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**TAKING THE RISK: STUDENTS' AND  
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF ENGLISH  
CONVERSATION CLASSES IN A GIRLS'  
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN JAPAN.**

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## The Abstract

This research examined why Japanese students appear reluctant to speak in English conversation classes. From the perspectives of three different groups of students in a girls' senior high school in Japan, it queried the students' motivation, attitudes, aims and expectations, perceptions of themselves as learners, and actual experiences in class. It investigated the *kokusai* (international) and Japanese teachers of English perspectives' of the students, the conversation classes, and the teachers themselves. A review of the relevant literature suggested that Japanese students were compelled to study English, but had little need to do so. In addition, the participants' culturally different expectations of appropriate learning and classroom behaviors indicated a mismatch between students' and teachers' expectations. The results of this research confirmed that the three different groups of students had different needs, attitudes and levels of motivation. English was the only foreign language offered. Cultural differences in teacher/student classroom practices were found to be involved in students' levels of comfort in conversation classes, and in their confidence in the interactional style encountered in conversation classes. Students with tangible goals were the most willing to adapt to the different classroom culture suggesting that *kokusai* teachers needed to consider the Japanese students' usual interactional style. The importance of the students' needs and goals, and the cultural differences in educational practices discussed in this research could be studied further investigating the relative benefits of easing the students into a different classroom culture or attempting to operate within a Japanese style classroom culture. The usefulness of gaining the support of Japanese teachers of English in schools in Japan by clarifying the interactional style of English conversation classes is an area of concern.

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