

**From Language Policy to Pedagogic Practice:
Elementary School English Education in Japan**

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Abstract

Since April 2011, all public elementary schools in Japan now officially include in their proscribed curriculum for fifth and sixth grade students a Course of Study entitled ‘Foreign Language Activities’ (FLA). The introduction of FLA can be seen as part of the wider international move towards making English as a foreign language a compulsory subject in state provided primary education. This two-year longitudinal ethnographic study examines how classroom implementation of this new Course of Study is impacted by an expansive circle of constantly interacting variables including teacher education, teaching materials, school curriculum, use of native speaker assistant language teachers (ALT), resource allocation, and state mandated language-in-education planning. The research methodology involved a combination of ethnography and critical discourse analysis in order to examine the discursive, contextual, and sociocultural factors that influence language-in-education policy implementation in Japan and how these factors manifest themselves in elementary school classrooms. Data were collected from four public elementary schools in northern Japan from April 2011 to March 2013 using participant observation, interviews, and publically available documents. The findings of this study reveal that the introduction of elementary school English represents a continuation of previous iterations of educational policy that have positioned English as an essential linguistic resource for Japan’s participation in the global economy. My findings also reveal that focusing solely on pedagogical practices in the elementary school classrooms obscures the *a priori* decisions concerning teacher training, ALT provision, mandated instructional time, and lack of formal assessment that critically affect the implementation of FLA. The study also makes a number of methodological contributions to undertaking classroom-based ethnographies in Japan. It addresses under theorized issues of translation in the use of primary Japanese language interview data, and also highlights the importance of ‘tacit knowledge’ in conducting prolonged fieldwork in a foreign location.

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Glossary of Acronyms

ALT:	Assistant Language Teacher
BOE:	Board of Education
CDA:	Critical Discourse Analysis
CLT:	Communicative Language Teaching
EES:	English in Elementary School
EFL:	English as Foreign Language
FLA:	Foreign Language Activities
HRT:	Homeroom Teacher
JET:	Japan Exchange and Teaching Program
JTE:	Japanese Teacher of English
L1:	First Language
L2:	Second Language
LPP:	Language Planning and Policy
MEXT:	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Sports, and Technology
SES:	Socio-Economic Status
TEFL:	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TEYL:	Teaching English to Young Learners

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

This thesis details a two-year longitudinal ethnographic study of the implementation of compulsory English education in state elementary schools in Japan. Specifically, it focuses on how the new curricular policy was implemented in fifth and sixth grade classrooms in four case study schools in northern Japan and examines the different issues that affected this process. This introductory chapter describes the historical, social, and contextual background within which this research is situated, outlines the motivations for this study, and provides the reader with an overview of the dissertation chapters.

1.1 Background to the study

Since April 2011, all public elementary schools in Japan now officially include in their proscribed curriculum for fifth and sixth grade students a Course of Study entitled ‘Foreign Language Activities’ (FLA)¹. This is best understood as official policy catching up with actual practice, as prior to 2011 more than 95% of public schools already had some form of foreign language education in place (MEXT², 2009a).

The introduction of FLA can be seen as part of the wider international move towards making English as a foreign language a compulsory subject in state provided primary education. Johnstone has called this development “possibly the world’s biggest policy development in education” (2009: 33). In introducing FLA, Japan is following an established trend that has seen English introduced at an increasingly younger age in countries around the world (Rixon, 2013) (Table 1).

¹ The official title of the course as stipulated by the Japanese Ministry of Education is 外国語活動 (*gaikokugo katsudo*), whose official English language translation is *Foreign Language Activities*. In practice the subject is nearly universally referred to as 英語 (*eigo*), ‘English’. I will refer to the subject as both FLA and English depending on the context. However, the distinction between the two is important and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

² MEXT is the commonly used abbreviation for the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. I will use this abbreviation throughout the thesis.

Starting age of compulsory English language learning					
5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years
France Netherlands	Austria Bangladesh Estonia Sweden Croatia Italy Poland	Finland	Belgium Bulgaria China Greece Korea Taiwan	Argentina Lithuania Romania	Brazil Japan Turkey Hungary

Table 1: The starting age of English language learning in select countries (Rixon, 2013)

These official educational policy directives have been accompanied by a wide-ranging expansion of educational and commercial initiatives that both meet and incite this demand for early English education. In Japan in 2014, private English education accounted for revenues of ¥8.1 billion (Yano Research Institute, 2015). This is nearly twice the total national educational budget of ¥4.1 billion (MEXT, 2015c).

Such spending by students and parents can be seen as a market-led recognition of the increased importance of English, particularly as a requisite for entry into higher educational institutions and future employment. Indeed, as Terasawa (2017) has noted, these trends are exacerbating social inequality within Japan between those who can and can't afford private English language education. Nor are these concerns unique to Japan. Globally, non-native speakers equate proficiency in English with career and social mobility (Song, 2011). In 2012 the global market for teaching English as a foreign language was estimated to be \$63.4 billion (GSV Education, 2012).

1.2 The economic importance of English education

Given both the international and national prominence accorded to English language proficiency, the Japanese Ministry of Education has continuously emphasized the central role of English in state education. This can be seen in the cumulative policy changes of the last three decades whereby English has seen a steady increase in total instructional hours, a shift from a teaching

methodology that prioritized grammar-translation to one that emphasizes oral communicative skills, and the planned introduction of English as a full academic subject in elementary school from 2020. As in many countries (Garton *et al.*, 2011) these language policy changes in Japan have originated with the state and implementation has followed a top-down model. In this model of educational change, the central government initiates new curricular visions and goals, usually through the education ministry. These visions and goals are then translated into curricular guidelines and cohere into methods of implementation such as textbooks, assessment materials, teacher education, etc. As is the case with the introduction of English education in Japanese elementary schools, such policy initiatives are intended to demarcate a relatively homogenous approach to what is taught and learned in classrooms; teachers are expected to implement them with minimal variation (Cave, 2007).

However, as Szulc-Kurpaska (1996) noted, as part of the global expansion in teaching English to young learners (TEYL), ministries of education around the world are implementing English language education policies that are perceived, rather than proven, to work. Seemingly little consideration is given to the subsequent consequences that follow, for both teachers and students, from the top-down introduction of these state-led initiatives.

1.3 Language policy implementation and the educational context

Furthermore, our understanding of these policy consequences is hampered by a lack of sustained research examining the complex process of language policy implementation within educational contexts. This is particularly the case for young learners of English where, as Pinter (2011) notes, “there is much less research targeting foreign language contexts” (p.146). Similarly, Wilden and Prosch (2017) highlight the “urgent need to increasingly investigate actual classroom practices in early FL [foreign language] education” (p.19). In particular, prominence needs to be given to the interaction between context and practice, an ongoing process that continuously configures and reconfigures how language education policies are interpreted, negotiated, and ultimately “(re)constructed in the process of implementation” (Menken & Garcia, 2010: 1). Even in Japan, with its highly centralized educational system, formalized policy process and emphasis on

pedagogical constancy, this thesis will detail how policy implementation in the classroom is determined by the dynamic and unstructured interpretation of individual teachers.

In spite of this individual dynamism, however, most language policy research remains national in scope, focusing on top-down policies and discursively analyzing written policy statements (Ricento, 2009; Spolsky, 2004; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Such approaches elide the essential contribution of classroom practitioners (Mecken & Garcia, 2010), and leave under researched questions of agency and local context.

A further criticism of research into teaching English to young learners at the primary level is the rather narrow focus on English learning *per se* (Sayer & Ban, 2014; Sundqvist & Sylven, 2014; Chik & Besser, 2011). In many primary schools world wide the majority of teachers are ‘generalist’ teachers who teach a broad variety of subjects (Copland & Garton, 2014). Focusing solely on English obscures the influence of these other curricular subjects on the foreign language classroom, particularly in relation to teachers’ professional development. In Japan the FLA subject, although compulsory, is not deemed an academic subject in the same way Japanese, Maths or Social Studies are. Rather it comes under the domain of ‘general integrated studies’, akin to art and music, and accordingly is limited to a total teaching time of 35 hours for each grade during one full school year (see Table 2).

Table 2: Annual hours of instruction per subject (MEXT, 2011a).

Subject	5th Grade	6th Grade
Japanese	175	175
Social Studies	100	105
Maths	175	175
Science	105	105
Music	50	50
Arts and Crafts	50	50
Home Economics	60	55
P.E.	90	90
Foreign Language Activities	35	35

There is a need therefore to examine the wider educational context in which the curriculum is enacted. To give one example of this effect of context on policy: in Hokkaido prefecture, in northern Japan where I undertook this study, all public elementary schools are compelled by the prefectural Board of Education to participate in the annual 全国が学力調査 (*zenkoku gakuryoka chousa*: ‘National Assessment of Academic Ability’) undertaken by the Ministry of Education. These tests assess 6th grade students' knowledge of Maths and Japanese³. Based on these results, schools, administrative areas, and prefectures are all evaluated and ranked. Hokkaido has consistently placed at the bottom of the national prefectural tables in both subjects. This has led to demands, particularly from parents, for steps to improve their children's scores (Okubo, 2014), the implication being that both the problem and solution are found in the school system. In response, the Hokkaido prefectural Board of Education has initiated a series of classroom policies and professional teacher development programs to try and improve scores in the test.

All this in turn has a number of implications for the teaching of FLA. Foremost is the importance attached to Japanese and Maths within the overall curriculum. FLA, as a non-academic, not formally assessed subject, is not integral to students' (and schools') academic standing, and thus is not prioritized by schools, teachers, students, and parents. In addition, the emphasis placed on teacher's professional development in teaching Japanese and Maths by the Hokkaido Board of Education, crowds out what little time there is available for skills training in teaching as a foreign language to young learners. Finally, the presence of native speaking assistant language teachers (ALTs⁴) in the majority of English lessons means that available financial resources are allocated to them (in the form of salaries), rather than the homeroom teacher (in the form of in-service professional development courses).

³ Science is also assessed but only once every three years.

⁴ For the purpose of this dissertation I will use the term ‘ALT’ to refer to a native, or inner circle (Kachru, 1985) speaker of English who is hired to assist in teaching in English in elementary schools. All of the ALTs covered by this research correspond to this description. However, Copland *et al.* (2016) and Yanase (2016) have pointed out that the term ALT should not be used as shorthand for ‘native speaker’. Yanase, a Japanese first language speaker, was recruited as an ALT because her bilingual and bicultural skills were thought better suited for teaching English in elementary school than a ‘native speaker’ ALT.

1.4 Motivations for this research

Such contextual issues highlight the disparity I find between accounts in the literature and my own professional and personal experiences, both as a former ALT at various public elementary schools, and as the husband of a native-Japanese elementary school teacher. There is, to my mind, a tendency in existing accounts (Honna & Takeshita, 2014; Hashimoto, 2011; Inoi, 2009; Izumi & Christianson, 2008; Kusumoto, 2008; Butler, 2007; 2004; Carreira, 2006) to focus on isolated 'snapshots' of various issues surrounding elementary school English education in Japan. What has been lacking is a detailed incorporation of context at both the macro (national) and micro (school) levels, along with the inclusion of broader, non-pedagogical factors that implicitly determine much of what is taught in FLA classes, how it is taught, and by whom.

A related issue is the lack of longitudinal research on the topic (Pinter, 2011). To date there has been no long-term, holistic study undertaken of Japanese elementary school English education that examines classroom practice in relation to an expansive circle of constantly interacting variables such as teacher education, teaching materials, school curriculum, use of native speaker ALTs, resource allocation, and state mandated language-in-education planning.

Thus, from a research perspective the introduction of the FLA Course of Study in 2011 offered a rare opportunity to examine both the discursive formulation of a new language in education policy, and to analyze how it is subsequently implemented in schools and classrooms. Interwoven throughout this dissertation is an emphasis on educational language policy as a process continuously mediated by context, something that is subjectively 'done' rather than objectively 'is' (Johnson & Freeman, 2010).

To uncover this 'policy as process' (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012) involved a combination of ethnography and discourse analysis in order to account for what Wodak and Savski (2018) term the 'paradox' at the center of mandated language policy; the discursive formulations that structure its actuality and the subjective interpretations of the agents who enact it. In enacting this combined approach, I wanted to go beyond merely analyzing policy 'on paper' (Barakos, 2016) and call attention to the different influences of 'agents, levels and processes' (Ricento & Hornberger 1996:

408), as well as depicting the experiences of those involved (McCarty 2014; Johnson 2009). In doing this I am following Johnson's (2011) contention that:

“The combination of ethnography and CDA provides a foundation for understanding how particular policies are recontextualized in particular contexts, how such recontextualization is related to more widely circulating policy text and discourse, and what this means for language policy agents” (2011: 267).

This thesis is therefore primarily interpretative rather than prescriptive; it concerns itself with explaining what is rather than succumbing to the hubristic temptation to prescribe what should be. As a native English speaker and a professional TEFL educator with over two decades of teaching experience in Japan, my classroom observations in the schools often provoked an inward response of “No, no, you should be doing this...”. Yet, to concentrate solely on how I perceived problems and proffer possible solutions would be to miss the focus of the research. In particular, I wanted to detail the lived professional experiences of the Japanese elementary school teachers and gain some emphatic understanding of how they came to terms with the new FLA curriculum. Hopefully, this research can contribute to our understanding of the challenges faced by generalist teachers in primary schools where English is only one of many educational goals they must successfully impart to their students.

1.5 Research Questions

To undertake this research, the following three research questions were proposed:

- 1: How is the new Foreign Language Activities course contextually situated within the prevalent language policy discourses surrounding English language education in Japan?
- 2: Within this discursive context, how is the new FLA course interpreted and implemented in public elementary schools?

3: What are the main factors impacting upon the implementation of the FLA policy?

1.6 Structure of the thesis

In order to adequately understand “how particular policies are recontextualized in particular contexts” (Johnson, *ibid*) this thesis will utilize a somewhat unorthodox approach that interweaves socio-cultural context, official language policy and classroom practice in order to illuminate the complexity of FLA in Japan. Rather than focus solely on a single specific issue related to the topic (for example: language policy discourse; textbook methodology; or in-service teacher education), this research adopts a necessarily broad approach. I do this in order to discern the principal factors determining FLA, how these factors interact, and what their outcomes are in terms of classroom teaching and learning. Consequently, the resulting thesis encompasses a broad range of themes. Such unorthodoxy is reflected in the structure of the thesis.

