gorsuch, 1999; Seargeant, 2008; Tahira, 2012). An example of this dismissal of what are seen as Japanese practices and deference to methodologies developed in other countries can be seen in the wording to Proposal 1 of the 5 most recent proposals outlined by MEXT, where it recommends “approaches adopted in foreign countries” (MEXT, 2011b p. 5) without specifying what these approaches may be. Similarly, Hino (1988) in his clear description of *yakudoku*, focuses solely on the perceived negative aspects and not at all on the positive side. He concludes that “in terms of the teaching of English for communication needed today, it is undoubtedly a serious handicap for Japanese students of English” (p. 52), without questioning why and in what form English for communication is needed.

This embrace of ‘Western’ methods as ‘superior’ (Holliday, 2005) and consequently of traditional ‘Asian’ methods as lacking can be seen to represent a broad trend in the ELT field that perpetuates the cultural hegemony of Western teaching methods and technologies (Canagarajah, 1999; Ellis, 1996; Holliday, 1994, 2005, 2006; Phillipson, 1992), which is now being questioned, particularly by those working and researching in Asian educational contexts (LoCastro, 1996; Lowe, 2020; Lowe & Lawrence, 2018; Sakui, 2004; Sato, 2010; Sullivan, 2000).

Ellis (1996) states that “different constructions of meaning or ‘meaning systems’ exist across cultures which inhibit the transferability of particular pedagogical practices between them” (p. 213). Sullivan (2000) put it more directly, stating that CLT has come to “represent Anglocentric culture and Anglocentric goals of communication and that these values are being exported as part and parcel of CLT methodology” (p. 118). In her study of the beliefs and practices of Japanese lower and upper secondary teachers, Sakui (2004), drawing on literature from Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Bruce and Rubin, 1992), refers to this as ‘situated evaluation’. This theory recognizes the disparity between idealised curriculum and classroom reality that often emerges in educational settings with a top-down goal setting system, and attributes it to not only individual teacher beliefs but also environmental factors. Bax (2003) uses the same argument to call for a “dethronement of CLT and its priorities as the ruling paradigm” (p. 284) to be replaced with a ‘context approach’ (Holliday, 1994). This has resulted in calls for a more flexible, adapted form of CLT in the Japanese context (Abe, 2013; Tanaka, 2009; Thompson & Yanagita, 2015).

4 Translation and L1 Use in Second Language Learning

Translation can be defined simply as: “the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language” (Catford, 1965, cited in Cook, 2010, p. 56). Although this paper is focused specifically on the particular form of translation known as *yakudoku* and how it is being enacted in classrooms, it is useful to our overall understanding to give a general overview of recent approaches and attitudes to the idea of translation in the ELT field.

In his influential book *Translation in Language Teaching: An argument for reassessment* (2010), Cook illustrates how use of translation in language teaching was systematically discredited based on little empirical evidence and a misguided belief in the infallibility of the often monolingual native speaker. He argues that as well as offering the overburdened teacher a “safe and reliable option” (p. 14) it allows learners to think more deeply about how a language works and how the target language relates directly to their “own language” (Cook’s term) use, which, it is argued, gives the learner more confidence that they have fully understood the new language they are using.

This argument is picked up by Woolard (2013), who advocates an efficient approach to language learning that utilises new technology such as internet search engines and podcasts, but integrates this with a focus on drilling, memorisation and extensive use of L1 through complete translations of texts. Part of his approach also involves repeated visits by students to the same text, exploiting it fully for its grammatical and lexical richness. These are all aspects that Grammar Translation-led classes have included for many years and in the case of the use of translations as the base for learning the language, represent a similar approach to that of *yakudoku*.

This has been seen by Japanese researchers as being particularly pertinent to the Japanese context. Saito (2012) distinguishes *yakudoku* from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) by emphasising the “parsing-interpretation” aspect that it allows and the cognitive and critical thinking skills that this encourages, describing it as a mixture of construing, parsing, interpretation and translation. In line with Leonardi (2010, 2011) he also makes the case that translation is an inevitable and unavoidable occurrence that is essential for international communication. He also views use of L1 in the classroom as “scaffolding” (Ochi, 2009) that can help to build up students’ ability to use English effectively, and can be taken down when the learner is ready.

