

THE RHETORIC OF “JAPANESE WITH ENGLISH ABILITIES”:
ANALYZING THE DISCOURSE OF ENGLISH CURRICULUM
REFORM AND ITS PROBLEMS WITH THE MEXT'S ‘ACTION PLAN’

A Thesis

by

KEN WATANABE

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Chair of Committee,	G. Patrick Slattery
Committee Members,	Laurie Q. Dixon
	Jennifer L. Jones-Barbour
Head of Department,	Yeping Li

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I would examine the discourse of Japan's English language education reform for primary and secondary schools through the close reading of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology's (MEXT) "Action Plan: Cultivating "Japanese with English Abilities,"" released in 2003. This document marked a critical touchstone of Japan's drastic move for English curriculum change by suggesting the shift of national attitude from hesitancy to willingness in the name of change for the needs of language improvement. 'Action Plan' served as a master plan for the MEXT by providing the attainment goals, key tasks, and benchmarks that would see fit to achieve in the next five years. It raised the public awareness and stirred up the public debate, for containing challenging proposals such as implementation of standardized English exams (TOEIC and TOEFL) for student assessment and teaching qualification, innovative teaching practices to high schools (i.e., Super English Language-High school[SEL-Hi]), and English as foreign language activities to primary schools.

Specifically, first, I would discuss how Japan's cultural ambivalence toward English language since the late 19th century sets up the contexts for nation's historical struggle in upgrading the curriculum that draws the problems reflecting on the MEXT's recent education policy proposal.

Then, I would examine Action Plan's attainment goals setting and key agendas highlighted as the MEXT's main strategy, and analyze its critical issues and problems

affecting the needs for both students and teachers. The issues include the mismatched targets, ill-defined goals setting, and benchmarks for academic achievements and project proposals aimed for teacher training and quality instruction (i.e., JET program, and Assistant Language Teachers [ALTs]).

Finally, I would provide the implications for Action Plan's impact on educational practice by assessing student's learning achievement and target benchmarks set for students and teachers in the five years after its release. At the end of conclusion, I would offer the list of recommendations for effective administrative policy that could provide better teaching and learning practice in Japanese schools.

DEDICATION

To my parents, brothers, relatives, friends and those who are striving for the better quality of life in any democratic society of the 21st century

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NOMENCLATURE

ALT	Assistant Language Teacher
BOE	Board of Education
CEC	Central Education Council
CIR	Coordinators for International Relations
CJGTC	Commission on Japan's Goals in the Twenty-First Century
CLAIR	Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second language
FLC	Foreign Language Council
JET	Japan Exchange and Teaching
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MOE	Ministry of Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
SEL-Hi	Super English Language High school
STEP	Society for Testing English Proficiency
TOEFL	Test Of English as a Foreign Language

TOEIC Test Of English for International Communication

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In Japan, the English language has played an important role in shaping and re-shaping public perception of its sociolinguistic status in relation to the ramifications on the national curriculum, culture and identity, until today. Japan has a long history of English language education that lasts well over a century and half, beginning from the mid19th century. Although English is not defined as an official language in Japan as of today, it is widely recognized as one of the most common foreign languages spoken and communicated by both non-Japanese and Japanese.

With the arrival of the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912), the central government adopted English as a foreign language, and offered formal training in the form of education. From the very beginning, Japanese citizens and policymakers regarded education as a part of national policy. The central government took sole control of public education and formalized the curriculum and instruction by establishing institutional bureaucracy affiliated to the prime minister's cabinet ministry. The Ministry of Education (previously MOE, until 2001), established in 1872, has played an important role in directing language policy and (re-) designing the curriculum for K-12 and higher education until today (Gottlieb, 2001; 2008).

Historically, Japan's education policy on the English curriculum and instruction has often been an influential product of political climate and social events in both national and international contexts. The backlash toward Western fascinations in the 1880s affected its popularity. With the rise of nationalism in the early 20th century, the importance of the English language for Japanese citizens fell into decline and was suppression in the wartime. After the Second World War, the English curriculum was reintroduced in a reformed education directed by Douglas MacArthur's Supreme Command for Allied Powers (SCAP). In contrast to a rapid national recovery and economic growth that made the nation visible to an international community, Japan was relatively slow in upgrading the English language curriculum for public education. Not until the mid1980s, did the central government take a bold step on the national-level curriculum reform under the slogan of internationalization (*Kokusaika*).

Continuous efforts made by the central government and business organizations to open up the Japanese marketplace have successfully led to the proliferation of cross-cultural exchanges and business transactions. The English language has swept across the nation, permeating into the fabric of academic and public spheres. Bilingual news media and English language education programs have become widely available. With an acceleration of globalization during the 90s, Japan has harvested various language teaching businesses in both the public and private sectors. Despite its struggle to break out of economic stagnation in the 'Lost Decade,' a difficult time period featuring the national syndrome of the post-bubble financial crisis and national disasters in the 1990s (i.e., Kobe-Hanshin earthquake, nerve gas attacks on Tokyo's metropolitan subway

stations by the *Aum Shinrikyo* religious cult group, the 1997 Asian currency crisis), Japan has successfully become one of the most developed countries to have successfully provided abundant English language resources and teaching practices to ordinary people.

It is in the context of market-based cultural consumption that for years a strong call has been made toward the MOE to reform its English language curriculum and instruction. In the private sector, English language teaching (ELT) is considered as a highly cherished practice. Thanks to a large number of individuals who are eager to learn English in language schools, it has become a fast-growing educational enterprise, in which spending could be worth as much as 3,000 billion yen (approximately \$US 30 billion) every year (Koike & Tanaka, 1995, p.19). Contrasting with the private sector, the depiction of ELT practice in K-12 school is often negative. Due to a poorly organized framework and ambiguous learning goals that do not match the practical needs of language learners, Japan's English language education system has been severely criticized for its ineffectiveness. Japanese test-takers underperformed in the certified English proficiency exam (i.e., TOEFL), in contrast to those from non-English speaking countries in Asia and other regions. This has been pointed out as evidence of a failing curriculum and instructional practice.

As a response to nationwide criticism and pressure, the central government has decided to make a direct appeal to the general public concerning their reconfiguring role in formulating education policy. Their collective political campaign on promoting English language began in January 2000, when the prime minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st century (CJGTC) was released. After changing its name to the

Ministry of Education, Sports, Science & Technology (MEXT) in 2001, the ministry released a couple of important documents on the updates to the English language curriculum. The first proposal, released in 2002, was Early Foreign Language Education that suggested the introduction of English to the elementary school curriculum. This was followed by the second proposal, which was even bigger than the first in terms of its scale and political ambition for educational achievement: “Strategies to cultivate Japanese with English abilities” (2002a; 2002b). After eight months, the MEXT finally released their detailed policy document titled “Action Plan to cultivate Japanese with English abilities” (2003b; 2003c). With the Action Plan, the central government initiated a daunting task to challenge students and teachers over the conventional understanding of English for dramatic improvement of learning achievement.

Significance of studying Japan’s curriculum trend in English language education

I hope my study on Japan’s trend in the K-12 English language curriculum will provide an opportunity to learn something about the meaning of effective teaching and learning through a critique of its politics to the Western scholarly audience. There are a couple of justifications that highlight the significance of crucially examining the discourse on Japan’s education policy on the English language curriculum and its practice.

First, Japan’s ELT model represents itself as challenging cultural contexts which policymakers and practitioners face as a non-English-speaking country. Specifically, Japan enjoys a high reputation for a solid school system and quality education, thanks to its third largest international economy and highly advanced technology. However, it has

a history of significant learning difficulties when it comes to English, in terms of providing effective teaching and learning practices to students in the classroom.

Under the Japanese education system (prior to April 2011), Japanese students spent, on average, six years studying English at K-12, starting from mid school (typically in the seventh grade, age 12 or 13). Some students, usually at top private schools, international or missionary schools, had the chance to study English in the earlier grades. Those who got into higher education had an extended time and opportunity to study English, ranging from two to four years depending on the type and quality of academic program at each college or university. In sum, Japanese who went from K-12 through higher education spent roughly eight to ten years studying English.

Despite such a substantial time period spent learning English in their school years, many Japanese have trouble communicating with people in English in a real-life situation. Those who spend most of their life in Japan (including myself) studying English have little difficulty finding out about their English language skills. Many people who learn English through the Japanese school system – rather than through an international life experience abroad – realize that they can hardly speak, read, or write English, after all. They have trouble understanding what they hear in English conversations (i.e., face-to-face-communication; English phone calls), as well as in reading and writing emails and document correspondence. In the last 30 years, the utmost effort to offer better language learning opportunities has been made by both the public and private sectors. With its robust economic growth and national stability, various forms of language learning services, such as bilingual TV programs, private

lessons, self-training teaching manuals, correspondence courses, have become widely available and accessible to the general public. Nevertheless, the public's negative perception of Japanese English language skills remains little changed. Due to the stigma of English at K-12 education (and even at college/university level), Japanese people, in general, are considered to significantly underachieve or to be substantially weak in their language skills.

Second, upgrading the English language education system is becoming of the utmost concern to the general public these days, by raising their awareness of its importance as a top national priority. This is a significant break from the past, since education policy used to be somewhat less appealing to them, or secondary to other important agenda such as economic stimulus plans or international business and trade. Public discourse on English language education was often characterized by its passivity, due to the fair-weather mindedness of the general public who were either disinterested or nonplussed. It was usually the media (both national and international) who instigated the public to prompt the national education authorities to make changes. What makes the public discourse of English language education visible to ordinary Japanese is the power of the national policymakers, especially those who can give party leaders an exclusive power to process the change of its curriculum as a top-down order. For example, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) set up the Education Reform Executive Council after their winning of the lower house election in December 2012. This April, this council issued a new proposal for improving the English language curriculum as a part of the national education reform agenda. The proposal suggested the

adoption of TOEFL as a new standard measurement and set the requirement: 1) for Japanese college admissions and graduation exams; 2) for all Japanese students to get a certain score at high school; and 3) for all applicants who will take national civil servant exams (The Education Reform Executive Council, 2013a).

The proposal sparked a public outcry for its demanding orders, upsetting schools and educators nationwide. Of all the changes, the TOEFL mandate has become a contentious issue since it was framed as the common benchmark to assess students' academic performance in English language skills. Toshiaki Endo, a senior LDP lawmaker who served as the leader of the reform council, began to appear in local news media to serve as the spokesman. Stressing the importance of TOEFL for its global recognition, he justified its use as the benchmark, and suggested that it would lead to the improvement of student performance by making drastic changes in instructional practices (*The Japan Times*, 2013). Critics of the English language education, such as Yukio Ohtsu and Haruo Erikawa, were quick to respond to the government's new proposal. Ohtsu, a Japanese cognitive linguist, showed up in a local radio talk show on April 3, and directly responded to Endo by questioning the council's decision to choose TOEFL as the new standard measurement (*Session-22*, 2013). Similarly, Erikawa, a professor of education policy at Wakayama University in Japan, made a thorough response in his blog and the local *Asahi Shinbun*, criticizing the proposal for offering an unrealistic demand to students and teachers (2013). Both critics accused the reform council of making a reckless decision without consulting scholarly experts in language teaching practice. Appealing to the general public, critics and the local media began to

challenge the proposal over its ill-considered standard measurement that ignores the voices of students and teachers. Facing such fierce opposition from the academic community, the council deleted the description of the TOEFL mandate from their proposal in the due course of meetings held in late May. Instead, they threw curveballs to their critics by adding demanding suggestions, such as teaching English as an academic subject in primary schools, and instructing classes in English at junior high schools as well as in high schools.

As this recent episode of the curriculum controversy illustrates, public discourse on English language education today carries the tone of ideological debate. Frankly speaking, the current government-sponsored proposal does not have the legislative power to mandate it as national law, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) endorsed by US President George W. Bush in 2001. Still, any proposal directed by a government-sponsored council could function very similarly to such a nationally endorsed policy or the one that succeeds a current initiative, such as Barack Obama's Race to the Top (RTTT), because it invokes the power of state control over schools to centralize the curriculum. What matters most is the impact of curriculum changes on Japanese public school teachers. Under Japanese education laws, all certified Japanese school teachers are classified as 'regional civil servants' (*chihou-koumuin*), subject to the directives of local/national government. Since all certified Japanese schools are subject to the national education authority, teachers are required to use government-approved textbooks and teach exactly what is written in official documents such as "Course of Study and Instructional Guidance." Thus, even though the central government's proposal

does not intend to seek a hard core move for privatization as we are seeing in the US, such as creating charter schools or a voucher program, the impact of curriculum changes on teachers and students can be immense. Due to expected loyalty and obedience to the national education authority, Japanese schoolteachers are inherently vulnerable to top-down orders that will highly constrain them into rigid instructional practice. They keep their eyes on government's education reform proposal to date because they know it will eventually affect their teaching and evaluation, once it has been approved and taken effect.

To sum up, the study of Japan's education reform on ELT can bring two scholarly benefits to us. First, it will help us to learn what, when, and how predominant cultural assumptions on curriculum politics become problematic by creating contradictions in instructional practice to the detriment of its outcome. And second, this study will provide a better understanding of how a discourse on language education politics reflects the conventional norms and values of the national culture or history of a host country.

Method/Analysis

The main objective of my analysis is to unravel the ways the National Education Agency and political leaders frame English within the policy document that constitutes the educational discourse of curriculum reform. Based on the close reading of MEXT's education policy proposal as an authoritative text, my research primarily investigates how their conceptualization of the English language constitutes its sociolinguistic

meaning that influences instructional practice in the K-12 classroom as well as public perception within Japanese society.

According to Liddicoat (2007), language policy contains “fundamental elements of discourses that policies construct around languages and their attendant cultures” (p. 33). This means that language in policy documents can be inherently pragmatic, as it conveys the meanings that go beyond the scope of literary definition in a dictionary or conventional linguistic textbooks. Many works on the sociolinguistic aspect of language use – whether through metaphor (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the constitution of a nationalistic image (e.g., Anderson, 1983/1991), or shared cultural communities (e.g. White, 1985) – show that language communicated in ordinary life or a sociopolitical entity creates the meanings and articulates its power from the reality of specific contexts. A British political theorist J.G.A. Pocock (1989) says, the language of politics is “not the language of a single disciplined mode of intellectual inquiry,” but rather, “the language in which men speak for all the purposes and in all the ways in which men may be found articulating and communicating as part of the activities and the culture of politics” (p. 17). He goes on to say that language, framed as political speech, “becomes impregnated with the more or less institutionalized idioms of the social activities for which politics has developed a special concern” (1989, p. 21-22). Thus, language in the Japanese government’s policy document is the representative of authoritative discourse that can be disseminated from their institutional practice of deliberation on language education. As Michel Foucault (1978; 1980) explains, institutional practice of discourse exercises power through a hegemonic production of knowledge as truth, which will shape and re-

shape our conventional norms and ways of understanding about the world. Knowledge, once acknowledged by an authoritative agent, provides a set of rules for creating cultural order that separates truth from false based on its power attribution. In the text of authoritative discourse, “power and knowledge are joined together,” and process a cultural logic of hegemony for producing the system of representation as authentic account (Foucault, 1980, p.100).

Language also serves as a medium to assist in articulating ideological positioning on the perception of realities in socio-cultural contexts. As Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) suggests, political discourses disseminate language in a way which provides ideological framings to encode the concepts and create their meanings. In the arena of public policy debate, key policy terms in the texts provide the connection between language and culture that will empower the advocates to justify the policy and invoke their visions of society. John Murphy (2004), for example, shows that key policy terms can become the source of rhetorical invention for creating a strong, persuasive argument that justifies a national leader’s political agenda – such as John F. Kennedy’s liberal economy. Murphy suggests the connection between ideology and idiom for the creation of words that can be transformed into action for “the enactment of government deed” (2004, p. 137). Robert Asen (2010; 2012) also demonstrates that national leaders (such as US presidents) can infuse ideology into idiom in their specific political agendas (e.g., education) so that they can create their own trajectory of social reform for their political goal. Thus, language in public documents is not a mere label detached from the contexts.

Rather, they, as the texts, bring out the cultural dynamics of common beliefs, attitudes, and values within teaching practice throughout the framework.

I find it extremely important to take a similar stand toward this study. MEXT's education policy on the English curriculum provides profound implications for the misconception and regulation of the language taught in the classroom. Critical inquiry into the way the framers conceptualize language within policy or pedagogy documents is crucial because, as Philip Seargeant (2008) states, it helps us "to gain an initial reading of the way in which the language operates as a determining cultural force within Japanese society" (p.122). Such perspective is derived from reflective thinking on conventional research trends in language disciplines such as TESOL (Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Language) and applied linguistics. One key concern is its tendency to accept uncritically sociolinguistic and methodological assumptions that are deemed authentic and apply virtually to any model of ELT practice and pedagogy under narrowly defined concepts. This has led to the bias on applied linguistics and TESOL research as the practice of cultural essentialism, since many researchers tend to consider the hegemonic power of language use culled from particular linguistic or pedagogical assumptions within ESL/EFL classroom as secondary or less important to the needs of language learners. It is in this context, Alastair Pennycook (2001) contends that English language in socio-cultural contexts essentially produces power dynamics of relations that account for disparity in social relations, and urges us to pay close attention to the contexts to discern the way particular language is used for the practice of social inequality. As a key advocate of critical perspective in applied linguistics discipline, he

suggests that exploring language in contexts to seek social relations will help provide us better our understanding of its role in creating reality.

Pennycook's insights shed light on the effect of political language on students, teachers, and the entire academic community, regarding its construction of social relations with education authorities as well as national leaders. Japanese public discourse on the recent English language education reform provides its rhetorical contexts in which education authorities address the needs for change to gain an understanding of the academic community and the general public who engage in the debate over whether the proposed changes are necessary and appropriate to meet certain language needs. From this perspective, I see the MEXT's 'Action Plan' critical in reconfiguring their administrative role which has transcended from historically inactive gatekeeper to reformer. In this study, I will argue that the 'Action Plan' empowered the MEXT to sanctify curriculum reform as a necessary condition for national improvement as well as an attempt to constitute the discourse of enlightenment in the classroom. As a symbolic rhetorical document, it has helped the MEXT and national policymakers to frame and reframe the roadmap for the English language curriculum. But, simultaneously, it has revealed significant discrepancies between political ambitions and actual educational practices.

By regarding the MEXT's 'Action Plan' as an authentic policy proposal for the revisions of English language education, I will critically look into the way they craft their political language of reform into the sphere curriculum and instructional practice. Through the textual analysis of a keynote speech, arguments and justifications that

include attainment goals-setting and key agendas, my study inquiries into the dialectic tension between curriculum-making politics and its educational practice in an attempt to answer the following questions. What does 'English abilities' mean to the Japanese? Why is it so important to the central government to promote English language education to the Japanese people as a whole? What kind of visions for teachers and students are the MEXT and national leaders trying to invoke in their policy document? How do their visions converge into or diverge from the reality of teaching practices in the classroom?

To answer these questions, I will follow a couple of theories from communication discipline for critical analysis of the text as well as from applied linguistics. My analysis basically follows Kenneth Burke's definition of rhetoric, which is "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents (1969, p. 41)." Rhetoric, as Burke (1969) says, "is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (p. 43). Also helpful to my approach is Stuart Hall's representation, which provides the meaning of concepts in the form of signification (1985, p. 103-104). Specifically, he suggests that the meaning of the concepts is created by the use of a sign, and reshaped through the dynamics of contexts in which they connect with different concepts. I find Hall's work useful because it provides insights into ideological constructs that create, promote, and reinforce a specified account or narrative as a cultural representation in the context of public education. Burke's notion of motives and Hall's signification help me to pay close attention to the power and

motives of the MEXT and national policymakers regarding their attempt to promote English language as a dominant cultural force. By following these two theoretical touchstones, I will analyze how the MEXT and national leaders communicate their idea of educational reform to its target audience, by crossing the border between political and pedagogical spheres. By unraveling MEXT's ideologically constructed discourse in the policy document, my analysis attempts to show how the discrepancies between political initiatives and pedagogical advice signify the dynamics of socio-cultural contradictions within Japanese society regarding the perception of language and culture.

Description of text

For the analysis of content, I will select the digital archive of central government's policy documents that were released in March 15, 2003. The documents are archived online at the MEXT's website (<http://www.mext.go.jp/english>), and all the sources are widely accessible to academic scholars, teachers, students, and the general public in Japan and overseas. The documents are published both in English and Japanese (MEXT, 2003b; 2003c). Since the late 1980s, the Japanese government has released its policy documents both in Japanese and in English (as a translation of the original document). In this research, I will use both texts for the sake of my interest in close reading and content analysis. The reason is simple. No translation is 100% accuracy in translation, and most importantly, the English translated version of the Japanese language documents is not necessarily the same as its original. This is often the case with public documents in Japan, primarily due to concern with confidentiality. Sometimes, policy documents are only partially translated into English, leaving out the

content which includes critical information – or they may even not be translated. Thus, close reading of texts in both languages helps me to verify translation accuracy. It also helps me to critically interrogate disparate cultural assumptions which may arise from the difference in semantics between the two languages.

Chapter II provides the background to the English curriculum and its educational practice in Japanese schools in order to seek out Japan's relation to English language education by looking into its 150-year history which stretches from the mid 1850s to the 21st century. Split into five segments, it will trace the origin of English language education and its cultural transition in the pre-WWII and post-WWII periods, including the Japanese encounter with English language, the establishment of formal education, the impact of political events on the curriculum in pre-WWII, the cultural transformation of the curriculum in the post-WWII period, and the curriculum trend in globalization and the 21st century.

The next two chapters – Chapter III and Chapter IV, respectively – make a close analysis of the Action Plan. Chapter III provides a rhetorical analysis of the MEXT's educational reform by focusing on the effect of language discourse through the close reading of two Action Plan documents. In the analysis, I will pay close attention to MEXT's visions of 'Japanese with English abilities' as a political strategy, in contrast to the content of the education proposal, by examining the problems with attainment goals setting for students and teachers. Chapter IV furthers the critical analysis of the Action Plan's problems as an educational proposal regarding teacher training and quality teaching. I will examine the systematic problems, ranging from the training system for

local Japanese teachers to the recruitment of foreign teachers for critiquing Japan's cultural ambivalence in ELT practice. Chapter IV will make a critical inquiry into such ambivalence by examining the official troubling account of 'international understanding,' which underlies MEXT's ideological assumptions on language education in relation to the perception of the international community. Finally, as the conclusion to my thesis, Chapter V will provide further implications that account for historical continuity of Japan's cultural relation to the English language and its practice. Followed by that is the evaluation of the Action Plan regarding its outcome including the attainment goals setting for students and teachers, and the pros and cons on key agendas. The chapter will conclude with my final thoughts on government-led education reform and recommendations to the Action Plan for a better educational practice in the future.

CHAPTER II

CULTURAL FOUNDATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

Historical background and the English curriculum to 1945

Origin and foundation

The origin of Japan's English language education can be traced through landmark events in the mid-19th century that called for a historical transition to modernization. It began with the arrival of the American admiral Commodore Perry in 1853 (Butler & Iino, 2005; McKenzie, 2010). Perry, who was traveling overseas under the international missionary, stunned local people at a seaport in Yokohama with his gigantic black-hulled steamships' (*kurofune*). Using such a demonstration of the West's cultural dominance, he asked Japan to open up all seaports for free trade and diplomatic exchange. After four years, Perry arrived in the Japanese seaport again – in a similar manner as his first arrival. His arrivals prompted Japan to establish a bilateral diplomatic relationship, which was formalized as the US-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1858. This treaty set the stage for opening up the floodgates of the nation which had maintained its isolation from international contracts since 1639. In 1868, Japan presaged a new century – the Meiji Restoration (1868–1911), and officially ended its 200-plus-years national isolation policy. To open its diplomatic conduit to the international

community, Japan incorporated Western-style modernity and upgraded its political system under a monarchic state.

The Meiji era witnessed a proliferation of the English language. The influx of English-speaking foreigners onto the Japanese soil became a strong force in introducing English language study as part of academic education (Butler, 2007; Butler & Iino, 2005; McKenzie, 2010). In 1872, the imperial government founded the Ministry of Education (MOE) to function as the central education authority to direct the curriculum and its practice until today (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). The MOE directed middle schools to teach English to the students for a total of six years – four years for the preliminary course and two years for the advanced, respectively. They also gave permission to some primary schools to teach English. Also, other foreign languages – German and French – were allowed to be taught at the advanced level of education. Studying English as a foreign language(s) and culture sounded fascinating to the general public, since many ordinary citizens never had any opportunity for foreign cultural experience either within or beyond their national soil. Indeed, there was an official attempt to promote English to schools at all level by a pro-Western administrator Arinori Mori. In 1872, he went so far as to propose the abolishment of the Japanese language and the adoption of English as Japan's official language. He provided four justifications: 1) the Japanese language was becoming impoverished compared to European languages on a speech level; 2) the Japanese language has too much constraint with communication due to the complexity of its written characters – kanji, hiragana, and katakana; 3) the Japanese language was not recognized as an international language; and 4) the text of Japanese language is no

more than a relic of Chinese cultural imperialism (Hagerman, 2009; McKenzie, 2010). To his dismay, the proposal was rejected by the MOE in the following year.

In the late 19th century, Japan's direction toward language policy took a nationalistic turn. What triggered this trend was the incident of Mori's assassination in 1889 (Ike, 1995; McKenzie, 2010). Mori became a target of the ultranationalists due to his affectation of Western culture. The incident marked a significant transition of language politics that drew the shift from English to Japanese with the rise of nationalism. Since the central government promulgated the Japanese Imperial Constitution and the National Diet, Japan increased its national power, heading into a couple of war events – the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), respectively. National victory of these wars had a significant impact on the MOE's priorities toward teaching Japanese culture and language, affecting the foreign language curriculum and its practice (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). Schools began to replace English-speaking Westerners with Japanese teachers. German and French courses were excluded from the boys' school curriculum, and English became optional for girls' schools. Teaching hours at middle schools were reduced from nine hours (at the beginning of the Meiji era) to six or seven hours per week. Even though the MOE decided to keep English as a compulsory subject, its decline in the school curriculum was unavoidable. The English course was secretly relegated to the category of 'electives' for foreign language requirement.

Palmer's role in founding the English curriculum & instruction

In a transitional period of the 20th century, Japan met a Western educator named Harold E. Palmer from England. Palmer, a linguist who was teaching at the University of London, is perhaps the most notable figure who made significant contributions to the foundation of English language education. He came to Japan in 1922 to serve as language advisor to the MOE. He founded the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET, now the Institute for Research in Language Teaching) (Smith, 1998). During his 15 years stay in Japan, Palmer directed the IRET, and dedicated his work to research on English language teaching practice and curriculum invention. Through public lectures and numerous publications, Palmer mentored a lot of Japanese teachers and advised students on language study and practice.

Palmer's original intention was to invent the framework of teaching practice that would be fit for the Japanese context. He proposed the 'Oral Method' as his main pedagogy that placed an emphasis on speaking and listening as the prime mode of language acquisition. His teaching philosophy included 'thinking in English,' teaching language as 'Speech,' the value of phonetics to language teachers, and the importance of 'oral work' in the classroom (Smith, 1998). Providing the core elements of language learning – i.e., grammar, sentence structure, reading, pronunciation, writing, and oral skills – in his guideline, he believed that his oral approach would be appealing to Japanese teachers and students.

Contrary to his expectation, his Oral Method was met with several challenges – primarily to due to the difficulty in its practical application. Indeed, many Japanese

teachers had trouble comprehending the speech pattern and language style that contrasted with its Japanese counterpart, despite their familiarity with the study of phonetics and training experience in Received Pronunciation [RP] (Smith, 1998; Stanlaw, 2004). To them, such oral training was considered secondary to the analysis of words, speeches, grammar, and sentence structure. In reality, many schools were following the traditional teaching style (i.e., grammar-translation) that prompted learners to decipher the transmitted information and message into Japanese sentences. Thus, teachers did not feel comfortable with his aural/oral approach that, from their perspective, stood apart from their language and cultural assumptions.

