

Purposes and Implications of L1 Use in Japanese Elementary School English Classes

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Abstract

2011年より全国の公立小学校の5・6年生で「外国語活動」の授業が必修化された。学級担任（HRT: homeroom teacher）と外国語指導助手（ALT: Assistant Language Teacher）のチームティーチングで英語の授業が実施されている。英語必修化については、賛成の声とともに、反対する意見も多く出されており、今後も議論すべき点が山積している。中でも指導者の第一言語（日本語）の使用に対しては、賛否両論の意見があがっている。小学校の英語教育に第一言語を使用することの影響については、調査が少なく、今後さらなる研究が必要である。本研究では公立小学校3校の英語授業を観察し、指導者の第一言語使用に着目するとともに、その目的について調査した。その結果、すべての学校で日本語が使用されていたが、その頻度には差があり、各学校の教育方針や第一言語使用に対する指導者の姿勢が大きく影響していることが明らかとなった。

Key Words: Use of L1, elementary school English, ALT, homeroom teachers, English acquisition

1. Introduction

English education has been adopted into Japanese elementary schools for quite some time, and it became compulsory in 2011. As a result, students in the fifth and sixth grades all across Japan must now take part in English education in one way or another. Most classes are conducted in a team teaching style, with a homeroom teacher (HRT) and an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). Although many have applauded this new initiative, at the same time, this move by The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has gathered controversy on many levels as well.

Since elementary school English has only recently become compulsory, there is still much unknown about what is actually occurring in these classes. In particular, the language use that is occurring in these classrooms is a topic that deserves attention. Although MEXT has recommended that high school English classes be conducted in English with little Japanese, they have not specified what elementary schools should do in regard to language use. Thus, it is

unclear as to how much L1 is being used, or not being used by HRTs and ALTs. And, if it is being used, it is unclear as to what purposes it is being used for, and what factors may affect its use.

This study is an attempt to discover the purposes of L1 use, factors that affect its use, and implications of its use in the Japanese elementary school context. In particular, the goals of elementary school English education and how that may be related to L1 use will be analyzed.

2. Background Information

2.1 Goals and Objectives of English Classes

As of 2011, fifth and sixth graders are now required to have a foreign language (English) activity class once a week. This new course of study, known as *shōgakkō gakushū shidō ryōkō*, has the following objectives: “To form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages” (MEXT, 2010, p. 1).

The aforementioned goals are based on the curriculum guidelines proposed by MEXT in 2008, officially announcing that English will be a compulsory subject for fifth and sixth graders. These guidelines, which were put into effect in 2011, state that English should be instructed so that students will be able to familiarize themselves with its sounds and rhythms and become aware of its differences from the Japanese language. In addition, MEXT believes that by familiarizing themselves with English, students will be equipped with a foundation of the language, which will enable them to make a smoother transition into the English classes they will take in junior high and high school. The guidelines also place a large emphasis on intercultural understanding and communication, stating that students should learn the differences in the customs between Japan and foreign countries and become aware of various points of view (MEXT, 2008). There is no official textbook, but MEXT has provided a supplementary text called *Hi, Friends!* that teachers can use as a guide.

2.2 The Current State of English Education in Japanese Elementary Schools

A year after the new guidelines were put out, it was estimated that 97.8% of public elementary schools were taking part in English classes in both the fifth and sixth grade level. However, the average number of hours per year was still at 28.2 hours (MEXT, 2009). The most recent survey conducted by Benesse (2010) showed a remarkable improvement, with an estimated 99.6% of schools conducting English activities in the fifth and sixth grades for an average of 33.1 hours of instruction per year (p. 34-35). This number is likely to have become closer to 35 hours per year in 2011, which is when the guidelines were put into full effect.