The following two chapters are an extended literature review examining the twin foci of this study: early English language education and language policy in education. To position primary foreign language education in Japan within the wider international context, Chapter 2 surveys the recent global expansion of teaching English to young learners. It examines some of the forces driving this expansion, particularly the increasing economic importance accorded to English language ability by national governments. It also discusses some of the common contentious issues surrounding early English language education, including starting age, teacher training, equity of provision, and the lack of clear criteria for assessing the success or otherwise of policy implementation. The chapter highlights both commonalities and differences between Japan and other countries, and demonstrates how the general term ‘teaching English to young learners’ tends to obscure the marked differences between countries.

The focus of Chapter 3 is on language policy and its implementation through state mandated formal education. The chapter begins with a historical explanation of the theoretical development of language policy and planning. In particular, I highlight Kaplan and Baldauf’s (2005; 1997) key contribution in proposing language-in-education planning as an effective theoretical approach for

investigating the teaching of languages in formal education. Particularly relevant to this study is the recent emergence of the ‘ethnography of language policy’ (Johnson, 2011: 2009) as a means of foregrounding the importance of teacher agency and context in policy implementation. I then turn my attention to Japan and discuss the various cultural and sociolinguistic factors that have shaped official English language education policy. Finally, I review the policy developments leading up to the introduction of FLA in Japanese elementary schools and detail some of the issues surrounding its implementation.

Chapter 4 draws upon the issues discussed in the literature review to explain and justify my research methodology. My foregrounding of ‘context’ as one of the key issues in this study is reflected in the interpretative, social-constructivist approach I take. Such an approach draws upon a well-established, qualitative based set of methodologies, principally involving ethnographic and discourse analytical approaches. The chapter provides a detailed description of the research design and methodological procedures for participant selection, data collection and analysis. In addition, factors concerning field sites, access, translation, and ethical issues are also elucidated.

In chapter 5 my focus is on the formulation of official language policy for teaching English in Japanese elementary schools. This involves a discourse analysis of the official Course of Study document produced by MEXT in order to examine how FLA is discursively situated within the wider theme of ‘English education’. In doing this I demonstrate how discursive articulations of policy affect pedagogical interpretations in the elementary school classroom.

Chapter 6 focuses on how textual policy discourses are enacted in classrooms and represents the first stage of data analysis. Drawing principally upon a detailed review of my field notes, I provide a series of ‘interpretive synecdoches’ (Richards, 2011) or ‘narrative vignettes’ (Saldana, 2011) in order to exemplify a ‘typical day’ in each of the four case study schools. These vignettes have a number of explanatory advantages: they provide the reader with the specific contextual information necessary to understand the ‘workings’ of elementary schools in Japan; they enable broad comparisons and contrasts to be made between schools; and they clearly illustrate how specific contexts gave rise to specific interpretations of the Course of Study, both within the same school and between the different schools.

Following on from the previous section, chapter 7 is concerned with a detailed analysis of the primary data I accumulated from my classroom observations over the two-year research period. Nine analytical themes were generated from a rigorous interpretative review of the data corpus. In developing these themes, I draw upon Erikson's (1986) concept of analytical induction whereby the elicited themes were the result of both systematic, inductive data analysis, and the application of both explicit and tacit knowledge acquired during the fieldwork.

Chapter 8 draws upon the concept of 'the ethnography of language policy' (Johnson, 2011) to combine the seemingly diverse findings from the previous three chapters. To effectively reconcile the discursive analysis of official language policy with the analytical themes generated from my field work, I employed the systematic framework provided by Kaplan and Baldauf (2005; 1997) for analyzing language-in-education policy. Using this framework highlighted the interrelated issues that impact on classroom teaching and learning. These include teachers' attitudes towards the FLA class, teacher's language proficiency, teacher and ALT roles and responsibilities, student motivation, students' demographic backgrounds, school ethos, classroom management, and curriculum priorities. In particular, using the methodical structure of Kaplan and Baldauf's framework highlights how policy implementation is a fluid process, susceptible to many influences that elide policy-makers discursive attempts at standardized implementation.

Chapter 9 concludes with a summation of the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions made by this research. The chapter also suggests implications that can be drawn from the findings and suggests areas for further research. Finally, it addresses some limitations of the current study.

1.7 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is that it attempts to fill the gap in the literature pertaining to detailed, context specific accounts of the introduction of mandatory English language education in Japanese elementary schools. Although a substantial body of research has examined various aspects of early English language learning in different countries and contexts around the world (Butler, 2015; Enever, 2015; Copland *et al.*, 2014; Rixon, 2013; Garton, *et al.*, 2011; Pinter, 2011) there have been

very few longitudinal ethnographic accounts of policy implementation, particularly in the foreign language classroom at the primary level (Fitzpatrick, 2011). In addition, the critical examination of the interplay of both macro- and micro-level contexts in implementing educational policy (Menken & Garcia, 2010) has yet to be fully explored. Most of the studies examining the implementation of the new Course of Study in Japan have been small-scale studies investigating specific instances of teacher pedagogy (Butler, 2015), instructional approaches (Butler and Inoi, 2005), learner behavior (Zein, 2016), student motivation (Machida and Walsh, 2015), and issues surrounding team-teaching with ‘native speaker’ assistant language teachers (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2013). There have been few holistic approaches that incorporate the discursive, contextual, and sociocultural factors that influence language-in-education policy implementation and how these factors manifest themselves in elementary school classrooms.

In highlighting this gap this thesis attempts to go some way towards filling it by examining in detail the enacted classroom practices in four public elementary schools in northern Japan using a combination of critical discourse analysis and ethnographic qualitative research (Bouchard, 2017; Barakos, 2016; Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Johnson, 2011). The study provides a much needed (Enever, 2016) ‘rich description’ of how state educational policy for primary foreign language learning is enacted in public schools. Through a comprehensive qualitative approach over a two-year period it foregrounds the often ‘hidden’ or ‘under researched’ structural, discursive, and individual variables that impact on policy implementation.

Chapter 2: Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners

2.1 Introduction

The global expansion in teaching English to young learners (TEYL) over the past twenty years represents what Garton *et al.* (2011; echoing Johnstone, 2009) describe as one of the world's largest educational policy developments. Rich (2014) has termed it a “global phenomenon”, an apt description given that many countries view English as a core skill, an essential component of school and university curricula that aim to prepare students for life and work in a globalised world (Graddol, 2008). “English,” write Tan and Rudby (2008), “is seen as an instrument of modernization, economic progress and social, educational and occupational success” facilitating “social mobility and economic power” for the individual (2008: 5) and adding value in a “highly competitive and flexible job market” (Gray, 2010: 16).

International organizations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Health Organization use English as their working language (Tan & Rudby, 2008; Modiano, 2001; McKay, 1992). More and more multinational companies use English as their in-house lingua franca irrespective of their country of origin; in Japan, for example, companies such as Rakuten, Honda, Uniqlo, and Bridgestone have all made English their official corporate language (“Honda makes English official”, 2015).

In conjunction with these developments there is often a less overtly mercantilist desire by governments to increase general communications skills and to promote the concept of global citizenry and intercultural sensitivity (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). Underlying this aim is the notion

that learning a foreign language also enables students to gain greater sensitivity and knowledge of other nations and cultures.

However, the last two decades have also shown that the rapid expansion of TEYL provision has often been justified on political rather than pedagogical grounds. This is particularly the case with the introduction of compulsory English as a foreign language in the state primary school sector. Politically, the introduction of TEYL can be seen as a proactive measure taken by governments to improve their citizens' overall English language proficiency. From a pedagogical point of view however, the results to date are more mixed. Research in different countries and contexts (Bland, 2015; Rixon 2015; Rich 2014; Garton *et al.* 2011; Enever *et al.*, 2009; Johnstone, 2009; Nikolov, 2009) has consistently shown that the aspirational rhetoric of educational policy does not necessarily translate into effective classroom pedagogy. Enever *et al.* (2009), in a review of the introduction of TEYL in twenty-six countries, concluded that worldwide educational policy makers had yet to

“clarify the priorities for formulating effective language policies, for delivering appropriate programs of implementation, and for meeting the very real challenge of ensuring that policy is effectively and sustainably implemented within the daily practice of classrooms” (2009: 5).

This chapter will set out to examine some of these issues⁵. It will begin with an overview of the reasons for the emergence of TEYL as a global phenomenon and the resulting concerns about the disparities in learning opportunities arising from families' socio-economic status, particularly given the increased influence of the private sector on early English language learning. This will be followed by an examination of the widespread belief that for learning English as a foreign language “earlier is better”, and the ongoing debate as to whether there is an ‘optimal age’ (Bland, 2015) for commencing the acquisition of a foreign language. Following this there will be a review of the

⁵ Space does not permit a full review of all the factors affecting the teaching of English to young learners, but comprehensive overviews can be found in Cameron, 2003; Enever *et al.* 2009, Pinter 2011; and Bland 2015. In addition, the global surveys undertaken by the British Council provide an excellent precis of the issues surrounding the implementation of early English language learning in over 140 countries. See Garton *et al.* 2011; Emery, 2012; and Rixon 2013.

research to date on TEYL in various countries and contexts, and a number of common issues will be addressed, including teacher training, equity of provision, and policy implementation.

2.2 The global expansion in early English education

Many commentators (Enever, 2016; Murphy, 2014; Emery, 2012; Garton *et al.*, 2011) have described the rise in compulsory TEYL provision as policy responses by nation states to both international and domestic pressure. Internationally, the pervasiveness of global ranking scales of academic ability such as the PISA test has meant that national educational policy makers are increasingly assessed according to international criteria rather than just domestic ones (Breakspear, 2012). This is particularly true of English where the widespread international use of common commercial assessments such as IELTS, TOEFL, BULATS, and the Cambridge English Language Exams, have meant that countries' apparent proficiency in English can be crudely ranked and compared according to how their citizens score in these tests (Jenkins and Leung, 2014). Given the importance of English to the global economy, such scales can also be taken as a ranking of nation's linguistic capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Hence, the lowering of the age at which students first commence learning the English language can be thus seen as one way by which governments attempt to add to their nation's linguistic capital.

Within countries, as Rich (2014) notes, domestic pressure is increasingly exerted by parents cognizant of the importance of English to their children's future and the perceived social and economical benefits that accrue from learning the language. Enever (2007: 215) terms this 'parentocracy', describing it as significant force behind the implementation of early foreign language learning in Europe. Such parental pressure has manifested itself in various guises. Park (2009) describes how in Korea, despite the lack of scientific validation, prenatal English education has "become big business" (2009: 98). In the past decade Chinese students have become the largest market for both short and long-term language courses in English speaking countries around the world (Matthews, 2016). In Japan, expenditure on the private English sector is estimated to be ¥8.1 billion, almost twice the entire educational budget of the state (Yano Research Institute, 2015).

2.2.1 Socio-economic status and access to early English education

These examples highlight the considerable effort and financial resources parents expend to have their children successfully learn English. However, such ‘parentocracy’ may also be exacerbating the increased inequality in educational opportunities afforded to students and their families depending on their socio-economic status (SES). Butler (2014), in her examination of parental factors affecting early language learners of English in China, found that socio-economic class had a significant affect on students’ English language proficiency. Parents with higher SES exhibited behaviours both direct (such as providing financial assistance for their children to learn English at private institutions), and indirect (such as the home literacy environment) that impacted on their children’s English proficiency. In Korea the divide between access to private English language education is seen as contributing to social inequality and the economic disparity between the “haves and have-nots” (Garton, 2013; Lee *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, Nikolov (2009) in her comparative study in Hungary of young learners studying either English or German as a foreign language, found that language outcomes were correlated with parents’ SES; the higher the level of parent’s ultimate educational attainment, the higher their children’s proficiency in both languages.

Butler (2013; 2007; 2005) argues that the introduction of compulsory English classes in the primary school curriculum is an attempt by governments to close this inequality gap. As previously noted, English language ability is now regarded as a core skill (Graddol, 2008) and hence increasingly a core subject in many countries primary school curriculum. This introduction of compulsory English language learning an earlier age is an attempt by policy makers to both democratise provision and develop this core skill. Yet on both counts the results have been mixed. Inequality still persists, particularly in access to private sector education (see, for example: Korea: Lee *et al.*, 2010; Vietnam: Nguyen, 2011; China: Hu, 2007; Indonesia: Zein, 2016; Turkey: Kirkgoz, 2009; Poland: Enever, 2007); while lowering of the age of instruction, the ‘optimal age’ debate (Enever, 2016), is still very much unresolved.

2.3 The Age Factor

Many of the policy developments concerning the introduction of TEYL have been premised on the belief that ‘earlier is better’, that children, more so than adults, acquire a second language ‘easier’ (Pinter, 2011). The assumption that “Children learn [languages] better at an earlier age” (Moon, 2006), has a seductive appeal to policy makers. Such an assumption is often premised on the Critical Period Hypothesis (Pinter, 2011), which proposes that “there is a limited developmental period during which it is possible to acquire a language, be it L1 or L2, to normal, native-like levels” (Birdsong, 1999:1)⁶.

Enever (2016) has proposed three factors that may account for the importance attached to the onset age of instruction. The first is the research evidence accumulated from studies of bilingualism and immersion schooling (Genesse, 2006; Dobson, Murillo & Johnstone, 2010) which demonstrate that two (or more) languages can be successfully acquired in childhood. However, assuming that such success can be replicated in the ordinary foreign language classroom is problematic as factors such as the quantity and quality of second language input are vastly different.

The second impetus comes from the expanding number of neuroscience studies that suggest (though not conclusively prove) that in learning languages children’s brains function differently from the adult brain (Goswami, 2004). Again, the majority of the research to date (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999; Wattendorf *et al.*, 2014) has focused on bilingual children. While there is evidence to suggest that “the early learning of two languages has a pervasive effect on a neuronal network that is presumed to regulate language controls in bilinguals at different processing levels” (Wattendorf *et al.* 2014: 61), the relevance to the more formal instructional context of the primary foreign-language classroom has yet to be established⁷.

The third factor Enever proposes is the pervasive discourse of the need for English fluency as an essential skill where by politicians have consistently argued for “the importance of a

⁶ Other researchers have suggested that different areas of language (phonology, syntax, lexicon, etc.) have different critical ages associated with them (for discussion see, for example, Singleton & Ryan 2004; Singleton 2005). Such multiplicity implies a multiplicity of cognitive mechanisms, a plausible suggestion, but one which undermines the notion of a unitary critical period. See also Munoz & Singleton, 2011.