To respond to such challenges, Palmer paid close attention to the distinctive character/style of the Japanese language and the phonetic sounds that differ from their English counterparts. He described word pronunciation in Japanese-based Roman characters that would help teachers and learners to speak new English words. That provided the aids to Japanese teachers and students in language study. In all, many students and teachers saw his creative resources beneficial; they utilized IRET bulletins and reference guides in the actual teaching classroom. Unfortunately, Palmer's effort and investment in language teaching practice and development were frustrated by structural insularity within the ministry bureaucracy. Despite his position as linguistic advisor, his efforts to propose an upgrade of the school curriculum and the incorporation of his innovations into teaching practice fell on the deaf ears of senior ministry officials. The MOE remained indifferent to the voices outside the core of government administration. Furthermore, Japan's increasing military ambition in Asia/Pacific since Manchuria

skewed its education system as the central government was turning into an autocratic military regime. In the 1930s, English classes met further cuts in teaching hours – five hours per week – and was placed under heavy scrutiny as the nation faced wartime crisis. As Japan entered WWII in 1941, the military regime coded English as the enemy’s language, and subsequently banned its teaching at schools on national soil. It was not until after the end of WWII that Palmer’s innovations took effect in the English curriculum.

English curriculum since 1945

Post-war reconstruction and curriculum transition during the 1950s–70s

Under the US Occupation, the reformers within the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP) introduced a new Japanese education system: defining the first six years at primary school, three years each at middle and high schools, and four years at college/university (Koike & Tanaka, 1995; McKenzie, 2010). English language was reintroduced as electives for foreign languages (though, practically, it was mandatory) to the entire school system. The national education guideline was incorporated into the Standard Education Law, which became effective in 1947. It resonated with Palmer’s principle, since speaking and listening were set as the prime mode of language acquisition. Such a drastic shift to the aural/oral method was widely attributed to the military-instructed audio-lingual approach. With the presence of SCAP, the audio-lingual approach offered a great deal, characterizing its power and control through rigorous drilling. It was more than coincidence that Palmer’s initial teaching principle was selected. To Western key contributors to the post-war English curriculum, the

audio-lingual approach served as a rhetorical arsenal. Similar to Perry's black ships in the 1850s, it infused might and cultural superiority into language practice in a way to rebrand – once again – the Western cultural learning style as a new, innovative model to 'naïve' Japanese teachers and students.

The dominance of the audio-lingual approach continued even after the SCAP's departure in 1952. However, this does not necessarily mean that it was accepted uncritically by teachers and students in all schools. There was a strong resistance from high school teachers and students to accept it as a new method due to the conflict of interests in teaching/learning needs (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). What kept them from accepting the audio-lingual approach was the existence of university entrance examinations, which were (and still are) required for all students to get into college/university. The main issue was a discrepancy between the entrance examination and teaching practice. Specifically, the exams placed more emphasis on assessing literacy skills – i.e., reading, translation, grammar, and composition – rather than listening and speaking skills. Such bias toward entrance exams was deeply rooted in the conventional assumption of the learning objective – which had been rigorous translation since the Meiji Restoration. Training in having an accurate understanding of the original words, expressions, and sentences was regarded as the main objective of teaching and learning. This reduction to such dispassionate deciphering work became the norm at that time, since the Japanese historically, by and large, had very little contact with people from foreign countries, prior to the Meiji Era. Thus, translation was an effective means to disseminate information to the general public, providing a comparative analysis of

languages for the understanding of foreign culture, and hence training logical thinking in the Japanese mindset.

The discrepancy between the entrance exams and teaching practice was somewhat new to the MOE because such concerns had never been brought to the public's attention until the late 1950s. In order to cope with such a discrepancy, the MOE convened the Ad Hoc Council for Improving English Teaching to review the direction of the English curriculum and teaching practice since the 1960s (Koike & Tanaka, 1995). The Council offered the call for significant revisions of English teaching practice – twice, in 1960 and 1975 – emphasizing that English teaching practice should comprise of language activities that were meaningful to the students for the acquisition of four language skills. The Council also made several proposals upgrading textbooks (e.g., modern language, audiovisual aids), sentence practices based on the aural/oral learning style, in-service teacher training, establishing language labs and expanding intensive English courses in high schools. Despite their recommendations, these proposals never got past the doors of ministry bureaucracy. On the contrary, the MOE ended up curtailing middle-school English to three hours per week, when they released the revised Course of Study in 1978. The MOE's attempt to provide more free time for teachers and students in a 'relaxed curriculum' was criticized heavily by schools and the general public for being a haphazard approach in cutting hours from all subjects – including English. It was the third call that eventually prompted the MOE to make significant changes in the English curriculum, thanks to a national economic surge in the 1980s.

Kokusaika and curriculum reform during the 1980s

Changes in the curriculum and language teaching practice were made with the nation's economic surge. The 1980s was a critical period for Japan as the nation successfully gained its international recognition as the world's second largest economy, after the US. Rigorous efforts to make an economic recovery after WWII began to pay off with a double-digit GDP growth in the 1960s. As the nation made consecutive investments in international business and trade, Japan's role in the international scene became visible in the 1970s (Befu, 1983; Vogel, 1978). The national economic growth outpaced most countries, including the US and Europe. A number of large Japanese corporations – including auto industries, pharmacies, construction companies, commercial banks – expanded their businesses to North America, watching their products dominate the market in the US and Canada. As tensions grew, especially from the US, over its dominance Japan worked its way out to avoid further international criticism that would lead to the likelihood of economic sanctions. One of two solutions was to deregulate its domestic market for free international trade. The other solution was made especially in the best interests of diplomatic relationships with the US: to facilitate cross-cultural exchanges in academic, business, and diplomatic circles within Japanese society – called Internationalization (*Kokusaika*).

The impact of foreign pressure for internationalization was profound enough to permeate through the structure of a notoriously whimsical bureaucracy in the central government. Unlike the previous reform meetings, the central government finally responded, although passively, to the proposals made by the Ad Hoc Committee for

Education Reform directed by the Nakasone administration (Gottlieb, 2001; Koike & Tanaka, 1995; Sargeant, 2008). Nakasone, the prime minister who took the initiatives for facilitating the nation's structural reform in the 1980s, preached the rhetoric of internationalization with his repetitive use of the word *kokusaika*. In his policy statement, Nakasone officially sanctified the word *kokusaika* through his empowerment of Japanese culture as a high-class brand appealing to the international community. The discourse of *kokusaika* disseminated to various elements of Japanese society, propelling the general public into the glare of the nation's higher social status and giving them a thirst for further success through engagement in cross-cultural opportunities (Kubota, 1999; Fujimoto, 2001).

Nakasone's contextualization of Japanese culture into international enlightenment was applied effectively to education policy (Hood, 2001). In 1987, the Ad Hoc Council for Education finalized its report. The Ministry of Education approved the report, and took the investigation into curriculum reform seriously. Two years later, the education ministry revised the curriculum and released the New Course of Study. The new curriculum describes the aim of studying English language as: "to develop students' abilities to understand a foreign language and express themselves in it, to foster a positive attitude toward communicating in it, and to heighten interest in language and culture, deepening international understanding" (MOE, 1989). This was the first time that the English curriculum provided a forward-looking process by calling for the importance of "communication" for enlightening "internationalization."

Such changes were clearly reflected in the renewal of the English curriculum for high schools. In the New Course of Study, the Ministry of Education offered new courses called 'Oral Communication' (Seargeant, 2008). They offered three classes focusing on listening comprehension and speaking activities (i.e., debate, discussion, public speaking) for the improvement of English for high school students. At the same time, the central government endorsed the teaching and cross-cultural exchange project called Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET). Cofounded by the three ministry organizations (i.e., MOE, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications), the project officially became effective in 1987. This project designates the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) as the administrative direction, and offers three types of positions: 1) Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs); 2) Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs); and 3) Special Exchange Advisors. The intension of the JET Programme was to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and friendship in these three academic, professional, and social engagements.

Curriculum trend in the age of globalization

The shift in the curriculum trend and its drive for early foreign language education

A sweeping curriculum reform – an introduction of a government-funded international program and a revision of the Course of Study, was a decision made timely with a trend in teaching practice. The MOE's move for such a curriculum change was in sync with a move that suggests a shift from the traditional grammar-translation method to a communicative teaching approach. Just as they had introduced the communicative

approach as an innovative approach in language teaching practice, so they added ‘communicative ability’ as a new term for the first time in the guideline as it was intended to be the students’ learning goal in nurturing English ability. The justification for such a change was the recognition of the inefficiency of conventional teaching practice relying on the grammar-translation method (Gorsush, 1998; Hino, 1988). Ad Hoc Councils within the ministry admitted that English language education so far placed too much emphasis on grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension while neglecting the skills for practical ability (i.e., how to speak and write). With a growing awareness of internationalization and globalization, upgrading English language education further became an increasingly important task.

During the 90s, further moves for revamping the English language education system were made within the education ministry. One key proposal was to offer English language education to primary schools. Originally brought up in 1991, the MOE took the proposal seriously and set out the plan to facilitate its project by assigning a selective number of primary schools to annual pilot studies (Tozawa, 2009). Within four years, the proposal was refined in the meetings held within the Central Education Council (*Chuou-kyouiku-shingikai*, CEC), a key leading advisory committee, who suggested the introduction of a new hour-block called ‘integrated general study period’. In 1998, the MOE revised the Course of Study, giving primary schools permission to conduct foreign language activities under the clause of ‘general study’ aimed at cultivating international understanding – instead of academic learning. This became the blueprint for Early Foreign Language Education (*souki-gaikokugo-kyouiku*) in the early 2000s, which later

became one of the contentious issues among critics and educators (see, for example, Erikawa, 2009; Ohtsu, 2004; Ohtsu & Torikai, 2002).

Socio-cultural trend and its impact on the English curriculum in the 21st century

The 1990s also provided a transition period to Japanese society as whole. It described the series of national challenges that Japan faced after the burst of its national economic bubble. In this period, so called the ‘Lost Decade,’ Japanese society experienced an unknown state of downward syndrome while dealing with a long-term economic stagnation. The socioeconomic impact of the ‘Lost-Decade’ has remained unknown since it did not affect Japan’s national economy seriously. Instead, it draws a significant contrast with the previous ten years because of the nation’s zero-percent growth on an annual basis. What Japan witnessed in the 90s is collective experience of subsequent national incidents—i.e., the collapse of housing-loan market bonds, the 1995 Hanshin-Kobe Earthquake, domestic terrorism (i.e., the *Aum Shinrikyo* religious cult group’s nerve gas attack in Tokyo’s metropolitan subway stations), and the 1997 Asian currency crisis. Each of these events has influenced public perception of the changing state of Japanese society, which has turned into a hyper-consumption of mass culture.

The ‘Lost Decade’ also provides a profound implication on the meaning of English in the age of globalization. The English language has swept across the nation, permeating the fabric of academic and public spheres. Bilingual news media and English language education programs have become widely available. With the proliferation of the internet and advanced technology, Japan has harvested various language teaching businesses in both the public and private sectors. Such a large consumption of the

English language product has become a cultural obsession with many Japanese, catering to their whim to study English out of a half-hearted motivation – such as utilizing language study for their job or acquiring the ability to communicate with foreigners.

It was such market-based needs for language teaching practice and the cultural consumption of international business and social entertainment that fomented a strong call for the reform of English language education. As the millennium year was approaching, a bold move was made within the body of the Cabinet Ministry – ‘the Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century’ (CJGTC) – under Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. In January 2000, this advisory body released a six-chapter report called “The frontier within: Individual empowerment and better governance in the new millennium.” In this policy document, the advisory commission suggested the importance of English to ordinary citizens for the acquisition of “global literacy” to survive the next century. The document also mentioned the commission’s proposal to adopt English as a second official language. The commission’s attempt to contextualize English with globalization and the IT revolution with a chimerical hope for bilingual education was met with harsh criticism from the public. It eventually died out within one year after the death of Obuchi.

Still, the prime minister’s Cabinet Office’s involvement had a profound meaning on central government’s role in language education reform. During this period (1999–2001), under Obuchi’s successors –Yoshiro Mori and Junichiro Koizumi, respectively – the central government was conducting structural reform of the Cabinet ministries. The MOE was among those at the top of the list, renamed as the Ministry of

Education, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in 2001. In the same year, the MEXT summoned an internal counsel group to formulate the “Strategic Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities.” It was officially announced in July 2002. After eight months, the ‘Strategic Plan’ was materialized into a 15-page document titled “Action Plan: Cultivating Japanese with English abilities,” which was finally released in March 2003. In this policy document, the MEXT addresses their set of goals in the range of agendas that should be achieved in the next five years by 2008. The goals include: 1) target achievement for students and teachers; 2) improvement of teaching practice; 3) strategies to enhance learning motivation; 4) improvement of entrance examinations and school admission system; 5) facilitating language activities in primary schools; 6) enriching Japanese language education; and 7) further research on student learning progress and teaching improvement.

In the next two chapters, I will critically examine the MEXT’s strategies on English language education reform by looking into pedagogic philosophy, instructional methods and cultural characters that constitute a hegemonic discourse of education policy. In Chapter III, I will analyze MEXT’s key strategies – setting learning goals, approaches targeted at teachers and students, assessing of student progress, fostering learning motivation. By addressing the problems and drawbacks from both a linguistic and pedagogic standpoint, I will discuss how their each prescriptive strategy will fall short of its effectiveness and become counterproductive to the reality of teaching practice in the Japanese classroom.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a historical background of Japan's English language education system, tracing its origin, the foundation of the MOE, and the transition/transformation of its curriculum and instruction from the pre-war period to the 21st century. Throughout its national history, the English curriculum has been shaped and reshaped by the political climate, cultural ideologies, and important decision-making on national/international politics by the central government. The MOE has dealt with cultural struggles and learning challenges that appeared in the pre-war curriculum, and which were again encountered in the post-war curriculum.

Despite a century-long history of language exposure and the proliferation of English language resources, print media and instructional practices widely available to the Japanese people nationwide, Japan's English language education system has turned out to be ineffective at best. For years, it has been criticized – widely and heavily – by the media, and academic and business sectors for failing to provide effective teaching practice that will help students' understanding and improvement. Critics point out students' poor learning outcome by providing empirical data of internationally recognized exams such as TOEFL, which indicate Japan's performance significantly underachieves in comparison to most countries in Asia (i.e., Aspinall, 2006; McVeigh, 2002).¹ Regardless of its test format – whether a paper-based test (PBT) or internet-

¹ Of course, there is a moot point in evaluating English skills solely based on national comparison of test scores. Some people argue that judging language skills from a particular test measurement is not an appropriate way. It is understandable that test-takers' sample size and test objectives of an internationally certified exam (TOEFL) are different from those of the preferred exam of the Japanese (TOEIC). I agree that this should be taken into account for a careful evaluation of the

based test (iBT) – TOEFL scores usually place Japan behind China, South Korea, and Taiwan. While the tests were conducted based on a PBT format until 2000, the average score of Japanese test-takers scattered around 500. That placed Japan second last among all 21 countries in Asia, barely surpassing North Korea. The transition to the iBT makes little change in test-takers' performance and Japan's dismal position. According to the 2012 TOEFL iBT score report, published by the Education Testing Service (ETS), Japan barely gets an average of 70 out of 120, in contrast to China (77), South Korea (84), and Taiwan (78). Also, it is the second lowest among all nations, only surpassing Cambodia and Mongolia.²

One popular view is a significant mismatch in learning needs between teaching English for entrance exams (emphasizing reading and sentence-writing skills) and teaching English for practical purposes (emphasizing listening comprehension and speaking skills) (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Gorsuch, 2000; O'Donnell, 2005). This discrepancy serves as a blind spot for the Japanese in terms of the long-term studying goal. Facing the pressure of exams, teaching practice typically drifts away from creative instruction for practical communication to a cookie-cutter rote-learning. That usually forces students to spend enormous time cramming complicated grammatical knowledge and lengthy vocabulary lists for archaic readings that will appear only in the exams for top-tier Japanese high schools and/or colleges (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; McVeigh,

progress of students and teachers to avoid unnecessary stigma detrimental to language study. Still, it is unlikely to change the general perception that Japanese have serious problems in English language skills, since in neither of these two measurements have their average scores made significant improvement for many years.

² See ETS's Test and Score Data Summary for *TOEFL iBT*® Tests and *TOEFL*® PBT Tests at http://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/94227_unlweb.pdf.

2002). Sustaining undue stress through the attrition, Japanese students eventually lose their energy to study English after realizing that they can't even have a simple conversation with a native speaker of English or any non-Japanese speaker despite their six-year learning experience. It was a mounting pressure and criticism from the general public and business sectors that prodded the central government into making a drastic reform of English language education, which has been reflected in the "Action Plan: Cultivating 'Japanese with English abilities.'"

CHAPTER III

ANALYZING THE DISCOURSE OF “JAPANESE WITH ENGLISH ABILITIES”: RHETORIC AND ITS PROBLEMS

Overview: Cultivating ‘Japanese with English Abilities’

Strategic plan to cultivate ‘Japanese with English abilities’

On 12 July 2002, the MEXT released the blueprint of their language education project titled “Developing a strategic plan to cultivate Japanese with English Abilities – A plan to improve English and Japanese abilities.” In this short document, the MEXT provided a brief overview of their project by describing objectives, background, and future action. They also included the draft of a proposal framework including attainment targets, key policy issues and the tasks to be investigated. The ‘Strategic Plan’ was released in both English and Japanese on the same date. The title “Japanese with English abilities,” appeared in the English version, and was the translated term for the original Japanese document titled “*eigo ga tsukaeru nohonjin*” [“Japanese who can use English,” translated literally], and the original Japanese document was translated thoroughly into English.

In the document, the MEXT explained that they processed their strategic plan based on a 17-month stretch of preconference meetings. The meetings were held under the name of two different councils: the Round-table Committee for the Improvement of

English Teaching Methods from January 2001 for one year; and the Round-table Committee on English Education Reform” from January 2002. As already reported in “background,” the MEXT made it clear that they summoned the in-house committee and held a monthly meeting five times prior to their official announcement. Reflecting on the reports from prearranged meetings on improved instruction methods, the MEXT summoned the committee under the direction of the chief cabinet minister and arranged follow-up conferences to gather ideas on revamping the educational system or curriculum and to discuss how to materialize such ideas. Under the direction of the chief cabinet minister, the Round-table Committee on English education reform was managed by the primary/junior education department within their institution.

From January to May 2002, the Round-table Committee invited semi-experts or knowledgeable persons (*yuushikisha*) to the meetings to discuss the ideas for a substantial improvement of Japanese people’s skills in English. Each meeting was structured in hour-and-a-half sessions supervised by several key ministry officials appointed to the committee. The round table had four participants who discussed freely their opinions and perspectives on any issues related to Japanese people’s English skills or English language education. Participants were diversified – ranging from business professionals to academics, and including, but not limited to, a certified interpreter/translator, school principal, TV anchorperson, and a leader of board of education.

The opinions and suggestions for proposed plans were culled by executive ministry officers and preserved as written records to be shared by committee members,

participants, ministry officers, and the chief cabinet minister (MEXT, 2002a). Through all five meetings, participants' discussions were centered on four areas including 1) learning goals for students at each school level; 2) cultivating student learning motivation; 3) teacher training; and 4) English at primary school. The MEXT proposal framework reflected on the input from invited guests, as shown in Table 1(p.38-41). In addition, 5) boosting Japanese language ability was added later in the finalized framework (See Table 2 on p. 42).

Table 1 Strategic plan attainment targets and issues for investigation

Strategic plan attainment targets		Issues for investigation
<p>@ English-language abilities demanded of all Japanese nationals --> attainment targets to be established for junior high and senior high schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On graduation from junior high school: Ability to hold simple conversations (and a similar level of reading and writing) comprising greetings and responses (English-language ability of graduates should be the third level of the STEP (Eiken) test, on average). • On graduation from senior high school: Ability to hold normal conversations (and a similar level of reading and writing) on everyday topics (English-language ability of graduates should be the second level or semi-second level of the STEP test, on average). <p>@ English-language abilities demanded of those active in the international community --> attainment targets to be established by individual universities with a view to cultivating human resources capable of using English in the work place.</p>		<p>➤ [Organization of a group to conduct research on English education]: the aim is to issue definite proposals within 1 year.</p> <p>(1) Conduct research to provide support for the target-level English-language abilities required at each school stage.</p> <p>(2) Conduct research into the relevancy of adopting external examination results as indices for the required English-language skills.</p> <p>(3) Conduct research into approaches for utilizing the results of external examinations in entrance examinations, etc.</p>
Key policy issues	Important policies and their objectives	
<p>I. Boosting motivation of learners</p> <p>(1) Increasing opportunities to use English</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthen cooperation, etc., with private sector English-language education facilities to promote unified English-language education in schools and regional communities. ➤ [Promoting contact with foreigners]: Promotion of English conversation salons and speech contests as well as exchange activities with foreign students centering on schools, etc. (subsidies to be provided to local authorities). ➤ [Measures to promote overseas study among high school students]: Expanding opportunities for overseas study for high school students (a target of 10 thousand high-school students studying overseas per year, including privately funded exchange students). Participation in 	

Table 1 Continued

Key policy issues	Important policies and their objectives	Issues for investigation
<p>I. Boosting motivation of learners (1)Increasing opportunities to use English</p>	<p>short-term international exchanges is also to be promoted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [Measures to promote overseas study among university students, etc.]: Enhancing overseas study assistance (scholarship programs) for students wishing to study abroad. 	
<p>(2)Improving entrance examinations, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [High school entrance examinations]: Promoting the use of the results of external examinations in entrance examinations. ➤ [University entrance examinations]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Introduction of a listening test into the University Entrance Central Examination (implementation targeted for the fiscal year 2006). (2) Improving/enhancing the foreign language examinations of individual universities. (3) Promoting the use of the results of external examinations in entrance examinations. ➤ [Corporate recruitment tests]: Urge corporations to attach importance to individuals with English abilities. MEXT will attach importance to English abilities when recruiting, promoting, etc., its employees. 	
<p>II. Improving educational content, etc.</p>	<p>[Junior high schools / high schools]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote the new Course of Study (targeting the comprehensive integration of the 4 skills, emphasizing basic practical communication abilities). ○ Within junior high and high schools, implement guidance responsive to individual needs such as elective subjects suited to the levels of students' enthusiasm/proficiency and supplementary lessons, etc. ➤ [Super English High Schools]: Implement practical research into progressive English education in high schools, etc. (proposed total of 100 schools in 3 years). ➤ [Survey on the state of the implementation of improvements to foreign language education]: Conduct survey on the present situation, such as small-group teaching and streaming students according to proficiency levels, and progressive teaching methods. Survey results are to be published and used as standards to measure the progress of related policies and measures. ➤ [Collection of examples of progressive teaching methods relating to foreign language learning]: The Curriculum Research Center is to collect examples of progressive teaching methods relating to foreign language education based on the results of the above survey. <p>[Universities]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus support on universities that are developing/implementing exceptional English education curriculums, and particularly on 	<p>(4) Conduct research on English education and compile fundamental data.</p> <p>(5) Conduct research into a unified system of English education through each school stage.</p> <p>(6) Conduct research into a model for English education at universities.</p>

Table 1 Continued

Key policy issues	Important policies and their objectives	Issues for investigation
<p>II. Improving educational content, etc.</p>	<p>universities (or faculties) where all subjects are taught in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promoting participation in special courses taught in English: Japanese students are to be encouraged to participate in the special courses taught in English that are provided for foreign students. 	
<p>III. Improving the qualifications of English instructors and upgrading the teaching system (1) Improving the qualifications of English instructors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Domestic training (Institute for Educational Leadership in the Teaching of English): 2,000 teachers per year (4 weeks) ○ Overseas training: 118 people short-term, 28 people long-term ➤ Establishing targets: Targets for the expected English-language abilities of English teachers to be established (equivalent to STEP semi-first level; TOEFL 550 points; TOEIC 730 points). (1) Urge education boards to make possession of the target-level English-language abilities one of the prerequisites when hiring English teachers. (2) Urge the consideration of teachers' English-language abilities in teacher assessments. ➤ Training: [Plan for training to improve qualifications of English teachers]: (1) Intensive training for all 60 thousand English teachers in junior high and senior high schools is to be carried out under a five-year plan to be implemented from the fiscal year 2003 (subsidies to be provided to prefectural governments). (2) Support to be extended to English teachers hoping to undertake training overseas for more than 1 year utilizing the sabbatical system for graduate study (annual total of 100 people; 2 per prefecture). 	<p>(7) Conduct research to provide support for the required English ability targets for English teachers.</p> <p>(8) Conduct research into efficient English teaching methods and the creation of effective teacher training programs.</p>
<p>2) Upgrading the teaching system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Placement of ALTs (5,583 hired through the JET program, 2,784 hired independently by regional authorities (total for 2001/2002: approx. 8,400)) ➤ Establishing targets: Aim is for junior-high and senior-high students to have native speaker(s) participating in more than one English class per week. Promotion of the placement of the necessary numbers of ALTs to meet this target (nationwide target: 11,500 ALTs). ➤ Effective utilization of ALTs under the JET program: Promote the enhanced utilization of ALTs through using ALTs in education to promote international understanding and in foreign language activities at elementary schools, and employing ALTs as special part-time instructors, etc. 	

Table 1 Continued

Key policy issues	Important policies and their objectives	Issues for investigation
<p>III. Improving the qualifications of English instructors and upgrading the teaching system</p> <p>2) Upgrading the teaching system</p>	<p>➤ Promote hiring of native English speakers as regular teachers: In order to attain the above-cited targets, as an additional measure, 300 foreign instructors are to be appointed as regular teachers in junior high schools over the next 3 years, with a goal of appointing 1,000 foreign instructors in junior high and senior high schools in the future.</p> <p>➤ Promote the utilization of human resources with fluent English-language abilities living in the local community: Promote the utilization of members of society who possess English-language abilities above a certain level in English education activities through such measures as the <i>Gakko Ikiiki Plan</i> (a plan to invigorate secondary schools) and the special part-time instructor system.</p>	
<p>IV. Enhancing English conversation activities in elementary schools</p>	<p>➤ [Measures to support English conversation activities in elementary schools]: In connection with English conversation activities, which are carried out in the Period for Integrated Study, support is to be extended so that teaching can be conducted by foreign instructors, fluent English speakers, or junior high school teachers in one third of such sessions.</p>	<p>➤ [Organization of a research committee to discuss English education in elementary schools]: the aim is to issue definite proposals within 3 years.</p> <p>(1) Ascertain and analyze the current situation of English conversation activities in elementary schools.</p> <p>(2) Toward the debate on the revision of the next Course of Study, in considering the future of English education at elementary school, arrange necessary research and data, etc. and consider problem areas.</p>

The Strategic Plan has a couple of key features regarding the description of “Japanese with English abilities.” First, the document title draws an inter-lingual contrast between Japanese and English-translated versions. The original Japanese version says “*eigo ga tsukaeru nihonjin*,” which literally means “Japanese who can use English.” This Japanese phrase ‘*tsukaeru*’ is a modal version of the verb ‘*tsukau*,’ which is the equivalent to the English word ‘use,’ if translated literally. ‘*Tsukaeru*’ usually refers to

one’s ability to obtain knowledge about an object or tool and learn how to use it for any practical application. To use it in the phrase ‘*Eigo-ga-tsu-ka-eru*’ means that one knows what English language is, how to pick up words and use them in communication, just like learning how to use a hammer or a utensil by hitting the nail on the wall to put up a calendar or picture frames.

Table 2: Strategic plan attainment target (added later)

Key policy issues	Important policies and their objectives	Issues for investigation
V. Boosting Japanese-language ability Cultivate Japanese-language abilities for appropriate expression and accurate comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote the new Course of Study (--> cultivate self-expression and comprehension abilities, and improve students' ability to communicate with each other). ○ Implement guidance responsive to individual needs such as supplementary lessons suited to the levels of students' enthusiasm/proficiency. ○ Promote reading activities among children: Cultivate enjoyment and the habit of a reading among children through morning reading sessions [Asa no dokusho]. ➤ [Japanese-language abilities required for the future]: The Cultural Advisory Board is to issue its report on [Japanese-language abilities required for the future] within this fiscal year. ➤ [Improving the instruction abilities of teachers]: Training is to be implemented for elementary school teachers, etc. to improve their knowledge and command of Japanese. ➤ [Promoting improvements in Japanese-language education]: Model regions are to be designated with the aim of producing all-round improvement in the Japanese-language abilities of school-age children. 	