2.3 The Use of L1 in the Instruction of a L2

The use of the first language (L1) in teaching a second language (L2) has been a long-debated issue in the field of L2 instruction. Some claim that the use of the L1 should be avoided at all costs, while others claim that its use can actually aid learners in acquiring the L2. This issue has recently become particularly heated in Japan when MEXT announced the new Course of Study for Senior High Schools in March 2009. These new guidelines, which are to be implemented by 2013, include the all-English policy, which states “classes, in principle should be conducted in English” (MEXT, 2010b, p. 3). Though the guidelines do not completely ban Japanese in the classroom, teachers are encouraged to use English as much as possible. This all-English policy seems to have grown out of increasing frustration with the grammar translation approach traditionally used in English classes in Japanese junior and senior high schools. In an English as a Second Language (ESL) environment, such as the United States, because many of the students do not share a common mother tongue, the use of L1 will not be suitable. However, in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment such as Japan, most, if not all students, share a common mother tongue—Japanese. Thus, Japanese has traditionally been used to teach English in Japan. In regards to the use of Japanese in English activities in elementary schools, MEXT does not give clear guidelines. However, because most of the students are beginners, it is likely that L1 use will occur. According to Krashen’s (1985) input hypothesis, language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input. To make input comprehensible for beginners, L1 use is generally necessary (Shimizu, 2006). L1 can also be beneficial when it is used to provide complex instructions and explaining classroom methodology at basic levels (Atkinson, 1987).

L1 use can fulfill humanistic functions as well. Results of a survey indicate that using the L1 can help students feel relaxed and create a positive atmosphere (Schweers, 1999). For learners, particularly those who are beginners, if there is no use of their L1, or clarity as to when and for what purposes it can be used, lessons can be both confusing and demoralizing (Cook, 2010).

At present there are few studies that refer specifically to benefits of the use of L1 in elementary school classes. Cook (2010) states that although there is a case for a more or less communicative focus for young learners, this does not mean that translation or explanation in their L1 is of no use. Furthermore, because elementary school students are young and may require more discipline than an adult, L1 use can be used for disciplinary purposes. In a case study conducted by Kang (2008), it was found that elementary school students in Korea learning English were much more prone to obeying their teacher’s orders when they were given exclusively in Korean. In addition, the same students also commented that in a previous classroom where the teacher only used English, they felt confused due to the amount of

incomprehensible information, and as a result lost interest in the target language.

However, at the same time, there can be an abuse of L1 if teachers are not careful. The use of L1 can be harmful when it is used in ways that do not encourage comprehensible input, particularly when it is overused for translation and students have no need to pay attention to the input provided in the L2 (Krashen, 2004). Previous studies indicate that in team teaching situations, Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) often act as “interpreters”, simply translating what the ALT has said (Kumabe, 1996). Furthermore, students may choose to speak to the teacher in their L1 even if they are capable of expressing themselves in the target language, resulting in a decrease of L2 output (Atkinson, 1987).

What then, influences the use of L1? Certainly, school or nationwide policies can have a large effect on the L1 use of teachers. However, research has also shown that teachers’ attitudes about the use of L1 can greatly influence the amount of L1 they use in their classrooms (Duff & Polio, 1990). In Hobbs, Matsuo, and Payne’s study (2010), it was found that “language teachers are powerfully influenced by their past experiences as language learners in specific cultural contexts” (p. 58). Previous studies have shown that there is no significant correlation between years of teaching experience and the amount of L1 use (Duff & Polio, 1990; Hobbs et al., 2010).

3. Focus of this Study

Aline and Hosoda (2006) conducted research about HRT participation patterns in elementary school classrooms and their observational data revealed four common patterns: a bystander, a translator, a co-learner, and a co-teacher. Though the study did not focus on language use, it was found that translation played a facilitating role, in that the translation of the ALT’s utterances by the HRT helped the students’ comprehension and helped the ALT to maintain the momentum of the lesson. However, it is also mentioned that, “conversely, in some cases, translation occurred at times when it did not appear necessary” (p. 12). Osada’s (2011) research focused on teachers’ use of L1 in elementary school classes. The same study found that all teachers used L1, but how they used L1 was different, such as for directions, translation, or feedback. However, this study focused on team teaching between two Japanese teachers, which is atypical in that there was no ALT present. In addition, though L1 use was explored, it was largely quantitative and did not include examples of actual language use in the classroom.

Furthermore, much of the L1 use that has been studied refer to L1 use by the HRT. L1 use by ALTs has not been investigated thoroughly. Though ALTs are typically native English speakers, this does not necessarily mean that they are limited to using only English in the classroom. In Miyazato’s (2007) case study, the ALT used Japanese when he wanted to send his messages directly to his students without the JTE’s translation, such as praising students and giving easy

instructions. However, this study took place at a high school, not at an elementary school. ALTs' language use in elementary schools needs to be investigated as well. In sum, few data exist indicating what sort of language use actually occurs by both the ALTs and HRTs in elementary school English classes. The present study thus aims to represent an empirical contribution to this issue. The study sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. For what purposes is L1 being used for in Japanese elementary school English classes?
2. What factors affect the use of L1?
3. What are the implications of L1 use for elementary school English education, and how might that affect the later acquisition of English?