In terms of classroom research, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) directly compared compositions by Japanese university students written through translation against those composed directly in the L2. They found that although students claimed to prefer the direct style because they found it easier and wanted to be able to think in English, teachers rated the translated compositions higher in terms of syntactic complexity and style. Additionally, Ochi (2009) employed an Interpretation Training Method (ITM) consisting of “quick response practice, shadowing, summarization, and sight translation” (p. 124). and found that, particularly for lower-level learners, L1 and translation use promoted L2 output, facilitated semantic processing, and reduced anxiety. Further to this, a study by Ota (2009) of sentence repetition (SR) exercises by Japanese learners found that rather than being a merely mechanical process, SR was found to be a cognitive and “reconstructive task involving grammatical and syntactic processing” (p. 65). It also found a strong link between comprehension of meaning and successful repetition.

Alongside these practical justifications for L1 use in the classroom, recent research on both student and teacher identity in ELT has highlighted the psychological and emotional benefits of allowing the students’ L1 in the classroom (Nagashima & Lawrence, 2020). For example, Li and Zhu (2013) investigated L1 use in the form of translanguaging and found that the availability of their L1 in the classroom allowed students to perform their preferred identities. Similarly, Zhang and Lawrence (2023) found that when it was perceived that access to the L1 was denied, this led to feelings of anxiety for students. Although, slightly outside the scope of this study, for teachers too, having access to their own L1, and being

able to use it effectively in classroom activities, was closely tied to feelings of positive personal identity and emotional wellbeing (Lawrence, 2023; Nagashima & Lawrence, 2020).

Other aspects of learning, common to *yakudoku* and traditional practices have also regained support. For instance, a comparative study pitted rote memorisation against semantic mapping (presenting words in related categories that allows learners to use prior knowledge and is thought to give deeper understanding of words) in the acquisition of vocabulary (Khoii & Sharififar, 2013). It was found that there was no significant statistical difference between the two methods and the authors concluded that rote memorisation should not be written off as an effective means of acquiring vocabulary. A similar study by Laufer and Girsai (2008) that compared non-contrastive form-focused activities with contrastive analysis (CA) and translation exercises, found that within the same learning time frame, the students that had followed the CA/translation method significantly out-performed the form-focused group. This would seem to confirm Woolard's (2013) claim of efficiency, which could be seen as important within a Japanese state school setting where lesson time is limited.

5 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to investigate what methods were being used in lessons, what activities emanated from this, and how these fitted into the discourse of language teaching in Japan that has a largely traditional approach (using *yakudoku*) as described in the literature at one end, and the specifications of government guidelines at the other. In this way, the main focus is not on translation as a pedagogical act, but on the way that *yakudoku* is being performed in classrooms, and whether or not the call for a more flexible, context-dependent approach to CLT (Abe, 2013; Tanaka, 2009; Thompson & Yanagita, 2015) is being answered by practicing teachers.

6 Method

6.1 Participants

The study was carried out in a public lower secondary school in eastern Tokyo. The district is predominantly working class with a large number of lower-income families in social housing, although in recent years it has become a commuter base for white-collar families too, resulting in a mix of backgrounds and educational abilities.

The research consisted of non-participant observation of nine 50-minute lessons by five different Japanese teachers of English (JTEs), with four teachers' classes being observed twice. All teachers worked in the same school, which has a positive reputation in the area as being well disciplined and efficiently run. The five teachers were chosen due to availability,

but represented a wide range of age, experience and exposure to different kinds of teaching and learning (all names are pseudonyms):

- Takahashi-sensei – a newly qualified first year teacher with a background as a postal worker.
- Makino-sensei - a young teacher just beginning their third year of teaching, has worked with ALTs since beginning teaching.
- Wada-sensei - an experienced teacher of over 20 years with a long history of working with ALTs and active participation in the local education board.
- Tanikawa-sensei – an experienced teacher with over 25 years teaching experience and a long history of working with ALTs. Also an active member of the local education board.
- Hashimoto-sensei - a medium-term teacher (over 10 years) with no experience of working with ALTs.

6.2 Materials and Procedure

A simplified version of Spada and Fröhlich's Communication Observation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation scheme (Nunan, 1992; Dörnyei, 2007; Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) that uses 'event sampling', the recording of certain classroom events on a checklist to allow easy and efficient monitoring, was utilised together with handwritten field notes taken in a separate notebook. The COLT observation scheme is a comprehensive, but simple to use observation tool that has been used in a number of studies (Fazio, 2001; Lyster & Mori, 2006; Spada, Fröhlich & Allen, 1985; Zuniga & Simard, 2016) to gather quantitative data on a complex and dynamic process. As encouraged by the authors, it has been adapted and adjusted many times to fit the particular context of the researcher (see Dörnyei's [2007] MOLT scheme for observing motivation for instance). The COLT scheme consists of two parts, COLT A (for describing features of activities) and COLT B (which analyses interactions between students and teacher and students). For the purposes of this study, data was taken mainly from part A. The flexibility and simplicity of use inherent in COLT A allowed me to record all significant classroom activity quickly and efficiently and the separate field notes added depth to this quantitative data set.