⁷ A further point to note is that even within childhood bilingual studies there is much variation in the combination of languages examined, which in turn influences the results obtained. Languages sharing a common linguistic ancestry such as English and French have been found to provide more robust evidence of increased neural activity in children (Lindgren & Munoz, 2013); whereas the evidence from studies of more linguistically ‘distant’ languages such as English and Japanese has been much more tentative (Nakamura *et al.* 2005). Interestingly, such inconclusiveness has also been found in studies of Japanese-Chinese bilinguals where the findings suggest that phonological differences mask any supposed gains that such bilinguals gain from a similar logographic based orthography (Kayamoto, 2002).

plurilingual citizenry equipped to operate in a global marketplace” (Enever, 2016: 17). The implication being that achieving such fluency by adulthood requires that children start learning languages early.

2.3.1 Age and ultimate attainment

Despite the positive findings from bilingual and immersion contexts, the research to date on formal second language instruction in primary school is considerably more mixed. With regard to ultimate attainment, studies have consistently shown that older learners outperform younger learners on tests of ultimate attainment (Munoz and Singleton, 2011). This advantage seems to be especially high for aspects of second language that are dependent on rule acquisition, i.e. morphology, syntax, lexis, and metalinguistic ability (Pinter, 2011). Munoz (2008) also posits that the age at which learners are tested may influence attainment scores. Older learners’ greater cognitive maturity may have an impact on test-taking skills, “since older learners’ superior cognitive development helps them achieve a better understanding of the task in comparison with younger learners” (Munoz, 2008: 588).

A series of studies conducted in Europe of children learning foreign languages in primary school found that, given the same duration of instruction, late starters consistently acquired the L2 at a rate faster than early starters (e.g. Pfenninger and Singleton, 2017; Cenoz 2002, 2003). Munoz (2008) found that in comparison to the explicit teaching processes used in the older learners’ classrooms, “young learners seem to favour and to be favoured by implicit learning. Implicit learning improves with practice but occurs slowly and requires massive amounts of exposure” (p.32)⁸. Singleton and Ryan (2004) have calculated that comparing the amount of exposure in naturalistic and formal language learning contexts, it would take approximately 18 years for foreign language learners to catch up with older beginners, if it all. Larson-Hall (2008) has stated that in a typical limited-input foreign language setting, an early start does not yield the same type of long-term advantage as it does in a naturalistic language learning setting.

⁸ Drawing on DeKeyser’s (2008) formulation, implicit learning in a foreign language context can be best understood as the process whereby children draw on Chomsky’s concept of Universal Grammar and language-specific learning mechanisms to understand the structure and use of the L2, all of which occurs outside of their conscious awareness. In contrast, DeKeyser posits that adults invariably make use of some explicit learning to analyze the structure and use of the L2 and how it differs from their L1. For a fuller discussion, see DeKeyser, 2008; and Ellis, 2005.

2.3.2 Potential benefits of an early start to English education

If starting age in of itself does not guarantee an advantage in cumulative L2 acquisition, what then are the benefits accruing from an early beginning? Johnstone (2009), in a helpful overview of accumulated research findings, proposes that:

“Overall, an advantage to an early start is that in principle at least it allows young beginners to exploit such advantages as they possess, but in addition, as they become older, to make use of the advantages older learners possess. So, over time, both sets of advantages are available to those making the early start, whereas only the second set of advantages is available to those beginning earlier” (2009: 34).

More specifically, Johnstone (2009) points out that young children seem to acquire relatively easily the phonological features of a second language such as pronunciation, intonation and accent. In addition, young children have less likely to be ‘language anxious’ (2009: 34) and thus willing to take risks and tolerate ambiguity in their attempts to convey meaning. In their longitudinal study of foreign language learning in the upper stage of primary English schools, Cable *et al.* (2012) found that

“[Foreign] languages were seen as making a substantial contribution to the development of children’s personal and social learning, and to the development of their cultural understanding, communication skills, literacy skills, knowledge about language and attitudes to learning” (2012: 367).

Similarly, a three-year longitudinal study by Taylor and Lafayette (2010) of American children in grades 3 to 5 in Louisiana state elementary schools learning French and Spanish found an increase in students’ cross-curricular academic achievement. Students learning a foreign language

significantly outperformed their peers who did not study a foreign language in tests for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Encouraging as these studies are, Pinter (2011) warns that not enough is known in detail about the actual processes of foreign language learning at different stages of childhood and what can students can reasonably be expected to achieve. In addition, the varying contexts in which these studies were carried out make it extremely difficult to generalize from these results (Murphy, 2015). Many of the benefits of are not solely due to learning a foreign language at an earlier age; the studies cited above differed in terms of classroom exposure to the foreign language, teacher language proficiency, and opportunities for extra-curricular language learning. In fact, Pinter (2011) suggests that the converse situation is more apposite:

“a common experience of foreign language programmes in many countries is that children are not exposed to the target language sufficiently to learn to participate in meaningful communication. They may learn songs and rhymes, some basic vocabulary and carefully rehearsed dialogues, but they rarely progress further, and typically they are unable to express their own meanings spontaneously” (p.91).

2.4 Issues with teacher’s professional development

If there is a lack of a definitive conclusion as to whether starting earlier results in greater overall English language attainment, the literature repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the teacher in TEYL provision (Hayes, 2014; Rixon, 2013; Garton *et al.*; 2011; Edelenbos *et al.* 2006; Pinter 2006; Nikolov 2002). Merely lowering the age of commencement without a concomitant investment in the quality of the teaching can, Rich (2014) warns, lead to an impoverished classroom experience for students and the development of negative attitudes towards language learning. Hayes (2014), in his précis of the conditions necessary for the successful introduction of foreign language instruction in the state primary school, emphasizes the need for systematic in-service teacher training rather than the still too typical one-off seminars based on a cascade model of professional

development⁹. Similarly, Rixon (2013), in her comprehensive survey of worldwide primary English teaching, found that “there are a high number of contexts in which provision of suitable teachers is problematic” (p.19). In their survey of nearly 5,000 primary school teachers in 144 countries, Garton *et al.* (2011) found that the “needs of in-service teachers are particularly acute, given that many did not start their careers as teachers of English or as teachers of young learners” (p.16). Their survey highlighted two related areas of particular concern:

- (1) Generalist teachers with insufficient English language ability;
- (2) Generalist teachers with insufficient training in the correct methodology for teaching English to young learners.

With regard to English language proficiency, Hayes (2014) recommends that generalist teachers should have at least a CEFR scale B2 proficiency though preferably C1. Enever (2016) emphasizes that oral fluency in particular needs to be at an advanced level so that teachers are “able to respond to the many informal uses of language that are likely to occur in the young-learner classroom” (p.22). This need is recognised by teachers themselves. In Emery’s (2012) review of teacher qualifications for TEYL, she found that teachers felt that having good English language skills was the most important criterion in making a “good primary school English teacher” (p.16).

However, teachers are also acutely aware that they don’t possess adequate English language skills. Butler (2004), in her survey of elementary school teachers in Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, found that the vast majority of them believed that their current proficiency levels did not meet the necessary minimum levels to effectively teach English to young learners. Similar concerns have been expressed by teachers in Korea (Lee, 2009); Brazil (Gimenez, 2009); China and Taiwan (Hu & McKay, 2012). In Japan, surveys carried out by both the Benesse Corporation (2006; 2010), and the Ministry of Education (MEXT 2010; 2014a) have consistently found that elementary school teachers rank their own lack of English ability as their main concern about teaching the language. Studies have found that teachers’ concerns are pedagogically justified. Characteristics of teachers talk such as the quantity and quality of vocabulary, speech use, prosody, and pronunciation are all positively

⁹ For critiques of this model of in-service professional development, see for example Hayes 2000; Lydon & King, 2009; Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; and Bett, 2016. For a comparative review of different models of continuing professional development, see Kennedy, 2006.

associated with children's foreign language skills (Detemple & Snow, 2003). Similarly, Unsworth *et al.* (2014), in their study of factors affecting early foreign language learning, suggest that the lexical diversity and grammatical complexity of L2 classroom use by higher proficient teachers (both native speaker and non-native speaker) had a significant positive affect on children's language learning as compared to the limited input provided by lower proficiency teachers.

Finally, it should be noted that students' potential English language proficiency should not be simply conflated with their teacher's actual language proficiency; important ancillary factors such as the teacher's use of L1 and L2, their ability to use age-appropriate L2, the use of feedback, focus on form / meaning, and their own attitudes to TEYL all contribute significantly to children's language learning (Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2011).

2.4.1 Issues in teacher training in TEYL

Garton *et al.* (2011) point out that the rapid expansion worldwide of TEYL has "outrun the planning required to ensure the change is successful" (p.4). This is particular the case with teacher training where appropriate methodologies for teaching young learners have yet to be successfully developed (Cameron, 2003). In many cases TEYL methodology has involved merely 'simplifying' teaching methods and materials that were developed for adult learners (Butler, 2015; Murphy, 2014). In addition, there is increased recognition of the importance of using different age-appropriate pedagogies within the primary school that takes into account the different levels of children's cognitive development and linguistic ability (Rich, 2014). For younger learners, language sensitization approaches are better suited to build motivation and foster positive attitudes towards foreign language learning (Johnstone, 2009); whereas with older primary school learners a more explicit focus on languages awareness and analysis has been found to be effective (Agullo, 2006; Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006).

2.5 Equity of Provision

Although worldwide surveys conducted by the British Council (Garton *et al.* 2011; Emery 2013; Rixon, 2013) have found large disparities in the quantity and quality of primary school English language teaching in different countries, there also concerns about disparities within countries. The longitudinal ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe) study undertaken in seven countries¹⁰ found that the extent to which TEYL policy is implemented is highly dependent on the amount of funding that is available at regional levels within countries (Enever, 2011). Of particular concern is the increasing urban-rural discrepancies in teacher quality and professional development opportunities. In China a number of studies have highlighted the large gap in the extent and quality of the early English provision between urban and rural areas (Lu, 2007; Hu, 2007; Feng, 2011). Looking solely at the Asian context, similar gaps have been reported in Vietnam (Hayes, 2008), India (Kapur, 2009), Japan (Nishizaki, 2009), Bangladesh (Hamid & Honan, 2012), and Korea (Garton, 2015). In addition, these disparities are being widened by the differing availability and utilisation of private English language education. Baldauf *et al.* (2011), in their review of primary foreign language programmes in Asia, found that in many countries wealthier urban families are investing heavily in after-school classes and tutoring. “This is creating inequality of opportunity in many societies and preserving socio-economic differences within the learner community” (2011: 318). Butler (2015) sees this as resulting from a mismatch between the customary communicative methodology employed in the classroom and the actual role of English in many countries. Outside of the classroom English is not a usual means of communication, but as an academically tested subject it plays a critical role in determining students’ future educational and career opportunities. The result is that “English proficiency has become a very expensive commodity” (Hu, 2009: 50). Many parents pursue a ‘family language policy’ (King *et al.*, 2008) in tandem with the official language-in-education policy, enrolling their children in private language schools, having them take commercial proficiency tests, and taking their children on overseas holidays to English language speaking countries (Hu & McKay, 2012). The result is that socio-economic inequities manifest themselves in the classroom where teachers are confronted with students whose extra-curricular learning experiences equip them with different levels of English proficiency (Cameron, 2003). However, where curricula, materials,

¹⁰ These were Croatia, England, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden.

and methodologies for primary English language learning are developed on the premise that students are essentially homogenous starters, the unfortunate result can be teachers who are not able to adapt to learners differing aptitudes and a consequent drop in student motivation (Rich, 2014; Butler, 2016). In Taiwan, for example, excessive reliance on the private sector, especially in urban areas, made the students feel that school English lessons were boring (Chung & Huang, 2010).

2.6 Policy implementation

Baldauf *et al.* (2011) note that the formulation of aspirational policy and the subsequent creation of a relevant curriculum is the “easy” part of language policy; much more difficult is the implementation of policy in schools and classrooms. International research (Garton, 2014; Rixon, 2013; Hu & McKay, 2012; Garton *et al.* 2011; Pinter, 2009; Enever *et al.*, 2009; Nikolov, 2009; Edelenbos *et al.*, 2006) on the introduction of English as a foreign language at the primary school level has consistently highlighted that policy measures have been more rhetorical rather than substantive in their impact on schools and classrooms.

“the decisions taken by governments appear to be predominantly political and against the little FL [foreign language] - as opposed to SL [second language] - research evidence available” (Baldauf *et al.* 2011: 310).

In the case of Hong Kong, Ng (2009) details a series of systematic issues that stymied the introduction of primary school EFL: top-down initiation of the reform, misconceptions of the reform, the lack of teacher enthusiasm, weak collaborative cultures and the lack of school leadership. Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008) stressed obstacles in Thailand’s school system: teachers’ English proficiency, insufficient training and inadequate resources and professional development hindered teachers’ implementation of the new communicative curriculum. Canh and Barnard (2009) highlighted similar hindrances in Vietnam, such as pressure to finish the prescribed syllabus within the allotted school year; the use of the first language for students’ understanding and self-esteem; students’ lack of motivation to communicate in English;

the lack of professional development training opportunities for teachers.

Although the issues in different countries are diverse and context-specific, an underlying common theme, and one apparent in Japan too, is the existence of ‘intercultural’ tensions between government curriculum policy and school-system implementation levels (Water and Vilches 2008), or what Canh and Barnard term the “wide gap between curricular rhetoric and classroom reality” (2009: 47). Goodson (2007) has termed this “implementationist myopia” where problems with policy implementation are blamed on ‘agents’ (teachers and schools), rather than on structural issues (funding, resources, teacher training). Similarly, Wedell (2005) has pointed out that focusing solely on what happens in the classroom when examining policy reform is to overlook the hugely complex and dynamic sets of interdependent political and sociocultural contextual factors in both the immediate and the wider environments that impact on this reform.

2.6.1 Difficulties in evaluating policy reforms

These situation-specific contextual factors also make it extremely difficult to objectively evaluate the success or otherwise of language policy implementation. Hayes (2014), in his comparative international study of the factors affecting the success of primary English language programmes, notes that ‘success’ was hard to quantify, as so few countries had any systematic measures of student attainment at the end of primary school.

“Lack of information on English language outcomes is surprising, given the importance attached to increasing English language skills by national governments, who would be expected to be concerned about the return on their investment in education” (2014: 8).

Hayes comments echo Nunan’s (2003) conclusions of nearly a decade earlier. In his review of the introduction of primary school English teaching in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan, Nunan concluded that,

“The single most pervasive outcome of this study is that English language policies and practices have been implemented, often at significant cost to other aspects of the curriculum, without a clearly articulated rationale and without a detailed consideration of the costs and benefits of such policies and practices on the countries in question” (2003: 609).