4. Method

Three public elementary schools in Tokyo (schools A, B, and C) were chosen for classroom observations. One fifth grade class at each school was observed between April 2012 and July 2012. Four class sessions were observed at each school, equaling a total of 12 observations. Lessons were recorded through the use of a voice recorder.

Though the use of Japanese by the ALT and HRT was the main topic of investigation, one classroom session at each school was transcribed in its entirety in order to provide for a holistic view, as it was necessary to realize in what sort of circumstances the use of Japanese appeared, or did not appear. Rather than transcribe all 12 sessions, one lesson was chosen as a representative of each school after the researcher deemed that the sessions at each respective school were quite similar in regard to teacher roles, number of turns, and language use. Thus, all audible speech by the ALT, HRT, and students was transcribed for a total of three classroom sessions.

The researcher then looked at the use of Japanese in teachers' utterances. Some utterances were completely in Japanese, and in other cases they contained a Japanese word or phrase. The Japanese portions were then classified into one of the following purposes: *Prompt, Repetition, Question, Elicitation, Response, Directions, Confirmation, Motivational, Discipline, Explanation, Translation, Role Play*, and *Miscellaneous*. Purposes will be explained in greater detail in the Results section.

Lastly, in order to assess what factors affect the use of L1, open-ended interviews were conducted with all teachers, asking about their teaching roles and personal beliefs about the use of L1.

5. Results

5.1 Purposes of L1 Use

Table 1: Purposes of L1 use

School A			School B			School C		
Purpose	HRT	ALT	Purpose	HRT	ALT	Purpose	HRT	ALT
Prompt	0	0	Prompt	12	1	Prompt	4	2
Repetition	1	1	Repetition	0	1	Repetition	0	0
Question	1	2	Question	20	5	Question	7	11
Elicitation	0	0	Elicitation	0	2	Elicitation	0	1
Response	0	0	Response	11	2	Response	2	5
Directions	2	11	Directions	45	2	Directions	25	15
Confirmation	3	0	Confirmation	13	0	Confirmation	2	1
Motivational	1	0	Motivational	13	0	Motivational	7	3
Discipline	0	0	Discipline	2	0	Discipline	1	0
Explanation	0	0	Explanation	2	1	Explanation	5	11
Translation	6	0	Translation	2	2	Translation	9	13
Role Play	0	0	Role Play	0	2	Role Play	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	1	Miscellaneous	4	2	Miscellaneous	3	5

often much quicker to give directions in Japanese than trying to explain them in English.

In schools B and C, directions were often given almost entirely in Japanese, usually by the HRT. However, in school A, directions were given mainly in English. At this school, rather than have the HRT give the directions, the ALT at this school chose to demonstrate the activity by himself first, so the students could watch and learn rather than rely on Japanese. This is illustrated in the situation below. After listening to a complex direction given in English by the ALT, all students were confused. One student requested help.

Student: *Sensei, tsūyaku.* [Teacher, translation please.]

HRT: *Chotto matte.* [Wait a second.]

ALT: No help, no help.

The ALT then proceeded to demonstrate the activity. After the demonstration and practicing, the students were able to understand what to do without any translation.

L1 was also often used for questions. Most questions were directed from the HRT toward the students, and were mostly simple questions, such as in the situations in school B and C below.

HRT: *Hai, kokomade shitsumon arimasuka?* [Are there any questions so far?]

HRT: *Seikai shita hito?* [Who got it correct?]

Responses were given in Japanese in all schools except school A. Typically, responses in L1 were given after a question was asked in L1 by the students. An example from school C is shown below:

Student: *Nihongo de ī?* [Is Japanese ok?]

HRT: *Īyo, Nihongo de. Katakana de. Kikoeta tōri kaitegoran.* [Yes, Japanese is ok. In Katakana. Write what you hear.]

In most cases, students asked the HRT in Japanese, and the HRT answered in Japanese as well. However, in some cases, there were questions and responses in L1 between the ALT and HRT as well, such as in the situation in school B below. The two teachers are talking about the gesture for “come here” in Japan.

HRT: *Kotchi desho, kotchi janaino?* [It’s this one, isn’t it?]