In contrast, the translated title “Japanese with English abilities” also gives similar positive connotations with the Japanese word ‘*tsukaeru*.’ However, its reference goes

beyond the literal meaning of the ‘tool/instrument’ metaphor. ‘Abilities’ is the term that directly or indirectly refers to one’s attribute or competency to fulfill the assigned tasks or jobs. In Japanese translation, ‘*nouryoku*’ has a close association with another colloquial term ‘*dekiru*,’ which is equivalent to the English word ‘can do,’ by placing a strong emphasis on ‘power’ (*ryoku*) which gives one an attribute for making moral improvement possible. Thus, the term ‘*nouryoku*’ is usually often paraphrased as ‘*dekiru-chikara*’ (one’s capability, or a power that enables one to make or do something).

The use of such colloquial terms stands out in the Japanese policy document which typically contains formal and abstract words created by the ministry officials. Not surprisingly, the Japanese terms ‘*tsukaeru*’ and ‘*dekiru*’ are used similarly in Japanese conversations. Both are positive connotations that describe one’s skills in real life application. In the Strategic Plan, ‘*tsukaeru*’ serves as a catchy phrase as it draws attention from many Japanese viewers who can easily interpret ‘*eigo-ga-tsukaeru-nihonjin*’ to ‘*eigo-ga-dekiru-nihonjin*’ (Japanese who can do English) in a more generic sense.

Interestingly, the English version leaves out the Japanese term ‘*tsukaeru*’ for translation. It is not clear whether the ministry officials dropped the verb ‘can use’ intentionally or not. But the title of the translated version “with English abilities” clearly strikes the connotations of ‘possession’ or ‘ownership’ of language skills. This phrasing draws it much closer to the arbitrary meaning of the generic Japanese term ‘*dekiru*,’ or ‘*can do*’ in English, emphasizing one’s performance to fulfill the assigned tasks such as presentation at a foreign press conference or translation/interpretation at court hearings,

academic conferences, or business meetings. When it comes to evaluating individual performance, the Japanese word '*dekiru*' usually becomes a prescriptive label for specific categorization, since it carries a judgmental tone on one's overall competency. The word '*tsukaeru*' connotes the instrumental aspect of skills in language learning for limited purpose (i.e., fluency, reading), although it can be similarly judgmental.

In all, it is notable that 'the Action Plan' clearly indicates English abilities as special skills Japanese people should possess to make them someone privileged. It is in this context that such labeling, which attempts to separate those who have foreign language fluency from those who don't, is the cause for the concerns over the MEXT's education reform proposal.

Another aspect of the document is the use of association that connects English abilities with terms related to socio-cultural trends – i.e., 'globalization,' 'the 21st century.' The MEXT provides their justification for their agenda by stressing that Japanese should be able to acquire English language to overcome the ongoing challenge of globalization. Mastering a language that is the most recognized worldwide is crucial for "the future of our children" and "the further development of Japan as a nation." Through such contextualization, the MEXT primarily frames the English language discipline as a potential investment in upscale socioeconomic mobility for national success. Indeed, the MEXT makes it clear that their agenda was endorsed by "the 'Basic policies for economic and fiscal management and structural reform 2002'" (Cabinet Resolution issued on June 25, 2002). This panel recommended that the MEXT "should

settle on an action plan for improving English education during the fiscal year 2002 as part of a strategy to enhance human potential.”

More importantly, the collusion of these two characteristics best represents the MEXT’s fundamental education philosophy reflected in their other key policy documents. In the following month, they released the policy document titled “Human resource strategy: Cultivating the spirit of Japanese people to carve out a new era” (2002c). In this document, they provide the “Human resources strategy vision” as a basic guideline for administering public education, based on the concept of nurturing human potential (*ningen-ryoku*) to enliven the spirit of the Japanese people for the breakthrough of the 21st century. Specifically, the “Human resource strategy vision” consists of four objectives: 1) to cultivate vigorous Japanese who think and act on their own initiative; 2) to foster top-level talents who will lead the ‘Century of Knowledge’; 3) to nurture Japanese who will maintain and create a spiritually rich culture and society; and 4) to encourage Japanese who are educated through living in the international community (MEXT, 2002c). Such high expectations on high task-oriented people skills parallel the emphasis on acquiring communication skills in English for better recognition of Japanese ideas and opinions.

‘Action Plan to cultivate “Japanese with English abilities”’

In March 2003, the MEXT finalized their ‘Strategic Plan’ into a comprehensive document titled ‘Action plan to cultivate “Japanese with English abilities.”’ The document consists of three parts: the mission statement made by Atsuko Tohyama, then chief cabinet minister of MEXT; “Goals to cultivate Japanese with English abilities”;

and “Action to improve English education.” There are a couple of remarkable changes from the Strategic Plan. First, the MEXT dropped the subtitle “Plan to improve English and Japanese abilities” from the document. Second, the Action Plan addresses stock issues – attainment goals, agendas, and the plans to achieve the assigned tasks – by extending the framework from the Strategic Plan. Specifically, it provides 1) overall learning goals based on communicative dimensions of skills in English; 2) concrete measurements for learning assessment; and 3) proactive action researches on learning motivation, reconsideration of the pre-existing school entrance exam system, and quality teaching practice. With annotated descriptions, the proposals clarify the main target for students and teachers, describe the key projects to facilitate effective teaching practice, identify the tasks related to key projects, and set the benchmark for each task to be achieved in the next five years.

By design, the Action Plan stands in contrast to MEXT’s two key instruments – *Course of Study* and *Instructions guideline*– in its seeking to overhaul the entire system of instructional practice through schooling. Traditionally, the MEXT has administered public education by using the latter as the tools to set up a national standard curriculum applied to all schools. Historically, due to the conservative culture within the institution, the MEXT has been hesitant to make big changes that would lead to a significant departure from the precedence. Instead of taking a bold step to alter the core structure of the curriculum, they primarily resorted to minor modifications and updates on the language of abstract that briefly provides learning goals and teaching guidance every two to three years. In most cases, the impact of a revised curriculum, textbook, and

course content has been so miniscule that it has hardly been recognized by the general public. Such hesitancy was especially prominent in the English curriculum, frustrating many students and teachers in the classroom for many decades.

In contrast, the Action Plan gives us a whole picture of the project and illustrates what the government wants to achieve by addressing specific proposals and benchmarks. Indeed, some proposals included in the Action Plan are quite important and meaningful for the improvement of learning motivation, teaching content or creative instruction (See Appendix A). MEXT's collective investments include innovative teaching practice called the Super English Language High school (SEL-Hi) program, overseas teacher training and learning opportunities, reflecting changes in the pre-existing examination system (i.e., implementing listening comprehension in English subject for the University Entrance Central Examination), and cross-cultural engagement opportunities in regional communities, and well deserve the public attention for being remarkable ideas. By providing the minister's keynote address and concretized ideas on learning goals and specific plans in the document, the Action Plan brings out its national ambition and commitment in relief.

Since its release in 2003, the Action Plan has attracted wide attention from both the academic and public community, and facilitated profound conversations between scholars, teachers, parents, and students on its inquiry. In the last few years, numerous literatures on the Action Plan have become available in both English and Japanese. The critique of Action Plan ranges from the overview of language policy to specific agenda. The former includes the critique of language discourse within policy documents

(Hashimoto, 2009), attainment goals setting (Hato, 2005) and overall proposals (Bulter & Iino, 2005; Yamada, 2003). The latter primarily focuses on the implementation of the English curriculum to primary schools which sparked a nationwide debate with its inclusion as a key proposal in the document (Butler, 2007; Hashimoto, 2011; Honna & Takeshita, 2005; Ohtsu, 2004; Ohtsu & Torikai, 2002).

My main aim of analysis is to unravel the authoritative discourse of education reform that illustrates Japan's problematic understanding of second/foreign language acquisition and its practice as an academic discipline. In the following section, I will make a close reading of the Action Plan that consists of two texts: 1) key statement and 2) the proposal. For the analysis of the key statement, I will examine the characteristics of MEXT's authoritative discourse that constitutes the rhetoric of national revitalization. For the proposal, I will critically examine the meta-linguistic dichotomy between word and substance in the attainment goals setting that illustrates fundamental problems with the Action Plan regarding its feasibility.

The 'Action Plan': rhetoric and its problems

Rhetoric of national revitalization: English as lingua franca

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the Action Plan is one of the key policy documents that illustrate central government's initiative in conducting language education reform. It was proposed in a clear response to repeated criticisms of Japan's exam-oriented English education and lack of action in responding to the various needs of English language for globalization which brings changes in the social environment. The global spread of English makes us aware of the trend in the world's increasing interdependency on

economy, peace, and environment and calls for active citizenship in an international context. In Japan, the importance of English is preached from several venues, such as science, trade, entertainment, telecommunication, which has brought a strong call for a more practical approach to English language teaching. It is interesting to note that the government presented the Action Plan as if it were a brand new language education project, while their claim of initiative became salient as a strong force of an external factor – i.e., globalization – pierced through the insular culture held within the education ministry.

Similar to the Strategic Plan, the Action Plan provides MEXT's justifications grounded on the growing influence of globalization on Japanese society. In the first three paragraphs, the MEXT illustrates the cultural dynamics of 'globalization' that facilitates "transfers of information and capital across national borders"; deepens "international interdependency"; and brings significant impact on "various activities of individuals." In a simplified account, the illustration of Japan's relation to globalization is featured with repetitive use of economic and business terms, depicting opportunities for active participation as the means for gaining materialistic concessions. Evidently, the other important aspect of globalization, i.e., the collaborative work for a humanitarian solution to the problems faced worldwide, is downplayed as secondary, as "international understanding" and "cooperation" are put as an addendum. Furthermore, the MEXT visualizes the impact of information technology on social life, suggesting that the acceleration of information proliferation will convert the learning community into a "knowledge-based society." To keep up with such social trends that will bring unfolding

changes to the public community, the MEXT argues that people should be able to nurture the integrated skills for input and output – to obtain information and knowledge and engage in communication to transmit ideas.

In the Action Plan, the MEXT crafts, though clumsily, the vision of the educated citizen in a global context, as the vehicle for national revitalization and success by intertwining their educational mission with socioeconomic development. The framing of globalization to create an economic argument for English language education is consistent with MEXT’s other policy documents. Notably, the promotion of English language clearly corresponds with the term ‘global literacy’ which appeared in “The frontier within: Individual empowerment and better governance in the new millennium”:

The advance of globalization and the information-technology revolution call for a world-class level of excellence. Achieving world-class excellence demands that, in addition to mastering information technology, all Japanese acquire a working knowledge of English – not as simply a foreign language but as the international lingua franca. English in this sense is a prerequisite for obtaining global information, expressing intentions, and sharing values. Of course the Japanese language, our mother tongue, is the basis for perpetuating Japan’s culture and traditions, and study of foreign languages other than English should be actively encouraged. Nevertheless, knowledge of English as the international lingua franca equips one with a key skill for knowing and accessing the world. (CJGTC, 2000, p.10)

As shown above, the commission report’s framing of English as an instrument to acquire working knowledge indicates the shift of language needs to practical skills virtually applicable to the business and public domains. More importantly, the report gives English special recognition by separating it from the foreign language category,

and proposes draconian measurements to shore up English language teaching practice and its curriculum. The commission report goes on:

...it is necessary, first to set the concrete objective of all citizens acquiring a working knowledge of English by the time they take their place in society as adults. We should think about organizing English classes according to students' actual level of competence rather than their grade in school, improving training and objective assessment of English teachers, greatly increasing the number of foreign teachers of English, and contracting language schools to handle English classes. We should also think about requiring the central government, local governments, and other public institutions to produce their publications, and home pages, in both Japanese and English. In the long term, it may be possible to make English an official second language, but national debate will be needed. First, though, every effort should be made to equip the population with a working knowledge of English. This is not simply a matter of foreign-language education. It should be regarded as a strategic imperative. (CJGTC, 2000, p.10)

Here, the report's high expectations of all Japanese citizens "to acquire working knowledge of English" indicate the power of calling for improvement, characterized with a radical notion of systematic 'reform.' Cultivating Japanese who have broad international perspectives and creativities is a daunting task. It requires a high commitment that will put educators and schools under the utmost constraint. Thus, national leaders must be cautious about using a hard core measurement that will cause changes in the national language policy, such as adopting English as the second language. Its use as "strategic imperative" invokes a high risk of challenge to the conventional understanding of language and culture, affecting not only the interests of public education but also the core values and norms of the general public. Although the idea to adopt English as the second language died out in the middle of public debate, a collective awareness of the needs for pragmatic English, driven by a global-cultural

trend, was a recurring theme in the Action Plan. It was resilient, appealing, and forceful enough for the MEXT to craft their vision of educational reform in the English language curriculum.

Discrepancies between language and reality

One of the characteristics that can be seen in public policy is the political effect of language discourse that illustrates discrepancy between rhetoric and reality. Whether it is education, social welfare, healthcare, or immigration reform, language crafted by national leaders or state authorities has the power to sanctify its meanings, giving politicians exclusive power to endorse specific agendas to the detriment of local and public concerns. In the US, for example, authoritative language crafted in controversial education policies such as the ‘No Child Left Behind’ Act or ‘Race to the Top’ has a sweeping effect on the entire nation³. It has instigated an ideological move toward the privatization of public education and the demonization of full-time teachers and principals with a misguided notion of ‘accountability’ – a hard core measurement determined by test scores. In the case of the US, since its dramatic shift to ‘accountability’ during the presidency of George W. Bush, the rhetoric of educational reform stands at odds with the realistic needs for American educators and families in the local community, by sweeping public attention away from the collective vision of education equality (Asen, 2012; Kuehl, 2012; McIntush, 2000; Ravitch, 2010).

³ Details for both initiatives are available at the US Department of Education Website. For *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, see <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>. For *Race to the Top*, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

Contrary to the US, Japan's call for educational reform has never driven the nation toward a strong push for the private takeover of public education. Education is virtually considered as a public responsibility – that is, the central government takes sole control of the curriculum and instruction over schools and teachers. Historically, the MEXT has never given permission to private organizations to found a K-12 educational institution as a certified public school or to replace existing public schools. However, this does not mean that Japan's education policy is immune to the problems driven by conflicting characteristics of language discourse.

Despite its creativity and innovation, the Action Plan is no stranger to such discrepancy when its ambitious rhetoric of national revitalization is contrasted to the structural problems with the content of the proposal. In their explanation, the MEXT identifies the components of communication abilities as “listening,” “speaking,” “reading,” and “writing,” referring to mastery in these four skills to English “as means for communication.” This is not the first time the MEXT identified these four skills clearly in their documents. They also appeared in the 2002 Course of Study for junior high schools' foreign language curriculum:

Learning Goals

- (1) To accustom and familiarize students with listening to English and to enable them to understand the speaker's intentions etc. in simple English.
- (2) To accustom and familiarize students with speaking in English and to enable them to speak about their thoughts etc. in simple English.
- (3) To accustom and familiarize students with reading in English and to enable them to understand the writer's intentions etc. in simple English.
- (4) To accustom and familiarize students with writing in English and to enable them to write about their thoughts etc. in simple English. (MEXT 2003a)

Contrasting with the description above, the goals in the Action Plan are much clearer and are directed to students at both levels. Although such an attempt to specify learning goals and targets is nothing new to the creation of a national curriculum in most countries, it seems to be a significant leap for the MEXT considering the ambiguous description of goals setting in the Course of Study. Unfortunately, the Action Plan similarly falls into the trap of semantic ambiguity in content due to the abstractness of the language used. Critical analysis of language discourse in attainment goals setting reveals Action Plan's three characteristic flaws that highlight 1) a meta-linguistic dichotomy between word and substance; 2) a mismatch between attainment goals and actual skill sets; and 3) little or lack of scientific verifications. These characteristic flaws illustrate characteristic problems with the official account of language acquisition and its teaching practice, and hence will undermine the overall quality of the Action Plan.

The first characteristic flaw is the use of generic terms that will need clarification of meaning and concept. In the Action Plan, such generic words as 'communication,' 'ability/abilities,' 'activity/activities,' 'instruction,' 'improvement' repeatedly appear as keywords that construct the important concepts for MEXT's goals setting and instructional framework. For example, in the first section "Goals to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities'," the word 'communication' is used for the description of two strands of learning goals set for all students:

- On graduation from a junior high school, students can conduct *basic communication* with regard to areas such as greetings, responses, or topics relating to daily life.

- On graduation from a senior high school, students can conduct *normal communication* with regard to topics, for example, relating to daily life. (MEXT, 2003b; emphasis added)

The Action Plan proposal does not give further explanation for the distinction between “basic communication” and “normal communication,” which may provide answers to unknown questions on separate learning goals between students in junior high school and senior high school. What is problematic here is the MEXT’s unscientific approach to learning outcome that produces an oversimplified account of communicative competence, described as “daily conversation and exchange information in English.” Such an apparent oversight of the difficulty and challenges in communication that people normally encounter in daily life testifies to the ministry’s cultural blindness to the collective struggle in language learning. The contexts for student learning difficulties in teaching practice is clouded by the ambiguity of another generic term ‘instruction’ (*shidou*) – an administrative guidance and discipline the MEXT imposes on schools. How can MEXT’s “instruction” encourage students and teachers to expect a positive learning outcome with the absence of its pedagogical concepts? In all, the MEXT’s goals setting does not give a clear picture of communicative skills applicable to students at either school levels due to the failure to provide the definitions for essential key terms – such as ‘basic English abilities,’ and ‘daily conversation.’

The meta-dichotomy between word and substance in the ministry’s language is also shown in the plans to improve teacher’s instructional skills and class productivity. Specifically, MEXT uses “activities” and/or “repetition of activities making use of English” as the key terms indicating the improvement of teaching practice, but no further

explanations are given for introducing new instructional models or scaffolding techniques. The only exceptions are small-group training and “streaming according to proficiency in English.” The document includes these instructions as the promotion of a plan for teacher improvement in a brief statement: “...small group teaching of approximately twenty persons and the streaming of students according to proficiency in subjects such as English, will be promoted so that detailed and individualized instruction can be realized.” Other than that, the term ‘activities’ which appears elsewhere in both goals and annotated descriptions is quite confusing:

- With textbooks and teaching materials, considerations should be given to the acquisition of language proficiency through *the repetition of activities* making actual use of English taking into consideration actual language situations and functions.
- The majority of an English class will be conducted in English and many activities where students can communicate in English will be introduced.
- A certain level of English ability and teaching ability is required of English teachers to conduct classes which aim to develop proficiency in terms of vocabulary and grammar through *the repetition of activities* where English is used as a means of communication and to foster communication abilities in “listening,” “speaking,” “reading,” and “writing” through classes principally taught in English. (MEXT, 2003b; emphasis added)

Despite its ambiguity, the term *the repetition of activities* plays out as a leading word that carries the connotation of an administrative order to impose on instructional practice. Like “basic communication” and “daily conversation,” the term does not contain substance due to the absence of clarification. Nevertheless, the term implicates the ministry’s assumption of a smooth transition to a new teaching style that teachers will master in a relatively short period in order for it to be quickly applied in the English classroom. This stands in contrast to student expectation in that MEXT’s description

makes the tasks more demanding for teachers. Calling for a shift to English-only instruction, while overall curriculum revisions – including teacher training and textbook materials – are still underway, this meta-linguistic dichotomy between word and substance becomes a serious challenge to many teachers who have been trained to instruct English classes in Japanese.

The second characteristic flaw is the significant mismatch between the specified target and actual skill sets. As the main strategy for assessing the student's learning progress and the teacher's English and instructional skills, the Action Plan adopts certified English proficiency exams such as TOEIC (Test of English for international communication) /TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign language) /STEP (Standardized test of English proficiency). Utilization of these conventional exams that are widely available to the general public allows curriculum designers to set specific targets by using the raw scores as a standard benchmark for both students and teachers. For students, learning goals are set based on the degree level of the STEP exam as the benchmark to assess learning progress for both school levels. At junior high school, students are expected to acquire English proficiency that is the equivalent to passing the 3rd grade level of the STEP exam (which is comparable to 450 in TOEIC/430 in TOEFL) upon graduation. At senior high school, students are expected to acquire English proficiency that is equivalent to the semi-2nd to 2nd grade level of STEP (which is comparable to 500–550 in TOEIC or 475–500 in TOEFL) upon graduation. The problem with this benchmark setting is that each degree level of STEP does not account for the skill levels targeted at each level of communicative competence, due to the

unclear distinction between ‘basic communication’ and ‘normal communication.’ A substantially lower level of target makes it utterly questionable as being relevant to students as the benchmark conflicts with the description of ‘normal communication.’ If its meaning is taken literally, this imposes more demanding expectations on students to engage in social interaction with non-Japanese nationals like they do in Japanese on a daily basis – against a substantially low standard achievement target. Moreover, pre-existing bias toward STEP as an exam made exclusively for Japanese invokes an irony for promoting English to the students from an international perspective.

A similar problem can also be seen in the achievement targets for teachers. The Action Plan clearly states that English teachers in Japan will achieve English proficiency equivalent to pre-first level for STEP, 550 for TOEFL(PBT, or 84 on iBT) or 730 for TOEIC. The description of attainment level – i.e., semi-1st grade in STEP, TOEFL 550/TOEIC 730 – is moderately challenging but not impossible for ordinary Japanese to achieve while living in Japan. This score guideline has been considered a de facto standard in Japanese society until today. Many job seekers and employers use this yardstick for consideration of employment. Yet, to put it in a different context, this benchmark is the minimum qualification for international applicants to apply for graduate school admission. It is not an alternative to certification for passing the speaking test. Nor does it guarantee one’s ability to demonstrate speaking skills in actual communication. In reality, this is not even sufficient for Japanese to communicate their ideas entirely in English. Again, the achievement targets for teachers do not account for the necessary skills applicable to effective teaching. This stems from the fact that MEXT

misrepresents English skills by equalizing basic literacy and knowledge with the ability to demonstrate the mastery of quality instruction in the classroom. Evidently, the description of the teacher's ability does not provide clear justifications for adopting a popular English exam – i.e., TOEIC – as a new measurement that will help teachers to nurture their communicative skills utilized for “the repetition of activity.” Their uncritical acceptance of a new test design without any consideration of the score biases toward its format and measurement is a strong case in point. The overreliance on quantitative measurement by a popular exam, whose credibility is masked under the name brand of ‘global standard,’ makes it questionable as an accurate assessment of progress since expectation is set unfairly high for teachers. Ironically, TOEIC – a popular English exam of which the vast majority of takers are Japanese and Koreans – is recognized as a test measurement which the Education Testing Service gives least credit to for its reliability in verifying the authenticity of English language proficiency in practical use. An attempt to measure teachers' progress in this manner well explains their problematic understanding of ‘English ability.’

The third characteristic flaw with the Action Plan's goals setting is the absence of scientific verification. The ambiguous description of attainment goals for students and teachers shows that the ministry's expectation and outcome prediction are seriously lacking empirical evidence from language studies such as applied linguistics, communication, or TESOL. Numerous studies on second/foreign language acquisition conducted by applied linguists such as Jim Cummins and his followers have suggested that it takes two to three years for non-native speakers of English to acquire essential

language skills – called basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) – that enable them to engage in interpersonal interactions for basic social needs while living in an ESL environment. However, the actual time needed for language acquisition is a bit more complicated than Cummins' initial findings, as it varies from learning environment, target language, learner's socioeconomic and cultural background, instructional framework, and so on. In language studies, there is little consensus for the prediction of the time it takes to reach specific levels of proficiency, especially in an EFL environment. What makes it more challenging to predict language proficiency for Japanese students is that the official expectation stands at odds with the reality of the structural hours allotted for the English curriculum in the Japanese school system. Hato (2005) illustrates this point really well in her critique of the official assumption on language acquisition. By providing several empirical data from researches on second language acquisition and bilingual education, she makes a comparison with EFL teaching in Japanese schools in terms of hours spent. Her study shows that Japanese schools spend a significantly less number of hours (total 740–920 hours in six years of study of English through secondary school education) than Japanese adult learners in American ESL classes (2,700–4,320 hours), or Canadians learning the French language (1,200–2,100 hours). Of course, contextual difference between ESL/EFL classroom environments stands as a critical factor that draws distinctive cultural perspectives toward language learning practice. That leads many researchers to agree to disagree on methodological issues and assumptions that have been applied repeatedly as the conventional norms of teaching practice in the ESL/EFL classroom. Still, the gap is quite

remarkable, given that study hours are dedicated solely to instructional practice for each respective classroom. Setting a similar level of expectations as those of ESL learners in immersion programs, and thereby disregarding the Japanese classroom reality, MEXT's goals setting stands out in relief as a gross miscalculation on assessing the appropriateness of its targets and feasibilities. Such an egregious drawback in strategic planning clearly demonstrates the ministry's overall ignorance in the study of language acquisition. It also testifies to the cultural insensitivity to both students and teachers whose English language exposure is significantly limited – less than a total of 1,000 hours on average throughout six years of secondary education – under the current Japanese school curriculum.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the critique of both the Strategic Plan and Action Plan for a rhetorical analysis of the “Japanese with English abilities” discourse. My analysis of keynote addresses in these two documents has revealed MEXT's motive for national revitalization through the strategic framing of globalization as increasing opportunities for economic mobility. By promoting the education reform project as a public policy, the MEXT attempts to create a collective vision of ‘Japanese with English abilities’ as future viable resources for national development. Their strategic use of economic vocabularies to create a national narrative for Japan's globalization is derived from a previous public policy document released by the CJGTC. My analysis confirms that this official account remains consistent with the two documents.

Next, my critical analysis of the language discourse in the Action Plan's attainment goals setting shows its three major flaws – the dichotomy between word and substance, the discrepancy between adopted measurements and actual skill sets, and the lack of empirical evidence, respectively. These characteristic flaws indicate a significant gap between rhetoric and reality regarding the official perception of language acquisition and teaching practice. A lack of clarification for key terms – ‘basic communication,’ ‘normal communication,’ ‘activities,’ ‘guidance,’ renders the official description of the overall attainment goals confusing. The inability to discern the characteristics of each test design (i.e., the STEP English for Japanese-made exam, TOEIC as the popular exam) has led to the failure of coordinating the achievement targets in relation to actual skills. A significant gap in estimated hours between empirical studies and the current English curriculum indicates that the ministry's attainment goals setting is solely based on unscientific speculations. These characteristic flaws seriously undermine the overall quality of the Action Plan because they diminish the positive aspects that characterize the creativity of several meaningful proposals. This is quite problematic since the MEXT's attainment goal-setting serves as the core objective of the Action Plan, and it reflects the ministry's disposition on language teaching practice.

Finally, my analysis of attainment goals setting suggests the ministry's ambivalence towards chimerical aspiration and required commitment in the official account of language acquisition and its practice. This cultural conflict is manifested in the implementation of primary English, another important agenda which appears in the Action Plan. An attempt to implement the English curriculum in primary schools as a

strategy to early English language education sparked a national controversy on its release in 2002. Until its official endorsement and implementation in April 2011, this agenda involved many researchers and lay educators who argued over its justification, curriculum positioning, structural hours, concern with students' Japanese literacy, and the instructional burden on class teachers. The debate over primary school English eventually divided the participants into ideological polarizations – such as Japanese vs. English, primary education vs. secondary education, and successful learning vs. international understanding. This hot-button issue produced a profound discourse of cultural representations and assumptions in teaching and learning, and highlighted its complicated effect on learning outcome due to its close relation to MEXT's relaxed education (*yutori kyouiku*) policy.