Although more than a decade apart, what Hayes’ and Nunan’s comments both suggest is that while there has been ongoing expansion of early English language provision, there has been no concurrent substantive evaluation of either prior or existing policies. Instead outcomes have to be determined by proxy measures such as instructional hours, surveys of teacher attitudes and opinions, results from commercial young learner language proficiency tests, and common state English exams at the secondary level (Enever, 2016; Rixon, 2013; Hu & McKay, 2012; Kaplan *et al.* 2011).

2.6.2 Issues with students transition to secondary school

This lack of clarity on what students are expected to achieve and how to measure such achievement is in turn having a detrimental effect on their transition to secondary school. Studies carried out (Burns *et al.*, 2013; Cable *et al.*, 2012) typically identify a lack of cohesion in foreign language provision from primary to secondary school. Burns *et al.* (2013), in their global survey, found that,

“In almost all the countries included in this research, although the transition between the two levels is mentioned in policy documents, there appeared to be no real continuity in the syllabus or in teaching practice and no guidelines to assist teachers” (2013: 8).

Adding to the problem is that students, drawn as they are from different elementary schools and with different early language education experiences, are entering secondary school with different levels of English ability. The common response at the secondary level is to revert to a low baseline

of assumed language proficiency and essentially begin all over again (Burns *et al.*, 2013). This in turn has detrimental effects on student motivation (Enever, 2016; Butler, 2015).

The literature does suggest a number of possible solutions to this problem; closer communication between primary and secondary teachers; reciprocal visits to observe English classes; appointing a local TEYL coordinator for both primary and early secondary English language curricula; common assessment of proficiency levels (Bland, 2015; Hayes, 2014; Karavas, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Johnstone, 2009). However, such solutions tend to occur at the local level with no common practices institutionalised across the entire country. This lack of transition planning means that, unfortunately, any advantages that accrue from starting English language learning in the primary level are not being optimised at the secondary level.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined a number of the more important issues surrounding the ongoing expansion of teaching English to young learners around the world. It noted how the introduction of English education in state primary schools was a reaction to both foreign and domestic pressures, particularly the designation of English proficiency by many polities as a core economic skill. This was followed by an examination of literature concerning the key factors affecting TEYL, including age of commencement, teacher training and required English language ability, differences in teaching provision and learning opportunities based on families' socio-economic status, and problems with policy implementation. This review highlighted that while the expansion of TEYL provision may be global in nature, the means by which such expansion occurs remains resolutely local. Thus, while common problems continue to be identified, there are still no common solutions to offer.

Chapter 3. Language Policy in Education

3.0 Introduction

Having examined the different issues surrounding the early learning of English as a foreign language in the previous chapter, this thesis now moves on to critically review the relevant literature in the field of language policy. The chapter will begin with a theoretical overview of the key constructs in the field, before examining ‘language-in-education-planning’ as the key theoretical concept underpinning this study. It will then focus on language policy in Japan and how this has developed in relation to English education. Finally, the chapter will provide a historical overview of the policy evolution in Japanese elementary school English education in order to contextualize the introduction of the new Course of Study.

3.1 Towards a definition of language policy

In searching for a commonly agreed upon definition of language policy, one is confronted with a diverse number of overlapping explanations, all of which are testament to the ongoing development of the discipline. Cooper (1989) has provided one of the most widely cited definitions of language planning (Wardhaugh, 2010; Wright, 2007; Butler, 2004; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), describing it as “deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes” (1989: 45).

Cooper proposed three major types of language planning approaches: corpus planning, “the creation of new forms, the modification of old ones or the selection from alternative forms in a spoken or written code” (1989: 31); status planning, which refers to “deliberate efforts to influence the allocation of functions among a community’s languages” (1989: 99); and acquisition planning, which refers to “organized efforts to promote the learning of a language” (1989: 157). By proposing this tripartite approach to the field, he expanded its theoretical and research possibilities which hitherto had followed a reductive ‘problem-solution’ approach, as exemplified by Fishman’s definition of language planning as “the organized pursuit of solutions to language problems, typically at the

national level” (1974: 79). Such a definition, Cooper argued, “obscured a fundamental point about language planning, namely that it is typically, perhaps always directed towards nonlinguistic ends” (1989: 35). In essence, Cooper was making the case for viewing language planning as much a political act as a linguistic one.

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), though not the first (see Baldauf, 2004), also make an explicit distinction between ‘language planning’ and ‘language policy’. Whereas Cooper accepted that one term could be used interchangeably as a synonym for the other (1989: 29), Kaplan and Baldauf propose a theoretical delineation between the two. For them language planning is “an activity, most visibly undertaken by government...intended to promote systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers” (1997: xi); whereas ‘language policy’ is “a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system” (*ibid*).

Although this distinction is conceptually useful, in practice it is often difficult to discern. Planning is mere words without an operational policy, and policy is rendered mere circumstance without some form of planning. Addressing this problem Ricento and Hornberger (1996) suggested combining the two to rename the discipline ‘Language Planning and Policy’ (LPP). This nomenclature was subsequently adopted and elaborated on by Fettes (1997), who highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the two areas: “Language planning...must be linked to the critical evaluation of language policy: the former providing standards of rationality and effectiveness, the latter testing these ideas against actual practice in order to promote the development of better...language planning models. Such a field would be better described as ‘language policy and planning’, LPP” (1997: 14).

3.2 Towards a framework of LPP

In order to meet Fettes’ (1997) call for “standards of rationality and effectiveness”, a number of theoretical models and frameworks have been proposed for LPP. Cooper’s tripartite approach (1989), what Hornberger terms his “accounting framework” (2006: 24), remains highly influential in the field and provides a theoretical base on which more complex models have been formulated

such as Fishman's (2001) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) for reversing language shift; Hornberger's continua of biliteracy framework (2003); and Baldauf's evolving framework for language planning goals (2005).

Yet, even with these ongoing attempts at theoretical rigor, there remain a number of issues that hinder the development of a unifying framework. Foremost among them is the diverse nature of the socio-historical environments in which LPP is formulated. Ricento's (2006) edited collection on theory and method in language policy demonstrated just how encompassing the field has become. It included contributions on such areas as critical theory, postmodernism, economics, political theory, geolinguistic analysis, psycho-sociological analysis, national identity, minority rights, sign language and linguistic imperialism. Given this diversity of approaches it could be argued that any analytical framework that attempted to account for all them, their constant dynamism, and the diverse national, ethnic and linguistic societies in which they are situated, could be so unwieldy as to be unworkable. Perhaps static snapshots, rather than a grand narrative picture, is the operational best LPP can aspire to.

3.3 Language in education planning

According to Baldauf "language in education planning is the area most explicitly related to language learning and teaching" (2005: 961). Although it is theoretically conceived of as occurring concurrently with status and corpus planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Cooper, 1989), it often constitutes the sole language planning activity in many polities (Corson, 1999). Much of the literature in the field has concentrated on the broader, societal level addressing such issues as national and supranational language policies (Gottlieb 2008; Lo Bianco 2005; Phillipson 2003); language ideology (Ricento 2006, 2000); linguistic culture (Schifferin 1996); and linguistic nationalism (Burnaby and Ricento, 1998). Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) have criticized what they see as an undue emphasis in the literature on Cooper's "systematic language policy development and implementation approach" (2007: 449), whereby schools and, by implication, teachers were generally regarded as agents of the state and regarded as "bottom-up bit players in the LPP hierarchy" (2007: 449). Rather, they argue, for language in education policy, one of the crucial

issues for policy makers is how to reconcile the macro with the micro; as Kaplan and Baldauf put it: “to define and facilitate choices that are relevant to individual’s interests and needs...while at the same time ensuring that the general [language] education benefits and societal needs are being met” (2005: 1014).

3.4 Language policy and pedagogic practice

Official policy can influence day-to-day classroom realities in a number of ways, if only because a certain pedagogical approach (communicative language teaching; or, on the case of elementary school English in Japan, the exclusion of literacy teaching); or a set of materials (e.g. *Hi Friends*) may be recommended for use in classrooms. Classroom teaching, however, involves more than the compliant realisation of a policy precept. It is something much more complex and, to use Freeman’s (1996) term, “messy”. One problem, of course, is that while the official discourse of the proposed pedagogy as found in language policy texts and curriculum descriptions is accessible to scrutiny and discussion, the day-to-day reality of teaching is far less accessible and is infinitely dispersed.

At each level of a state educational system, from the national education ministry to the individual classroom, language education policies are interpreted, negotiated, and ultimately “(re)constructed in the process of implementation” (Menken & Garcia, 2010: 1). Teachers, as the ultimate implementers of such policies are also the main agents of policy reconstruction; they interpret, instigate or ignore policy directives in terms of the complex dynamics of their classrooms.

In spite of the emerging recognition of such complexity, however, most language policy research remains national in scope, focusing on top-down policies and analysing written policy statements (Ng, 2016; Gottlieb, 2008; Ricento, 2006; Spolsky, 2004; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Such research elides the essential contribution of classroom practitioners (Mecken & Garcia, 2010), and leaves under researched questions of agency and local context. Calderhead (2001), in his review of educational reform initiatives in different countries, noted that, “surprisingly, in the formulation of reforms, little attention has been given to understanding of processes of teaching and learning as they

occur in the classrooms and to the factors that influence and support the quality and effectiveness of those experiences” (p.794).

3.5 The Ethnography of Language Policy

Johnson and Freeman (2010) contend that the use of the term ‘policy implementation’ implies that “policy directives are necessarily and predictably implemented when, instead ... policies are *appropriated* in a variety of ways” (p.14). For them appropriation shifts the point of focus from structure to agency in language policy research. To understand how such agency appropriation occurs they propose a methodological approach based on the ethnography of language policy (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011) where language policy is conceptualised as

“a *process* that begins with a potentially heterogenous text that is interpreted and appropriated in unpredictable ways by agents who appropriate, resist, and/or change dominant and alternative policy discourses” (Johnson & Freeman, 2010: 15).

Ethnography of language policy is a methodological means of capturing the dichotomy at the heart of this process; between the top-down determined policy as it should be, and the realisation of the process as it actually is. Such an approach moves the focus from critical analyses of language policy texts to an ethnographic understanding of some local context.

Studies utilising this approach include Jaffe’s (1999) work on Corsican language policy in France, Hult’s (2007) research on Swedish language policy, Martin-Jones (2011) study of Welsh language policy and education; and Cincotta-Segi’s (2011) research on language policy and education in Lao PDR.

Menken and Garcia (2010) take this a step further arguing that teachers as agents do more than appropriate a given language policy; through their pedagogic decisions and actions in the classroom they are also policy makers. Menken (2008), Mohanty *et al.* (2010), and Johnson (2013) all use the term *arbiter* to characterise the power of teachers as the ultimate decision-makers in how a policy is implemented. Johnson (2013) further expands on this concept and describes all individuals

with a disproportionate influence on the language policy process as *language policy arbiters*. He recognises that teachers are the ultimate arbiters in classroom implementation of policy but argues that they too are susceptible to the ways language policy power is differentially allocated across, and within, schools, institutions, local contexts, and layers of language policy activity (Johnson 2013: 100). Hence, the necessity for foregrounding context in examining language policy and planning. For Menken and Garcia (2010) context “is an intrinsic part of language education policies, not [merely] a background against which action takes place” (p.255).

3.6 Language policy in Japan - the sociolinguistic background

Since the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the commencement of ‘modern’ Japan (Hane and Perez, 2012), Japan has consistently represented itself in both internal and external discourse as a monolingual nation. As recently as 2005, former prime minister Taro Aso described Japan as “one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture and one race” (Japan Times, 2005). Support for this view has been particularly entrenched in the nationalist literary tradition of ‘Nihonjinron’ - literally ‘what it means to be Japanese’ (Sugimoto 2006). For much of the past three decades, Nihonjinron has constituted a key discourse through which various aspects of Japanese culture, society and language are formulated (Gottlieb 2008; Liddicoat 2007; Befu 2001). The proponents of Nihonjinron portray the Japanese language as somehow uniquely different from other languages and conflate language with ethnicity, based on mutually reciprocal definitions of both terms (Befu 2001). Despite clear evidence to the contrary, they endorse Aso’s conception of Japan as a singularly linguistic, ethnically homogenous nation. It is Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ taken to an extreme.

Gottlieb rightly describes this ideological position as a “monolingual myth” (2008:1), but, as she adds, it is an enduring myth, “what we might call [one of] the foundation myths of modern Japan” (2008:2), and one that continues to influence official language policy. The continued promulgation of this myth also obscures the contemporary existence of large ethnic communities from Korea, China, Brazil, the Philippines and other countries; the historical existence of the indigenous languages and cultures of the Ainu and Ryuku peoples; and that from 2011 all Japanese

students attending compulsory public education will have to study English for five years out of a total of nine years of schooling. Demographics also undermines the ‘monolingual myth’; whereas Japan’s rapidly aging and declining population is perhaps well known, less acknowledged is the fact that the resident foreign population has consistently grown over the past decade, from 1.68 million in 2000 to 2.23 million in 2015, alongside a concurrent increase in the number of international marriages over the same period (Statistics Bureau Japan, 2016). The evidence would therefore suggest that not only is Japan adamantly not a monolingual society, but that ongoing demographic changes are accelerating the development of a multilingual, albeit still a minority, society.

3.7 Language policy and internationalization

Language in education policy making in Japan occurs within the framework of *kokusaika*, ‘internationalization’ (Gottlieb, 2008; Butler, 2007; Hashimoto, 2000). Though the term ‘internationalization’ may suggest a form of intercultural exchange, in Japan *kokusaika* is primarily framed as an encounter between Japan and the English-speaking world (Kubota, 2002). To fit this constructed frame therefore requires that foreign language education become publicly accepted as synonymous with English language education (Morita, 1988). This is espoused at the state level. The 2002 Course of Study for Languages (MEXT, 2003) clearly states that, “For compulsory foreign language instruction, English should be selected in principal”, a statement reprised in the 2008 Course of Study for Elementary Schools, which states that, “In principal English should be selected for foreign language activities” (MEXT, 2009b). In both instances the emphasis is on ‘first circle’ (Kachru, 1985) varieties of English, so that teaching English as a foreign language, within the frame of *kokusaika*, is “directed at communication with the economically and politically dominant English-speaking nations, rather than communication across a broad geographical and linguistic spectrum” (Liddicoat, 2007: 36).