ALT: *Kore Nihon janai, kore Nihon yo.* [That’s not Japan, this is Japan.]

Such small exchanges in Japanese were rare, but were also seen in school C as well. From the viewpoint of teaching English, such question and response exchanges in Japanese may not be favorable. By seeing teachers communicate in English, students are able to see real-life communication conducted through English. In addition, HRTs can serve as role models for students. By hearing a Japanese person speak English, students may feel more motivated to learn English.

Most turns that contained motivational utterances were in English, but there were some in Japanese as well. All students in all schools were likely at the level to be able to understand simple praises such as “good job,” so most of the praises in Japanese were likely not used for the purpose to have the students be able to understand. Perhaps a praise in Japanese, such as “*subarashi*,” seemed more personal than a praise in English, as that is the language that students are used to receiving praises in. Thus, motivational phrases in Japanese could possibly serve a humanistic purpose.

Interestingly, although L1 was used for translation, it did not make up the majority of L1 use.

It was, however, significant in that it was not only used to translate certain words or phrases, but also directions as well. Through observations, it was discovered that there were three patterns as to when L1 was used for translation. The first pattern was when the HRT's translated an ALT's utterance only after the ALT requested that it be translated. The request was verbalized, or was seen through a gesture. An example of an explicit verbal request in school C is:

ALT: Last we have a music game. Music game. Music card game. I have five feeling cards. Tired, angry, sick *toka* [and such]. I'm going to give them randomly to five people. *Kore chotto zenbu tsūyaku*. [Translate all of this.] Randomly to five people. You will pass to the next person while you listen to music. When the music stops, the person holding the card has to say, I'm sleepy, I'm hungry...after you said it, you can sit down. Then we'll go again until everybody is sitting. Are you ok?

Here, the ALT realized that the students would not likely be able to understand her directions. Therefore, she made a request for the HRT to translate the directions of the activity they were to do. The HRT subsequently translated the directions.

The second pattern of translation occurred when the ALT translated their own utterances. Though all three ALTs were able to speak Japanese, this second pattern of translation only occurred in schools B and C. In the example below, the ALT in school C was teaching the students some gestures used in the United States. When one student asks about the middle finger, the ALT explains.

ALT: No, that's bad. This finger (pointing to middle finger), bad. *Mannaka no yubi wa dame*.

In this case, perhaps this translation was not necessary, as the students in the class were at a level that could understand the English word "bad". However, in this case the ALT translates a piece of information not for the sake of students being able to understand it, but for emphasis.

The third pattern of translation occurred when the HRT translated the ALT's utterance even where there was no request to do so. The reasons for this are not clear, but possible reasons are explained in the examples that follow. This type of translation only occurred in schools B and C. An example is shown below in school C, after a student gets a question wrong.

ALT: Close.

HRT: *Chikai yo.*

It is not apparent whether the student understood the ALT's utterance, but perhaps in this case, the HRT felt that it was necessary to translate so the student was able to understand that her answer was very close, so as not to discourage her. By being told that her answer was close in both Japanese and English, it may have alleviated discouragement, motivating her to try again.

Though L1 was not used directly for explanation in school A, it was used in school B and C. Explanation in L1 was used to explain concepts such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or culture. One session in school C had to do with gestures around the world. Here, both the ALT and HRT used Japanese to explain them. By explaining in Japanese, students were able to gain a greater understanding about gestures. Although it may have been possible to explain some things in English, it would have taken up much more time in the 40-minute class session. In the situation below, the ALT is trying to explain the thumbs down gesture in America versus Japan.

ALT: *Demo Amerika dewa sonnani warui imi dewanai. Tatoeba, eiga o miru to, omoshiroi to omou wa, ah, good movie, ī eiga.* (signals with thumbs up sign). *Demo omoshirokunai to omou wa* (signals with thumbs down sign). [This isn't so bad in America. For example, when you see a movie you think is good, we use the thumbs up sign. But when the movie isn't good, we use the thumbs down sign.]

Students: *Hē.* [I see.]

ALT: *Sō, Amerika de kono gesture zenzen daijōbu. Demo Nihon de ikenai.*
[Yes, so this gesture is fine to use in America, but not in Japan.]