In the next chapter, I will first provide a contextual background for the primary school English curriculum in connection with *yutori kyouiku*, and reflect on how the cultural conflict between the two has illustrated the contradiction between the ministry's strategy and the backwash effect of the relaxation policy. Then, I will move on to the analysis of other important agendas – teacher training and quality instruction, respectively – to reveal the cultural and ideological assumptions hidden in each proposal that may help us identify the overall problems with the ministry's perceptions of language education.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYZING THE CULTURAL PROBLEMS: TEACHER TRAINING
SYSTEM AND PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL
UNDERSTANDING

Problems with teacher training and quality instruction

Training local teachers: insufficiency and lack of structural solidarity

As shown in Appendix A, the Action Plan places the teacher training system as one of the top priorities. It could be argued that the MEXT puts the utmost emphasis on teacher training and its system because it plays a crucial role in influencing the outcome of the quality teaching and learning motivation in the proposal. More than 60 percent of total budget on their English language education project was allotted to teacher training and quality instruction (Takahashi, 2004). At the outset, the MEXT created the sets of teacher training targets and contacted universities and academic associations for help. Their project attracted some interest from higher education, inviting several hundred college professors and researchers to volunteer teaching at primary school.

For the training of local teachers, the proposal includes 1) a five-year plan for intensive training at both local and national level; 2) leading teachers to direct learning communities in the regions; and 3) overseas training. The first task was to provide accessible course training to all English teachers from 2003 to 2007 through a

collaboration of local prefectures and central government. The MEXT and education boards in all 47 prefectures were assigned for this task to provide training programs. The second task was to offer the course for educational leadership in pedagogy to guide teachers in refining their instructional skills in the classroom and lead other instructors in the development of effective learning communities at local level. The third task was to send teachers to certified academic or language institutions overseas for a certain length of time, depending on their various needs, such as instructional training, teaching certificate, or graduate program.

Based on the proposal, MEXT sets the protocol for the practice of teacher training. This is that they distribute their training manual to each prefecture as guidance, but allow the local board of education to design training sessions and arrange the schedule for its actual practice. This means that local prefectures have little constraint from administrative guidance. At the same time, this also means that the content and quality of training varies from prefecture to prefecture. On the surface, three tasks that appear in the proposal seem decent and fair for the improvement of quality education. However, the proposal misses the point in achieving the main objective of teacher training. The biggest problem is that the proposal underestimates the challenges of fostering leading teachers due to its short-sightedness in developing a training system with an unrealistic expectation for improving teachers' English proficiency.

The most critical issue in teacher training for Japanese teachers lies in its insufficiency. At local level, many training programs sponsored by a prefectural council or board of education are compacted into a relatively short time – two to five days per

year. Some prefectural councils offer a longer program in the summer or fall semester, but in most prefectures very few councils offer solid structural hours such as semester-long seminars that will provide enough time for meaningful learning for teachers. Even more challenging is the training system at national level. Training programs offered by the National Center for Teachers' Development go far short of its aim in educating leading teachers. Participants of national level training programs are significantly limited because they are only available to senior teachers and those who are directing instructional training at regional level. Admittedly, the national level training program has its strength in its solid content material. Derived from MEXT's manual, the program provides several key models relating to pedagogical approaches and instructional techniques that are useful for actual teaching. But the training session lasts for only ten days, which is way too short to cover the entire content for teachers. Moreover, the officials' neglecting to demonstrate the effective utilization of their models in effective training sessions to local education councils and teachers becomes a focal point in questioning the sessions' overall productivity.

The problem with teacher training is also reflected in the context for primary school English. Several studies have been conducted since MEXT officially announced English activities for primary schools in 2006. According to the survey by the National Education Board Council, the length of a training session offered to primary school teachers is three days on average. The data from Benesse corporations, a private educational research consulting firm, shows that more than half of public schools in the survey did not conduct any kind of instructional training for upcoming English

activities.⁴ This data also suggests that schools providing frequent in-house training had homeroom teachers who took the initiative, voluntarily, while most schools relying on external personnel – such as native speakers of English – held fewer instructional training sessions or gave no training at all. These surveys point to the fact that many teachers were indeed underprepared for teaching English, regardless of their disposition, due to multiple factors including school's indifference, hesitancy, anxiety towards a foreign language, lack of educational resources and teaching infrastructure. It is such adversity that makes teacher training a daunting task, since many primary school teachers don't have enough English for both literacy and conversation skills. What is worse, the vast majority of these teachers are even offered the opportunity to receive regular professional seminar and workshops offered at national level.

In this respect, MEXT's proposal for teacher training in the proposal seems to be an empty promise at best. The training system offered in the proposal lacks the perspective for professional development in the mid-to-long term. Sporadic training sessions may not be bad for teachers who struggle to find time in a cluttered schedule for a heavy workload, but it is quite ineffective in providing moral encouragement and support for the improvement of instructional and language skills. Honing language and instructional skills is a long-term process, and the training session is just one such opportunity for professional development. It cannot be accomplished in a few days. I wonder if the MEXT officials were even aware of that while working on the draft of the Action Plan.

⁴ Data is available at http://benesse.jp/berd/center/open/report/syo_eigo/2006/index.shtml

Idolizing native speakers of English: the myth of ALT as a model teacher

Recruiting ALTs through official channel

Another issue involving quality instruction is the systematic use of external resources. This is the mobilization of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), who are assigned to help regular teachers to facilitate student engagement for productive learning in the classroom. The proposal suggests that the effective use of the JET Programme will fulfill the important task of providing meaningful educational learning experience to students. The program, founded in 1987, has become a popular educational project for bringing foreign teachers – most of whom are native speakers of English – to the Japanese classroom. A historical record of recruitment gives credit to the successful development of the program. According to the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), the number of JET participants increased steadily in the 1990s, and reached above 6,000 in 2002.⁵ The statistics show that over 90 percent of the applicants who got accepted to the program are selected as a full-time ALT and dispatched to K-12 schools nationwide. By and large, the JET Programme seems to have a good reputation for facilitating a cross-cultural teaching and learning experience to the predominantly insular academic environment of Japanese schools. However, critical analysis of the program reveals several problems that will undermine its reliability for quality teaching.

Critics of the program roughly identify three problems, including application, ALT's role and duties, insufficient training, and lack of internal (between local teachers

⁵ Data is available at the official website, <http://www.jetprogramme.org/e/introduction/history.html>

and ALTs) and external communication (between administrative officials and schools) (Kushima, 2007; McConnell, 1996; Ohtani, 2008). The first problem is with the application criteria. The program does not set any further requirements other than a bachelor's degree. There are no specific qualifications (i.e., master's degree in TESL or any related field, teaching certificate or experiences) identified as a requirement. Instead, the program emphasizes nationality and language status as a key part of eligibility requirement in the descriptions – that is 1) an applicant must be a native speaker of English or equivalent, and 2) they do not hold Japanese citizenship at the time of applying (if they do, they must surrender the Japanese citizenship prior to the employment). These guidelines generally show the ministry's description of the ideal candidates as innocent, naïve foreigners who know very little about the host culture or do not have too much experience in teaching. The ministry's preference to provide more placements to novices stems from their hesitancy to hire well-experienced teachers based on a couple of assumptions. They are: 1) experienced teachers are generally overqualified and this may discourage many young and inexperienced applicants; 2) the excellent instructional skills of experienced teachers could become a threat to local teachers who could lose face through feeling a sense of inferiority due to little confidence in English (Browne, 2008; McConnell, 2000). Thus, fresh and young college graduates, most of whom have neither a teaching certificate in TEFL/TESL nor solid teaching experience, become the representatives of applicants, limiting the openings for well-trained and experienced teachers.

Another problem is the lack of clarity regarding the ALTs' duties and responsibilities. According to JET's *General Information Handbook*, ALTs are described as "an assistant to the Japanese teacher" and are not "expected to conduct classes alone, nor be the 'main' teacher (JET Programme, 2012, p. 89)." However, the handbook also suggests an expectation that ALTs will engage in "team-teaching" with local teachers, working together on lesson plans and assessment of outcomes. Contrary to this description, the ALTs' actual role in the classroom varies from school to school. In middle school, for example, the classroom is primarily controlled by a local teacher. Most ALTs are not given opportunities to participate in any teaching that goes beyond serving as 'a live tape recorder.' By contrast, at primary school, they are pressured into taking a leading role because very few local teachers can teach the class in English. Such inconsistency between the documents and classroom reality well illustrates the point that ALTs are seriously unprepared due to the lack of adequate input in Japanese school system, classroom culture, semesters, class sizes, curriculum hours, teaching styles and expectations, entrance examinations, and goals of student learning. Even updated information on JET handbook does not suffice to resolve their main concern in the classroom. Many ALTs find that there is a clear contradiction between what is written in the manual and how to participate in the classroom. They have trouble finding their role in the classroom—"teacher" or 'assistant,' getting confused by teaching duties that are assigned to local teachers or frustrated with sporadic participation in the classroom.

The third problem, which is critical, in my opinion, is the lack of training opportunities and communication that will offer administrative and professional

assistance to ALTs and local teachers. Typically, qualified ALTs will be notified less than a couple of months prior to the school semester. Official preparation and training are patchy at best, a few days being allotted for post-arrival orientation, mid-term teaching session, or JET conference workshops for new and returning ALTs. ALTs will not receive any pedagogy-related training until they get dispatched to schools. There's not even an intensive crash course for teacher training prior to the first day of teaching. Due to such unpreparedness and insufficient information received, many ALTs have serious challenges in the classroom – i.e., in their interaction with local teachers and students. They have difficulty in communicating with local teachers regarding lesson plans and instructions, due to language issues (English for Japanese teachers, and Japanese for ALTs) as well as regarding administrative duties the local teachers have to undertake outside teaching duties. In reality, many ALTs are dealing with undue stress and anxiety over their ambiguous position in the classroom, and uncertainty over job security in their struggle to adapt to the local culture of the school environment.

In addition to the drawbacks mentioned above, the popularity of the JET Programme is also being affected by the ongoing economic recession. The number of participants in the program has been in a declining trend since 2003, dropping to 5,119 (5,057 for ALTs) in 2006 and 4,334 (3,974 for ALTs) in 2010.⁶ Furthermore, in May 2010, the JET Programme was also put under scrutiny by the prime minister's Cabinet's Revitalization Unit. The official evaluation of the program was critical for its systematic flaws: ambiguous objectives, waste of resources for its educational investment, lack of

⁶ See <http://www.jetprogramme.org/e/introduction/history.html>

clarity in outcomes. Although the Cabinet allowed the JET Programme to continue to today, the impact of its negative report was not negligible. The program has lost some integrity as an educational project, as it was put in the list of review-required projects and even led the general public to call for its end.

Recruiting ALTs through unofficial channels

The decline of JET Programme participants had little effect on the total numbers of ALTs in the job market. This means that more ALTs were getting hired through alternative channels, such as through local government or the private sector. Since 2002, the numbers of non-JET ALTs have been on the rise, as if corresponding to the decline of JET ALTs. The government's move to introduce English into primary schools stimulated the need for English teachers, inviting the private sector to the job market. Although such a trend was under the radar, the MEXT confirmed 3,090 ALTs were hired through alternative channels in 2002. The non-JET ALTs rose to 5,951 in 2006, outnumbering JET ALTs.⁷ When the MEXT announced their plan to introduce English to the 5th and 6th grades in the future, approximately a half of non-JET ALTs were dispatched to primary schools.

As in the US or elsewhere, a dramatic shift to private education incurs widespread concern among educators and teachers regarding its impact on school reform or teaching quality. Japan is no exception. A growing demand for teaching English in primary schools has driven numerous private firms and consulting businesses into the

⁷ Data is available at the MEXT's official website. See http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/082/houkoku/1308375.htm

education market. Among them, an outsourcing agent called '*haken kaisha*,' has become the main representative of the private sector (Aspinall, 2008; Flynn, 2009). As with temporary staff, '*haken kaisha*' hires potential ALTs based on an annual-based contract, gives specific job assignments, and dispatches them to the workplace as a temporary worker to do the assigned tasks during working hours. Not surprisingly, such fast-growing dispatching companies have infiltrated into public education to cater for the need of schools to have native speakers of English in the classroom. This hiring practice has spread like wildfire, as many schools are desperate for native speakers of English to practice foreign language activities in and outside of the classroom. In general, the public sees that dispatching companies can provide an alternative form of employment – especially at a time of uncertainty regarding the continuous economic recession in Japan.

Nevertheless, this trend does not escape the questions of teaching quality and reliability, either. Although there is some argument to say that non-JET ALTs have more flexibility and autonomy in teaching, they are no better or worse than JET ALTs in terms of teaching eligibility. Like the JET Programme, very few employers offer additional qualifications that go beyond a college degree and language status (native speaker of English). However, due to meager payment and serious lack of job security, ALTs hired through non-official channels are considered even worse than JET ALTs. Contrary to JET ALTs who are under the protection of Japan's Standard Labor Law, many non-JET ALTs are subject to unethical labor exploitation perpetrated by miscellaneous outsourcing agencies.

Critics have addressed concern over the random hiring practice of ALTs recruited through the public and private sectors at regional level, issuing a warning that such a trend will seriously undermine the overall quality of language teaching practice (Aspinall, 2008; Flynn, 2009). Public media have also cut through the fog of the unidentified non-JET ALT job market by providing an investigating report about the harsh reality of dispatched ALTs who are being demoralized by private employers through the abuse of the labor contract. *The Yomiuri Shimbun* (2009), a popular Japanese conservative newspaper, provided the story about the Saitama prefectural education board that had four different ALTs in less than a year. The newspapers also criticized employers' schemes on hiring practice and business decisions that dispatch ALTs as a subcontract workforce or as day labor. Those who are recruited through outsourcing agencies soon learn that their employers treat them like a slave – no paid leave, no pay raise, penalty for sick/early leave, few employment benefits/health insurance and unreasonable dismissal. Due to the employers' neglect (sometimes deliberate) of basic labor standards, non-JET ALT is depicted as insecure, low-quality, high turnover revolving-door labor. Many privately hired ALTs quit the jobs after just a few years.

Private hiring agencies are not the only ones responsible for unethical hiring practice. Local education boards are also being accused of failing to provide adequate legal support and job protection. In the past, boards of education in many prefectures assisted JET ALTs in the registration process, housing, and with their employment contract. Recently, however, most of them have become reluctant to accept JET ALTs – primarily due to local budget cuts and an unwillingness to follow the bureaucratic

process for registration. What is more disturbing is that local councils even encourage outsourcing practice by offering tender bidding (*kikaku-nyusatsu*) to private hiring agencies and dispatching companies to win contracts, instead of hiring ALTs directly for public employment.

In 2005, the MEXT notified all schools and prefectures that ALTs cannot be hired under subcontract labor (i.e., *itaku-ukeoi*⁸) due to its inappropriateness for assigning tasks that involve direct instructions from the employer. They made it illegal to hire ALTs under consignment since h work such as team teaching would involve a high number of tasks requiring specific orders from local teachers. However, such a ruling does little to improve ALTs' labor conditions regarding job security and entitlement. Many dispatching agencies are still able to take advantage of legal loopholes stemming from the ambiguity of the language in the subcontract form by curtailing ALTs' rights, including those regarding health and labor insurances, overtime pay, and sick leave. In spite of the ministry's notification, outsourcing ALTs through a subcontract form of labor is still rampant in Japan's ESL/EFL job market today. Critics and labor unions are looking to crack down on labor exploitation in both the public and private sectors, by targeting dispatching companies and local education boards who offer tender bidding to various private sector businesses.

⁸ A Japanese term of contract in which an employer is different from a work supervisor; an employer is required to make a written form of agreement based on a specific task or the change of tasks assigned to the employee. According to the notification, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare makes it illegal to hire ALTs under the *itaku-ukeoi* contract. Notification is available at http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/1304118.htm. For the rules of Japan's labor dispatching business, see http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/03/30/1304118_1.pdf

Fixing “international understanding”: ironic essentialism in the cultural view

Strategic contextualization: primary school English and yutori kyouiku

Most importantly, the profound issue surrounding the problems with teacher training and its system is the idea of “international understanding” – translated as *kokusai rikai*, in Japanese. This concept is what MEXT has advocated as a slogan in educational politics since the national call for *kokusaika* (internationalization) in the 1980s, which has served as a catalyst for the collective reform of the English language education system. What can be seen in such official accounts is the irony of *kokusaika* being the representation of Japan’s cultural assumptions regarding learning practice and educational achievement. It also plays out for Japan’s problematic perception of their relational identities with the international community. This can be drawn from MEXT’s strategic framing of primary school English in relation to their controversial educational philosophy called *yutori kyouiku*.

The national effort to implement primary school English began in the mid-1990s when the government was working on the future direction of public education. In 1996, the MOE/MEXT called for leisure (*yutori*) and spiritual enlivenment (willpower to live – *ikiru chikira*) to be the core educational concepts for the future national curriculum. Initiated at prearranged meetings within the CEC, this proposal was forwarded for further deliberation (Tozawa, 2009). The main aim of *yutori kyouiku* was to foster enthusiasm in student learning emphasizing free will and autonomy – that is, to give students more time and opportunity to develop their own thinking skills and act independently. The ministry’s move to liberalize public education was heavily

influenced by some parents who expressed their concern over densely packed course loads and a cookie-cutter learning style relying on cramming and rote memorization. Special attention had been paid to such conventional teaching practice and curriculum since the media reported that a sizeable number of students were falling behind in schools every year. The best way to reduce such a heavy learning constraint and to provide more time for meaningful engagement was to offer a new class session called ‘Integrated Study Hours.’

This idea gave the ministry officials a perfect solution to a couple of the issues over foreign language needs and undue academic pressure. The proposal for primary school English was initiated proposed in the 1996 CEC meetings (Tozawa, 2009). In the first preliminary report “On our direction of national education in the 21st century,” the CEC confirmed the proposal and gave recommendations that English be introduced and taught in the Integrated Study Hour session in future. Such a recommendation became the consensus within the ministry. It was subsequently brought up at the meetings organized by the School Curriculum Council, another important division that made critical decisions on curriculum politics. This council echoed the CEC’s suggestion made in the previous report. In 2000, the revised Course of Study guideline to all primary and junior high schools became effective two years after its press release. In the same year, the MEXT officially implemented *yutori kyouiku* for all junior high and senior high schools across the nation.

The objectives of Integrated Study Hours concur with the aim of introducing English to primary schools. It gives the ministry a political platform to promote cultural

enlightenment – i.e., international understanding – with the hope that schools would select English as the main foreign language to teach in the classroom. More importantly, MEXT frames primary school English as a non-academic subject with an attempt to separate it from English taught at secondary school. In official policy documents, including the Action Plan, primary school English is described as “English activities.” The 2002 Course of Study Guidelines defines its objective as “to expose children to a foreign language and familiarize them with ways of life and cultures of a foreign country as they experience these activities appropriate to the primary school level” (MEXT, 2003a). Although schools were free to choose any foreign language to teach, MEXT’s 2001 survey confirmed that approximately 70 percent of all primary schools selected English for this purpose. Consensus was made within the ministry over the meaning of foreign language activity and its practice. It was in the Action Plan as the blueprint – that is, English conversation activities will take place in approximately one third of Integrated Study Hours at elementary schools.

Strategic de-contextualization: withdrawing primary school English from yutori kyouiku

Realizing cultural enlightenment in traditional Japanese public education required changes in the pre-existing curriculum. The implementation of *yutori kyouiku* was never easy due to its trade-offs. To implement the Integrated Study Hours into the pre-existing curriculum, the MEXT reduced one third of teaching hours across the core subjects. Saturday classes were terminated to ensure a five-day-week school system for students and teachers. Due to such a random cut in hours of the core curriculum, the initiative was challenged by a growing skepticism from the general public. It was not

easy to pacify the critics regarding the uncertainty of the impact of *yutori kyouiku* on student learning.

In 2003, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a couple of international reports on comparative educational achievement. The MEXT did not see these reports as good news as the provided data gave a rough indication of the nation's decline in the international ranking from the previous survey. According to OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2003, Japan was ranked sixth (first in 2000) in high school math, and fourteenth (eighth in 2000) in high school reading literacy.⁹ In the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)'s report, Japan was placed fifth (third in 1995; first in 1981) in junior high school math and sixth (third in 1995, second in 1983) in science.¹⁰ It also showed that Japan was below average on study hours (6.5 hours/week to 8.9 hours/week) and learning enthusiasm in math (32.5 percent to 53.1 percent on average) among international countries.

Of course, it should be impetuous to evaluate Japan's educational achievement based on these data alone. These data reports came out just one year after the implementation of *yutori kyouiku*, so it is unconvincing to suggest that MEXT's initiative caused a negative impact on educational achievement. Oddly, the data indicating Japan's decline in ranking in the 2003 international reports was on specific subjects (i.e., math and science). For elementary school students, Japan still remained

⁹ PISA data is available at the OECD website. See <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/>

¹⁰ Data is available at *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) website. See <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/datafiles.asp>

high and stable in math (third) and science (third). Moreover, the 2003 OECD report never suggested that Japan's overall educational achievement was in decline. Rather, its evaluation was positive, applauding the country's efforts to make further improvements on student's high achievement by introducing new policies.

Nevertheless, the MEXT was apparently shaken with international reports indicating the nation's downside in its lower ranking. These international reports sent shock waves through the general public creating a negative perception of *yutori kyouiku*. The critics' assault was centered on its negative impact on academic performance and the tactics to promote English practice through an additional hour slot (Butler, 2007; Butler & Iino, 2005; Honna & Takeshita, 2005). The most common attack was that the MEXT disregarded essential academic learning skills important to student development through its decreasing of the total structural hours for core subjects – i.e., Japanese language arts, science, and math. This also provided strong ammunition to the opponents of primary school English. Some language critics argued against the promotion of primary school English by addressing the issues of learning contexts – such as the difference between EFL/ESL, the specific objectives of language practice, teaching/learning outcomes. Others involved those who were inherently skeptical or even hostile toward ELT practice in Japan, citing concerns over the linguistic domination of English in defense of the traditional curriculum emphasizing Japanese language, art and reading.

Faced with mounting pressure, the MEXT had to remain cautious about officially introducing primary school English under the new curriculum. *Asahi Shinbun's* opinion

poll showed that 78 percent of the general public were dissatisfied with *yutori kyoiku* and called for its change. The MEXT needed to minimize the risk of putting their plan under public scrutiny to avoid the worst scenario –that is, for the general public to be misled into believing primary school English would be responsible for negatively affecting the students’ academic performance. They decided to put their critical decisions on hold while keeping their main communication channels open for public dialogue. Further discussions on language teaching practice and its national direction were conducted primarily in the English Forum and Foreign Language Division in the Central Education Council, established after the release of the Action Plan. These communication channels collected opinions from experts and knowledgeable persons who participated in the meetings on a regular basis. Progress reports were published on their official website. Yet, no specific recommendations were made available. By keeping their decision-making process under their hat, the MEXT frustrated the general public with its prolonged deliberation. By resorting to backhanded communication and procrastination tactics, MEXT deflected public attention by, on the surface, putting primary school English on hold, in order to avoid the negative impact of *yutori kyoiku* bashing. It was not until 2006 – three years after the release of the Action Plan – that primary school English was officially introduced.

Here the MEXT has fixed the meaning of “international understanding” in a very narrow context in order to implement primary school English in their struggle to find a connection between the two. In the 2006 Course of Study, foreign language activities were described as “part of the study for international understanding,” aimed at giving

exposure to a foreign language and familiarity with “foreign life and culture.” This seems odd since “international understanding” is exactly what the MEXT espouses in *yutori kyouiku* as part of its core concepts. Their strategy to reframe primary school English after the public criticism of *yutori kyouiku* relegated their rhetoric of “international understanding” to a trivial description for English language activities, while leaving the questions unanswered on learning content and outcome. If cross-cultural awareness of Japanese relations with the global community was exactly what they were seeking in the meaning of “international understanding,” why did the MEXT feel the need to separate the primary school English curriculum from their educational philosophy?

I would argue that strategic maneuvering led by a misunderstanding of the international evaluation of educational achievement – including scant attention being paid to the release date of the OECD’s data reports, target skills, and overall assessment, and their subsequent decisions on primary school English – is a clear indication of the official view characterizing ironic essentialism. MEXT’s attempt to enlighten the national curriculum under the banner of “international understanding” reveals its contradiction in painting Japanese culture as more ‘inward,’ ‘protective,’ and even ‘ethnocentric.’ The Action Plan’s problems with teacher training and its system reflect such skewed ideology that influences the Japanese perception of internationalization in relation to race and nationality.

Nationalizing “international understanding”: manifestation of cultural seclusion

It is as if ineptitude of foreign language instruction and learning is maintained (though, needless to say, unconsciously) for the very purpose of convincing millions of Japanese of their separatedness. — Befu (1983, p.242)

Japan does not plan to become more open or cosmopolitan in the way Americans and others suppose...Japan’s promised “internationalization,” known as *kokusaika*, is indeed more device for continued anxious self-protection than for a fresh outward engagement with the rest of the world. — Hall (1998, p. 173)

A common assumption held by many people is that Japan has successfully become a modernized democratic society that embraces the international community and maintains its ‘unique’ culture simultaneously. What is left out from such conventional understanding, however, are cultural assumptions that constitute the Japanese perception of “international understanding,” lying behind a supposedly balanced modernity with national tradition. Shawn Batt (2003) suggests that the practice of educational discourse is conducted through the negotiation of policy and many aspects of culture. The government’s promotion of “international understanding” is a case in point, as its educational discourse clearly paints an ideological character of national culture.

As language critics suggest, the government’s politics of internationalizing education have often served for the promotion of cultural nationalism (Aspinall, 2006; Kawai, 2007, Liddicoat, 2007, Sargeant, 2008). What makes the official account of “international understanding” most troubling from this perspective is that it conflates into the conventional norm of national culture, depicted as homogeneous and distinctive. As Testuya Kobayashi (1986) describes, Japan sees international society as “a realm for economic competition where foreign countries are characterized as “objects for her

benchmark” to “learn something or make a profit” (p.66). Brian McVeigh (2002) contends that Japan’s internationalization renders the nation more nationalistic because it highlights difference rather than similarity in a way that creates an unspoken rule for its social order. One common and strong approach is to contrast one cultural representative of self for the articulation of the difference between the two. Through the use of Japanese lexicons, contrasts such as between *nihonjin* (Japanese) and *gaikokujin* (foreigners), *nihongo* (Japanese) and *eigo* (English), symbolically create an unspoken rule about cultural distinction that will appeal to public recognition as rational divisions of self from others. This has widely been applied to people, foods, products, habits, and any other entities that seem mutually incompatible with each other.

This cultural disposition indicating Japanese perception of national self-proclaiming cultural uniqueness can be further explicated by the concept of *nihonjinron* (theories of the Japanese). *Nihonjinron* is an ethnological description of Japanese ideas and way of thinking regarding interpersonal relationships, lifestyle, language use, social behaviors, group psychology, business management, etc. Originated from Ruth Benedict’s *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* released in 1946, *nihonjinron* sensationalized the general public in the 1960s, and became a popular discourse in the 1970s when Japan increased its geopolitical influence on the international community with her rapid economic growth. It stimulated public discussion in the international arena as there was a growing attention to the Japanese approaches to business and management that led to her national economic success.

The initial idea of *nihonjinron* is that Japan is the representative of a linguistically and culturally homogenous society; and the Japanese are ethnically homogenous people constituting a racially unified state (Befu, 1993; Dale, 1986; Sugimoto, 1999). *Nihonjinron* claims its centralized position by constituting a collective form of Japanese cultural identity based on racial accounts. It describes Japanese or *nihonjin*, in ethnic terms by including most members of the Yamamoto (i.e., ancestors and descendants born in Japan) while excluding those ethnic minorities who are legally Japanese but not considered so due to the history of ethnic/cultural orientation outside the nation (i.e., Ainu, Okinawans) or social outcasts (i.e., Buraku). *Nihonjinron* was widely appreciated among the general public, since many of those were dealing with spiritual loss and a sense of humiliation after the national defeat of war. It attracted many lay Japanese critics and commentators by providing a basis for the reconstruction of cultural identities as the means to deal with Western hegemony (Kubota, 1999; Yoshino, 1992). On the other hand, *Nihonjinron* received criticism for having prejudiced ideologies and reduction of logic which provides an overly simplistic view of national culture. Its lack of a compelling theory as a social science became the focal point in the debate over whether the notion of cultural uniqueness could exonerate Japan from responsibility for the issues on race and human rights in contrast to the West (Befu, 1993; Fujimoto, 2001; Sugimoto, 1999). What attracts critical concern over *nihonjinron* is not its genuine claim of cultural uniqueness attributed to national character, however. Rather, it is the way *nihonjinron* is utilized for the justification of establishing national or

racial sanctification that displaces the cultures of ‘other,’ by providing an idea of exclusiveness – that Japanese are fundamentally different from others as a general norm.