For Suzuki (1995) *kokusaika* is also concerned with spreading Japanese culture and values internationally so that the foreign ‘other’ can see the world from a Japanese perspective. The inference here is that *kokusaika* is less about transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries, and more about maintaining them. As Ivy (1995) has argued, “the policy of internationalization

implies...the thorough domestication of the foreign” (1995: 3). It is essentially a policy of assimilation, one that, in its approach to English language education, corresponds to Lo Bianco’s idea of an “Assimilationist Language Policy” (2010: 169), a situation in which there is monolingual language instruction and an emphasis on cultural homogeneity. Such an assimilationist orientation is also evident in Hashimoto’s (2000) argument that one of the main objectives of English language education is to foster within students a heightened sense of their own ‘Japaneseness’ (2000: 49). Liddicoat advances a similar criticism contending that *kokusaika* is “mono-directional - it allows Japanese self-expression in the world rather than articulating a mutually informing encounter between cultures” (2007: 38). Again, evidence for this argument can be found at the state level in official policy documents; the most recent Course of Study document issued by MEXT for ‘Foreign Language Education’ in 2008 states that, “Teachers should enable pupils to deepen their understanding not only of the foreign language and culture, but also of the Japanese language and culture through foreign language and activities” (MEXT, 2009b).

3.8 English language education policy in Japan

Gottlieb (2008) contends that English language education policy in Japan is premised on the idea that the language serves a purely pragmatic function as the international language of globalization, particularly in its role as the lingua franca in the fields of business and science. Similarly, Hashimoto (2009) characterizes the teaching of English as being based on a policy of economic utility, one that “focus[es] less on the educational needs of individual learners, and more on how TEFL contributes to the nation’s economic success” (2009: 23). For Torikai (2005) English is taught as an international language rather than as a second language, with official policy determined by the view that English is necessary to communicate outside Japan whilst having no substantial role within the country (2005: 254).

These utilitarian views of English have been reflected in recent official policy developments which, Butler and Inoi (2005) argue, have been a response to constant pressure from the business sector for English education to place more emphasis on practical communication skills. Such developments include the introduction of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program (JET)

in 1987 under which ‘native speakers’ of English (predominantly drawn from Kachru’s first circle of nations) were placed in local schools and boards of education in order to “promote communicative based English teaching” (McConnell, 2000: 13)¹¹; the 2003 ‘Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities’ (MEXT, 2003), with its explicitly stated aim of ensuring that all students will be able to communicate in English upon graduation from high school (Gottlieb 2008:45); and the ‘Revised Course of Study’ introduced in 2002 which proposed introducing English at the elementary school level as an optional subject. This recommendation was officially adopted by MEXT and approved by the Government in 2008 with the result that since April 2011, all public elementary schools in Japan have enacted compulsory English education for fifth and sixth grade students. However, in tacit recognition of the ongoing debate over the perceived neglect of other subjects in the primary curriculum (Japan Times, 2009), MEXT categorized English as a non-academic subject with no formal assessment which, as Butler (2007: 130) notes, may well lead to diverse classroom practices and uncertain outcomes, with a related effect on students’ abilities at the junior high school level where English is an academic subject.

Although much of the literature characterizes the introduction of elementary school English (ESS) as a response to Japan’s economic nationalism (Hashimoto 2011, 2009; Kawai, 2007; Torikai, 2005), Butler, mirroring Liddicoat’s reference to “the actual practices of diversity” (2007:43), argues that the introduction of English in elementary school (EES) is “also driven by multiple social and political factors” (2007: 130). She cites:

“the role of English as a measure of one’s academic ability within the Japanese education system...as an attractive ‘selling point’ for certain schools...the (unwarranted) perceptions of English as a potential solution for communication-related behavioral problems... and growing

¹¹ Although the JET program was (and continues to be) framed as a means of both improving English education and introducing Japan to a wider international audience, its origins were distinctly mercantilist. Kuniyuki Nose, the Home Affairs Ministry official who wrote the original proposal for JET, stated that, “The purpose of the JET Program was never focused on the revolution of English education or changing Japanese society. Frankly speaking, during the year of the trade conflict between Japan and the US ... what I was thinking about was how to deal with the demands of the US that we buy more things such as computers and cars. I realized the trade friction was not going to be solved by manipulating material things, and, besides, I wanted to demonstrate the fact that not all Japanese are economic animals who gobble up real estate” (McConnell, 2000: 456). For further critiques of the JET Programme see Sarich, 2014; Nakatsugawa, 2014; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2013; and Galloway, 2009.

concerns about ensuring equal access to EES in different regions and among different socio-economic groups” (2007:137).

Nevertheless, even with such a diversity of motives beside the economic for instigating EES, the fact remains that at both state and local levels policy decisions about EES have been made almost exclusively on the basis of the needs of the Japanese speaking majority (Hashimoto 2009; Gottlieb 2008; Liddicoat 2007; McVeigh 2006). Such a language policy accords with Ruiz’s (1984) notion of ‘language as a resource’, eschewing a broader and more encompassing multilingual perspective. There is also the related criticism that the explicit favoring of English as the foreign language to be learned in elementary school purposefully ignores the fact that the overwhelming majority of multilingual school children in Japan have a combination of Japanese and a language other than English. According to MEXT (2005), among students who do not speak Japanese as their first language, 36% speak Portuguese, 24% speak Chinese, 15% speak Spanish, 9% speak various Filipino languages, while less than 3% of students speak English as their first language.

Kanno’s (2008) study of different bilingual communities within Japan highlighted how different language combinations (Japanese-English, Japanese-Korean, Japanese-Chinese, and Japanese-Portuguese) result in the unequal provision of language education. In her study of five elementary schools providing different forms of bilingual education, she demonstrates how linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) is unequally distributed among students with different minority languages. Language, she argues, functions as a determinant of social class:

“In contemporary Japan language is part of the social and cultural reproduction that schools help sustain – the process of endowing the already privileged children with more linguistic and cultural capital, while further depriving the already underprivileged children” (2008: 4).

In determining language education policies regarding EES, there has been little discussion about the possibility of introducing other foreign languages that might better serve the immediate

community needs of resident minority speakers, a policy of abeyance that has attracted criticism from the United Nations (Diene, 2006).

3.9 Language policy and English in the elementary school

In Japan major curriculum developments, such as the introduction of EES, are by definition the creations of policy makers, in this case the Ministry of Education, who often have different motives and expected outcomes from those of teachers and other educational professionals. Elmore and Sykes (1992), following from Cooper (1989), noted that the setting of curriculum policy is essentially a political act, dealing at local, regional and national levels with educational issues of concern to often conflicting political and civic constituencies. Thus, policy documents attending to such curriculum developments also serve a symbolic function (Elmore & Sykes, 1992), resulting in a policy statement that addresses content but not instruction. As Gorsuch (2000) observes, “Policy makers want short-term results, and a curriculum statement that focuses on content has the appearance of achieving those results” (2000: 677).

This gap between policy content and classroom instruction is evident in the problems affecting the introduction of EES. A survey conducted by the Benesse Corporation in 2010 found that elementary school teachers ranked the lack of clear instructions on what to teach and how to teach as their biggest concern in implementing EES (Benesse, 2010). Yet, the policy document, ‘The Course of Study for Foreign Language Activities’ (see Appendix 1), explicitly places the burden of curriculum design and instruction upon the shoulders of the teachers: “Homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities should make teaching programs and conduct lessons” (MEXT, 2009b). Commenting on a similar proposal in the 2003 ‘Action Plan’, Butler and Iino (2005) see this as offering teachers and local governments the opportunity of greater autonomy in determining educational policy at the micro level. However, grasping such opportunities presupposes that teachers and local governments have the knowledge and expertise to do so. Again, the results of the Benesse survey call these assumptions into question; approximately 40% of teachers said they lacked the necessary time to plan lessons and develop materials, while similarly, less than one tenth of the boards of education surveyed had developed a curriculum for EES (Benesse, 2010).

Similarly, Yano (2011), in her critical examination of the introduction of the FLA class, identified five main areas of concern: elementary school teacher anxiety, junior high school teacher anxiety, problems with pre-service teacher training, the lack of literacy teaching, and issues related to ALT team-teaching. On the latter issue she highlighted how, given homeroom teachers' low English ability, hitherto ALTs had taken the lead in classroom instruction. However, with FLA being made compulsory and the number of mandatory classroom contact hours increased, she points out that this would no longer be a viable policy. There would not be sufficient ALT numbers to be present in all classes in all elementary schools nationwide.

There are also pedagogical issues with the deliberate elision in the policy documents of the differences between fostering 'international understanding' and developing basic communicative competence in English. Kusumoto (2008) quotes an elementary school homeroom teacher as saying, "We play games and sing songs as an 'international understanding' curriculum, but is playing English games really 'international understanding'? It seems like the period is just 'play time' with no clear objectives and goals" (2008: 31). Her words echo a criticism made by Cameron (2003) of the lack of pedagogic effectiveness of many early English programmes: "the time available in busy school timetables for language teaching is too short to waste on activities that are fun but do not maximise learning" (2003: 2).

However, such elisions and ambiguities, Butler (2007) argues, were necessary in order to enable English to become a subject on the elementary school curriculum. The establishment of distinct learning objectives in terms of specified language attainment goals would have had the effect of highlighting teachers' lack of professional development, both in terms of their own English proficiency and the necessary methodological training to teach English as a foreign language to young learners.

In addition, since the 'Course of Action' in 2003 first enabled individual schools to introduce English classes at their discretion, there has been substantial public discussion over whether or not English should be in fact taught at the primary level. Much of the public discourse surrounding the introduction of EES conceives of it as a zero-sum game, with the teaching of English taking time and teaching resources away from Japanese language instruction (Otsu, 2004; Otsu &

Torikai, 2002). By implementing EES in what Butler describes as a “tactical” (2007: 142) way, this apparent ambiguous introduction may in fact be a necessary, albeit slow, step in the transition towards making English a compulsory academic subject in elementary schools (Butler, 2007).

Be that as it may, the fact remains that as currently conceptualized ESS is based on a policy formulation that does little to address the substantial diversity in curricula, instructional approaches and resources available to local governments and individual schools. Nor does it address student diversity, assuming a linguistic and cultural homogeneity that is increasingly at odds with the varied voices and faces in the classroom.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter critically reviewed the relevant literature in the field of language policy in education. It began with an examination of the key theoretical constructs in the field and highlighted the potential for ‘language-in-education-planning’ as a means of theorizing this research. This was followed with an overview of language policy in Japan that traced the historical developments behind the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in primary education.

In the next chapter I will detail the methodological approach undertaken and the elaborate on the different issues surrounding data collection.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Overview

The principal aim of this research is to examine how foreign language policy in Japanese elementary schools is discursively formulated and then subsequently implemented. Such a deceptively straightforward aim conceals a vast array of factors that the research must contend with at both the macro and micro levels. This reflects the broadening of methodological approaches to language policy based on increasingly expansive notions of what factors influence the development and implementation of policy (Johnson 2013; McCarthy, 2011; Hult, 2010; Ricento, 2006). Recent research in the field has included examining the pedagogical decisions teachers have to make in multilingual classrooms (Menken & Garcia, 2010); parental decisions about home language practices in bilingual families (King & Fogel, 2006); the introduction of English-medium instruction in Hong Kong secondary schools (Evans and Morrison, 2016); the lived experiences of primary school students learning English in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011); and standardized testing of English language learners (Menken, 2008). What these examples highlight is the increased emphasis on the ‘places of implementation’ - those locations where people turn the written word into concrete action. Shohamy (2006) has termed this, “the real LP” (p.52), and contends that, “Language policy should not be limited to the examination of declared and official statements. Rather, the real policy is executed through a variety of mechanisms that determine *de facto* practices” (p.54). To examine these issues this research will draw upon a well-established, qualitative based set of methodologies, principally involving ethnographic and discourse analytical approaches.

This chapter will therefore present, explain and justify the research design and methodology adopted for this study. It begins by establishing the research paradigm underlying the study and follows this with a detailed description of the research design and methodological procedures for participant selection, data collection and analysis. In addition, factors concerning field sites, access, translation, and ethical issues are also explained.

4.2 Research Paradigm

Language policy, both as text and discourse, is a socially constructed artefact (Johnson, 2013; Spolsky, 2012; Ricento, 2006). It is not an objective phenomenon like gravity, immutable to the wishes and whims of humankind. Rather, it emerges as a result of social interaction within particular cultures, at particular times, amongst a particular people. Underlying my ontological stance is the assumption that human beings, social behavior, and social phenomena are fundamentally different from inanimate physical phenomena in that they are “socially shaped and constructed by social actors, human beings rather than the forces of nature” (Pole & Morrison, 2003: 6). Deriving from this stance, an interpretive approach to understanding society “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social-life world” (Crotty, 1998: 67).

Language Policy is one such form of socially constructed knowledge and to understand it requires an understanding of the particularities of the society that produced it, what Levinson *et al.* (2009: 768) term “a robust anthropological understanding of policy as sociocultural practice”. Hence, my research is firmly bound within an interpretive paradigm that “strive(s) to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 28).

The danger, of course, in researching and writing about an ostensibly ‘foreign’ society is that I generalize too readily, ascribing various attributes and explanations to an undifferentiated and subjective conception of ‘Japanese society’, what Holliday (2007: 141) terms “othering ... reducing whole swathes of people to deterministic description”. To counter this potential criticism, I have already provided in the literature review a comprehensive overview of the context in which elementary school English in Japan is situated. In this chapter I will provide a detailed description of my methodology to “show the workings” (Holliday, 2016; 2007) of how I collected and analyzed my data, thereby explicating “how [I] managed the subjectivity inherent in this paradigm” (Holliday, 2016: 44).

I also accept that my interpretative, socio-constructive approach is inherently limited: “we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go” (Holliday, 2007: 7). Likewise, for Hammersley (1992: 51) the “aim of social research is to represent reality”, but not necessarily to reproduce it. Indeed, from a social constructionist

perspective an absolutely accurate and objective reproduction of reality is “an impossibility” (Burr 2003: 152), and the same event may be presented and discussed differently by different researchers. Hammersley (1992) makes the point that every representation of reality will come from a perspective that makes some phenomena more pertinent, but no more important, than others.

4.2.1 Qualitative Research

The research paradigm within which I position my research means that my approach to methodology is determinedly qualitative in nature. Qualitative research can be understood as an approach that prioritizes exploring and understanding the meanings people assign to social or human issues and problems (Creswell, 2009). Silverman (2000) suggests that a qualitative approach, rather than a positivist based quantitative approach, facilitates a “deeper understanding of social phenomena” (p.8). Similarly, Richards (2009) sees this form of research as one that allows for a richer understanding of phenomena. Thorne (2016) emphasises how unlike determinate, empirically derived explanations, qualitative research enables us to examine how fundamental social effects such as structure and agency “play out in human experience” (p.144).