Prior to the actual observations I carried out two pilot observations. Notes from these were used to construct the groupings in my simplified version of a COLT observation scheme. COLT schemes usually record classroom activity by time or event frequency according to four broad categories: Participating organization, Content, Student Modality and Materials used. These main categories are then broken down into specific boxes, for example Student Modality can be sub-divided into Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing and Other. Due to the fact that my pilot observations indicated that a limited range of approaches and activities were being utilised, I kept the four broad categories mentioned above, but

reduced the number of the sub-categories within them. I also added an extra category to indicate which language, English or Japanese, was being used. Additionally, in order to collect data on what kinds of activities were being carried out I decided to break down the lesson into ‘activities’ and record what occurred within each activity. In order to avoid the narrow Westernized, CLT-centric definitions employed by some second language researchers (Hunter, 2017), I chose to define “activity” simply as “any distinctive phase within a language lesson” (Hunter, 2017, p. 516). This required some subjectivity on my part, as the transition point from one activity to the next was not always clear. By its very nature, classroom observation research requires researchers to make subjective value judgements when recording data (Copland & Creese, 2015) and although COLT schemes are able to codify and quantify many aspects of a classroom, there are still a number of value judgements to make. In this study, the contents and frequency of the activities were the main focus of the investigation. My purpose was to ascertain whether or not a certain action was happening at all. Therefore, I decided to focus on event frequency, rather than time spent. Also, in this particular study, the choice of whether to identify an activity as using ‘function’ or ‘form’ presented the most difficult value judgement. In an attempt to standardise my responses to these categories, ‘form’ was defined as any activity that focused on grammatical or structural aspects of English such as grammatical explanations, Listen and Repeat, or drilling exercises. Conversely, ‘function’ was used to identify any activity that required students to use the language independently of decontextualised practice.

7 Findings

Although the data set was limited, the raw data gathered by COLT scheme observation and more detailed note taking revealed a heavy bias towards focus on form and some innovative and interactive *yakudoku* exercises. This suggests an evolved form of *yakudoku* that takes ideas from CLT to progress and evolve traditional ideas of what *yakudoku* can be.

7.1 COLT Scheme Data

Data was gathered on nine lessons of equal length (50 minutes) with between 19 and 34 students in each class. The classes with lower numbers reflect a deliberate attempt to improve English education in the school I observed in by offering smaller group classes of between 19 and 25 students for some lessons. These two separate class types mean that the average number of students of 27.3 per class is misleading, as it represents different class types. Therefore, it may be more useful to note that the average number of students in larger classes was 33.75 and in smaller classes was 22.2. Lessons observed contained between four and nine separate activities, with an average number of 7.4 activities per lesson.

7.2 Participating Organisation

This section of the COLT scheme table allows us to see at a glance the various groupings of classroom organisation used and gives an indication of the kind of methodology implemented. Traditional, *yakudoku*-style classes are more likely to be teacher-fronted, whole class activities, whilst the interactive nature of CLT-centred activities can be expected to make more use of pair and group work.

The findings here showed a significant tendency towards teacher-centred, whole class activities, with just under half (49.3%) of all activities involving this grouping. These exercises mainly included choral Listen and Repeat exercises. Interestingly, there was no evidence of drilling techniques such as substitution drills that may have required students to insert their own ideas into a predetermined sentence pattern, only un-manipulated Listen and Repeat sentences, usually taken directly from the textbook, or listening exercises using a CD. The second biggest category at just under a quarter (24.7%) of activities were individual exercises, which my extra notes revealed to have included vocabulary review tests, writing exercises in which students copied sentences or dialogues from a textbook into notebooks and reading aloud individually. Once again this would imply a more traditional approach and a lack of interaction between students. The least used organisational structure at 5.5% was group work, which further emphasises the tendency towards a more traditional approach with few opportunities for students to communicate with classmates in English. One example of group work used by Tanikawa-sensei was a dictogloss-type activity in which students were put into groups and assigned different parts of a longer listening exercise to listen to and answer questions about. The group that answered their questions the quickest was rewarded with stickers. Discussion of answers within the group was carried out in Japanese. The following table shows a summary of this data (numbers given indicate number of occurrences of each grouping):