The official account of “international understanding” reflects such issues by disseminating *nihonjiron* as institutional discourse. Similar to the rhetoric of “whiteness,” (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), MEXT’s “international understanding” constitutes an ethnocentric notion of a cross-cultural landscape that positions Japanese as the center of the cross-cultural landscape and ‘other’ cultures on the periphery. The Western notion of “internationalization” is converted into the Oriental notion of *kokusaika*, in which society provides the spectacle of superficial cultural diplomacy – such as welcoming and treating non-Japanese nationals as guests – as its main objective. Ivan Hall (1998) describes such an existence of cultural divide as “academic apartheid,” which sanctifies cultural segregation between Japanese and foreign educators in academia. In his words, teacher or ‘*kyoshi*’ is “best seen as the equivalent of foreign technical advisors in Third World developing countries – as transitory, disposable transmitters of foreign knowledge or techniques – rather than as fellow laborers in the ongoing quest for human knowledge” (1998, p.93). Although Hall’s provocative account is reflected in the higher education system, it also illustrates the contexts for the problems which ALTs face regarding working conditions and professional responsibility in the classroom. Loose job qualifications, constraint as a contract-based employee, and limited autonomy to control the classroom show that many ALTs are not even considered as *kyoshi*, which is, in Hall’s words, “a low-level, generic term for ‘teacher’ or ‘instructor’” at public schools (1998, p. 93).

Note that the Action Plan as an administrative order has impacts on all 60,000 Japanese teachers certified to teach in the Japanese secondary school system. It assumes the local schools' responsibility to recruit ALTs as "special part-time instructors" and to direct various instructional practices, while approximately 70 percent of local teachers are below the minimum level of English proficiency set as attainment goals. The academic apartheid in K-12 Japanese classroom shows the irony in revealing the powerlessness of local teachers through its attempt to empower them with the privilege of cultural uniqueness: how could it be possible to supervise ALTs regarding assignments and teaching evaluation if local teachers cannot even have a simple conversation in school? What is the point in having ALTs in Japanese classrooms if local schools consider their teaching as secondary or of little relevance to the main learning goals set by local teachers, and hence does not lead to the improvement of students' academic progress? If schools are thinking seriously about the improvement of English for both students and local teachers as the main priority in ELT practice, why use underqualified ALTs, not certified teachers or academic professionals?

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the problems with the teacher training system and quality instruction proposed in the Action Plan. I have also looked into MEXT's strategy to promote primary school English in relation to their controversial educational philosophy in critiquing their account of "international understanding," which imposes a skewed cultural ideology and hegemonic cultural assumptions on ELT practice.

For both local teachers and ALTs, the training system and quality instruction proposed in the Action Plan have serious drawbacks. The proposal does not promise solid and effective training for better instruction and language communication due to its short-sightedness and significant lack of quality programs available to local teachers nationwide. With patchy, sporadic training sessions, it is unrealistic to have strong expectations for even achieving the Action Plan's minimum attainment goals that will take at least several years for the vast majority of local teachers to meet. The proposal's overreliance on ALTs is another drawback. Many ALTs recruited through the JET Programme have serious issues regarding qualifications, pre-training, professional roles and duties, autonomy and class control, and professional support in the local school environment. The declining numbers of JET ALTs, the reality of a low turnout in primary schools, and subsequent analysis of problems with non-JET ALTs show that the proposal is significantly flawed and hampering quality teaching.

Finally, my close analysis on teacher training and quality instruction draw significant cultural implications on the ideological construction of culture and identity reflected in the Action Plan. MEXT's strategies to frame primary school English in relation to their perceptions of international education reports indicate their ideological construction of "international understanding," which reveals the irony of essentialism for promoting cultural nationalism. Harumi Befu (1983) best describes the irony of "international understanding" for mutual misunderstanding:

Once dissatisfaction is fixed in the foreigner's mind because of his permanent exclusion from the category into which he wishes to be included, the label of *gaijin* [foreigner] will necessarily sound pejorative when thrust on him against

his will. Here is a classic case of mutual misunderstanding: a foreigner's wishful thinking is that internationalization obliterates the line between him and the Japanese, whereas for the Japanese internationalization compels them to draw a sharper line than ever before between themselves and outsiders. (p.244)

Such ideological construction manifests the existence of the cultural divide between Japanese and non-Japanese and its maintenance of social order. Cultural separation of Japanese from foreignness, which goes unchallenged in Japanese society, stands out as the biggest challenge in ELT practice. Such an unspoken rule for racial distinction often turns into the practice of academic apartheid, driving the wedge between ALTs and local teachers in the workplace to the detriment of professional relationships and teaching excellence.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Summary and implications

Like most countries in the world, English has played an important role in influencing Japan's national character and cultural identity through the process of Western-style modernization and democracy. My historical analysis of Japan's curriculum trend in English language education (in Chapter II) suggests a continuity of cultural ambivalence within its society – namely, the desire to learn a foreign culture and the desire to avoid its influence, simultaneously. Such anxiety is deeply rooted in Japan's long history of conflicts with neighbors and other countries over centuries. Particularly influential is the national isolationist policy imposed by the Tokugawa clan, who banned most foreign trade and overseas departures from 1638. In most of the Edo period (1603–1868), national isolationism inculcated public anxiety, discouraging any attempt for cross-cultural contact. Craig Hagerman (2009) identifies the clan's failing attempt to gather foreign intelligences in the 1800s as the origin of Japan's cultural ambivalence in the politics of ELT practice. The clan sent the delegates abroad to learn English and Russia, only ending up scrapping the order themselves due to the fears that the delegates might transfer ideas to others outside Japan.

The national desire to embrace foreign culture can be traced from the event of Westerners' arrival in 1853. This incident had a backwash effect on public perception of

national power and confidence, and subsequently changed the national direction to modernization. The mighty images of black steamships overpowered the authoritative Tokugawa clan, and effectively replaced fears with awe by mesmerizing the people with advanced technology. The nationwide spread of Western ideas stimulated the Japanese aspiration for learning the English language from the beginning of the Meiji Era, and it became an obsessive phenomenon until the rise of nationalism in the early 1900s. The trend of Japan's aspiration to English re-emerged in the late 1980s. The official recognition of *kokusaika* has served as the beachhead for spreading the English language in Japanese society, inviting numerous public and private sectors to promote its teaching and English learning services as commercial products (Bailey, 2006; Seargeant, 2005).

Such cultural ambivalence between fear and aspiration is deeply embedded in the cultural contexts of education politics and its practice. The Japanese perception of language needs – apart from Western teachers – regarding its learning goals and process points to a distinction between literacy skills (i.e., reading/writing) and communicative skills (i.e., speaking/listening). Such dichotomy was reinforced by the ministry's incorporation of an English language test as the requirement for entrance exams. Mandating a heavily reading-oriented test led to the Japanese ELT practice of a strict grammar-translation approach, constraining teachers and students into repetitive drillings of word-by-word translation and sentence memorization. This became Japan's notorious curriculum trend in the postwar period, illustrating the English language discipline as a test-ready training rather than a meaningful learning experience reflected in students' real lives. The impact on students' learning motivation was quite detrimental. Many

students ran out of the energy to learn English further after the burnout from years of rigorous drilling and rote memorization.

Strong public calls for curriculum reform in the 1960s and 70s fell upon central government's deaf ears. The 1989 Course of Study emphasizing communicative language teaching in high school did have some positive influence on both foreign and international-minded Japanese teachers. However, it did not necessarily translate into a change from the teaching practice of rote learning and repetitive drills. Some junior high and senior high teachers were able to incorporate speaking-and-listening practice in English classes, with the presence of ALTs. Yet, many schools have been following the grammar-translation method, despite its ineffectiveness in nurturing overall language skills including reading, listening, writing, and speaking (i.e., Brown & Wada, 1998; Gorsuch, 1998, 2000; O'Donnell, 2005). This is nothing new. It is not surprising to see this trend among academically high-performing schools today, since Japanese teachers have responsibilities to prepare students for their postgraduate career. Teachers have little choice but to provide rigorous learning drills for students who will sit for the conventional college entrance exams to get into top-ranked universities in Japan or overseas. As ever, there is a strong belief among Japanese high school students that passing entrance exams is considered one of the most important moments that will determine their life. An English test is just one part of the rigorous exams they need to take as a rite of passage.

My analysis of Japan's trend in the English curriculum also shows its significant cultural transformation regarding power and influence on educational practice. The

prewar period witnessed the ministry's sole control of the curriculum, and this became a continuing theme in the postwar education system. Building the wall of 'protecting the old tradition' mindset, the education authorities rarely let any outside voices bring changes to the curriculum until the arrival of *kokusaika* in the mid-1980s. Even after that, the education ministry was still reluctant to make important decisions on the curriculum by themselves. It was widely believed that the government's education reform initiative, starting from the early 1990s, was instigated by increasing pressure from the business sectors calling for a practical need for English (Waku, 2007). Such outside pressure strengthened the public voice for reform, as Japan's historically dismal English test scores in TOEFL/TOEIC were picked up by both the national and international media.

The most important change came in the late 1990s, when the central government increased its role in the politics of the English curriculum. In 2000, the release of "The frontier within" by the CJGTC marked a significant shift in enacting the reform of the English language education system as a top-down order. The MEXT's Action Plan is one such policy document following the notion of government-led reform in English language education.

As my analysis of the Action Plan (in Chapter III) shows, the MEXT disseminates the educational discourse on "Japanese with English abilities" as a national narrative, describing success in materialistic terms. It could be argued that the Action Plan has similar characteristics with the 1983 "A nation at risk" for invoking the shift that will impose profound implications on education policy and practice. As the political

document that shaped the politics of education reform in American public education shows, education discourse is conflated into national narratives of crisis as it is framed as the means to economic competition (Asen, 2012; Hunt & Staton, 1996; McIntush, 2000). Their framing of English as an instrumental tool for global competition resonates with the topoi of free market rhetoric, although not entirely, as it is aligned with the economic argument of human behavior appealing to materialistic incentives (Aune, 2000). The Action Plan makes it clear that a lack of English abilities is a problem, because it keeps the Japanese from gaining opportunities for economic transactions and exchanges in the global market.

The educational discourse of “Japanese with English abilities” shows its significant discrepancy between political strategy and educational proposal. As a political strategy, the Action Plan primarily characterizes English as a cultural commodity for national prosperity. The promotion of a neoliberal ideology can be even more troubling to many students and teachers, since they are already thrown into a stressful high-task-oriented, test-driven discipline to go through the ordeal of school entrance examinations. Strategic framing of success based on materialistic gains and economic social status characterizes educational achievement as individual responsibility, driving more students to the attrition of a test-driven discipline. Thus, it will bring the assumption of English as a language for the elite, leading students and teachers to believe that only a selective number of those who are good at the tests will successfully master English as a foreign or second language. On the other hand, as an educational proposal, the Action Plan’s framing of goals in English language becomes

quite problematic due to the ambiguous use of language. Lower setting of attainment goals, misinterpretation of actual language skills, and lack of scientific evidence in second-language acquisition show the ministry's serious problems with curriculum designing. Their overreliance on test measurements and their blindness to the context of the classroom environment make their overall goals setting unpromising as it does not provide the answers for teachers and students regarding instructional needs.

My subsequent analysis on teacher training and quality instruction (in Chapter IV) illustrates ideological contradictions between politics and practice. The MEXT's promotion of "international understanding" in education policy agendas stands at odds with the English curriculum (Butler & Iino, 2005; Hashimoto, 2011; Kawai, 2007; Liddicoat, 2007). It is problematic because the concept was used for a limited purpose – introducing English language activities to primary schools, rather than following the notion of keeping track with the curriculum trend in a global context. Thus it was not reflected in social studies, science, history, civil society, or any other subjects gaining the significance of global perspectives today. MEXT's use of "international understanding" has been often criticized for its ambiguity that masks learning goals in the language discipline. As Japanese linguist Yuichiro Yamada (2003) points out, Japanese language and culture are frequently used as the pretext for the promotion of English language education. He criticizes the way the authorities use subjective terms, such as 'wonderful' and 'beautiful,' to emphasize the superiority of the Japanese language to the detriment of the ethno-linguistic mindset. "Such adjectives," as Yamada says, " may infuse the ideology of Japanese language nationalism, but not lead to its

healthy improvement as a language” for better communication (2003, p. 177; my translation).

MEXT’s liberal initiative *yutori kyouiku* was, without a doubt, controversial in randomly cutting hours for core subjects –including language arts, math, science, history, civi society. Because of the way it was implemented, the MEXT invited scathing criticism for underestimating the basic learning discipline. Although I am not very much convinced that *yutori kyouiku* is to be blamed for a decline in educational achievement, public concern is very understandable. In 2006, Japan also lowered its average scores in PISA math and science from 2003.¹¹ In March 2008, the MEXT announced the revisions of instructional guidance. This brought changes to the curriculum for primary and junior high schools, by adding more hours in math, science, Japanese language arts, and by providing more pages in school textbooks. In 2009, Japan improved PISA test scores in math, science, and reading. The negative impact of *yutori kyouiku* becomes negligible in the test scores of the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)*, since the data, since 2006 never went below those prior to 2003.¹²

In all, the outcome of *yutoru kyouiku* did not meet its overall expectations. The MEXT neglected to provide follow-ups on instructional methods for reduced core subjects and the newly added Integrated Study Hours. Many students and teachers had trouble adjusting to the change of school schedule from a six-day to five-day week.

MEXT’s gross miscalculation on public criticism of *yutori kyouiku* and its

¹¹ All PISA scores data are available at OECD Website. See <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/>

¹² All TIMSS data is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/datafiles.asp>

misinterpretation of international education reports show their historical continuation of cultural secularism. Problems involving ALTs, including professional development, class control, and unknown job security, suggest that the official account of international understanding primarily works in a way to maintain the power relations and order reflected in Japanese society.

The Action Plan also comes under such scrutiny for its inclusion of “Improvement of Japanese language abilities,” in the sixth section of the proposal:

In order to cultivate communication abilities in English, the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language, which is the basis of all intellectual activities, will be fostered. The acquisition of English is greatly related to students’ abilities in their mother tongue, Japanese. It is necessary to foster in students the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language and to enhance communication abilities in Japanese in order to cultivate communication abilities in English. Also, in order to foster the Japanese people, rich in humanity with an awareness of society, who will live as members of an international society, it is important to enhance students’ thinking ability, foster students’ strength of expression and sense of language, deepen their interest in the Japanese language, and nurture an attitude of respect for the Japanese language. (MEXT, 2003a)

The above statements sound normal to many students living in Japan. I certainly agree with the importance of developing cognitive/metacognitive skills and background knowledge through the use of the first language. Nevertheless, the statements emphasizing the affectation of Japanese as the national language seem very odd, since English is primarily framed as an ‘instrumental tool’ in the proposal. It makes us wonder why the MEXT needs to emphasize Japanese as the basic mode of language communication – in their working proposal on English language education.

Here the MEXT's oversimplified language view brings a couple of problems. First, they overlook the existence of interlingual transfer errors between the two languages, caused by semantic gaps, rhetorical difference, grammar, and logical structure. This stands as one of the biggest challenges to many Japanese because accuracy in Japanese grammar and expression does not necessarily translate itself into a sound and meaningful English sentence. Second, the statements are primarily directed to the Japanese-speaking majority, effectively excluding language minorities who speak neither English nor Japanese – such as Chinese, Brazilians, and Portuguese – from the audience. This is exactly where the government's promotion of education reform becomes most problematic. As Yuko Goto Butler (2007) argues, policy decisions on curriculum making or related reform projects are conducted primarily for the best interests of the Japanese-speaking majorities, while failing to include the needs of the ethnic community of language minority students. Also, Yuko Kawai (2007; 2009) suggests an inherent risk in using English as an instrument for framing its creation of a neoliberal discourse that will have a significant impact on public perception of national culture and identity. I second her contention that promoting English and Japanese language education in order to display of cultural exclusivity to a selective number of people is quite detrimental to the public understanding of intercultural communication and national identity. It will likely reinforce the difference in pre-existing power relations on race and ethnicity that are already affecting language and ethnic minorities in Japanese society today.

Evaluating the Action Plan: progress and outcomes

Five years after the release of the Action Plan, public attention has focused on its progress and outcomes on key agendas. Despite the detractors and problems, it is obvious that the MEXT has made decent progress in showing their willingness to overhaul the English language curriculum in K-12 schools. Unlike their past history, the MEXT did successfully send the message of their commitment to the public through the release of the Action Plan. There is no doubt they were able to provide key agendas and stock issues in detail as an educational proposal. Some of the agendas were indeed put into practice. The proposal outcomes are very mixed, containing both positive and negative sides.

As positive outcomes, the MEXT has made three main accomplishments: 1) stable progress for the upcoming implementation of primary school English; 2) the revision of admission criteria for college and university entrance examination; and 3) a steady increase of high schools joining in the SEL-Hi program. The proposal has indeed provided the platform for all three agendas that were put into practice at local and national level within a few years after 2003.

First, implementing English language activities into the primary school curriculum is one of the fine accomplishments in the Action Plan. As I mentioned in previous chapters, the plan for primary school English was realized into the 2008 Course of Study and incorporated into the school curriculum as of April 2011, despite strong criticism over its positioning and unknown effectiveness (i.e., Ohtsu, 2004; Ohtsu & Torikai, 2002). Although it is unrealistic to expect a dramatic improvement of English,

with its small portion of hours (70 hours; 35 hours/year for 5th and 6th grade), it is a good start for Japanese schools to provide students with learning opportunities for language and social interaction. I personally think this should be applauded, for it provides the idea of how students can develop English language skills through practice outside the specific subject area. Since students spend most of their time in the school environment, providing as much amount of time for communication in English beyond the academic subject is highly necessary in today's Japanese classroom environment. Students should be able to learn how to make use of what they study in the English language activities class in other class settings, extracurricular activities or even outside school hours, as a practical application. This is exactly what needs to be discussed in future conversations for improving ELT practice in junior and senior high schools setting.

Second, the Action Plan also provides specific measurements for the revisions of the college entrance examination system. One remarkable achievement is implementing a listening section into the conventional English test for National Center Exam, which became effective from 2006. This is a meaningful progress, as it attempts to break with the exam's historical trend in reading and writing orientation. Although there are more things to be done for a significant improvement of this rigid exam system, adding listening comprehension is a step in the right direction to evaluate the student's learning progress more broadly. Also, the proposal provides a clear guideline by using test scores from common English proficiency exams (TOEFL) as the alternative college admission criteria for the students regarding their school choices.

Third, the establishment of the SEL-Hi program is illuminating. It serves in the best interests of both students and Japanese teachers. This government-sponsored program invites some hundreds of high schools nationwide to take part in research on creative teaching methods and practices, through providing meaningful classroom experiences to students by conducting classes in English. It also invites K-12 teachers and school representatives to share ideas about effective teaching by offering workshops for communicative language teaching, the opportunities for classroom observation, lesson plans, instructional skills and classroom management. These engagements are quite productive for Japanese teachers, since they are usually constrained by MEXT's prescriptive instructional manuals which detail what and how they are supposed to teach the subject driven by drilling and rote learning. Because of their hesitancy, Japanese teachers rarely allow other teachers to observe their own classes. It is also understandable that Japanese teachers may feel less comfortable with American or British teachers in their classroom for observation. But, the strength of the SEL-Hi program far outweighs the negative impacts on Japanese teachers, if any. The program should be beneficial to Japanese teachers as it raises their awareness of issues in the classroom through constructive criticism and advice for meaningful classroom engagement. Since the project was discontinued in 2009, the MEXT should find alternative projects to extend the network of academic community elsewhere and initiate the plan to stabilize its teaching practice.

On the other hand, the MEXT have serious challenges including 1) attainment goals setting for teachers and students; and 2) facilitation of teacher training. These

drawbacks show how the MEXT is lagging behind. According to the Benesse's 2008 survey on Japanese students' English language proficiency, only one third of junior high school students and one out of four high school students were able to meet their target attainment (3rd grade level and semi-2nd grade level in the STEP test, respectively) shown in the proposal.¹³ Moreover, the report also suggests that 60 percent of junior high school students at the 7th grade are already having trouble understanding the English subject, falling behind the class at an early stage of the grade.

For MEXT's 2007 survey on Japanese teachers, the ratio of those who were able to pass the minimum language requirement (semi-1st grade in STEP test or TOEFL 550 (84 iBT) /TOEIC 730) represents just 24 percent in junior high schools and 49 percent in senior high schools, respectively.¹⁴ Moreover, the MEXT also found that about 40 percent of junior high school English teachers and 30 percent of senior high school English teachers had never taken the certified English tests before. The last three years of MEXT's data report show some increase in the ratio for senior high school students and teachers.¹⁵ For senior high school students, the ratio moved up to 30.4 percent (2011) and 31 percent (2012), respectively. For teachers, it was 24.2 percent (2010) and 27.7 percent (2011 & 2012) for junior high school teachers, and 48.9 percent (2010), 52.8 percent (2011), and 52.3 percent (2012) for senior high school teachers, respectively.

¹³ 1st report available at <http://benesse.jp/berd/data/dataclip/clip0014/index.html>

¹⁴ Available at http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/082/houkoku/1308375.htm

¹⁵ Available at http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/index.htm

The recent survey data may provide some hope for educational improvement. But the fact remains that many students are left behind in achieving even the lower-level goals. The reality of underachievement looks quite dismal for junior high school students. According to Benesse's 2009 survey report, approximately 60 percent of 7th-grade students already have trouble understanding English classes – even though it is entirely instructed in Japanese. ¹⁶This clearly explains that junior high school students are the ones who are struggling most due to many Japanese teachers who are unable to pass the minimum criteria shown in the proposal. The MEXT's data report shows that junior high school students represent only 31.1 percent (2012) of the ratio for meeting the minimum attainment goal.

The challenges are even more daunting for Japanese teachers. Regardless of passing the minimum criteria or not, the vast majority of Japanese teachers of English are having difficulties in their teaching. It is ironic that many teachers believe that they need training for specific instructional skills and research on textbook materials, as they begin to see MEXT's teacher's manual as unhelpful for improving their teaching. Indeed, the MEXT is far behind achieving the goals for teacher training and quality teaching, contrary to what is said in the proposal. Very few teachers are able to get the opportunities for solid training at local and national level today.

The outlook for Japanese teachers is quite desperate. An English education critic Haruo Erikawa (2009) suggests that many Japanese teachers of English are at the risk of overwork-related death, due to the working environment surrounding them. He contends

¹⁶ 4th report, available at <http://benesse.jp/berd/data/dataclip/clip0014/index.html>

that the ministry's misguided instructions will only lead to the further demoralization of teachers who are already becoming demoralized with an increasing amount of non-teaching duties and the pressure from the government, board of education and students' parents. There is little wonder that indifference to such administrative constraints is a huge setback to the systematic improvement of teaching.

Recommendations

As my critical analysis and evaluation of the Action Plan shows, reforming Japan's English language education is a significantly daunting task. There has been a stigma attached to the English curriculum for K-12 school. The public media and business sectors hold the MEXT accountable for Japanese poor English skills, mainly compared to most foreign nationals, much less to native speakers of English. As one of many students and teachers of English in Japanese schools, I have struggled with English throughout my educational and life experience. Historical and chronic structural problems within the MEXT regarding education politics and practice have led to distrust so many students, educators, and researchers in Japan and overseas. Personally, I am not very optimistic about the current government-initiated reform, although I still see the benefits of an English language discipline meaningful to Japanese people. However, with the assumption that the MEXT might take draconian measures to make significant changes in the future, I would provide several recommendations for Japan's English language education reform.

Here are the recommendations I would suggest for the improvement of ELT practice for the best interests of Japanese students and teachers.

#1 Appoint an experienced foreign researcher to the chief advisor of the English language curriculum for the MEXT. Allow her/him/them to administer the following tasks:

- Direct research on important ELT projects (i.e, SEL-Hi, English language activities at primary schools, and the JET-Programme), instructional practices, and evaluation of teaching/learning
- Supervise the development and revisions of the curriculum framework, Course of Study, textbook materials, teaching aids/references/study tips for teachers and students, and test design (i.e., national standard achievement test, the National Center Exams)
- Establish special advisory councils and have them participate in important meetings(both in-house and external) related to ELT curriculum and practice
- Send experienced researchers and educators to schools and local Board Of Education
- Advise textbook reading councils and administrative staff within the ministry on a regular basis
- Review the curriculum and ELT practice annually

#2 Appoint foreign administrative coordinator(s) for the development of academic community at local/regional level. Allow her/him/them to administer the following tasks:

- Facilitate communication with non-teaching branch of JET Programme (i.e., CIRs, CLAIR), local BOEs, and K-12 schools
- Advise local BOEs and K-12 schools on a regular basis

#3 Make significant revisions of the JET Programme under the following tasks:

- Abolish JET ALTs completely(!) or reduce the number of inexperienced JET ALTs
- Refine the role of ALTs/foreign teachers in Japanese classroom
- Recruit more experienced teachers and educators
- Revise contract system (i.e., multi-year appointment) contingent on professional responsibilities and qualifications

#4 Facilitate mentor program for both foreign and local teachers based on the following tasks:

- Hire experienced educators/academic professionals as mentor teachers and appoint them to all available communication channels including CLAIR/CIRs/local BOEs in each prefecture
- Supervise regular training sessions and workshops at both local and national levels
- Help local teachers to work on the plan for professional development and attainment goals (i.e., language/instructional skills)

- Advise local teachers and ALTs regarding instructional practice and administrative duties

#5 Improve the working condition for schoolteachers under the following tasks:

- Hire more administrative staff and substitute teachers to take care of non-teaching duties for Japanese teachers
- Provide counseling service for both Japanese and foreign teachers
- Allow Japanese teachers more opportunities for academic and social engagements with ALTs and/or foreign teachers
- Step up the standard labor law to protect teachers' rights against illegal hiring/firing practice and labor abuse

#6 Provide opportunities for meaningful teaching/learning experience under the following tasks:

- Allow teachers/mentor teachers to conduct teaching observation and in-house workshops to share the ideas for effective teaching
- Give local schoolteachers autonomy to create their own lesson plans and instructional practice
- Give some local governments and cities (in rural/remote area) options for alternative curriculum and instructional practice

Conclusion

In the entire thesis, I have explored Japan's curriculum trend in English language education, focusing on its historical transition and the analysis of the Action Plan. As I have illustrated elsewhere, the Japanese have been dealing with the challenges of English for centuries, debating over the pros and cons of its curriculum and practice in K-12 schools and its impact on their understanding of English practice in higher-education and business/professional contexts. There are many problems surrounding the politics of English language education and its practice in the classroom. My analysis illustrates the contexts for Japan's problematic relations with the English language derived from a national history of cultural ambivalence and insularity. I have discussed

how MEXT's education reform policy reflects such cultural ambivalence and insularity in the Action Plan and parallels with the reality of ELT practice in the classroom. The problems addressed in each chapter are present in the Japanese classroom today. None of them are exaggerated.

The MEXT really needs another Harold Palmer in their history, who would help them to rebuild, mold, and refine the guidelines of foreign language education for its better direction in the 21st century. Palmer's role as a language advisor was significant for reviving the ELT practice in Japanese schools during the 1920s to 1930s. Despite its difficult time and the issues over curriculum control, Palmer was able to help many students and teachers by providing numerous tips, study guides, and reference materials meaningful for their improvement. It was his administrative role that allowed him to direct ELT practice for the development of a profound language community at both local and national levels. For both administrative and academic purposes, such a role is needed for a drastic improvement of the English language education system. It all comes down to the MEXT's willingness to abandon their traditionally insular mindset so that they can accept experienced foreign researchers within the institution for important administrative tasks. Should the MEXT be ready for such change, it would provide a better outlook for the improvement of an English language education beneficial to both students and teachers in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" (English)

Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese With English Abilities"

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MEXT
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2002/07/12

Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese With English Abilities"

Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese With English Abilities"

-Plan to improve English and Japanese abilities-

July 12, 2002

1. Objectives

With the progress of globalization in the economy and in society, it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English, which has become a common international language, in order for living in the 21st century. This has become an extremely important issue both in terms of the future of our children and the further development of Japan as a nation.