The ‘human experience’ I document and analyze arose from my engagement, both professional and personal, with various social and cultural worlds here in Japan and my interactions with the people who inhabit them (see Section 4:3 below). Such engagement could not have furnished me with positivist “impersonal, de-contextualized warrants of knowledge” (Atkinson *et al.*, 2011: 11); rather it resulted in a cumulative, reflective process of interpretation mediated by both time and experience.

Such a process follows Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) description of qualitative research as

“... a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. ...This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (pp. 4-5).

Creswell (2007), in his examination of the methods adopted in the contemporary literature on qualitative research, compiled the following list of significant characteristics:

- Natural setting
- Researcher as key instrument
- Multiple sources of data
- Inductive data analysis
- Participants' meanings
- Emergent design
- Theoretical lens
- Interpretive
- Holistic account

Of particular importance for a qualitative approach is that (a) data are collected in the field; and (b) that the researcher is the principle method of data collection (Creswell, 2009). In this study the field (see also chapter 5) consisted of four elementary schools in northern Japan. As a participant observer, I was the locus of data collection, though I augmented this with interviews and document collection so as not to be over-reliant on only a single method.

Creswell (2007) further notes that much of the literature he surveyed uses an inductive process to develop comprehensive themes, most often citing grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as the guiding analytical concept (see also Silverman, 2000; Richards, 2009). However, in an applied educational research project like this one, theory must be reconciled with the need for “useable knowledge” (Thorne, 2016: 56), whereby “methodology should not overshadow the applicability of the derived knowledge” (*ibid*). Indeed, this tension between theoretical integrity and real world utility in many ways mirrors the dissonance between the formal language policy edict and its ‘practical’ interpretation in the classroom.

A further point is that qualitative research, unlike the controlled, determinist requirements of quantitative research, encompasses a degree of methodological uncertainty and openness to opportunism. As Holliday (2007) explains,

“strategies for collecting qualitative data have to develop in dialogue with the unfolding nature of the social settings, and with opportunity and developing relations between the researcher and other people in the research process. You cannot decide exactly what sort of data you are going to collect before you begin” (p.71).

Thorne (2016) considers writing a qualitative research methodology an *ex post facto* process: “you go back, trying to recreate the steps that led you, not quite by accident, not quite by design, to where you wanted to be. You call that recreation your ‘method’” (p.88). Contingency was thus part of the process as issues with access, context, logistics, and ‘happy accidents’ meant that my research took some unplanned but productive turns, exhibiting the sort of methodological ‘messiness’ that occurs in this sort of study (Whitehead, 2016).

4.2.2 Exploratory Research

Holliday (2007) suggests that traditionally the divide between qualitative and quantitative is one way of differentiating between research traditions, though there are authors who would disagree with this view (Pring, 2000). Perry (2005) argues that this distinction is misleading; rather the two methodologies are part of a continuum which in turn interacts with two other continua, namely basic-applied and exploratory-confirmatory. Though Richards (2009) has raised questions about the veracity of this approach to offer a complete explanation of research methodologies, it is nevertheless a useful framework for understanding how a study can put its strategy of inquiry into action. The three continua are summarized in Figure 1 below (Perry, 2005).

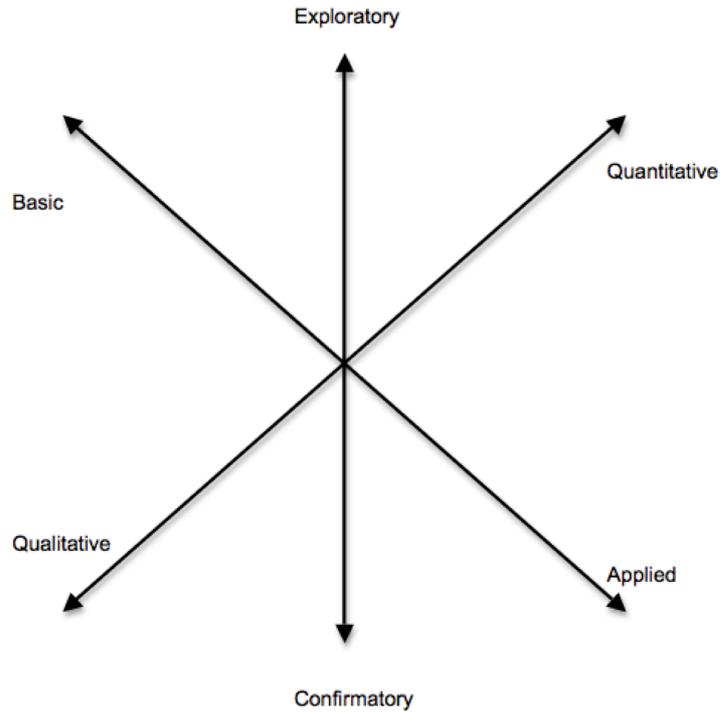


Figure 1: Design continua for classifying research (Perry, 2005: 72).

The basic-applied continuum refers to research that is either highly theoretical (basic) or something that is very practical (applied). This research would be placed at the applied end of the continuum as it focuses on how language policy in education is interpreted and implemented in the classroom, rather than addressing purely theoretical concerns. The exploratory-confirmatory continuum distinguishes between research that attempts to discover some form of evidence to support a hypothesis (confirmatory) or, to “... explore some phenomena prior to the development of any hypothesis” (Perry, 2005: 80). Exploratory research is concerned with “describing participants’ understanding and interpretations of social phenomena in a way that captures their inherent nature” Ritchie (2003: 28), what Robson (2002) describes as a way of “assessing phenomena in new light” (p.59). Along this continuum, this study would be situated at the exploratory end as it aims to describe and interpret how policy is realized in Japanese elementary schools, rather than to verify a hypothesis such as whether the policy is effective or not.

Therefore, in applying Perry’s framework, the methodological approaches undertaken for this research can be best understood as being applied, qualitative and exploratory, corresponding to

Ritchie's (2003) supposition that qualitative research is exploratory, interactive and interpretivist in nature, which, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the social world.

4.3 Methodological approaches to Language Policy Research

Research on language policy in education is an example of what Thorne (2016) terms a 'wicked problem', where the process is:

“fundamentally complex and messy, often representing the kinds of wicked problems that defy whole or coherent theorizing and demand instead a multiplicity of perspectives and approaches used intersectionally together within increasingly dynamic contexts” (p.72).

The methodological tension inherent in trying to reconcile the demands of theoretical rigour and real-world utility is, I would contend, a result of the subject of study. Language policy as formally documented in written form has to be subsequently implemented in the classroom, an often 'complex and messy' process whereby contingency alters, undermines, or ignores, the original formal policy. Ricento (2006) notes that in investigating the implementation of language policies, “best research is that which uses an array of techniques and perspectives in order to achieve the most valid results possible” (p. 131).

The particular concern of this research is with finding connections between macro-level language policy texts and discourses, and micro-level pedagogical practices—what Hult (2010) refers to as the perennial challenge for the field. Responding to such a challenge has led to an expanding body of 'on-the-ground' research on language in education planning that primarily utilizes ethnographic and discourse analytic research methods (Liddicoat, 2014; Helot and O Laoire, 2011; Li & Baldauf, 2011; Hult, 2010).

As part of this response Hornberger and Johnson (2011) have proposed a distinct methodology, the ethnography of language policy, as an apposite method that can illuminate and inform multiple types of language planning (status, corpus, and acquisition); illuminate and inform language policy processes (creation, interpretation, and appropriation); marry a critical approach with

a focus on educator agency; and examine the connections across the various layers and levels of language planning and policy activity, from the macro to the micro (McCarty, 2014; Johnson, 2013; Menken and García, 2010).

In instrumentalizing this approach Johnson (2013) has proposed a general framework for determining the extent of data collection in ethnography of language policy, one that includes agents, structures, and processes. It consists of:

- (1) agents—these include both the creators of the policy and those responsible for policy interpretation and appropriation.
- (2) goals—refers to the intentions of the policy as stated in the policy text.
- (3) processes—refers to the creation, interpretation, and appropriation of policy text and discourse.
- (4) discourses that engender and perpetuate the policy—the discourses within and without the policy; i.e. the discourses (whether explicit or implicit) within the language policy texts, intertextual and interdiscursive connections to other policy texts and discourses, and the discursive power of a particular policy.
- (5) the dynamic social and historical contexts in which the policy exists—an ethnography of language policy is interested in the dynamic social, historical, and physical contexts in which language policies are created, interpreted, and appropriated.

To meet the requirements of this framework, my methodology used a combination of ethnography and discourse analysis (see Chapter 5). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) contend that a diversity of data collection methods can “interact with each other and inform the research process as a whole” (p.20). A combined approach also enhances descriptions and understandings of the context in which the study is carried out (Ricento, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Atkinson and Coffey (2002) suggest that a combination of observations and interviews can “capitalize on the respective strengths of these methods, or ... counteract the perceived limitations of each” (p. 806). This integrated approach therefore enabled the collection of a rich data set and allowed for a more robust defence of the reliability and validity of the research findings (Richards, 2009).

4. 3. 1 Language policy and Ethnography

Adopting an ethnographic approach to investigate a language policy provides “insights about life at the grass-roots level and leads to better understanding of the role of language(s) in the lives of people directly affected by overt or covert language policies” (Ricento, 2006: 130). Ethnography refutes the simplistic top-down approach often implicit in language in education policy provisions and instead enables us to recognize and examine the inherent complexity and internal diversity of actual policy implementation. Liddicoat (2014) helpfully draws attention to the what he terms the classroom ‘interface’ where language policy has to be converted into effective pedagogical practice.

In Japan, the implementation of language policies occurs in a top-down ‘cascade’ process with the Ministry of Education formulating policy which is then diffused through a number of administrative levels (see Figure 2), before entering the classroom in the form of a workable pedagogy. Concurrent with this process there is supposed to be a cascade training system (through conferences and workshops) whereby practical teaching methodologies are to be diffused to each and every elementary school in Japan¹². However, attendance at such training opportunities is voluntary and during the two years of my research none of the teachers in the study attended such training¹³. Whereas a focus on the macro implementation of the new policy may indicate an effective system of teacher training, an ethnographic approach can uncover and illuminate issues that policy makers and specialists in Ministries of Education may not be able to predict or even comprehend when formulating the policy. An ethnographic approach shifts the viewpoint from the societal to the local, emphasizing how language in education policy implementation is a “local phenomena enacted in teaching and learning” (Garcia & Menken, 2010: 251). It offers a way to effectively examine

¹² The official teacher training process organized by MEXT involved each prefecture and city board of education nominating two teachers to attend a three-day conference held in Tokyo in September 2010. Following this the teachers, in conjunction with the boards of education, organized regional one day conferences for each prefecture and city. In the case of Hokkaido this one-day conference was held in December 2010 and each district on the island sent two teachers to attend. These teachers in turn held workshops during the winter holidays in January 2011 for elementary school teachers in their districts. However, content and duration of the workshops were left to the discretion of the district board of education and attendance was voluntarily. I could find no official attendance data on the workshop that was organized in the district in which the present study was undertaken, nor had any of the teachers in my study had attended the winter workshop.

¹³ In December 2012 I attended one such training conference organized by the Hokkaido prefectural Board of Education.

Liddicoat's notion of 'interface' by "marrying a critical focus on the power of ... policy discourses with a focus on agency, and by recognizing the power of both societal and local policy texts, discourses, and discourses" (Johnson, 2013: 44).

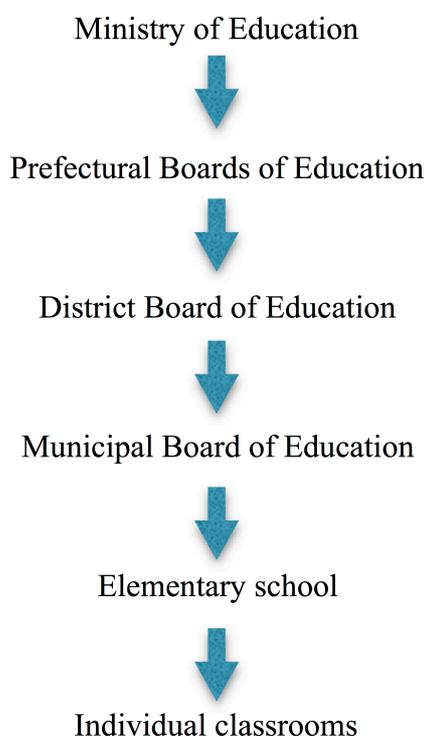


Figure 2: Diagram showing the administrative hierarchy for compulsory elementary school education in Japan

4.4 Research Design

Pinter (2017; 2006) has highlighted the dearth of longitudinal classroom-based studies of what actually happens in the young learners' classrooms. Enever (2016) has also emphasized this particular paucity of research, noting that our knowledge of classroom practices is incomplete and inadequate, thereby limiting the formulation of best practice advice. Although a number of comparative language policy studies have examined how such policy is implemented in classrooms around the world (Garton, 2014; Garton *et al.*, 2011; Nguyen, 2011), these have mainly been concerned with minority language learners (Walsh, 2012), multilingual environments (Johnson, 2010), teachers' roles and responsibilities (Malsbary and Appelgate, 2016), and instructional models (Butler, 2004). Research into the implementation of primary school foreign language learning in state educational systems has occurred (Mokibelo, 2015; Li & Baldauf, 2011; Kirkgoz, 2009; Hu, 2007).

However, the majority of these studies have been of a limited duration with a methodological emphasis on interviewing and surveys as the main data collection instruments. In the Japanese context a number of studies have been undertaken using both observation and interviews of elementary school foreign language activity classes, but many have been ‘once-off’ studies (Roux, 2016; Machida and Walsh, 2015; Hashimoto, 2011; Yamamori, 2013; Inoi, 2009), or of a distinctly limited duration (Otani, 2014; Sato, 2013; Sato and Miyamoto, 2012). To the best of my knowledge an extended, ethnographic investigation has not been undertaken of the implementation of the new foreign language activities curriculum in Japanese elementary schools¹⁴.