Table 1 *Participating Organisation*

Teacher/ whole class	Teacher/ individual	Individual	Pair	Group	Total
36	6	18	9	4	73
49.3%	8.2%	24.7%	12.3%	5.5	100%

7.3 Content

The Content section of the COLT scheme indicates the focus of each activity in terms of the methodological approach and could be seen as the most salient section for the purposes of this particular study as it allows us to judge whether the activity takes a form-focused traditional *yakudoku* approach, or a functional, communicative one. It also shows whether or not

material is personalised, or requires students to utilize more abstract cognitive skills and use their imagination. A focus on abstract, personalised, imagination-based activities would imply that students were being given the opportunity to manipulate the language they are being taught independently.

The results for this section were particularly striking; with 59 out of 67 separate activities (88.1%) being either completely form-focused or containing elements of a focus on grammatical structure or contextualised vocabulary. At the same time, the functional content that was observed was usually used within a form-focused context, such as the reading aloud of dialogue in pairs. Only 8 of the 23 instances of function-focused activities observed occurred independently of a form-focused exercise and within these 8 activities, 4 were well-practised, initial classroom greetings. One example of a potentially functional phrase that was turned into a form-focused exercise was observed in a lesson by Tanikawa-sensei. In this activity, the natural, functional phrase “have a good time” was extracted from a longer dialogue and written on the board as a complete lexical chunk. After briefly explaining the meaning and how it can be used (in Japanese), the phrase was then translated directly, word for word into unnatural Japanese and the students were told that it was a useful phrase because it often comes up in EIKEN step 3 tests.

Only one instance of personalisation of language or structure was noted and at no time during any of the nine observed lessons, which represented 7.5 hours of English lessons were students required to exercise their imagination or tackle abstract concepts in English. The following table gives an overview of this data (numbers given indicate number of occurrences within activities). “Form with function” refers to a largely form-focused activity that contains a function element, conversely “function with form” indicates a mainly function-focused activity that has elements of form:

Table 2 *Content*

Form only	Function only	Form with function	Function with form	Personalised	Abstract	Imaginative	Totals
51	8	59	23	1	0	0	67 (83)
76.1% (61.4%)	11.9% (9.6%)	88.1% (71.1%)	34.3% (27.7%)	1.5% (1.2%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (100%)

This strikingly high percentage of classroom activities allotted to form-focused exercises is in line with data from the previous section and points overwhelmingly towards a tendency for teacher-centred, input-heavy classes. This leads to a methodology that contains many aspects of audiolingualism in form-focused, listen and repeat sentence and dialogue drills and

an insistence on accuracy, combined with the traditional Japanese tendency towards translation of words and sentences that makes up the *yakudoku* approach.

7.4 Student Modality

In a non-CLT context, listening, reading and writing are seen as essentially passive classroom actions, whilst speaking is active and, as explained above, the main modalities utilised in *yakudoku* methodology are reading and writing. Therefore, for consistent results in relation to the previous two sections it might be expected that higher instances of the passive skills were recorded with less student oral output in the form of speaking.

The raw data shows that this was not necessarily the case as the table below illustrates (numbers given indicate number of occurrences in activities of each student modality). The main focus of the quantitative data here is not to establish whether or not *yakudoku*-style translating was occurring, but simply to illustrate the teaching modalities as usually associated with traditional or CLT approaches. The *yakudoku* element is expanded upon in the qualitative data below and the use of L1/L2 will be investigated in the following section (7.5):

Table 3 *Modality*

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Other	Totals
29	38	21	12	4	104
27.9%	36.6%	20.2%	11.5%	3.8%	100%

As the table shows, speaking has the highest number of occurrences, whilst the fulcrums of *yakudoku*, reading, and especially writing are in third and fourth place. This goes against the passive, form-focused approach outlined by the data from the Participating Organisation and Content sections and implies that a priority is put on language output through speaking exercises. By extension it also indicates that use of translation through reading and writing, which is central to *yakudoku*, is limited. Closer examination of observation notes and cross referencing between modalities reveals this to be partly true, but does not verify the presence of a CLT approach.

