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# Keep Them Coming Back

## An investigation and analysis of adult *eikaiwa* classrooms in Japan

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment**
**of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Philosophy**
**in**
**Second Language Teaching**

**at**
**Massey University, Palmerston North Campus,**
**New Zealand.**

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Submitted in February **2010**

# Abstract

*Eikaiwa*, or private English language classes for adults in Japan, can be characterized as being relatively small, having teachers from English-speaking countries and students that are looking for face-to-face interaction in the English language. The aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of what goes on in these EFL classrooms. More specifically the purpose is to give a thick holistic description of four adult English language classrooms.

The study is located in a qualitative paradigm and uses the ethnographic methods of interviews, focus groups and participant observation to collect the data. The data was collected from four different classrooms in Utsunomiya, a city 100km north of Tokyo. The results of the study can be divided into three major themes. Firstly, the study showed that the sociocultural factors of the context influenced the content and behaviour in these classrooms. Secondly, in this context, unique classroom cultures were formed with participants involved in 'sociopedagogical relationships' as they adjusted to create a comfortable environment with mutual understandings. And lastly, often the sociolinguistic aspects of language learning are given secondary importance as participants focused on the more tangible and easier to understand aspects of language learning.

The research suggests that the participants in these classes need a greater awareness of the sociocultural influences on language learning and teaching and the sociolinguistic nature of language use. Implications about classroom practice are drawn in relation to the teaching of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in conjunction with using certain basic principles from ethnography to address these needs.

# Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisors Gillian Skyrme and Averil Coxhead for their patience and guidance while doing this thesis.

I would also like to thank the teachers, students and friends who gave their time to participate in the data gathering process or to help in preparing the thesis.

And lastly to the support of my family.

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## Glossary of abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---|---|
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| CLT | Communicative Language Teaching |
| TL | Target Language |
| L2 | Second Language |