Hence, one of the major aims of this study is to fill this gap in our knowledge of early foreign language learning by examining the implementation of the new curriculum over a two-year period from April 2011, the official start date of the new foreign language activity class. The research design involves four interconnected domains: 1) a critical discourse analysis of the policy document and how it relates to both historical and contemporary discourses about English education within Japan; 2) an extended and detailed ethnography of four public elementary schools in Hokkaido, in northern Japan involving participant observation, interviews, and document collection; (3) a comparative, inductive analysis of the collected data to investigate how this policy is interpreted and implemented in different schools by teachers, ALTs, students, and school administrators; and 4) the use of Kaplan and Baldauf’s (2005, 1997) language-in-education planning framework to situate these analytical findings within the wider Japanese sociocultural context.

4.4.1 Ethnography

Ethnography was chosen for this study because it enables the “excavating, illuminating, articulating and disseminating [of] ... knowledge in applied disciplines such as education” (Thorne 2016: 15). Hammersley (1992) claims that ethnography gets “closer to social reality than other methods” (p.44), while Walford (2008) has succinctly described educational ethnography as seeking a qualified balance between the minute of everyday classroom activities and the wider sociocultural structures in which they take place.

Adequately defining ethnography is difficult due to the different expectations held by researchers. Spradley and McCurdy (1980) hold ethnography to be the “elicitation of cultural knowledge” (p.18), whereas Gumperz (1981) considers it to be the “detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction” (p.5). Lutz (1981) contends that it is the holistic analysis of societies. Rather than prescribing an overarching aim for ethnography, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) more helpfully define it in terms of what ethnographers actually do.

¹⁴ This is not to say that there have been no ethnographic accounts of Japanese elementary schools. Cave (2013, 2007) undertook a prolonged ethnography of schooling in two Japanese elementary schools though this was for a cumulative period of 10 months spread out over 2 years of visits. Benjamin (1998) and White (1987) have written ethnographic accounts of their children’s attendance at Japanese elementary schools, but their focus was on highlighting the differences between Japanese and American primary educational systems. However, none of these studies were interested in policy implementation *per se*, nor did they have as their focus the teaching of English as a foreign language in the elementary school classroom.

“...ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts - in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry” (p.3).

As “a way of seeing” (Wolcott, 2008), ethnography is concerned with cultural interpretation, the meanings that people construct through social practice. Rampton (2007) uses the concept of ‘repertoires’ to describe how such structures, both micro and macro, interact and develop.

“Persons, encounters and institutions are profoundly interlinked, and a great deal of research is concerned with the nature and dynamics of these linkages – with varying degrees of friction and slippage, repertoires get used and developed in encounters, encounters enact institutions and institutions produce and regulate persons and their repertoires through the regimentation of encounters” (Rampton, 2007: 3).

Ethnographers attempt to access the world of their participants thereby uncovering and understanding (albeit never fully) their shared discursive repertoires, and the sociocultural construed structures, both explicit and implicit, that shape and determine them. This requires the ethnographer to alternate between involvement in a particular local activity whilst orientating themselves to exogenous audiences and frameworks (Todorov, 1988).

One of the significant benefits of ethnography is the emphasis placed on being ‘on site’ and gaining knowledge of the resultant context specific data (Kawulich, 2005). Ethnographic research produces valuable descriptions of contexts that cannot be garnered by other techniques. It is the presence of the researcher in the field for an extensive period of time that enables an understanding to develop, which in turn makes interpretative descriptions possible. Another of the major benefits of ethnography is the assumed ‘permission’ to use a range of data collection techniques as deemed necessary by the researcher and the context. Indeed, according to Cohen *et al.* (2007:), whether a tool is appropriate for use in ethnographic research is decided purely on its “fitness for purpose” (p. 146). Similarly, Holliday (2007) emphasizes how methods should be “sufficiently flexible to grow naturally from the research questions and in turn from the nature of the social setting in which the research is carried out” (p.20).

In language policy in education research this entails viewing policy as a situated sociocultural process (McCarthy, 2014), occurring because of and through the agents, practices and institutions of formal education. Such processes can be both explicit - through rules and regulations, curricula, textbooks, tests, etc.; and implicit in the subtler ways in which people (teachers, students, administrators, parents) “accommodate, resist, and ‘make’ policy” (McCarthy 2014: 82).

The methodological variety ethnography sanctions enabled me to observe, interact, and account for these ‘agents, practices, and institutions’ and come to understand, albeit comparatively, how the new language policy was interpreted and implemented in the classrooms. To do this comprehensively required that I would visit the same schools and repeatedly observe the same teachers and ALTs with the same groups of students over an extended period of time. In doing this I was fulfilling Woods’ (1994) key stipulations that the ethnographer maintains a long term engagement with the research site, and observes things first hand. In undertaking a two-year study, I was making an investment of time so that I became a familiar presence to teachers, ALTs and students, and they in turn were less likely to “perform” (Gold, 1997), but rather to reveal more details of their educational lives and opinions.

4.4.2 Criticisms of ethnography

Ethnography, as an approach, has received criticism principally in relation to three key areas: imprecision, subjectivity, and generalization (Pole & Morrison, 2003: 15). Imprecision relates to the non-scientific descriptions produced, the *ad hoc* nature of data collection potentially resulting in a lack of methodological rigour. However, in attempting to fulfill Geertz’s (1973) criteria of providing a ‘thick description’, researchers need to comprehensively account for the social reality as lived in by the participants. The use of statistical techniques in positivist, quantitative research utilizing *a priori* defined variables to deliver analytical rigour would be anathema to the emergent approach of qualitative research. The researcher cannot render all the data they encounter, but they can provide a suitably ‘thick description’ of the field, making clear the workings of their research in order to provide clear evidence of how and why particular findings emerged.

The complaint regarding subjectivity is that ethnographic findings are the result of researcher interpretation. Such interpretation is held to be synonymous with personal opinion based on anecdotal evidence and is little more than journalism (Pole & Morrison, 2003:15). Implicit in this criticism is the epistemological assumption that all knowledge can be accessed objectively and that, through rigorous statistical methodology, the influence of the researcher can be negated. Yet, all research is affected by the individual interpretations and decisions of the researcher regarding what to research, what methods to use, what questions to ask, and of whom to ask them. Unlike the often artificially controlled settings of quantitative approaches, which attempt to limit such researcher influence, ethnography makes the role of the researcher explicit. As Holliday (2007) notes, “Every act of ‘seeing’ or ‘saying’ is unavoidably conditioned by cultural, institutional, and interactional contingencies” (p.19), which means that “researchers cannot help being socially located persons” (Cameron *et al.*, 1992: 5)

The third criticism of ethnography highlighted by Pole and Morrison (2003) is that of generalization, whereby the results of a specific study cannot be related to the wider world (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 157). As Hammersley (1992) points out, the “goal of any research is to provide

information that is not only true, but which is also of relevance to issues of human concern” (p.85). However, the located specificity of the classrooms and schools in this study make generalizations to other schools and classrooms in different communities problematic. In attempting to resolve this problem, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 233) propose a number of potential solutions. One is for researchers to develop general, theoretical accounts akin to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Another is to locate a specific case study that enables the researcher to draw some general conclusions about larger populations because the case is typical or atypical in key respects. They also emphasize the merits of producing thick description, “whose general value is to be judged by readers when they use those descriptions to understand new situations in which they are interested or involved” (2007: 234), what Walford (2001) terms ‘transferability’. Here, the generalizability of the findings is extrinsic to the research and depends on reader appropriation. My research follows this latter solution to generalization whereby the purpose is to add to the general understanding of policy planning and implementation in teaching English as a foreign language in primary school education. This ethnographic study does not attempt to present a ‘scientific and objective account’, but rather represents the most appropriate methodology for accounting for the complex context “in which a single school becomes part of a system and a society, including historical, social, cultural, linguistic, [and] political backgrounds” (Blommaert and Jie, 2010: 20).

4.4.3 Participant Observation

Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) contend that, for many researchers, participant observation is the “foundation method for ethnographic research” (p.2). Merriam (2009: 124) aligns the degree of participation along a continuum, from complete participant to participant as observer, observer as participant, and at the opposite end, complete observer. During fieldwork my involvement alternated along this scale. In Midori my role entailed complete participation in the class as the ALT, whereas in Kihiro I was usually in the position of non-participant, though there were occasions when I was involved in communicative activities with the students. In both Aoi and Chairō schools, the nature and extent of my participation was quite fluid, circumstances determining when I was actively included in the class. As Walford (2001) notes, being an observer is a “process of role definition, negotiation and renegotiation” (p.62).

There are a number of advantages to using participant observation in educational research. Observation enables the researcher to access participants “lived experiences” (Johnson, 2009: 142), and to “get close to understanding the meanings that participants give to their activities” (Gibson and Brown, 2009: 102). Activities and situations can be witnessed in “naturalistic settings” (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002: 2) first hand and, where necessary, immediate feedback can be elicited from teachers after the class. The shifting gaze of the observer facilitates noticing minor events that could possibly be missed if a static audio-visual recording device was set up and left to capture the events. On the

other hand, events can be obscured from human view as they can be hidden from a stationary camera.. As Pole and Morrison (2003) aptly remark, “observers cannot be everywhere” (p.27).

There are also challenges related to being a participant observer. In attempting to see the research field as the participants do, there is the concern that the observer may ‘go native’ (Pollner and Emerson, 2001), and lose the analytical distance necessary to ‘make the familiar strange’. There is also the related issue of maintaining a distinctive research focus while immersed in the classroom environment. This was particularly the case in Midori where the guiding theoretical focus of data collection was sometimes blurred by the practical exigencies of co-teaching the FLA class.

A further methodological concern is with my use of observations as the dominant data collection technique. This could mean that my analysis and findings were inherently biased by my own participant perspectives (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). For this reason, I discussed my classroom observations with the teachers in an attempt to ensure that what I was observing reflected their own interpretations and understandings of the teaching and learning in their classrooms. This participant checking (Creswell, 2007) permitted a degree of authenticity to apply to the data, thus improving the robustness and validity of this research.

4.4.4 Researcher Positionality

In order to successfully undertake ethnographic research “the researcher has to be accepted by the individuals or groups being studied” (Bell 1999: 13). To effectively do this requires an awareness of how “social identities and particular perspectives have an impact on the interpersonal relations of fieldwork” (Temple & Edwards, 2002: 10). As Chiseri-Strater (1996) has commented, “researchers are positioned ... by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation, historical-personal circumstance, and intellectual predisposition” (p.115). These are what Hammersley and Atkinson term “ascribed characteristics” (2007:73), integral features of my identity that I could not change. For the duration of my research I was a male, middle-aged, non-Japanese, native-English speaking, academic who specialized in English as a foreign language for young learners.

What I could and did change was the emphasis I placed on my multiple social identities in order to create “different self-presentations for different settings” (Seale, 2013: 253). By undertaking such ‘impression management’, I was attempting to influence my positionality (Aull Davies, 2008) with respect to how the various participants at the schools perceived me. Hence, I deliberately foregrounded those elements of myself that would, I hoped, make access and subsequent interactions more palatable. I adopted a role I termed ‘the familiar stranger’ whereby I highlighted those commonalities of experience I shared with the participants. In doing this I was striving to negotiate a balance between emic and etic perspectives (Spradley & McCurdy, 1980), so that I could simultaneously approach the field with a more objective ‘external’ point of view while drawing upon

my knowledge as a ‘partial insider’ (Sherif, 2001) in order to facilitate my fieldwork and relations with the participants.

Thus, to the school principals and vice-principals I emphasized my professional credentials as an associate professor and researcher at a national university. In detailing my research objectives, I stressed my focus on how policy at the national level (in the form of the mandated Course of Study) is implemented at the school level. Policy implementation rather than pedagogical evaluation was my main concern.

With the teachers, I presented a different stance. I emphasized my domestic background as the husband of an elementary school teacher and working parent as a means of establishing common ground between us. I also drew on my experience as an ALT for seven years to demonstrate an understanding of classroom realities. Thus, to the teachers I positioned myself as a ‘marginal insider’ (Lim, 2012) who, conscious of their already demanding jobs, wanted to understand how they coped with the addition of a new subject to their curriculum.

Hudson (2004) notes that the employment of such strategies in establishing ‘mutuality’ is more than simply initiating field relations and collecting data. Where a researcher’s projected image fails to be accepted is also a form of data for it necessitates a need to try and uncover the answer to the question ‘why not?’. Roth (2003; 2002) found that he had to adopt multiple roles when trying to position himself in relation to both Japanese management and *Nikkeijin* assembly line workers at a car manufacturing plant in Aichi:

“Depending on the person or context, Japanese friends and acquaintances referred to me as *Amerikajin* (American), *gaijin* (foreigner), *hafu* (‘half’ Japanese), *Nikkeijin* (overseas Japanese), and *daigakuinsei* (graduate student)” (Roth, 2003: 344).

Similarly, depending on who I was interacting with, I was referred to (in descending order of formality) as *kyoujuu* (professor), *sensei* (teacher), ALT (assistant language teacher), or simply *buraian* (Brian)¹⁵.

Hammersley (1992) criticizes outsider ethnography explaining that it is the direct experience of a phenomenon that yields understanding of it, implying that an outsider is likely to deliver a less than full representation. Pring (2000) argues, however, that there are certain common practices within formal education which enable the foreign researcher to find the activities intelligible. Although I accept that there are significant practices particular to the Japanese classroom, nevertheless I would contend that there is also a plenitude of commonly recognizable elements of teaching and learning which permit them to be rendered in an explanatory framework accessible to non-Japanese readers.

¹⁵ Interestingly, I was never referred to as a *kenkyusha* (researcher).

In addition, being a partial insider and thus, logically, a partial outsider also enabled me to stand outside the hermeneutically consistent world of the participants. As an outsider not naturally socialized to the the rhythms, routines, and structures of the elementary school classroom, I am in position to continuously ask the key question in ethnography: what is going on here? (Agar, 1986; Pole & Morrison, 2003). Indeed, as Bestor (2004) notes, questions that, if asked by a Japanese researcher would be considered rude or nonsensical, could be asked freely.

Undertaking a comprehensive literature review of Japanese language sources (see Chapter 2), along with a close reading of previous ethnographic studies set in Japan (Nakamura, 2013; Robertson, 2008; Kanno, 2008; Cave, 2007; Kawano, 2005; Bestor, 2004; Rupp, 2003; Roth, 2002; McConnell, 2000; Hendry, 1999; Lewis 1995) go some way towards validating my ‘familiar stranger’ approach, the data I accumulated, and the subsequent analysis. While I recognize that “absolute objectivity is an impossibility” (Burr, 2003: 152), as a ‘familiar stranger’ I believe I have been able to bring forth areas of analysis that an insider may have dismissed as uneventful, and a complete outsider would have potentially overlooked.