For instance, listen and repeat exercises of individual words and short phrases counted as a speaking activity. Interestingly, the most common form of vocabulary input in the classes observed could be described as an audiolingual version of *yakudoku* that used a form-focused approach to produce oral output from students. This was a 4-stage exercise which involved the teacher first holding up a double-sided flashcard with the English word on one side and a Japanese translation on the other and requiring the students to say the word first in Japanese and then in English at a rapid pace, as a whole class. The second stage repeated the same vocabulary items, but required the students to repeat the English words only. In the third

stage the students were shown the Japanese word only and were required to produce the English equivalent. Finally, this process was repeated to individual students. Thus, students were presented with contextualised language (from a dialogue in the textbook) and required to translate it from the L1 into the target language, as *yakudoku* has been described, but the output was spoken rather than written. Another example of this occurred during a lesson conducted by Makino-sensei. This involved a similar concept to that just described, but combined it with an interactive activity that required use of listening and speaking skills. In this activity, students stood face to face in pairs while Makino-sensei stood at the front of the class. The teacher said a word, or short phrase in Japanese and students raced to translate the word into English by slapping their opponents' hand as they spoke the translated English word. This was an engaging and motivating activity that utilised aural and oral modalities to carry out a translation exercise that could be described as oral/aural *yakudoku*. Variations on this included standing back-to-back to race and translate and a bingo translation game. These activity types were observed in lessons by four out of the five teachers observed.

Another noteworthy practice that was common to all five teachers that I observed was that reading activities were very rarely conducted as pure reading exercises, but were accompanied by listening (a CD recording of the text) and speaking through listen and repeat of sentences, usually broken down into short clauses by the teacher. In fact, only one instance of reading, independent of other skills, was observed. This allowed students to hear the words they were reading being spoken by a native English speaker, giving clues to pronunciation and intonation patterns, rather than simply as a dry text. This might suggest that a more progressive edge has been added to the teaching of reading skills. Although this may be true to some extent, it also means that students' listening ability may be being given insufficient opportunity to develop, as dialogues and longer texts are read at the same time as they are listened to. As Table 3 shows, listening activities are present in over a quarter (27.9%) of all activities, which once again points to the presence of elements of audiolingual methodology

7.5 Use of L1/L2 by the Teacher

I decided to add this category to the COLT scheme both as an indicator of overall approach, and to highlight any co-occurrences of Japanese and English within the same activity that may suggest use of translation and thus the presence of *yakudoku*. It may be inferred that a teacher that makes the effort to use predominantly English in a lesson would indicate a sympathetic approach to CLT, and be less inclined towards *yakudoku*-type activities.

The results in this category were somewhat surprising and point to a more dominant presence of translation and code switching than may have been anticipated, as the table below shows (numbers given indicate number of activities with language used):

Table 4 *Use of L1/L2*

English	Japanese	Both English and Japanese	Totals
35	5	27	67
52.2%	7.5%	40.3%	100%

The low percentage of activities where the teacher used only Japanese (7.5%) and the high percentage of activities where only English was used (52.2%), indicate that teachers are making a conscious effort to use English for all types of activities and at every stage in the lesson. A cross-reference with observation notes confirms this to be the case, with the activities that used only English being spread fairly evenly across the stages of the lessons, with a very slight trend towards the beginning and end of lessons. These were mainly greeting activities and final practice of a structure. One lesson, delivered to a class of 34 first year students by Wada-sensei, contained only English for all activities in the lesson. These activities ranged from greetings, to pair work, to group mingling, to alphabet practice and a writing activity.

The most pertinent figure in terms of ascertaining to what extent *yakudoku* activities were used is the observation that in 40% of activities the teacher used both Japanese and English, which would suggest that a large amount of translation is taking place, at least by teachers. However, this figure by itself does not confirm that *yakudoku* activities were being employed. Observation notes reveal that although a large amount of translation occurred, as mentioned above, they were usually aural/oral listen and repeat activities, rather than traditional reading/writing exercises. The majority of dual language activities entailed the teacher giving instructions or saying a word first in English, and then saying the same instructions or word in Japanese, presumably to confirm what was initially said.

8 Summary of Findings

Taking into account all five sectors of the COLT scheme data, together with more detailed classroom notes, it appears that what was taking place in the nine lessons that I observed, in one school in the district of Tokyo under investigation was a modern incarnation of *yakudoku* that took the interactive essence and oral focus of CLT and used it to perpetuate a traditional focus on form method that may be said to be more appropriate to the Japanese classroom.

In terms of participant groupings and lesson content, there was evidence of a traditional teacher-centred approach that used whole class choral activities to translate contextualised (through dialogues in textbooks) words and phrases. However, observation of student modalities show evidence of a more progressive edge that places the biggest priority on

speaking and listening exercises, but places them within a *yakudoku* tradition. Finally, analysis of L1 and L2 use shows little use of L1 only and a strong tendency for both languages to be included within the same activity, which observation notes confirmed to be due both to the presence of translation exercises and by a tendency for teachers to repeat instructions and explanations in Japanese after first giving them in English.