At present, though, the English-speaking abilities of a large percentage of the population are inadequate, and this imposes restrictions on exchanges with foreigners and creates occasions when the ideas and opinions of Japanese people are not appropriately evaluated. However, it is not possible to state that Japanese people have sufficient ability to express their opinions based on a firm grasp of their own language.

Accordingly, we have formulated a strategy to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities" in a concrete action plan with the aim of drastically improving the English education of Japanese people. In addition, we aim to make improvements to Japanese-language education.

2. Background

(1) Before devising these plans, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) listened to the opinions of experts in various fields with a view to ascertaining the importance of English education. Specifically, in January of last year we received a report from the "Round-table Committee for the Improvement of English Teaching Methods". In addition to this committee, five meetings were held between January and May of this year by the "Round-table Committee on English Education Reform," during which we heard the opinions of a total of 20 experts from various fields. The deliberations of both these committees formed the basis for the attached strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities".

(2) In addition, the "Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Management and Structural Reform 2002" (Cabinet resolution issued on June 25, 2002) also included a provision stating that MEXT should settle on an action plan for improving English education during the fiscal year 2002 as part of a strategy to enhance human potential.

3. Future action

<http://warp.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/286794/www.mext.go.jp/english/news/2002/07/020901....> 2/4/2013

On the basis of these strategic plans, those measures that can be implemented immediately will be, whilst those requiring budgetary allocation will be included in the budget request for the fiscal year 2003. Once the government budget draft for 2003 has been completed, a plan of action will be determined upon a review of the strategic plans.

[Reference]

- Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Management and Structural Reform 2002 (extract) (June 25, 2002)

Section 2: Strategies to stimulate the economy

2. Six strategies, thirty action programs

(1) Strategies to enhance human potential
(Education to develop individuality)

*The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) shall settle on an action plan to improve English education within the fiscal year 2002 with the aim of fostering "Japanese with English abilities". As of the fiscal year 2003, the employment of excellent assistant language teachers of foreign nationality as regular teachers is to be promoted.

July 12, 2002

Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities"
-Plan to boost English and Japanese abilities-

Strategic plan attainment targets		Issues for investigation
◎ English-language abilities demanded of all Japanese nationals --> attainment targets to be established for junior high and senior high schools • On graduation from junior high school: Ability to hold simple conversations (and a similar level of reading and writing) comprising greetings and responses (English-language ability of graduates should be the third level of the STEP (Eiken) test, on average). • On graduation from senior high school: Ability to hold normal conversations (and a similar level of reading and writing) on everyday topics (English-language ability of graduates should be the second level or semi-second level of the STEP test, on average). ◎ English-language abilities demanded of those active in the international community --> attainment targets to be established by individual universities with a view to cultivating human resources capable of using English in the work place.		☆ [Organization of a group to conduct research on English education]: the aim is to issue definite proposals within 1 year. (1) Conduct research to provide support for the target-level English-language abilities required at each school stage. (2) Conduct research into the relevancy of adopting external examination results as indices for the required English-language skills. (3) Conduct research into approaches for utilizing the results of external examinations in entrance examinations,
Key policy issues	Important policies and their objectives	
I. Boosting motivation of learners (1) Increasing opportunities to use English	○ Strengthen cooperation, etc., with private-sector English-language education facilities to promote unified English-language education in schools and regional communities. ☆	

	<p>[Promoting contact with foreigners]: Promotion of English conversation salons and speech contests as well as exchange activities with foreign students centering on schools, etc. (subsidies to be provided to local authorities).</p> <p>☆ [Measures to promote overseas study among high school students]: Expanding opportunities for overseas study for high school students (a target of 10 thousand high-school students studying overseas per year, including privately funded exchange students). Participation in short-term international exchanges is also to be promoted.</p> <p>☆ [Measures to promote overseas study among university students, etc.]: Enhancing overseas study assistance (scholarship programs) for students wishing to study abroad.</p>	etc.
(2)Improving entrance examinations, etc.	<p>☆ [High school entrance examinations]: Promoting the use of the results of external examinations in entrance examinations.</p> <p>☆ [University entrance examinations]: (1)Introduction of a listening test into the University Entrance Central Examination (implementation targeted for the fiscal year 2006). (2)Improving/enhancing the foreign language examinations of individual universities. (3)Promoting the use of the results of external examinations in entrance examinations.</p> <p>☆ [Corporate recruitment tests]: Urge corporations to attach importance to individuals with English abilities. MEXT will attach importance to English abilities when recruiting, promoting, etc., its employees.</p>	
II. Improving educational content, etc.	<p>[Junior high schools / high schools]</p> <p>○ Promote the new Course of Study (--> targeting the comprehensive integration of the 4 skills, emphasizing basic practical communication abilities).</p> <p>○ Within junior high and high schools, implement guidance responsive to individual needs such as elective subjects suited to the levels of students' enthusiasm/proficiency and supplementary lessons, etc.</p> <p>☆ [Super English High Schools]: Implement practical research into progressive English education in high schools, etc. (proposed total of 100 schools in 3 years).</p> <p>☆ [Survey on the state of the implementation of improvements to foreign language</p>	<p>(4) Conduct research on English education and compile fundamental data.</p> <p>(5) Conduct research into a unified system of English education through each school stage.</p> <p>(6) Conduct research into a model for English education at universities.</p>

	<p>education]: Conduct survey on the present situation, such as small-group teaching and streaming students according to proficiency levels, and progressive teaching methods. Survey results are to be published and used as standards to measure the progress of related policies and measures.</p> <p>☆ [Collection of examples of progressive teaching methods relating to foreign language learning]: The Curriculum Research Center is to collect examples of progressive teaching methods relating to foreign language education based on the results of the above survey.</p> <p>[Universities]</p> <p>○ Focus support on universities that are developing/implementing exceptional English education curriculums, and particularly on universities (or faculties) where all subjects are taught in English.</p> <p>☆ [Promoting participation in special courses taught in English]: Japanese students are to be encouraged to participate in the special courses taught in English that are provided for foreign students.</p>	
<p>III. Improving the qualifications of English instructors and upgrading the teaching system</p> <p>(1) Improving the qualifications of English instructors</p>	<p>○ Domestic training (Institute for Educational Leadership in the Teaching of English): 2,000 teachers per year (4 weeks)</p> <p>○ Overseas training: 118 people short-term, 28 people long-term</p> <p>☆ Establishing targets: Targets for the expected English-language abilities of English teachers to be established (equivalent to STEP semi-first level; TOEFL 550 points; TOEIC 730 points).</p> <p>(1) Urge education boards to make possession of the target-level English-language abilities one of the prerequisites when hiring English teachers.</p> <p>(2) Urge the consideration of teachers' English-language abilities in teacher assessments.</p> <p>☆ Training: [Plan for training to improve qualifications of English teachers]:</p> <p>(1) Intensive training for all 60 thousand English teachers in junior high and senior high schools is to be carried out under a five-year plan to be implemented from the fiscal year 2003 (subsidies to be provided to prefectural governments).</p> <p>(2) Support to be extended to English teachers hoping to undertake training overseas for more than 1 year utilizing the sabbatical system for graduate study (annual total of 100 people; 2 per prefecture).</p>	<p>(7) Conduct research to provide support for the required English ability targets for English teachers.</p> <p>(8) Conduct research into efficient English teaching methods and the creation of effective teacher training programs.</p>

<p>(2) Upgrading the teaching system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Placement of ALTs (5,583 hired through the JET program, 2,784 hired independently by regional authorities (total for 2001/2002: approx. 8,400)) ☆ Establishing targets: Aim is for junior-high and senior-high students to have native speaker(s) participating in more than one English class per week. Promotion of the placement of the necessary numbers of ALTs to meet this target (nationwide target: 11,500 ALTs). ☆ Effective utilization of ALTs under the JET program: Promote the enhanced utilization of ALTs through using ALTs in education to promote international understanding and in foreign language activities at elementary schools, and employing ALTs as special part-time instructors, etc. ☆ Promote hiring of native English speakers as regular teachers: In order to attain the above-cited targets, as an additional measure, 300 foreign instructors are to be appointed as regular teachers in junior high schools over the next 3 years, with a goal of appointing 1,000 foreign instructors in junior high and senior high schools in the future. ☆ Promote the utilization of human resources with fluent English-language abilities living in the local community: Promote the utilization of members of society who possess English-language abilities above a certain level in English education activities through such measures as the <i>Gakko Ikiiki Plan</i> (a plan to invigorate secondary schools) and the special part-time instructor system. 	
<p>IV. Enhancing English conversation activities in elementary schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ [Measures to support English conversation activities in elementary schools]: In connection with English conversation activities, which are carried out in the Period for Integrated Study, support is to be extended so that teaching can be conducted by foreign instructors, fluent English speakers, or junior high school teachers in one third of such sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ [Organization of a research committee to discuss English education in elementary schools]: the aim is to issue definite proposals within 3 years. (1) Ascertain and analyze the current situation of English conversation activities in elementary schools. (2) Toward the debate on the revision of the next Course of Study, in considering the future of English education at elementary school, arrange necessary research and data, etc. and consider problem

<p>V. Boosting Japanese-language ability Cultivate Japanese-language abilities for appropriate expression and accurate comprehension.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote the new Course of Study (--> cultivate self-expression and comprehension abilities, and improve students' ability to communicate with each other). ○ Implement guidance responsive to individual needs such as supplementary lessons suited to the levels of students' enthusiasm/proficiency. ○ Promote reading activities among children: Cultivate enjoyment and the habit of a reading among children through morning reading sessions [Asa no dokusho]. ☆ [Japanese-language abilities required for the future]: The Cultural Advisory Board is to issue its report on [Japanese-language abilities required for the future] within this fiscal year. ☆ [Improving the instruction abilities of teachers]: Training is to be implemented for elementary school teachers, etc. to improve their knowledge and command of Japanese. ☆ [Promoting improvements in Japanese-language education]: Model regions are to be designated with the aim of producing all-round improvement in the Japanese-language abilities of school-age children. 	<p>areas.</p>
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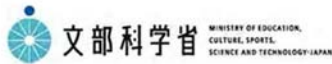
Note: ○ denote existing policies and measures; ☆ denote new/expanded policies and measures

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Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" (Japanese)

「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための戦略構想の策定について：文部科学省

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「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための戦略構想の策定について

平成14年7月12日

1. 趣旨：

経済・社会等のグローバル化が進展する中、子ども達が21世紀を生き抜くためには、国際的共通語となっている「英語」のコミュニケーション能力を身に付けることが必要であり、このことは、子ども達の将来のためにも、我が国の一層の発展のためにも非常に重要な課題となっている。

その一方、現状では、日本人の多くが、英語力が十分でないために、外国人との交流において制限を受けたり、適切な評価が得られないといった事態も生じている。同時に、しっかりした国語力に基づき、自らの意見を表現する能力も十分とは言えない。

このため、日本人に対する英語教育を抜本的に改善する目的で、具体的なアクションプランとして「『英語が使える日本人』の育成のための戦略構想」を作成することとした。あわせて、国語力の涵養も図ることとした。

2. 経緯：

- (1) これまで、文部科学省では、英語教育の重要性に鑑み様々な有識者より意見を聴取してきた。具体的には、昨年1月、「英語指導方法等改善の推進に関する懇談会」の報告を受けた。また、本年1月から5月にかけて、5回にわたり、「英語教育改革に関する懇談会」を開催し、計20人の有識者から意見を聴取した。これらを踏まえて、別添のとおり、[『英語が使える日本人』の育成のための戦略構想](#)をとりまとめた。
- (2) また、[『経済財政運営と構造改革に関する基本方針2002』](#)(平成14年6月25日、閣議決定)においても、人間力戦略の一環として、文部科学省において平成14年度中に英語教育改善のための行動計画をとりまとめることとなっている。

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/020/sesaku/020702.htm

8/22/2012

3. 今後の進め方：

この戦略構想に基づき、今後、直ちに実施可能なものは実施に移し、予算の必要なものは平成15年度概算要求を行う。そして、平成15年度政府予算案ができた段階で、本戦略構想を見直し、行動計画として決定する。

(参考)

○経済財政運営と構造改革の基本方針2002(抄)
(平成14年6月21日)

第2部 経済活性化戦略

2. 6つの戦略、30のアクションプログラム

(1) 人間力戦略

(個性ある人間教育)

・文部科学省は、「英語が使える日本人」の育成を目指し、平成14年度中に英語教育の改善のための行動計画をとりまとめる。平成15年度から外国人の優秀な外国語指導助手の正規教員等への採用を促進する。

平成14年7月12日

「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための戦略構想
—英語力・国語力増進プラン—

戦略構想の達成目標	検討課題
◎ 国民全体に求められる英語力→中学・高校での達成目標を設定。 ・ 中学校卒業段階：挨拶や応対等の平易な会話(同程度の読む・書く・聞く)ができる(卒業生の平均が英検3級程度。)	☆ 「英語教育に関する研究グループの組織」 1年間を目処に結論を出す。

<p>・ 高等学校卒業段階：日常の話題に関する通常の会話（同程度の読む・書く・聞く）ができる（高校卒業者の平均が英検準2級～2級程度。）。</p> <p>◎ 国際社会に活躍する人材等に求められる英語力—各大学が、仕事で英語が使える人材を育成する観点から、達成目標を設定。</p>		<p>① 各段階で求められる英語力等に関する指標について裏付けのための研究。</p> <p>② 外部試験結果を指標に関連づけることの妥当性に関する研究。</p> <p>③ 外部試験結果を入試等で活用すること等の方策に関する研究。</p>
主な政策課題	主要な施策とその目標	
<p>I. 学習者のモチベーション(動機付け)の高揚</p> <p>①英語を使う機会の拡充</p>	<p>○ 民間語学教育施設との連携強化等学校と地域が一体となった英語教育の推進。</p> <p>☆「外国人とのふれあい推進事業」：学校を中心とした英会話サロン、スピーチコンテスト及び留学生との交流活動等の事業を推進（自治体への補助事業）。</p> <p>☆「高校生の留学促進施策」：高校生の留学機会の拡大（年間1万人の高校生（私費留学生を含む）が海外留学することを目標。また、短期の国際交流事業等への参加も促進）。</p> <p>☆「大学生等の海外留学促進施策」：海外への留学を希望する学生のための海外派遣奨学金の充実。</p>	
<p>②入試等の改善</p>	<p>☆「高校入試」：外部試験結果の入試での活用促進。</p> <p>☆「大学入試」：</p> <p>① 大学入試センター試験でのリスニングテストの導入（平成18年度実施を目標）。</p> <p>② 各大学の個別試験における外国語試験の改善・充実。</p> <p>③ 外部試験結果の入試での活用促進。</p>	<p>④ 英語教育に関する研究や基礎的データの集約。</p> <p>⑤</p>

	<p>☆「企業等の採用試験」：使える英語力の所持を重視するよう要請。文部科学省においても、職員の採用、昇任等の際に英語力の所持も重視。</p>	<p>学校種を通じて一貫した教育内容の研究。 ◎大学の英語教育の在り方に関する研究。</p>
<p>II. 教育内容等の改善</p>	<p>(中学校・高等学校)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○新学習指導要領の推進(→4技能の有機的な関連を図り基礎的・実践的コミュニケーション能力を重視)。 ○中学・高校において、生徒の意欲・習熟の程度に応じた選択教科の活用又は補充学習の実施等、個に応じた指導の徹底。 <p>☆「スーパー・イングリッシュ・ランゲージ・ハイスクール」：高等学校等(3年間で計100校指定)における先進的な英語教育の実践研究。</p> <p>☆「外国語教育改善実施状況調査」：少人数指導や習熟度別指導等に関する実施状況及び先進的指導事例を調査。調査結果を公表するとともに、関連施策の進捗の基準とする。</p> <p>☆「外国語教育に関する先進的指導事例集の作成」：教育課程研究センターにて上記調査結果をもとに、先進的授業事例に関する指導事例集を作成。</p> <p>(大学)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○優れた英語教育カリキュラムの開発・実践等を行う大学や、特に全課程を英語で授業する大学(又は学部)を重点的に支援。 	

	<p>☆「英語による特別コースへの参加の促進」：留学生を対象として実施されている英語による特別コースへの日本人学生の参加の促進。</p>	
<p>Ⅲ. 英語教員の資質向上及び指導体制の充実 ①英語教員の資質向上</p>	<p>○ 国内研修(指導者講座)：毎年2千名(4週間)。 ○ 国外研修：短期118人、長期28人。</p> <p>☆ 目標設定：英語教員が備えておくべき英語力の目標値の設定(英検準1級、TOEFL550点、TOEIC730点程度)。 ① 英語教員の採用の際に目標とされる英語力の所持を条件の1つとする事を要請。 ② 教員の評価に当たり英語力の所持を考慮する事を要請。</p> <p>☆ 研修：「英語教員の資質向上のための研修計画」： ① 平成15年度から5カ年計画で中学・高校の全英語教員6万人に対し、集中的に研修を実施(都道府県等への補助事業)。 ② 大学院修学休業制度を活用した1年以上の海外研修希望の英語教員の支援(年に計100名、各都道府県2名ずつ)。</p>	<p>① 英語教員が備えておくべき英語力の目標値について裏付けのための研究。 ② 効率的な英語の指導方法の研究及び有効な教員養成・研修プログラムの作成等。</p>
<p>②指導体制の充実</p>	<p>○ ALTの配置(JETプログラムにより5,583人、地方単独事業により2,784人(計約8,400人)。)</p> <p>☆ 目標設定：中学・高校の英語の授業に週1回以上は外国人が参加することを目標。これに必要なALT等の配置を促進(全体で11,500人を目標。)</p> <p>☆</p>	

	<p>JETプログラムによるALTの有効活用:国際理解教育や小学校の外国語活動への活用又は特別非常勤講師への任用などを通じて一層ALTの有効活用を促進。</p> <p>☆ 外国人(ネイティブ)の正規の教員への採用の促進:上記目標の達成のため、当面3年間で中学について加配措置により300人、将来的に中学・高校について加配措置等により1,000人の配置を目標。</p> <p>☆ 英語に堪能な地域社会の人材の活用促進:一定以上の英語力を所持している社会人等について、学校いきいきプランや特別非常勤講師制度等により英語教育への活用を促進する。</p>	
<p>IV. 小学校の英会話活動の充実</p>	<p>☆ 「小学校の英会話活動支援方策」:総合的な学習の時間などにおいて英会話活動を行っている小学校について、その回数の3分の1程度は、外国人教員、英語に堪能な者又は中学校等の英語教員による指導が行えるよう支援。</p>	<p>☆ 「小学校の英語教育に関する研究協力者会議の組織」:3年間を目処に結論を出す。</p> <p>① 現行の小学校の英会話活動の実情把握及び分析。</p> <p>② 次の学習指導要領改訂の議論に向け、小学校の英語教育の在り方を検討する上で必要となる研究やデータ等の整理・問題点の検討。</p>
<p>V. 国語力の増進 適切に表現し正確に理解する能力の育成</p>	<p>○ 新学習指導要領の推進(→表現力、理解力等を育て、伝え合う力を高める。))。</p> <p>○ 児童生徒の意欲・習熟の程度に応じた補充学習の実施等、個に応じた指導の徹底。</p> <p>○</p>	

<p>子どもの読書活動の推進：「朝の読書」の推進などにより、子どもの読書に親しむ態度を育成し、読書習慣を身に付けさせる。</p> <p>☆「これからの時代に求められる国語力」：文化審議会において「これからの時代に求められる国語力」を本年度中にとりまとめる。</p> <p>☆「教員の国語指導力の向上」：小学校の教員等に対し、国語に関する知識や運用能力を向上するための研修を実施。</p> <p>☆「国語教育改善推進事業」：児童生徒の国語力を総合的に高めるためモデル地域を指定。</p>
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(注)○：現行施策、☆：新規・拡充施策。
(初等中等教育局国際教育課)

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文部科学省 〒100-8959 東京都千代田区霞が関三丁目2番2号 電話番号：03-5253-4111(代表) 050-3772-4111 (IP 電話代表) 案内図

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APPENDIX B

Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities” (English)

Regarding the Establishment of an Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”

Recently, globalization in various fields of the economy and society has advanced rapidly. Transfers of information and capital across national borders as well as the movement of people and products have increased. Thus, international interdependency has deepened. At the same time, international economic competition has intensified entering a so-called period of “mega-competition”. Much effort is necessary to meet such challenges. In addition, the situation demands the sharing of wisdom among different peoples for the resolution of worldwide issues that face humanity such as global environmental problems. Given such circumstances, international understanding and cooperation are essential, as is the perspective of living as a member of the international society.

Globalization extends to various activities of individuals as well as to the business world. Each individual has increasing opportunities to come in contact with the global market and services, and participate in international activities. It has become possible for anyone to become active on a world level.

Furthermore, due to progress in the information technology revolution, a wide range of activities, from daily life to economic activities, are being influenced by the movement to a knowledge-based society driven by the forces of knowledge and information. Thus, there is a strong demand for the abilities to obtain and understand knowledge and information as well as the abilities to transmit information and to engage in communication.

In such a situation, English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. For children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language. In addition, English abilities are important in terms of linking our country with the rest of the world, obtaining the world’s understanding and trust, enhancing our international presence and further developing our nation.

At present, though, due to the lack of sufficient ability, many Japanese are restricted in their exchanges with foreigners and their ideas or opinions are not evaluated appropriately. It is also necessary for Japanese to develop their ability to clearly express their own opinions in Japanese first in order to learn English.

In response to this situation, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has formulated various measures such as the revision of the Ministry’s Courses of Study with a further focus on cultivating students’ basic and practical communication abilities. However, in order to make such improvements bear fruit, it is necessary to carry out simultaneously a number of different measures. These include improving teaching methods, improving the teaching ability of teachers, improving the selection system for school and university applicants as well as creating better curricula.

To this end, opinions of numerous experts were obtained through bodies such as the “Round-table Committee for the Improvement of English Teaching Methods,” and the “Round-table Committee on English Education Reform.” Based on such opinions, “A Strategic Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English Abilities’” was formulated in July of last year, as a comprehensive and concrete plan for the purpose of drastically reforming English education in our country.

Building on the strategic plan, this Action Plan establishes a system for cultivating “Japanese with English abilities” in 5 years, based on measures included in the strategic plan and measures included in the budget for 2003. The formulation of this concrete action plan clarifies the goals and directions for the improvement of English education to be achieved by 2008 and the measures that should be taken by the government to realize these goals.

Cultivating “Japanese with English Abilities” is an extremely important issue for the future of our children and for the further development of our country. However, this issue will only be resolved when the relevant parties related to English education (such as relevant personnel in national, public, and private elementary, junior high, senior high schools, and universities as well as relevant personnel in local municipal bodies) seek to realize this goal by making improvements to the system from their respective positions.

In addition, in order to realize such improvements, the understanding of the public and the business world is essential as well as a positive approach by parents. Thus, MEXT is seeking to promote widely public understanding of this action plan through various opportunities. MEXT will evaluate the state of implementation of all measures aimed at improvement and review the action plan annually. The cooperation of all parties will be greatly appreciated. It is hoped that all relevant parties can understand the purpose and significance of these changes, and further address the task of improvement positively and voluntarily in accordance with their individual responsibilities.

March 31, 2003

Toyama Atsuko

Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”

March 31, 2003

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

I. Goals to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”

English language abilities required for all Japanese people

【Goals】

English language abilities required for all Japanese nationals

“On graduating from junior high school and senior high school, graduates can communicate in English”

- On graduation from a junior high school, students can conduct basic communication with regard to areas such as greetings, responses, or topics relating to daily life. (English-language abilities for graduates should be the third level of the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) on average.)
- On graduation from a senior high school, students can conduct normal communication with regard to topics, for example, relating to daily life. (English-language abilities for graduates should be the second level or the pre-second level of the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) on average.)

English language skills required for specialized fields or for those active in international society

“On graduating from university, graduates can use English in their work”

- Each university should establish attainment targets from the viewpoint of fostering personnel who can use English in their work.

With the progress of globalization, it is important, while focusing on speaking and listening communication abilities in the initial learning stages, to acquire comprehensive communication abilities in “listening,” “speaking,” “reading,” and “writing,” from the perspective of “English as a means for communication,” in order to foster “Japanese with English Abilities.” Through instruction, basic and practical communication abilities will be acquired so that the entire public can conduct daily conversation and exchange information in English. At the same time, personnel who need English for their work, such as for professional or research reasons, will acquire the English necessary for their fields by building on their basic English abilities. It is important for all Japanese people to aim at achieving a level of English commensurate with average world standards based on objective indicators such as STEP, TOEFL, and TOEIC.

In order to foster such abilities in school education, it is necessary to give a system of unified instruction through each school level. Thus, attainment targets for the English abilities required at each school level, based on the new Courses of Study, will be established. The improvement of English classes, the upgrading of the teaching abilities of English teachers, the enhancement of systems for instruction, and strengthening the

motivation for English learning will be addressed. Through cooperation between the schools at different levels, instruction to allow students to acquire steadily the English required at each stage will be promoted.

II. Action to Improve English education

1. Improvement of English classes

[Goals]

“Cultivating communication abilities through the repetition of activities making use of English”

- The majority of an English class will be conducted in English and many activities where students can communicate in English will be introduced.
- Small-group teaching and the streaming of students according to proficiency in the English classes of junior and senior high schools will be positively adopted.
- Progressive schools in terms of English education will be formed within local communities.

In order to be able to “make use of English”, it is necessary not only to have a knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use English for the purpose of actual communication. Thus, in English classes, instruction mainly based on grammar and translation or teacher-centered classes are not recommended. Through the repetition of activities making use of English as a means of communication, the learning of vocabulary and grammar should be enhanced, and communication abilities in “listening,” “speaking,” “reading,” and “writing” should be fostered. Such techniques for instruction are necessary.

To carry out such instruction effectively, it is important for teachers to establish many situations where students can communicate with each other in English and routinely to conduct classes principally in English. Through such opportunities, learners can experience the fulfillment of expressing themselves and understanding others, and feel the joy of learning English. Furthermore, it is also important to devise creative teaching methods so that learners can become interested in the importance and necessity of acquiring English, which can broaden the student’s world and possibilities.

Additionally, making use of assistant language teachers (ALTs) and the system of special part-time instructors¹, small-group teaching and the streaming of students according to proficiency will be positively adopted. Measures such as the promotion of innovative English education and the dissemination of excellent classroom practices are required.

Through the following measures, the implementation of the English classes mentioned above will be consistently promoted through each school level.

¹ A system that allows members of society or local citizens without a teacher’s license who have superior knowledge and skills to be in charge of part of or all of a subject at an elementary school, junior high school, or senior high school as a part-time instructor by giving notification to the prefectural board of education.

【Promotion of new Courses of Study】

○ Realization of the aims of the new Courses of Study

The new Courses of Study that have been implemented since 2002 are responses to the advance of internationalization and focus on the viewpoint that basic practical communication abilities, which include the ability to conduct daily conversation and the ability to exchange basic information in a foreign language, are required of all students. As a result, foreign language education has become a required subject at junior high school and senior high school. At the junior high school level, the focus is on cultivating communication abilities in “listening” and “speaking.” At the high school level, the four skills of “listening,” “speaking,” “reading,” and “writing” are integrated, and the improvement of content is attempted by focusing on nurturing practical communication abilities. Deepening the understanding of language and cultures, and a positive attitude toward communication is also stressed in foreign language education.

In order to realize the aims of the new Courses of Study, MEXT aims to promulgate the Courses of Study through various meetings involving the boards of education and relevant school personnel. This will help the improvement of educational instruction at each school.