After explaining in Japanese, the students genuinely seemed interested in the fact that the same gesture had different meanings in Japan and America. Though a lot of Japanese was used for this lesson, it seemed appropriate since the portion of the lesson was not about the English language itself. Had the lesson been about English language, such as teaching a new word or phrase, the L1 use that occurred may have been excessive. However, since the objective of the lesson was to make students aware of differences in gestures between the two countries, L1 use did not seem to have a negative effect. In fact, by using L1, the teachers were able to achieve one of MEXT's (2010) objectives, which is that students should learn the differences in the ways of living, customs, and events between Japan and foreign countries and become aware of various points of view.

Prompts were abundant in all schools, as much of the lessons were centered around

repetition. The ALT would say a word or phrase to be learned, prompting the students to repeat it. The ALT usually did not have to explicitly request the students to repeat the word or phrase; rather, it was natural for the students to repeat it without any sort of instruction, such as the situation below in school A.

ALT: I'm happy.

Students: I'm happy.

Naturally, since the words and phrases to be learned were in English, prompts were in English as well. However, when a student asked or answered a question, and the HRT called on them to speak, such prompts were mostly in Japanese, indicated by utterances such as “*Hai, dōzo.*” Of course, such utterances could have been in English, such as by saying, “Yes, ok” but it would likely not make much of a difference in terms of gaining exposure to English.

Based upon observation, the three classes seemed generally well-behaved, so teachers did not have to discipline them very much. As a result, discipline related turns in both languages were few. The majority of discipline was given by the HRTs, which is understandable, as they see the students everyday and disciplining students is one of their many duties.

Though not very often, L1 was also used for humorous purposes (included in the miscellaneous category). School A's ALT uses “nonsense” Japanese in the situation below, which made the students laugh.

ALT: Ok...*sa...sa...sa...sayonara ocha, ima ima, yasumimashōka.*

[b...b...b...bye tea, now, now, let's take a rest.]

<Student laughter>

ALT: I don't know!

<Student laughter>

ALT: I don't know Japanese, alright.

Here, the ALT is reading random Japanese words off the board, and inserting some random words as well. Of course, this makes no sense, making the students laugh. Interestingly, although the students may not have noticed, not only was his use of Japanese funny, by pretending he couldn't read Japanese, he demonstrated the meaning of the English phrase “I don't know.” Because ALTs only spend 40 minutes per week with each class, using Japanese for jokes can be a way to establish a good relationship with the students.

HRTs also used Japanese for humorous purposes as well. While ALT's use of L1 for

humorous purposes can be thought of as a way to establish rapport with the students, HRT's use of Japanese for jokes was simply a way to take a short break from the lesson.

5.2 Interviews

Through interviews it was found that both school policy and teachers' general beliefs about teaching were crucial factors that affected the use of L1 in their classrooms

School A gave most of the responsibility to the ALT. Though the ALT was given an outline of what was to be taught over the school year, the ALT was in charge of the actual lessons; from the planning to the teaching. So although his title, ALT, suggests that he is an assistant, he in fact, was the main teacher. In fact, the HRT himself stated that his role as the HRT is to assist the students, while the ALT's role is to lead. Since the ALT at School A had the biggest teaching role, L1 use was very limited compared to other schools. However, this was not merely because he had the bigger role, but was also influenced by his beliefs about the use of L1 as well, indicated by his opinion here: "Me speaking Japanese is of no benefit to kids, but if I calibrate my English down to their comprehension level, I can talk to them using English and they can get something out of it." Even the HRT mentions, "the ALT should speak only in English, but the HRT can speak a little bit of Japanese." In regard to when each of them use Japanese in the classroom, the ALT replied, "While I never explain anything using a Japanese sentence, I sometimes use a vocabulary word in a joke, or sing a snippet of a song," and the HRT replied that he uses Japanese for directions, such as explaining the rules of a game. True to his words, the ALT never used a full Japanese sentence in the four observations.

On the other hand, school B had one teacher that was assigned to plan all English classes at the school. This teacher, though Japanese, had experience abroad and was highly proficient in English and planned all the lessons for all grades. The ALT was given a lesson plan, and although he was able to make changes to it, generally followed the plan. The plans were highly specific and had the HRT functioning as the main teacher, with the ALT as the assistant. Hence, the HRT here had a much larger role than School A's HRT, which was not only apparent in the number of his utterances but also by the fact that he stood up at the front of the classroom with the ALT, rather than off to the side.