9 Discussion

In line with previous studies that have focused on use of *yakudoku* (Gorsuch, 1998; Sakui, 2004), this study found evidence that despite its negative connotations even amongst its practitioners, a form of *yakudoku* is being used fairly extensively in lessons. However, the form of *yakudoku* observed bore little relation to the traditional word for word transcoding carried out in silence that disregards pronunciation. The *yakudoku* identified in this study focused on using translations to elicit oral output, via a modified form of the audiolingual method that utilised an interactive aspect derived from CLT to achieve this. Thus, it may be inferred from this, that what is being taught to Japanese students is more akin to interpretation skills than translation skills, which as Leonardi (2010) points out, can be seen as an essential skill in an increasing globalised world and reflects the Japanese government's commitment to *kokusaika* or internationalisation. It also has similarities to the theoretical "Functional Translation" method that was proposed by Weschler (1997) as an ideal form for Japanese classrooms and shares many aspects with the Interpretation Training Method (ITM) outlined by Ochi (2009).

These observations found evidence of a modern take on traditional practices that brought together *yakudoku* and CLT into a manageable whole that gave an oral output outlet to grammar structures and contextualised words. This indicates a teaching body that is using the best of each method in order to meet the conflicting demands of short-term examination goals and long-term societal aims. Furthermore, this innovative adaptation of *yakudoku* to accommodate the interactive essence of CLT ideology into the unique circumstances of the Japanese education system has been done in the face of a centralised education system that puts teachers under extreme time and workload pressures and fails to recognise that entire methodologies (such as CLT) cannot simply be imported wholesale into countries and institutions that have their own long history and set of cultural traditions (Holliday, 1994).

Despite this diversity of methodology, the ratio of form to function activities was found to be heavily weighted in favour of attention to form. The most common classroom activity observed was teacher-whole class choral and translation drills. Again, it is possible to view this finding from both a positive and negative perspective. The dominant view of sentence repetition exercises as anachronistic and outdated that is part of the wider CLT mythology has been challenged in recent years (Ota, 2009). In this way, the decision by the teachers

examined in this study to focus on this might be seen as a sensible option for an input-poor, EFL environment such as Japan. Additionally, use of translation, embodied in the *yakudoku* activities observed in this study, as advocated by Woolard (2013), Saito (2012), Leonardi (2010) Cook (2010), and Ochi (2009), would also seem to make pedagogical sense as an efficient route to language acquisition, well suited to time restricted, monolingual Japanese classrooms. In addition, by not denying students access to their own L1, the approach taken by the observed teachers may be said to help lower anxiety for students. At the same time, the restriction of identity that English-only policies can be seen to exacerbate is also avoided.

Although this study is only limited to one public school in Tokyo, the study found evidence of diverse and innovative practices that updated traditional *yakudoku* methodology to create engaging activities that focused on oral output. In light of a return to a recognition of the role of translation in second language learning within the context of a rejection of the Western-dominated CLT monopoly, this innovation suggests that rather than being seen as failed implementers of CLT, teachers in Japanese secondary schools may be seen as successful teachers of a new kind of *yakudoku* that supports learners and helps to provide essential translation and interpretation skills for modern global society.

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要旨

日本の文部科学省が発表した最新の方針（文部科学省，2011）によると、日本の中等教育の英語教育において、従来の文法と訳読に重点を置く代わりに CLT（Communicative Language Teaching）の実践を採用することを提唱し、コミュニケーション重視のカリキュラムを導入することに、これまでで最も積極的に取り組んでいる。しかし、これは、CLT のイデオロギー的独占が、特にアジアの文脈で活動する研究者や教育者によって疑問視され始め、第二言語学習における訳読の役割も再評価されつつある時期と重なっている。この研究は、COLT の観察スキームにアレンジを加え、東京の公立中学校で教える 5 人の教師による 9 つの授業を観察したものである。その結果、従来の文法訳読やオーディオリンガリズムの要素と、CLT の対話的でアウトプットに重点を置くアプローチを組み合わせ、新しいタイプの訳読が実践されていることがわかった。この研究は、よりニュアンスのある多様な文法訳読の実践的な証拠を提供するだけでなく、こうした活動が魅力的で、学生のやる気を高め、グローバルな時代の実用的なスキルを提供していることも発見した。