○ Promotion of criterion-based evaluation (so-called “absolute evaluation”)

The establishment of criteria-based evaluation will be further promoted through means such as “Reference Materials for Creating Evaluation Standards and Improving Evaluating Methods” for the junior high school level, instruction manuals, and the progress of deliberations concerning evaluation in foreign language education at the senior high school level.

【Promotion of innovative English education】

○ Promotion of the Super English Language High School Program

By 2005, a total of 100 schools will be designated as Super English Language High Schools². Innovative English education will be promoted at senior high schools and unified secondary schools. The results of the program will be disseminated.

(Number of schools involved in the program: 16 schools in 2002→50 schools in 2003)

○ Promotion of the system of pilot schools for research purposes

Through the system of pilot schools for research purposes³, areas such as the curriculum and teaching methods for English education at elementary schools, junior

² A school where practical research is conducted in areas such as: the development of a curriculum focusing on English education; education where part of a subject is taught in English; or effective policies and measures for linking with universities and sister schools overseas.

³ Pilot schools are for researching issues related to classroom practice, new curricula and teaching methods responding to various demands of school education. For this purpose, boards of education in cities, towns, and villages voluntarily establish a system for the formulation and implementation of educational

high schools, and high schools will continue to be developed.

○ **Promotion of the “Program Supporting Distinctive University Education”**

The “Program for Supporting Distinctive University Education” will be implemented in 2003. From various proposals, outstanding distinctive programs will be selected to contribute to the improvement of university education, including the improvement of English education. Such programs will be used for the future improvement of university education.

○ **Promotion of participation in special courses taught in English**

Japanese students will be encouraged to participate in special courses taught in English that are provided at universities for foreign students.

【Improvement of teaching methods and teaching materials】

○ **Promotion of the plan for improving the number of teachers**

The Plan for Improving the Number of Teachers (2001), which allows small-group teaching of approximately 20 persons and the streaming of students according to proficiency in subjects such as English, will be promoted so that detailed and individualized instruction can be realized.

Promotion of innovation in textbooks and teaching materials

With textbooks and teaching materials, considerations should be given to the acquisition of language proficiency through the repetition of activities making actual use of English taking into consideration actual language situations and functions. Such approaches will be further promoted through conferences that deal with appropriate materials for students in terms of their mental and physical developmental levels, and their interests.

【Positive provision of information relating to the improvement of English education】

○ **Implementation of a status report on improvements in English education**

A status report on improvements in English education in junior and senior high schools will be implemented in 2003. Approaches by each school relating to English education will be surveyed and publicized. Items on the survey will include the situation concerning the implementation of instruction conducted in English, small-group instruction, the streaming of students according to proficiency, the number of class hours for English, and examples of innovative teaching. As a result, further approaches for the improvement of English education will be promoted.

○ **Implementation of a status report on improvements in English education at the university level**

The present situation concerning the establishment of attainment levels for

guidelines not based on the courses of study.

English education at universities will be surveyed and publicized, and further approaches for the improvement of English education at universities will be promoted.

【Promotion of the sharing of excellent examples of English classroom practices】

○ **Publishing a handbook of innovative approaches relating to English education**

At the Curriculum Research Center of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, a collection of examples of innovative English instruction will be published within 2003, which will be disseminated through training and other means.

○ **Promotion of the sharing of classroom practices for distinctive English classes**

Through the Information Center for Educational Resources of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, the sharing of research results from the Super English Language High School program and the sharing of classroom practices for distinctive English classes will be promoted in 2003 to support improvements in the designing of classes.

2. Improving the teaching ability of English teachers and upgrading the teaching system

【Goals】

- Almost all English teachers will acquire English skills (STEP pre-first level, TOEFL 550, TOEIC 730 or over) and the teaching ability to be able to conduct classes to cultivate communication abilities through the repetition of activities making use of English.
- Centering on leading teachers at the local community level, the improvement of English abilities in the community will be enhanced.
- A native speaker of English will attend English classes at junior and senior high schools more than once a week.
- People living in the local community proficient in English will be positively utilized.

Cultivating “Japanese with English Abilities” is realized through the practice of teachers who have daily contact with children. The teaching methods of such teachers are extremely important. A certain level of English ability and teaching ability is required of English teachers to conduct classes which aim to develop proficiency in terms of vocabulary and grammar through the repetition of activities where English is used as a means of communication and to foster communication abilities in “listening,” “speaking,” “reading,” and “writing” through classes principally taught in English. Thus, research to analyze concretely the English and teaching abilities required of English teachers will be implemented (see section 7. “Promotion of practical research.”). Additionally, specific targets will be established in the short term regarding the measurement of the English abilities of teachers by external proficiency examinations. Approaches for the enhancement of the training of teachers will be promoted through the measures outlined below in order to improve their English and teaching abilities.

Also, a native speaker of English provides a valuable opportunity for students to learn living English and familiarize themselves with foreign languages and cultures. To have one’s English understood by a native speaker, increases the students’ joy and motivation for English learning. In this way, the use of a native speaker of English has great meaning. Similarly, to strengthen the system of English education, cooperation from the members in the community who are proficient in English due to having lived overseas and other reasons is highly important. Such cooperation is also essential as children can understand directly the necessity for English in society and how English abilities can broaden their world. Therefore, for the enhancement of the teaching system, the effective use of native speakers of English and the use of people living in the local communities with advanced English abilities will be promoted through the measures outlined below.

【Considerations for hiring and evaluating teachers】

○ Promotion of improvements in the hiring of teachers

When hiring a teacher of English, boards of education in almost all prefectures and designated cities conduct skill tests for listening, English conversation, and in other

areas. Such selection procedures will be further promoted. Also, with consideration given to improvements on achievement tests and the most recent scores in proficiency examinations like STEP, TOEFL and TOEIC, it will be necessary to confirm that teachers have the required levels of English ability upon selection. Recruitment with an increased focus on the evaluation of communication abilities in English will be promoted.

○ **Promotion of improvements in evaluating teachers**

As a certain level of English is required for English teachers in addition to the ability to teach in English as well as willingness and enthusiasm, it will be required to consider the level of the teacher's English ability in the evaluation of the results of training, work assessments and by other means.

【Promotion of intensive training for English teachers】

○ **Promotion of intensive training in a five-year plan**

Intensive training given by the prefectural boards of education in conjunction with training at the national level will be supported so that all English teachers can undertake training in the five years from 2003 through 2007. This training will aim to improve the teachers' abilities to cultivate students' practical communication abilities. The level of attendance of training will become known through the Status Report on the Improvements in English Education mentioned previously.

【Promoting the fostering of leading teachers in local communities】

○ **Implementation of the course for Educational Leadership on the Teaching of English**

Through the National Center for Teachers' Development, the course for Educational Leadership on the Teaching of English will continue to be implemented with the aim of teachers acquiring effective teaching methods to cultivate students' practical communication abilities. The aim is to develop leading teachers who will promote English education in local communities by, for example, becoming training instructors in the local communities.

The scheduled number of teachers for this course in 2003 is 1,000.

○ **Enrichment of overseas training for English teachers with advanced abilities**

Through the National Center for Teachers' Development, overseas training to meet various requirements will be provided for English teachers of junior and senior high schools, who have gained advanced teaching and English abilities through the intensive training mentioned above as well as through other measures. By such an opportunity, the aim is to foster English teachers with advanced English and teaching abilities, and to improve the motivation of teachers.

The scheduled number of teachers for overseas training in 2003:

12-month duration = 15

6-month duration = 85

2-month dispatch (new) = 200

○ **Promotion of study at overseas graduate schools utilizing the unpaid sabbatical system for the completion of graduate school**

Studying on courses related to English education at overseas graduate schools will be promoted for junior and senior high school English teachers who have high levels of enthusiasm, English ability, and teaching ability. From 2003, by utilizing the unpaid sabbatical system⁴, it will be possible for teachers to enroll at overseas graduate school after completing steps such as the submission of information related to the admitting graduate schools.

[Promoting the utilization of native speakers of English]

○ **Promotion of the utilization of assistant language teachers (ALTs)**

Through making flexible the terms of employment of the JET program ⁵(extending the maximum period of employment from three years to five years) and utilizing ALTs as special part-time instructors who can teach alone in class, the effective use of ALTs will be promoted. At the same time, the use of ALTs will be encouraged by meeting the placement requests of local municipal bodies as flexibly as possible. Also, the situation concerning the utilization of ALTs will be ascertained through the previously mentioned Status Report on Improvements in English Education.

○ **Promotion of the hiring of ALTs with advanced abilities as full-time teachers**

From 2003, by making an additional quota to the fixed number of teachers at junior high schools, the aim is to appoint 300 people as full-time junior high school teachers over the next three years with the future goal of appointing 1,000 junior and senior high school teachers. Thus, the use of native speakers of English, such as ALTs with excellent experience, will be promoted.

[Promotion of the use of local personnel who are proficient in English]

○ **Promotion of the use of local personnel who are proficient in English**

Using members of society who are proficient in English, English education will be promoted through the *Gakko Iki-Iki Plan*⁶, special licenses, and the special part-time instructor system.

⁴ A system that enables the teachers at national and public schools to take a sabbatical to attend domestic or overseas graduate schools and undergo training for a period not exceeding three years on a one-year basis after receiving permission from their employers.

⁵ A program promoted by local government bodies in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of this program is to enhance mutual understanding between our country and other countries, and to contribute to the promotion of internationalization in our country through promoting international exchange at the local level, as well as strengthening foreign language education in our country.

⁶ A concept for using members of society with various types of knowledge and work experience as assistant teachers, etc. at schools nationwide. The targeted number for this plan is about 50,000 persons over three years ending in 2004. (This plan makes use of the Special Part-time Instructor System and the Special Subsidy for Urgent Local Employment Creation.)

3. Improving motivation for learning English

[Goals]

- 10,000 high school students will study abroad every year.
- Opportunities to use English outside the class will be enhanced.
- International exchange will be further developed through such means as communicating with the world using English.

In order to cultivate students' communication abilities in English, it is necessary to provide numerous experiences of using English as a means of communication. However, in our country, there are few opportunities to come into contact with English in daily life so that many children have difficulty applying in daily life what they have learned in the classroom. Considering these circumstances, the issue of how to increase the children's desire to learn is very important.

It is necessary to increase the motivation for learning English. Making use of various opportunities, education to deepen understanding of, and interest in, different cultures and ways of living will be promoted. Such opportunities make the children realize the significance and enjoyment in acquiring communication abilities in English. In setting up many opportunities to use English outside the class and establishing challenging targets, it is important to employ approaches that are enjoyable for students and provide a sense of achievement in the use of English.

The improvement of motivation for learning English will be promoted through the following measures.

[Promotion of education for international understanding]

○ Realization of the aims of the new Courses of Study

Education for international understanding is not only applicable to English classes but to every subject, especially the subject of social studies, the subject of geography and history, moral education and special activities. Such education aims at instilling a broader perspective and an understanding of different cultures, fostering attitudes of respect for such ideas, and the ability to live with people of different cultures. Additionally, in the new Courses of Study, which were implemented from 2002, international understanding is one of the important learning activities included in the cross-curricula "Period for Integrated Study."

Therefore, through various meetings and other activities aimed at the boards of education and relevant school personnel, publicity and understanding regarding these aims of the new Courses of Study will be promoted.

○ Publishing a handbook of examples of instruction relating to education for international understanding

Following the example of elementary schools, a handbook of examples of instruction concerning effective education for international understanding regarding each relevant

subject for junior and senior high schools will be issued within 2003 and disseminated through conferences and other means.

【Expansion of opportunities for overseas study】

○ **Promotion of overseas study for high school students**

With a goal of 10,000 high school students studying abroad annually, support will be provided for overseas programs carried out by high school exchange and overseas study organizations and for the provision of information about locations for overseas study. (For 2003, support to cover part of students' round-trip expenses will be provided for a target number of about 1,000 students.)

○ **Promotion of overseas study for university students**

Short-term overseas study for Japanese students utilizing such means as agreements for international exchanges between universities will be promoted and the provision of information relating to overseas study will be enhanced. (In 2003, the program to promote short-term overseas study is scheduled to involve 585 persons. Scholarships will be provided.)

【Enhancement of opportunities to use English】

○ **Promotion of approaches to use local personnel and others**

Utilizing members of society who are proficient in English through the *Gakko Iki-iki Plan*, and utilizing ALTs and other human resources, English conversation lounges and speech contests centering on schools will be promoted.

○ **Promotion of longer-term experiential activities for foreign languages**

A model program will be implemented aimed at fifth and sixth-year grade students to foster children responsive to internationalization and to nurture communication abilities in foreign languages through living together with native speakers of English in longer-term experiential activities such as summer camps.

○ **Publishing a handbook of examples of distinctive approaches**

In the handbook of innovative approaches relating to English education mentioned previously, distinctive approaches for opportunities to use English outside class such as English conversation lounges, summer camps, exchanges with foreign students or children living overseas, and the positive use of English broadcasts will be included and publicized.

Additionally, the situation concerning out-of-class English activities will be ascertained through the Status Report on Improvements in English Education mentioned previously.

【Promotion of international exchange】

○ **Promotion of activities to provide information to pursue international exchange**

As part of the program to provide information relating to overseas education for high school students described above, activities to provide information to promote the affiliation of sister schools and exchange activities among schools will be encouraged.

○ **Promotion of the creation of homepages to introduce schools in English**

The creation of English homepages for each school will be encouraged and introduced via the system provided by the National Information Center for Educational Resources. This will enhance the ability to transmit information in English, serve as motivation for English learning and promote international exchange utilizing information technologies.

4. Improvement in the evaluation system for selecting school and university applicants

[Goals]

- Communication abilities, including listening and speaking, will be appropriately evaluated.
- Utilization of listening tests or external proficiency examinations will be encouraged for entrance examinations of universities and high schools.

For the purpose of fostering communication abilities in English, an appropriate evaluation of communication abilities must be conducted. In particular, given that in our country there are few opportunities to come into contact with English on a daily basis, achievement and entrance examinations tend to serve as final goals. Thus, without doubt, the methods for selecting applicants have a major influence regarding the improvement of teaching methods, motivation, and desire for learning.

Therefore, through the following measures, improvements relating to evaluation methods, question methods, examination contents, and other factors will be promoted.

[Improvement in the selection of applicants]

- **Introduction of a listening test in the University Center Examination (targeted for implementation from 2006)**

As a result of consultations among the relevant parties of universities and high schools, the outline for the implementation of a listening test in the University Center Examination will be publicized within May 2003. The arrangements for each university's system will also be reviewed in accordance with this measure.

- **Promotion of improvements in the selection of applicants at each university**

Based on the attainment targets for English ability that are established by each university, the English abilities required for applicants will be clarified. In particular, from a perspective of emphasizing communication abilities, selection methods that appropriately evaluate communication abilities will be promoted in the approach of each university through the use of such means as listening tests.

- **Promotion of improvements in the selection of applicants at high schools**

Considering that learning at junior high schools focuses on speaking and listening communication abilities, improving question methods to focus more on communication abilities will be promoted, such as the adoption of oral interview tests in English, in addition to the listening tests already given by all prefectures.

- **Promotion of the use of results of external proficiency examinations in the entrance examinations of universities and high schools**

Consideration will be given to the content and levels of various external proficiency examinations and the actual conditions of the applicants regarding the selection of

students at universities and high schools. Based on the results of research relating to English education mentioned in section 7., the further use of STEP, TOEFL, TOEIC, University of Cambridge ESOL examinations, and other measures will be promoted through various meetings and conferences.

【Considerations for the employment examinations of companies】

Companies and other organizations will be asked to attach importance to the possession of English abilities suitable for work purposes. MEXT will give special consideration to the possession of English abilities when hiring staff.

5. Support for English conversation activities in elementary schools

【Goals】

- At elementary schools where English conversation activities take place in the Period for Integrated Study, approximately 1/3 of these sessions will be guided by personnel such as foreign teachers, those who are proficient in English and junior high school English teachers.

At elementary schools, based on the new Courses of Study implemented in 2002, foreign language conversation can be performed as part of education for international understanding during the newly established “Period for Integrated Study.” In 2002 when the new Courses of Study were fully implemented, English conversation activities were carried out at approximately 50% of all public elementary schools.

In English conversation activities during the “Period for Integrated Study,” the simple introduction of junior high school English education at an earlier stage as well as teacher-centered methods for cramming knowledge should be avoided. It is important that experiential learning activities that are suitable for elementary school students are carried out, and that the motivation and attitude for children to communicate positively is fostered by providing children with exposure to foreign language conversation in an enjoyable manner, and by familiarizing them with foreign cultures and ways of living. Through the measures outlined below, the smooth implementation of such approaches will be promoted.

In the implementation of such activities, it is important for children to come into contact with different languages and cultures, to be interested in them, and to have experiential activities involving speaking and listening. Thus, for English activities at the elementary school, the aim is to have one third of all sessions taught by personnel such as native speakers of English and English teachers at junior high schools. Necessary support will be given through the measures outlined below.

【Improvement in teaching methods】

- **Publishing a handbook to promote activities for English conversation at elementary schools**

A handbook relating to instruction for English conversation activities at the elementary school level will be published. This handbook will include topics such as effective teaching methods, considerations for classroom practice and ways of teaching taking into account English education at junior high schools.

- **Implementation of a status report on the situation of activities for English conversation**

The situation and content of English conversation activities at elementary schools will be surveyed and publicized through the Status Report on Improvements in English Education mentioned previously. This will contribute to further approaches for

improvement.

○ **Promotion of the system of pilot schools for research purposes**

Under the system of pilot schools for research purposes, teaching methods relating to English education at elementary schools will continue to be developed.

【Enhancement of teaching abilities and the teaching system】

○ **Enhancement of training for teachers in charge of English conversation activities**

Through the National Center for Teacher's Development, the training of teachers who will become leaders for teachers responsible for English conversation activities will be implemented on an intensive basis. (The scheduled number of teachers taking part in this training in 2003 is 600.)

○ **Promotion of the placement of ALTs with excellent experience**

Through the JET program and systems such as the special part-time instructor system, the placement of ALTs in elementary schools with the experiences of teaching at junior and senior high schools will be promoted.

○ **Promotion of the use of local personnel who are proficient in English**

Through the *Gakko Ikiiki Plan* and other resources such as special part-time instructors, members of society who are proficient in English through overseas experiences, and foreign students will be promoted.

○ **Promotion of the participation by junior high and senior high school teachers in English conversation activities at elementary schools**

Due to the Amendment of the Educational Personnel Certification Law in May 2002, personnel who have a teacher's license for junior or senior high schools can be placed in charge of subjects and the Period for Integrated Study at the elementary school level, which are the responsibility of elementary school teachers. From the viewpoint of promoting links between elementary schools and junior high schools, as well as supporting English conversation activities at elementary schools, the use of junior and senior high school teachers for English conversation activities at elementary schools will be promoted.

【Research relating to methods of English education at elementary schools】

○ **Research and development of the curriculum**

Under the system of pilot schools for research purposes, the curriculum relating to English education at elementary schools will continue to be developed.

○ **Ascertaining and analyzing the actual conditions of activities for English conversation at elementary schools**

Detailed surveys and analyses regarding the state of implementation of English

conversation activities will be performed within 2003.

○ **Research relating to future methods of English education at elementary schools**

A research committee will be established in 2003 with the aim of completing by 2005, an analysis of the results and issues of: the practical research conducted at pilot schools; research relating to the characteristics of language acquisition for children; and the collection and analysis of examples from foreign countries. Necessary research on English education at elementary schools will be carried out for the Central Education Council and its future deliberations related to the improvement of curriculum standards.

6. Improvement of Japanese language abilities

【Goals】

- In order to cultivate communication abilities in English, the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language, which is the basis of all intellectual activities, will be fostered.

The acquisition of English is greatly related to students' abilities in their mother tongue, Japanese. It is necessary to foster in students the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language and to enhance communication abilities in Japanese in order to cultivate communication abilities in English.

Also, in order to foster Japanese people rich in humanity with an awareness of society, who will live as members of an international society, it is important to enhance students' thinking ability, foster students' strength of expression and sense of language, deepen their interest in the Japanese language, and nurture an attitude of respect for the Japanese language.

Thus, the following measures to improve students' Japanese language abilities will be promoted.

- **Realization of the aims of the new Courses of Study**

Regarding the Japanese language education in the new Courses of Study implemented from 2002, the improvement of content has been achieved, of course, by emphasizing strongly literacy. In addition, emphasis has been placed on nurturing the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language in accordance with the purpose and situation for communication, and the person with whom one is speaking. The enhancement of verbal "communication ability" while respecting other people's points of view and ways of thinking has been stressed.

In order to realize the principles of the new Courses of Study, the contents will be promulgated through various meetings and conferences for boards of education and relevant school personnel, contributing to the improvement of instruction at each school.

- **Implementation of model programs to improve Japanese language studies**

Linking with the home and community, advanced schools to improve Japanese language studies for children will be established, model areas to address practical research will be designated, and comprehensive approaches to improve Japanese language studies will be promoted.

- **Review of the "Japanese Language Abilities Required for the Future Age"**

At the behest of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in February, 2002, a report was issued "Concerning the Japanese Language Abilities Required for the Future Age." The contents were reviewed at the sectional meetings of an advisory body concerning Japanese language education and a summary of their

deliberations was released in January 2003.

Based on opinions from various sectors of the public, deliberations on Japanese language education will continue and recommended guidelines will be formulated.

○ **Promotion of reading activities for children**

Through the promotion of activities such as “morning reading,” the fostering of a familiar attitude toward reading and the acquisition of good reading habits will be promoted.

○ **Raising awareness of language**

“A program to experience thinking about ‘language’” will be implemented in an integrated manner in the home and community. This program will offer an opportunity to think about such aspects as appropriate word usage and verbal expressions appropriate to the situation and the person one talks to as well as seeking to raise the awareness of language.

○ **Implementation of training to improve the teaching of the Japanese language**

Training regarding teaching methods and improvement in the teaching skills of teachers will be implemented. Training will target teachers at elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools (including teachers in charge of subjects other than the Japanese language), as well as teaching consultants for Japanese language education.

7. Promotion of practical research

【Goals】

- Practical research relating to English education at junior high schools, high schools, and universities will be comprehensively implemented for promoting approaches to improve English education. (A report will be issued in the autumn of 2003 including initial conclusions.)

- **Research relating to levels of English ability required at the junior high and senior high school levels**

Using the Courses of Study as a base, the levels of English ability required at junior high and senior high school levels will be detailed. Also, through surveys on the actual situation of English teaching, areas that require improvement in teaching methods will be concretely researched.

Additionally, the measurement of English abilities by external proficiency examinations such as STEP, TOEFL, and TOEIC, will be analyzed. The relationship between such levels and required English abilities will be clarified, and policies to use such examinations for the purpose of entrance examinations will be researched.

- **Research relating to English education at junior high and senior high schools, and training programs for teachers**

From the viewpoint of reviewing effective teaching methods to cultivate practical communication abilities in English, research and basic data relating to English education inside and outside Japan will be collected.

Based on these results, a model program will be created for the previously mentioned intensive training program aiming at improving teaching abilities to cultivate students' practical communication abilities in English.

- **Research regarding the target goals for the English ability required by English teachers**

Research targeting English teachers will be implemented, analyzing the nature of English and teaching abilities required for English teachers. Considering the characteristics of proficiency examinations such as STEP, TOEFL, TOEIC, the relation between the English abilities required for English teachers and external proficiency examinations will be researched, as well as the appropriateness of the scores of each examination with regard to entrance examinations.

The possibility of measuring teachers' abilities to foster practical communication abilities in English will also be reviewed through the research relating to effective teaching methods mentioned previously.

- **Research relating to English education at universities**

Considering various methods, examples of concrete models will be formulated

from the perspective of nurturing personnel “who can use English in their work after graduating from universities.” Such models will deal with improvements to the contents of subjects, the structuring of a system for cooperation between universities, ways of training teachers, and other matters.

○ **Research relating to approaches to English education in other countries**

Concentrating mainly on Asian countries, reports on the state of English education in other countries concerning teaching methods, teaching materials, techniques for evaluation, and approaches to teacher training in different countries will be gathered.

Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities” (Japanese)

「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための行動計画

平成15年3月31日

文部科学省

「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための行動計画の策定について

今日においては、経済、社会の様々な面でグローバル化が急速に進展し、人の流れ、物の流れのみならず、情報、資本などの国境を越えた移動が活発となり、国際的な相互依存関係が深まっています。それとともに、国際的な経済競争は激化し、メガコンペティションと呼ばれる状態が到来する中、これに対する果敢な挑戦が求められています。さらに、地球環境問題をはじめ人類が直面する地球規模の課題の解決に向けて、人類の英知を結集することが求められています。こうした状況の下にあっては、絶えず国際社会を生きるという広い視野とともに、国際的な理解と協調は不可欠となっています。

また、グローバル化は、経済界のみならず個人の様々な営みにまで波及し、個人が国際的に流通する商品やサービス、国際的な活動に触れ、参画する機会の増大がもたらされているとともに、誰もが世界において活躍できる可能性が広がっています。

さらに、今日のIT革命の進展により、日常生活から経済活動に至るあらゆる活動が知識と情報を原動力として展開される知識社会に移行しようとしており、知識や情報を入手、理解し、さらに、発信、対話する能力が強く求められています。

このような状況の中、英語は、母語の異なる人々の間をつなぐ国際的共通語として最も中心的な役割を果たしており、子どもたちが21世紀を生き抜くためには、国際的共通語としての英語のコミュニケーション能力を身に付けることが不可欠です。また、このことは、我が国が世界とつながり、世界から理解、信頼され、国際的なプレゼンスを高め、一層発展していくためにも極めて重要な課題です。

その一方で、現状では、日本人の多くが、英語力が十分でないために、外国人との交流において制限を受けたり、適切な評価が得られないといった事態も生じています。また、同時に、英語の習得のためには、まず国語で自分の意思を明確に表現する能力を涵養する必要もあります。

このようなことに鑑み、文部科学省では、基礎的・実践的コミュニケーション能力の育成を一層重視した学習指導要領の改訂など様々な施策を講じてきました。しかし、このような改善の実をあげるためには、カリキュラムの改善だけでなく、指導方法の改善、教員の指導力の向上、入学者選抜の改善など、様々な取組を同時に行っていかなければなりません。

このため、「英語指導方法等改善の推進に関する懇談会」や「英語教育改革に関する懇談会」等を通じ様々な有識者より意見を聴取し、これらを踏まえ、我が国の英語教育を抜本的に改善する目的で、総合的かつ具体的なアクションプランとして、昨年7月、「『英語が使える日本人』の育成のための戦略構想」を作成しました。

本「行動計画」は、上記の「戦略構想」に基づき、その後の施策の実施状況や平成15年度予算措置などを踏まえながら、今後5カ年で「英語が使える日本人」を育成する体制

を確立すべく、平成20年度を目指した英語教育の改善の目標や方向性を明らかにし、その実現のために国として取り組むべき施策を具体的な行動計画としてまとめたものです。

「英語が使える日本人」の育成は、子どもたちの将来のためにも、我が国の一層の発展のためにも非常に重要な課題です。しかし、この課題の解決は、小・中・高等学校・大学等の国公私立学校関係者、地方公共団体関係者をはじめとする英語教育に関わるあらゆる関係者が、それぞれの立場でこの目標を認識し、それぞれに改善に取り組むことを通じてこそ実現されるものであります。また、この改善の実現のためには、保護者、経済界をはじめ関係団体などの積極的な取組のほか広く国民の方々のご理解が必要です。このため、文部科学省では、様々な機会を通じ、本行動計画について広く国民への理解を促すとともに、改善に向けた各種の取組状況などを評価し、毎年、計画を見直すこととしています。関係各位におかれましては、この趣旨・重要性にご理解賜り、それぞれの責任の下、一層積極的かつ主体的に改善に取り組まれるようお願いいたします。

平成15年3月31日

文部科学大臣 遠山 敦子

「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための行動計画

平成15年3月31日
文 部 科 学 省

I. 「英語が使える日本人」育成の目標

日本人に求められる英語力

【目標】

国民全体に求められる英語力

「中学校・高等学校を卒業したら英語でコミュニケーションができる」

- 中学校卒業段階：挨拶や応対、身近な暮らしに関わる話題などについて平易なコミュニケーションができる（卒業者の平均が実用英語技能検定（英検）3級程度）
- 高等学校卒業段階：日常的な話題について通常のコミュニケーションができる（卒業者の平均が英検準2級～2級程度）

専門分野に必要な英語力や国際社会に活躍する人材等に求められる英語力

「大学を卒業したら仕事で英語が使える」

- 各大学が、仕事で英語が使える人材を育成する観点から、達成目標を設定

今後のグローバル化の進展の中で、「英語が使える日本人」を育成するためには、「『コミュニケーションの手段』としての英語」という観点から、初期の学習段階においては音声によるコミュニケーション能力を重視しながらも、「聞く」「話す」「読む」「書く」の総合的なコミュニケーション能力を身に付けることが重要である。こうした指導を通じて、国民全体のレベルで、英語により日常的な会話や簡単な情報の交換ができるような基礎的・実践的なコミュニケーション能力を身に付けるようにすると同時に、職業や研究などの仕事上英語を必要とする者には、上記の基礎的な英語力を踏まえつつ、それぞれの分野に応じて必要な英語力を身に付けるようにし、日本人全体として、英検、TOEFL、TOEIC等客観的指標に基づいて世界平均水準の英語力を目指すことが重要である。

学校教育においてこのような能力の育成を図るためには、各学校段階を通した一貫性のある指導を行う必要がある。このため、新学習指導要領を踏まえ、各学校段階で求められる英語力の達成目標を設定し、英語の授業の改善、英語教員の指導力向上及び指導体制の充実、英語学習のモチベーションの向上などに取り組み、接続する学校間が連携しながら、それぞれの段階で求められる英語力を着実に身に付ける指導を推進する。

Ⅱ. 英語教育改善のためのアクション

1. 英語の授業の改善

【目標】

「英語を使用する活動を積み重ねながらコミュニケーション能力の育成を図る」

- 英語の授業の大半は英語を用いて行い、生徒や学生が英語でコミュニケーションを行う活動を多く取り入れる
- 中・高等学校等の英語の授業で少人数指導や習熟度別指導などを積極的に取り入れる
- 地域に英語教育に関する先進校を形成する

「英語が使える」ようになるためには、文法や語彙などについての知識を持っているというだけではなく、実際にコミュニケーションを目的として英語を運用する能力が必要である。このため、英語の授業においては、文法訳読中心の指導や教員の一方的な授業ではなく、英語をコミュニケーションの手段として使用する活動を積み重ね、これを通して、語彙や文法などの習熟を図り、「聞く」「話す」「読む」「書く」のコミュニケーション能力の育成を図っていく指導の工夫が必要である。

こうした指導を効果的に行っていくために、教員は、普段から主に英語で授業を展開しながら、生徒や学生が英語でコミュニケーションを行う場面を多く設定することが重要である。その際、こうした授業を通じて、学習者が、自分を表現し、相手を理解することができた成就感や学ぶ楽しさを味わうことができ、さらに、英語ができることの意義、必要性や、そのことによって広がる世界や可能性に興味や関心を持つことができるよう、指導を工夫することも大切である。

また、ALT（外国語指導助手）や特別非常勤講師制度¹などを活用して少人数指導や習熟度別指導などを積極的に取り入れるとともに、先進的な英語教育を推進し、優れた授業実践を普及することが求められる。

このため、下記のような施策を通じて、上記のような英語の授業が各学校段階を通して一貫して行われることを推進する。

【新学習指導要領の推進】

○ 新学習指導要領の趣旨の実現

平成14年度から順次実施されている新しい学習指導要領においては、国際化の進展に対応し、外国語による日常的な会話や簡単な情報の交換などの基礎的・実践的コミュニケーション能力がどの生徒にも必要になってきているとの観点から、中・高等学校の外国語科を必修とし、中学校段階については、「聞くこと」「話すこと」の音声によるコミュニケーション能力の育成に重点をおいて、高等学校段階については、「聞くこと」「話すこと」「読むこと」「書くこと」の4つの領域を有機的に関連付け

¹ 都道府県教育委員会への届出により、教員免許状を有しないが、優れた知識や技術を有する社会人や地域住民が、小・中・高等学校などの全ての教科等について、非常勤の講師として、その教科等の領域の一部を担任することを可能とする制度。

て、実践的コミュニケーション能力の育成に重点をおいて、内容の改善が図られている。その際、外国語を通じて、言語や文化に対する理解を深め、積極的にコミュニケーションを図ろうとする態度の育成も重視している。

この新学習指導要領の趣旨の実現のため、教育委員会や学校関係者等を対象とした各種会議等を通じて周知等を図り、各学校における学習指導の改善に資する。

○ **目標に準拠した評価（いわゆる絶対評価）の推進**

中学校についての「評価規準の作成・評価方法の工夫改善のための参考資料」及びその解説書の作成に続き、高等学校外国語についても検討を進め、これらを参考にしながら、目標に準拠した評価の一層の定着を推進する。

【先進的な英語教育等の推進】

○ **スーパー・イングリッシュ・ランゲージ・ハイスクール事業の推進**

平成17年度までに計100校を目標に、スーパー・イングリッシュ・ランゲージ・ハイスクール²を指定し、高等学校及び中等教育学校における先進的な英語教育を推進し、その成果の普及を図る。

（平成14年度；16件→平成15年度；50件）

○ **研究開発学校制度の推進**

研究開発学校制度³の中で、引き続き、小・中・高等学校等の英語教育に関する教育課程や指導方法などを開発する。

○ **「特色ある大学教育支援プログラム」の推進**

平成15年度から「特色ある大学教育支援プログラム」を実施し、英語教育の改善を含む、大学教育の改善に資する種々の取組のうち特色ある優れたものを選定し、今後の大学教育の改善に活用する。

○ **英語による特別コースへの参加の促進**

外国人留学生を対象として大学で実施されている英語による特別コースへの日本人学生の参加を促す。

【指導方法、教材等の改善】

○ **教職員定数改善計画の推進**

英語など教科に応じて20人程度の少人数指導や習熟度別指導を行うことを可能とする教職員定数改善計画(平成13年度～)を推進し、きめ細かな指導を実現する。

² 英語教育を重視したカリキュラムの開発、一部の教科を英語によって行う教育、大学や海外姉妹校との効果的な連携方策等について、実践的な研究開発を行う学校。

³ 教育実践の中から提起される諸課題や、学校教育に対する多様な要請に対応した新しい教育課程（カリキュラム）や指導方法を開発するため、市町村教育委員会等が主体的に設定した研究課題に基づき、学習指導要領等によらない教育課程の編成・実施を認める制度。

○ **教科書及び教材における工夫の促進**

教科書や教材において、英語を実際に使用する活動を積み重ねながら言語の習熟を図ることができるよう配慮し、実際の言語の使用場面や言語の働きに配慮したものとなるとともに、その際、生徒の心身の発達段階及び興味・関心に即して適切な題材を取り上げるよう、会議等を通じて一層の取組を促進する。

【英語教育改善に関する情報の積極的提供】

○ **英語教育の改善実施状況調査の実施**

平成15年度から、中・高等学校を対象に英語教育に関する改善実施状況調査を実施し、英語による指導や少人数指導、習熟度別指導の実施状況や英語の授業時間数、先進的指導事例など、英語教育に関する各学校の取組状況を調査・公表し、英語教育の改善のための一層の取組を促す。

○ **大学英語教育実施状況調査の実施**

各大学における英語教育の達成目標の設定状況などを調査・公表し、大学における英語教育の改善のための一層の取組を促す。

【英語の優れた実践事例等の共有化の推進】

○ **英語教育に関する先進的取組事例集の作成**

平成15年度中に、国立教育政策研究所教育課程研究センターにおいて、先進的な英語の指導事例等に関する事例集を作成し、研修等を通じた普及を図る。

○ **英語の特色ある授業実践の共有化の推進**

平成15年度から、国立教育政策研究所教育情報ナショナルセンターを通じ、スーパー・イングリッシュ・ランゲージ・ハイスクールの研究成果や特色ある英語教育の実践事例の共有化を推進し、よりよい授業づくりを支援する。

2. 英語教員の指導力向上及び指導体制の充実

【目標】

- 概ね全ての英語教員が、英語を使用する活動を積み重ねながらコミュニケーション能力の育成を図る授業を行うことのできる英語力（英検準一級、TOEFL550点、TOEIC730点程度以上）及び教授力を備える
- 地域レベルのリーダー的教員を中核として、地域の英語教育の向上を図る
- 中・高等学校の英語の授業に週1回以上はネイティブスピーカーが参加する
- 英語に堪能な地域の人材を積極的に活用する

「英語が使える日本人」の育成は、日々子どもに接する教員の実践を通して実現されるものであり、教員の指導力の在り方は極めて重要なものである。英語をコミュニケーションの手段として使用する活動を積み重ね、これを通して、語彙や文法などの習熟を図り、「聞く」「話す」「読む」「書く」のコミュニケーション能力の育成を図っていく授業を、普段から主に英語で展開するためには、英語教員に一定の英語力及び教授力が必要となる。このため、後述（「7. 実践的研究の推進」参照）のとおり英語教員が備えておくべき英語力及び教授力の内容を具体的に分析する研究を実施するとともに、外部検定試験である程度測定が可能な英語力については当面の具体的な目標値を設定し、英語力及び教授力を向上させるため、下記のような施策を通じて、教員研修の充実等の取組を推進する。

また、ネイティブスピーカーの活用は、生きた英語を学ぶ貴重な機会であるとともに、外国語や外国文化等に親しみ、自分の英語がネイティブスピーカーに通じたという喜びと英語学習へのモチベーション（動機づけ）を高めるなどの意味で、大きな意義を有する。さらに、海外生活経験等により英語に堪能な社会人など地域の優れた人材の協力を得ることは、英語の指導体制の充実を図る観点のみならず、社会の中での英語の必要性や、英語ができることによって広がる世界などについて、子どもたちが直接学ぶ貴重な機会となる観点からも、大きな意義を有する。このため、指導体制の充実のため、下記のような施策を通じて、ネイティブスピーカーの効果的な活用や地域の優れた人材の活用を推進する。

【採用・評価の際の考慮】

○ 教員採用の改善の促進

英語担当教員の採用選考に当たっては、現在、ほぼ全ての都道府県・指定都市教育委員会が、リスニング、英会話などの実技試験を行っており、このような選考を一層推進する。また、学力試験の改善や直近の英検、TOEFL、TOEIC等のスコアの考慮により、選考の際に目標とされる英語力の所持を確認することを求め、英語によるコミュニケーション能力に関する評価を一層重視した採用を促す。

○ 教員評価の改善の促進

英語教員には、英語の教授力や意欲・情熱などに加え、一定の英語力が求められることを踏まえ、研修成果の評価や勤務評定などの中で、英語力の所持を考慮することを求める。

【英語教員の集中的研修の推進】

○ 5カ年計画による集中的研修の推進

平成15年度から平成19年度までの5年間に、全ての英語教員が、実践的コミュニケーション能力育成のための指導力向上を図る研修を受けるよう、国レベルの研修と合わせ、都道府県等教育委員会が行う集中的な研修を支援する。また、研修の受講状況は、先述の英語教育の改善実施状況調査により把握する。

【地域のリーダー的教員育成の推進】

○ 英語教育指導者講座の実施

独立行政法人教員研修センターにおいて、英語教育指導者講座を引き続き実施し、実践的コミュニケーション能力の育成のための効果的な指導法などを習得し、地域における研修講師となるなど地域の英語教育を推進するリーダー的教員の育成を図る。

平成15年度予定人数 1,000人

○ 優れた英語教員への海外研修の充実

独立行政法人教員研修センターにおいて、上記集中的研修等を通じて優れた教授力や英語力を有する中・高等学校の英語教員に対して、それぞれの必要性に応じた海外研修の機会を提供することを通じて、英語力、教授力とも優れた英語教員の育成を図るとともに、周囲の英語教員の意欲向上を促す。

平成15年度予定人数

12ヶ月派遣	15人
6ヶ月派遣	85人
2ヶ月派遣（新規）	200人

○ 大学院修学休業制度を活用した海外の大学院への留学の促進

平成15年度から、英語教員の受け入れ可能な大学院に関する情報提供などにより、秀でた熱意と英語力・教授力を有する中・高等学校の英語教員が、大学院修学休業制度⁴を活用して海外の大学院で英語教育に関する課程を修得することを促進する。

【ネイティブスピーカーの活用促進】

○ ALT（外国語指導助手）の活用促進

JETプログラム⁵によるALTの勤務年限の弾力化（最大3年から5年に拡大）や、単独での授業が可能な特別非常勤講師としての活用などを通じて、ALTの有効活用を促進するとともに、地方公共団体の配置要望に可能な範囲で応え、ALTの活用を促進する。また、活用状況は、先述の英語教育の改善実施状況調査により把握する。

⁴ 国公立学校の教員が、任命権者の許可を受けて、専修免許状を取得するため、1年を単位とする3年を超えない期間、国内外の大学院へ在学し、研修を行うため休業することができる制度。

⁵ 地方公共団体を事業主体として、文部科学省、総務省、外務省の協力の下に推進している事業。我が国における外国語教育の充実を図るとともに、地域レベルでの国際交流の進展を図ることを通じて、我が国と諸外国との相互理解を増進し、もって我が国の国際化の促進に資することを目的とする。

○ **優れたA L T等の正規教員への採用促進**

平成15年度からの3年間で中学について教員定数の加配等も活用し300人、将来的には、中・高等学校について教員定数の加配等も活用し1,000人の配置を目指し、A L T等として優れた経験等を有するネイティブスピーカーを正規教員として活用することを促進する。

【英語に堪能な地域人材の活用促進】

○ **英語に堪能な地域人材の活用促進**

一定以上の英語力を所持している社会人等について、学校いきいきプラン⁶や特別免許状、特別非常勤講師制度により英語教育への活用を促進する。

⁶ 平成16年度までの3年間で、約5万人を目標に全国の学校に多様な知識や経験を有する社会人を教員補助者等として導入する構想（特別非常勤講師制度や緊急地域雇用創出特別交付金を活用）。

3. 英語学習へのモチベーションの向上

【目標】

- 毎年 10,000 人の高校生が海外留学する
- 授業以外で英語を使う機会が充実する
- 英語を用いて世界へ情報発信するなど、国際交流を一層活発にする

英語によるコミュニケーション能力の育成のためには、コミュニケーションの手段として活用する経験を積み重ねる必要がある。しかし、我が国においては、日常生活の中で英語に接する機会は少なく、多くの子どもたちは教室で学習したことを日常生活の中で試してみることが困難な状況の中、子どもたちの学習意欲を如何に高めるかが重要な課題である。

このためには、英語学習へのモチベーション（動機づけ）を高めることが必要である。様々な機会をとらえて、異なる文化や生活への理解と関心を深める教育を推進し、英語によるコミュニケーション能力を身に付けることの意義や面白さを理解させるとともに、授業以外で英語を使う機会をできるだけ多く設けたり、挑戦すべき具体的目標を設定したりするなど、英語が使えたという喜びや成就感を与える取組が重要である。

このため、下記のような施策を通じて、英語学習へのモチベーションの向上を推進する。

【国際理解教育の推進】

○ 新学習指導要領の趣旨の実現

広い視野を持ち、異文化を理解するとともに、これを尊重する態度や異なる文化を持った人々と共に生きていく資質や能力の育成をねらいとする国際理解教育は、英語のみならず、社会科、地理歴史科を中心に各教科、道徳、特別活動の特質等に応じて行うこととしている。また、平成14年度から順次実施されている新しい学習指導要領においては、「総合的な学習の時間」においても横断的・総合的な学習活動の一つとして国際理解に関する学習活動が示されている。

このため、教育委員会や学校関係者等を対象とした各種会議等を通じて、このような新学習指導要領のねらいについての周知と理解を促す。

○ 国際理解教育に関する指導事例集の作成

小学校編に続き、中・高等学校の各教科等における効果的な国際理解教育の指導事例に関する事例集を、平成15年度中に作成し、研究協議会等を通じた普及を図る。

【留学機会の拡大】

○ 高校生留学の促進

年間 10,000 人の高校生が海外留学することを目指し、高校生留学交流団体が実施する留学プログラムや、留学先に関する情報提供活動を支援する。

（平成15年度予定 1,000人程度を対象に、往復航空費の一部を支援）

- **大学生等の留学促進**
大学間交流協定等に基づく日本人学生の短期留学を推進するとともに、留学に関する情報提供活動の充実を図る。
(平成15年度短期留学推進制度予定 585人を対象に、奨学金を支援)

【英語を使う機会の充実】

- **地域人材等を活用した取組の推進**
学校いきいきプランを通じた英語に堪能な社会人等の活用や、ALT等の活用によって、学校を中心とした英会話サロンやスピーチコンテストなどの取組を促進する。
- **外国語長期体験活動の推進**
小学校高学年を対象にネイティブスピーカー等と長期にわたり共同生活をする中で外国語コミュニケーション能力を培うとともに、国際化に対応できる人材を育成するためのモデル事業を実施する。
- **特色ある取組に関する事例集の作成等**
先述の英語教育に関する先進的取組事例集の中で、英語の授業外における英会話サロンやサマーキャンプ、留学生や海外の子どもたちとの交流、英語放送の積極的活用など、英語を使う機会に関する特色ある取組を取り上げ、周知を図る。
また、英語の授業外における取組状況については、先述の英語教育の改善実施状況調査により把握する。

【国際交流の推進】

- **国際交流を推進する情報提供活動の推進**
先述の高校生留学に係る情報提供活動の一環として、姉妹校提携や学校間交流活動を推進する情報提供活動を支援する。
- **英語版学校紹介ホームページ作成の促進**
英語を用いて発信する力や英語学習への意欲を高め、ITを活用した国際交流を促進する観点から、各学校が英語で学校や地域を紹介するホームページを作成する取組を促し、教育情報ナショナルセンターの提供するシステムを通してインターネットで紹介する。

4. 入学者選抜等における評価の改善

【目標】

- 聞く及び話す能力を含むコミュニケーション能力を適切に評価する
- 大学や高校入試において、リスニングテスト、外部検定試験の活用を促進する

英語によるコミュニケーション能力の育成のためには、コミュニケーション能力の適切な評価がなされなければならない。特に、日常生活の中で英語に接する機会が少ない我が国においては、成績や受験が最終の目標になりがちであることから、入学者選抜等の在り方は、指導方法の改善やモチベーションや学習意欲に極めて大きな影響を与えているといえる。

このため、下記のような施策を通じて、評価方法や出題方式、内容等に関する改善を推進する。

【入学者選抜における改善】

- **大学入試センター試験でのリスニングテストの導入（平成18年度からの実施を目標）**
大学関係者と高等学校関係者等の間で行われている協議の結果を踏まえ、平成15年5月中に、大学入試センター試験でのリスニングテストの実施の概要について公表する。また、これに伴う各大学の体制の整備などについて検討する。
- **各大学の入学者選抜の改善の促進**
各大学が設定する英語力の達成目標などをもとに、入学者に求める英語力を明確にし、特にコミュニケーション能力を重視する観点から、リスニングテストなどコミュニケーション能力が適切に評価される選抜方法の改善に関する各大学の取組を促進する。
- **高等学校入学者選抜の改善の促進**
音声によるコミュニケーション能力を重視した中学校の学習に配慮し、全都道府県で行われているリスニングテストに加え、例えば、英語による口頭試問の導入など、コミュニケーション能力をより重視した出題方法の改善を促進する。
- **大学入試及び高校入試での外部検定試験結果の活用の促進**
大学や高等学校の入学者選抜においては、各種外部検定試験の内容・程度や受験者の実態等に配慮しつつ、後述の英語教育に関する研究の結果を踏まえ、各種会議等を通じて、英検やTOEFL、TOEIC、ケンブリッジ大学英語検定試験などの一層の活用を促す。

【企業等の採用試験における配慮】

企業等の採用試験において、仕事で使える英語力の所持を重視するよう求める。また、文部科学省においても、職員の採用等の際に英語力の所持も重視する。

5. 小学校の英会話活動の支援

【目標】

- 総合的な学習の時間などにおいて英会話活動を行っている小学校について、その実施回数の3分の1程度は、外国人教員、英語に堪能な者又は中学校等の英語教員による指導を行う

小学校においては、平成14年度から順次実施されている新しい学習指導要領のもと、新設された「総合的な学習の時間」の中で、国際理解教育の一環として外国語会話等を行うことができるようにしており、新学習指導要領が全面実施となった平成14年度では、およそ5割の公立小学校で英会話活動が行われている。

「総合的な学習の時間」における英会話活動においては、単なる中学校の英語教育の前倒しは避けるとともに、教員が一方的に教え込むのではなく、児童が楽しみながら外国語に触れたり、外国の生活や文化などに慣れ親しんだりするなど、小学校段階にふさわしい体験的な学習活動を行い、積極的にコミュニケーションを図ろうとする意欲や態度を育成することが重要である。このため、下記のような施策を通じて、こうした取組の円滑な実施を推進する。

また、その際には、児童が異なった言語や文化などに触れ、興味や関心を持つことや、音声を使った体験的な活動を行うことが重要であることから、ネイティブスピーカーなど高い英語力を有する者の活用が重要である。このため、英会話活動を行う小学校については、その実施回数の3分の1程度は、ネイティブスピーカーや中学校の英語教員等による指導が行えることを目標に、下記のような施策を通じて、必要な支援を行う。

【指導方法の改善】

- 小学校英会話活動推進のための手引の作成
効果的な指導法や指導に当たっての配慮、中学校の英語教育を踏まえた指導の在り方など、小学校の英会話活動の指導に関する手引書を作成する。
- 英会話活動の実施状況に関する調査の実施
先述の英語教育に関する改善実施状況調査の中で、小学校の英会話活動の実施状況や内容などについて調査・公表し、一層の取組の改善に資することとする。
- 研究開発学校制度の推進
研究開発学校制度の下で、引き続き、小学校の英語教育に関する指導方法などを開発する。

【指導力及び指導体制の充実】

- 英会話活動担当教員への研修の充実
独立行政法人教員研修センターにより、英会話活動担当教員の指導者となる教員の研修を重点的に実施する。
(平成15年度予定人数 600人)

- **経験豊かなALTの配置促進**
JETプログラムや特別非常勤講師制度等を通じ、中・高等学校等での指導経験を有するALTの小学校への配置を促進する。
- **英語に堪能な地域人材の活用促進**
学校いきいきプランや特別非常勤講師制度等を通じ、海外生活経験等により英語に堪能な社会人や留学生等の活用を促進する。
- **中・高等学校教員の小学校英会話活動への参加の促進**
平成14年5月の教育職員免許法の改正により、中学校又は高等学校の教諭の免許状を有する者が小学校の相当する教科及び総合的な学習の時間の授業を担当することができるようになったことを踏まえ、小学校の英会話活動の支援とともに小・中学校等間の連携を促進する観点から、小学校の英会話活動への中・高等学校教員の活用を促進する。

【小学校の英語教育の在り方に関する研究】

- **教育課程の研究開発**
研究開発学校制度の下で、引き続き、小学校の英語教育に関する教育課程等を開発する。
- **小学校の英会話活動の実情把握及び分析**
平成15年度中に、現行の英会話活動の実施状況について詳細な調査・分析を行う。
- **今後の小学校英語教育の在り方に関する研究**
平成15年度に調査研究協力者会議を設置し、17年度までを目途として研究開発学校における研究実践の成果・課題の分析、児童の言語習得の特質に関する研究、諸外国の事例等の収集・分析など、今後、中央教育審議会における教育課程の基準の改善に係る審議において小学校の英語教育の在り方を検討する上で必要となる研究等を行う。

6. 国語力の向上

【目標】

- 英語によるコミュニケーション能力の育成のため、すべての知的活動の基盤となる国語を適切に表現し正確に理解する能力を育成する

英語の習得は母語である国語の能力が大きくかわるものであり、英語によるコミュニケーション能力の育成のためには、その基礎として、国語を適切に表現し正確に理解する能力を育成するとともに、伝え合う力を高めることが必要である。

また、豊かな人間性や社会性を持ち、国際社会の中で主体的に生きていく日本人を育成するためには、思考力を伸ばし、豊かな表現力や言語感覚を養うとともに、国語への関心を深め、国語を尊重する態度を育てることが大切である。

このため、下記のような施策を通じ、国語力の向上の取組を推進する。

○ 新学習指導要領の趣旨の実現

平成14年度から順次実施されている新しい学習指導要領「国語」においては、読み書きなどの徹底はもちろんのこと、相手や目的、場面に応じて国語を適切に表現し正確に理解する能力を育成し、互いの立場や考えを尊重しつつ言葉で「伝え合う力」を高めることに重点をおいて、内容の改善が図られている。

この新学習指導要領の趣旨の実現のため、教育委員会や学校関係者等を対象とした各種会議等を通じて周知等を図り、各学校における学習指導の改善に資する。

○ 国語力向上モデル事業の実施

家庭や地域と連携しながら、児童生徒の国語力向上のための推進校を設け、実践研究に取り組むモデル地域を指定し、国語力向上のための総合的な取組を推進する。

○ 「これからの時代に求められる国語力」の検討

平成14年2月の文部科学大臣からの諮問「これからの時代に求められる国語力について」を受けて、文化審議会国語分科会において検討し、平成15年1月に審議経過の概要を取りまとめ公表した。

今後、国民各界各層からの意見等も踏まえつつ、引き続き検討を進め、答申として取りまとめる。

○ 子どもの読書活動の推進

「朝の読書」の推進などにより、子どもの読書に親しむ態度を育成し、読書習慣を身に付けることを推進する。

○ 言葉に対する意識の高揚

家庭や地域などが一体となって、相手や場面に応じた適切な言葉遣いや言葉による表現等について考える機会を提供する「『言葉』について考える体験事業」等を実施し、言葉についての意識の高揚を図る。

○ 国語指導力向上講座の実施

小・中・高等学校の教員（国語科以外の教員を含む）や指導主事を対象として、指導方法等についての研修を実施し、教員の指導技術の向上を図る。

7. 実践的研究の推進

【目標】

- 英語教育の改善のための取組が着実に推進されるよう、中・高等学校・大学の英語教育に関する実践的研究を総合的に実施する（平成15年秋までに一定の結論を得る）

- 中・高等学校段階で求められる英語力の指標に関する研究
学習指導要領等を踏まえ、中・高等学校段階で求められる英語力の指標に関し具体的に示すとともに、実際の指導状況などを調査し、いかなる点で指導方法の改善が必要か具体的に研究する。
また、英検、TOEFL、TOEICなどの外部検定試験でいかなる英語力が測定されるかを分析し、求められる英語力との関係を明らかにし、外部検定試験の入試等での活用方策を研究する。

- 中・高等学校における英語教育及び教員の研修プログラムに関する研究
英語による実践的コミュニケーション能力育成のための効果的な指導方法を検討する観点から、国内外の英語教育に関する研究や基礎的データを集約する。
これを踏まえ、英語による実践的コミュニケーション能力育成のための指導力向上をねらいとする先述の集中的研修のためのモデルプログラムや、効果的な教員養成プログラムを作成する。

- 英語教員が備えておくべき英語力の目標値についての研究
英語教員が備えておくべき英語力及び教授力の内容について分析するとともに、英語教員を対象とした調査を実施し、英検、TOEFL、TOEICなどの特性を踏まえ、英語教員が備えておくべき英語力と外部検定試験との関連、各試験の点数互換の妥当性等を研究する。
また、上記効果的な指導方法に関する研究と連携し、英語による実践的コミュニケーション能力育成のための指導力の測定の可能性について検討する。

- 大学の英語教育の在り方に関する研究
高等教育における人材育成の多様性を踏まえつつ、「大学を卒業したら仕事で英語が使える」人材を育成する観点から、教科内容の改善や大学間の協力体制の構築、大学教員養成の在り方等について、具体的なモデル事例を策定する。

- 諸外国における英語教育の取組に関する研究
アジア諸国を中心とする諸外国における英語教育の取組状況について調査し、諸外国の指導方法や教材、学習評価の工夫、教員研修の取組等に関する事例をまとめる。