Though the ALT at school B used more Japanese than the ALT in school A, his use of L1 was limited. Most of his L1 use was limited to words or phrases, not full sentences. He himself states that he only uses it when it is necessary or there are problems. However, he also did state that Japanese could be a good resource, particularly for first graders to fourth graders because they need explanation in Japanese, as they do not have much experience with English. In addition, he indicated that Japanese could be a good time saver. The HRT at this school used the most

Japanese out of all the other HRTs at other schools. He stated, "I think it is most effective to only use English when teaching, but this may be detrimental to students who have trouble with English, making them resist the subject even more. It is the most taboo to create a feeling of dislike toward English during elementary school, so I believe it is better to use Japanese when appropriate." It was obvious that the HRT here cared a great deal if students understood the lesson and felt comfortable.

School A and C's policy were very similar in regard to teacher roles, in that they both gave larger roles to the ALTs. Though the ALT did have a larger role than the HRT and was in charge of planning and leading the lessons, the difference between the two teachers was not as apparent as the other schools. While school A had the ALT as the main teacher and school B had the HRT as the main teacher, school C seemed to have more of a shared teaching role between the two teachers, which was apparent in the number of the HRTs' utterances and how he stood at the front of the classroom at all times. In addition, the HRT in school C stated that during his training he was told to act the part of an exemplary learner, so that is what he strived to be during the lessons. However, this was not his only role. The ALT stated, "the role of the HRT is to help the students understand the lesson and give instructions in Japanese as well as hopefully ask the ALT questions that might be on the students' minds."

Interestingly, at this school the ALT here used the most Japanese compared to the ALTs in schools A and B. Full sentences in Japanese were not a rare occurrence. This was found to be strongly influenced by her personal beliefs about the use of L1. She stated, "Children have very short attention spans and the second they don't understand, their brains shut off and they start to daydream or cause disruptions in the class. I know that if I had foreign language classes when I was eight, nine, ten years old, etc., and it was taught completely in that language, I would probably just give up before even getting started. It's too much to expect from young children." In addition, she also stated, "I think that using Japanese can definitely be an advantage because you can go into more detail about things such as cultural differences and interesting things about the English language that you can't convey simply through gestures." Compared to other ALTs, she seemed to place a larger emphasis on intercultural understanding, which she believed would be difficult to convey entirely through English.

Though the HRT at school C mentioned that Japanese should not be used as much as possible, he also stated that it should be used to explain things in details to the students. He recalled an instance about a class dedicated to gestures (see p. 9), stating, "Japanese was used not only to explain the meaning of gestures, but also the differences in gestures around the world. By explaining this in Japanese, students may have been able to gain more interest."

Through conducting interviews, it was determined that both individual school policy and

teachers' personal beliefs were a factor in determining how much Japanese was used in their classrooms. Though language ability could have possibly been another factor, this was likely to not have had a large influence on teachers' language usage. For example, it may be true in some cases that an ALT did not use Japanese because he/she could not speak it. However, in the present study, all three ALTs were able to speak and understand Japanese at an intermediate level, so this was not a factor in determining their proportion of L1 use. In fact, although the ALT in school A used the least Japanese, he, in fact had been living in Japan for the longest time and perhaps have had the highest Japanese ability. However, due to his strong personal beliefs about not using L1, and the fact that the school placed him as the main teacher, he was able to conduct the lessons in his own style, using very little Japanese.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that L1 is being used to fulfill various purposes in team teaching practices in Japanese elementary schools. Regarding the purposes of L1 (research question one), it was used to fulfill all purposes, but in all three schools, it was most often used for directions. The answer to research question two ("What factors are related to the use of L1?") was discovered through interviews. It was revealed that both school policy and teacher beliefs greatly affect the use of L1; thus there was a large variation among schools in regard to how much L1 was being used by both HRTs and ALTs.

In regard to the third research question, "What are the implications of L1 use for elementary school English education, and how might that affect the later acquisition of English?", using too much L1 may potentially hinder the later acquisition of English because students may become too dependent on it, which will decrease their English output. Through observing classes, it was found that the majority of the time, students asked questions in Japanese, and HRTs answered questions in Japanese. Of course, having just started learning English, it is highly unlikely that students will be able to formulate questions in English. However, even teaching them simple phrases such as "I don't know", as the ALT in school A did, is a simple strategy to get them to use as much English as possible during class.

However, through observations, L1 use in the three schools did not seem to be excessive. Compared to school A, schools B and C used much more Japanese, but even then, English was used to teach the main objectives of the lesson. Japanese was used as support, mainly through giving directions and answering questions. Although students relied on Japanese to ask questions, they were able to carry out classroom activities in English, which involved them using the key phrases that were to be learned in the lesson. In this sense, L1 seemed to be of a resource, and not of a hindrance, to the students.

Nevertheless, it is true that L1 use still did occur in all three classes, particularly in School B and C. In addition, all three HRTs used more Japanese than English. While some may object to such use of L1, it is important to keep in mind the objectives that MEXT has laid out for elementary school English classes. First of all, the classes are not even referred to as English, but rather, *gaikokugo katsudō*, or foreign language activities. While it is true that the language the students are learning is English, the naming of the classes suggest that these classes are not the typical English classes one would expect in a junior high or high school setting. There is no teaching of grammar, rote memorization of vocabulary, or tests. Contrary to popular belief, the objective of these classes is not to teach the students English. In fact, MEXT does not mention anything of this sort. Their main objectives are: “To form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages” (MEXT, 2010, p.1). Students are not expected to become proficient in English; rather these classes at the elementary school level are designed to equip students with a mere foundation of the language, which will enable them to make a smoother transition into the English classes they will take in junior high and high school. In addition, much emphasis is placed on intercultural understanding (MEXT, 2010), so many of the lessons are centered around learning about the customs or culture of various countries. There are no rigid, strict objectives; for example, a certain level of English that students are expected to obtain through these classes. In this way, the use of L1 seemed to aid in achieving MEXT’s objectives, in particular, intercultural understanding. Explaining differences in culture without using Japanese may be very difficult for students to understand.

Another hidden goal of the current foreign language activity classes is to reduce the number of students that dislike English. It is well known in Japanese society that many junior high and high school students dislike English. For example, a survey conducted by Benesse (2009) indicated that approximately 60% of junior high school students dislike English and feel that they are bad at English. This is in stark contrast to another survey conducted by the same company, Benesse (2010), where HRTs stated that approximately 70% of their students enjoy foreign language (English) activity classes, or a survey conducted by MEXT (2006), where 73.9% of elementary school students answered that they liked English. In order to combat negativity toward English, it is important to foster positive attitudes toward English at the elementary school level so students will enter junior high school feeling confident and positive toward their upcoming English classes. And, in order to foster positive attitudes, L1 use can be beneficial. Forcing students to use only English, or forcing teachers to use only English may only create feelings of

negativity toward English, which may, in turn, potentially harm the later acquisition of English.

Although the present study was successful in discovering the purposes of L1 use, factors that affect its use, and implications of L1 use, there are a number of limitations that need to be addressed. This study only looked at three different schools, so it may be difficult to generalize how L1 is being used in team teaching practices in elementary schools across the country. Nonetheless, looking at this study, uses of L1 differed considerably even across three schools. Thus, it is likely that L1 use will differ across schools throughout Japan depending on each school's policy and teacher beliefs because at present, MEXT has not issued any strict recommendations for how much L1 should or should not be used in elementary school classes.

Furthermore, in some of the classroom sessions, while the students were doing an activity, the HRT went around the classroom and talked to individual students in Japanese, answering questions or giving instructions about how to conduct the activity. The researcher was not able to transcribe these one-on-one interactions, as she did not want to be intrusive and follow the HRT around. Most of these interactions were in Japanese, so potential uses of L1 could have been missed. In addition, although the researcher was able to transcribe most turn, there were a few instances where the researcher was not able to hear the utterances, so they had to be noted as inaudible in the transcriptions. Although such cases were few, there potentially could have been interesting L1 use that was not heard.

Although the present study did not include interviews with students, it would be highly valuable for future studies to include this. It would be interesting to take a look at the use of L1 from the view of students, since they are ultimately affected by its use. In addition, the study was only able to look at each class over a three-month period. Longer scale studies will be valuable in order to assess not only students' progression, but also how the use of L1 may change over time.

This study was highly valuable because past studies have not explored the use of L1 in detail in English classes at Japanese elementary schools, a context where L1 use is very likely to occur. The results of this study suggest that in the case of elementary schools in Japan, L1 can be a useful resource in achieving MEXT's goals, which are to familiarize students with foreign languages. Whether it would be effective in junior high or high schools, or whether it actually aids in acquiring English itself, however, is another issue. In the future, if MEXT alters its goals to include language acquisition, which many people wrongly assume is already one of its goals, L1 use may have to be looked into further.

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