4.5 Research site selection

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out, prior to the commencement of ethnographic fieldwork the researcher is not in a position to specify the precise nature of the setting required: “...it is a matter of identifying the sorts of location that would be most appropriate for investigation of the research problem” (p.29). Obviously, I wanted to conduct my study in public elementary schools, but pragmatic considerations meant that the schools had to be geographically accessible and fit my work schedule at the university where I am employed. This in turn limited me to schools in a radius of approximately ninety-minute driving time, that conducted their foreign language activity classes on Thursdays and Fridays (the days when I did not have any university classes scheduled). Working on a proposed schedule of one school visit a week, each month, over a two-year period gave me a figure of four schools. In addition, to achieve a certain amount of variability in the data I collected, I required a mix of urban and rural schools, with different socio-economic catchment areas, in different municipalities, and schools with large and small student numbers.

In establishing these criteria, I was undertaking a form of purposeful sampling¹⁶ whereby my intention was to find a sample “from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009: 77), what Patton (2002) describes as “selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study” (p.264). More

¹⁶ Yin (2014) proffers an interesting critique of the use of sampling in qualitative research. He argues that the use of the term ‘sampling’ implies a desire to achieve statistical generalizability, whereas in case study research the aim should instead be for analytical generalizability (where generalization is at a conceptual level above the specific case). Thus, Yin argues, the use of sampling may risk “misleading others into thinking that the case comes from some larger universe or population of like-cases, undesirably reigniting the specter of statistical generalization. The most desirable posture may be to avoid referring to any kind of sample (purposive or otherwise)” (p.44).

specifically I undertook a combination of criterion sampling “where the cases meet predetermined criteria” (Duff, 2008: 115), and typical sampling (Creswell, 2009), where the site is selected because it “reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2009: 77). As such the chosen site is presumed to be “not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 2002: 236).

My sampling frame consisted of 41 elementary schools which met the criteria outlined above. School location, teacher and student numbers, and classes were obtained from the Hokkaido Prefectural Board of Education’s homepage. At the time of my study in Hokkaido the average school size (based on the number of students) was 117 in rural areas, and 359 in urban areas (Hokkaido Board of Education, 2011), the designations ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ being based on prefectural definitions¹⁷. In seeking typical samples, I therefore used the average number of students as my referent while location and socio-economic catchment¹⁸ area were further determining variables. This resulted in a list of 17 potential schools from which an initial six were contacted (see the following section) and four schools agreed to participate.

4.5.1 Accessing the field

My initial entrance into the field in April 2011 was facilitated by my wife. Pragmatic considerations, what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe as “drawing on intra- and inter-personal resources” (p.41), prompted me to consider my wife’s then school (Chaiiro) as a potential research site (the school also met the sampling criteria I outlined in section 4.5). On my behalf she arranged a meeting with the vice-principal and briefed him on the background to my research. In doing this she was acting as my ‘informal sponsor’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), vouchsafing for my professional credibility and ethical responsibility. In approaching the vice-principal, rather than the principal of the school, she was also highlighting the former’s role as ‘gatekeeper’.

I had met and talked with the vice-principal several times before (while my wife was in hospital for an extended period), so we were already acquainted. He was quite receptive to my request and, after discussing the matter with the principal, agreed to my conducting classroom observations in the school. Prior to commencing my fieldwork, the vice-principal also introduced me to the teachers in charge of the 5th and 6th grade students and explained the nature of my research. While the vice-principal’s cooperation was immensely beneficial, I was also concerned that the teachers may have considered his ‘official’ explanation (as their vice-principal) as subtly coercive in that they

¹⁷ In Hokkaido municipalities are defined as either *shi* ‘city’, *machi* ‘town’, or *mura* ‘village’. Although these denominations are primarily demographically based, some are also the residue of historical designations which local governments, despite a steep decline in population, are loathe to alter as it affects the amount of subsidies they received from both the prefectural and national government. See Seaton (2010) for a more comprehensive explanation.

¹⁸ Socio-economic catchment area was determined by using the annual land price register published by the Ministry of Land Transport and Industry. In addition, I undertook a ‘drive around’ of the areas using housing type and quality as an approximate indicator, a method also employed by Gordon (2009) in his ethnographic study of immigrant children residing in Hamomatsu, where he noted that “changes in the terrain as well as variation in homes ... clearly distinguishes among socio-economic levels” (p.170).

had no choice but to acquiesce to my presence in their classrooms (see also section 4.8 on ethical considerations concerning my research).

Gaining access to this first school considerably expedited gaining access to the subsequent schools. Having identified their gatekeeper role, I now knew to contact the vice-principal rather than the principal in each of the schools. Furthermore, the participation of Chairi school was invaluable in establishing my 'researcher legitimacy' (Morse, 2003). In addition, I also drew upon the 'occupational networks' (Cassell, 1988) that linked the schools to facilitate my access negotiations. When I contacted each of the subsequent schools and met with the vice-principals, I made the point of informing them that I was married to an elementary school teacher and had a child in elementary school thereby emphasizing a personal facet to my professional researcher's role. This invariably uncovered some connection between myself and the school which abetted both access and the development of rapport with the various participants.

Although access was successfully obtained for all four schools, I was conscious that it was the 'gatekeepers' permission I had received and not the unforced consent of the teachers. As Hobbs and Kubanyiova (2008) point out,

"most teachers ... do not wish to have their teaching scrutinized by outsiders, are overburdened with heavy workloads and have their own personal and professional agendas ... that are often incompatible with those of the researcher's" (p.500).

To overcome these issues, I followed Hobbs and Kubanyiova suggested solutions (p. 502) of 'selling' my project to encourage participants to 'buy in' to the research; spending time gaining the trust of the teachers; providing help and assistance; being non-judgmental; and being sensitive and flexible to the teachers' changing needs and anxieties.

Thus, by May 2011, when I commenced my fieldwork, I had a total of 12 classes to observe in four schools.

4.5.2 Field notes and field boundaries

Atkinson (1992) argues that the field is never just *in situ*, waiting to be discovered by the researcher, but rather emerges from the very process of research.

"The boundaries of the field are not 'given'. They are the outcome of what the ethnographer may encompass in his or her gaze; what he or she may negotiate with hosts and informants; and what the ethnographer omits and overlooks" (p.9).

Thus, the boundaries of my fieldwork were primarily the classrooms of the 5th and 6th grade classes in the four elementary schools. Depending on the school, the field also included the

corridors traversed between the classroom and the teachers' room (where much of the informal interview data were gathered); and the teachers' room. What I had to omit from my fieldwork was the unobservable planning and preparations the teachers undertook (though I did try to access that data through my interviews). Similarly, interactions with the ALTs, other teachers, the students, or the school administration were limited by the spatial and temporal bounds of my fieldwork. My engagement with what constituted my 'field of research' was restricted, but still adhered to what Emerson *et al.* (2011: 354) term "classic ethnographic naturalism"¹⁹.

4.5.3 Developing and maintaining field relations

Conscious of the imposition I was making on the teachers I spent the first month of my field site visits primarily concerned with establishing a measure of acceptance to my presence in the classroom. In doing this I was following Walford's (2008) assumption that "as the researcher becomes a more familiar presence, participants are less likely to behave uncharacteristically" (p.9). In this way, "the fieldworker uses face-to-face relationships with informants as the fundamental way of demonstrating to them that he or she is there to learn about their lives without passing judgement on them" (Gold, 1997: 394).

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the observer inevitably impacts the social setting by his or her presence and interaction. This particularly the case in foreign language research. As Richards (2003) notes:

"one consequence of our professional identity as a teacher is that we are unlikely to be seen as a neutral presence by the teachers we are observing. Observing in TESOL is so much bound up with evaluation that it will be hard for teachers not to see the teacher - researcher, possessor of sufficient relevant knowledge for the purposes of judgement, as someone to be regarded warily" (p.126).

This was especially an issue in my research where I, a native English speaker, EFL teacher and professional researcher, was observing non-native speakers/educators teach English, many of them for the first time in their professional careers. To mitigate this stance required me to continuously monitor my relations with the teachers and re-iterate and re-negotiate the nature and extent of my engagement with them, what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe as a process of 'impression management'.

¹⁹ Gubrium and Holstein (1997) provide a typology of different conceptions of the field and how this in turn shapes and constrains the resulting field notes. They distinguish between ethnographic naturalism which defines the field as a geographical location; the ethnomethodology field which occurs "wherever reality-constitution interaction takes place" (p.52); the field of phenomenological lived experience that emphasizes the emotions; and post-modern conceptions of the field as a 'hyperreal' construct that eschews notions of place and time (p.77). See also Atkinson *et al.*, 2011.

My field notes record how these shifts in positional stance occurred. From Midori school and a 5th grade class I participated in:

A very enjoyable class. A sensei did my idea for the karuta game for teaching months. She said it was better than the activity in the TG (teachers' guide). Said she will do it again next week with Catherine²⁰.

(Field note M/A/5/111110/3)²¹.

However, in Kiuro school I wrote the following:

Felix (the ALT) was late getting to the school arriving a few minutes before class. Said the roads were icy. Y. sensei hurried over to us to talk about her class. Felix wasn't sure what to do. I suggested an activity, explained what to do. But Y just nodded. Felix suggested the grab the rubber game (again) and Y agreed to do that. Then the chime sounded and that was lesson planning.

(Field note K/Y/5/061512/3).

It has been argued that only a trusting, reciprocal relationship between a researcher and participant can ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative report (Krueger, 1994), though some researchers have critiqued the traditional practices of rapport building (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007), while others have questioned its necessity (Venkateswar, 2001).

However, as the second field note extract above demonstrates, such reciprocity is not always possible. This lack of rapport did not completely impede my data collection in Y. sensei's class, but it did affect the quality of the data I collected. Somewhat paradoxically, this lack of reciprocity and what Sanjek (2015) terms 'mutuality' in itself also constituted data. It induced me to consider whether Y. sensei's seeming indifference was to me personally, professionally, or arising from her antipathy to English education in general.

All fieldwork generates data, both hoped for and unexpected (Patton, 2002); the next section explains my principal methods of data collection.

4.6 Data Collection

4.6.1 Field notes

Field notes are written records of observational work, a process Geertz (1973) famously described as the inscription of social discourse. However, this process of inscription is necessarily partial; field notes do not approximate moments of complete and 'pure' description wherein the entire

²⁰ The names of all the teachers and ALTs in this study have been changed in order to preserve their anonymity. Teachers are denoted by an unrelated capital letter (e.g. A. sensei), while the ALTs have been ascribed pseudonyms.

²¹ The reference system for my field notes uses the following format: school/teacher/class/date/period. Thus, the above field note means Midori school, A. sensei, 5th grade, November 11th, 2011, 3rd period.

observed world is rendered into an all-encompassing text. Rather, field notes are a form of representation (Emerson *et al.*, 2011), or ‘montage’ (Jones *et al.*, 2010), that reduce “the welter and confusion of the social to written words ... [and] (re)constitute the world in preserved forms that can be reviewed, studied and thought about time and time again” (Emerson *et al.*, 2011: 353).

As selective acts of representation field notes reflect particular purposes and commitments on the part of the researcher. What is written down is *a priori* influenced by the “other discourses and texts [that] have already shaped the researcher’s modes of seeing and representational practices” (Jones *et al.*, 2010: 481). Thus, what is rendered in the field note is not merely a descriptive account of what the observer perceived, but a filtering of this perception through a prescribed set of possibilities embedded in the researcher’s research design, what Malinowski (1922; 1984) termed ‘foreshadowed problems’, and Blommaert and Jie (2010) call ‘patterns of expectations’ (p.29). Thus, in my classroom observations and field notes I choose to focus on how the new curriculum is implemented in terms of classroom routines and practices, whereas another researcher may well have decided to focus on teacher-talk, or homeroom teacher - ALT relations.

In writing field notes Emerson *et al.* (2011) emphasize writing descriptive accounts that minimize explicit theorizing and interpretation. However, I found such an implicit chronological distinction difficult to maintain. Rather, my approach involved a continual thinking through of what I was observing and selectively recording. In doing this I was adhering to Gibson and Brown’s (2009) contention that,

“Observational work is data analysis - it involves thinking through what *is* being observed, why it is interesting, how it is to be categorized, what its relevance is to the problems at hand, how it might be thought through in relation to other data, which aspects of it are unintelligible or confusing; how it contrasts with or supports existing ideas/propositions/data/assumptions, and so on” (p.107).

This congruent process of observation and analysis also draws upon my ‘tacit knowledge’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2011) of elementary school teaching and my broader knowledge of English language education in Japan. For Wolfinger (2002) tacit knowledge is perhaps the most important consideration in determining how particular observations are deemed worthy of annotation. Hammersley and Atkinson describe the use of such tacit knowledge as ‘head notes’ (p.147) and commend their use in ethnographic research in order to “add detail and decontextualize recorded events and utterances” (p.147). Thus, for example, in a field note for the 6th grade class at Kihiro school on June 16th, 2011:

Today was a show class ‘sankanbi’, so discussion beforehand with ALT was for 15 minutes - normally 2. Lesson about countries and what you can do there: “This France. You can see the Eiffel Tower”. However, as the students have had no literacy instruction in English and hadn’t done this

lesson before, they had great difficulty remembering and producing the target language. So, HRT had to write key sentences in mnemonic katakana on the blackboard. ユー カン シー ゼ イーフエ ル タワー (*Yuu kan shii ze iiferu tawa*).

(Field note: K/K/6/061611/4)

Sankanbi is a special ‘open’ day at the school when parents (and other interested observers) can attend classes and subsequently meet the homeroom teachers. They are a regular feature of elementary school education in Japan and schools usually have three to four *sankanbi* days in the school year. As a form of public performance there is immense pressure on the teachers to present both their teaching and the students’ learning (and classroom behaviour) in a favorable light. Teachers wear formal ‘business attire’ (what they describe as their ‘*seifuku*’, [uniform]) and spend considerable time preparing for the day. Hence my note on the length of time the homeroom teacher spent planning the class with the ALT. However, as the students clearly struggled to produce the expected target language from memory alone, for this particular lesson the homeroom teacher, K. sensei, wrote a *katakana* gloss on the blackboard as an aid for speaking practice. The unfortunate effect of using such a gloss is that it overlays Japanese phonetic representations on to English pronunciation with the result that, for example, the verb ‘see’ is pronounced like ‘she’, while the final ‘l’ sound in ‘Eiffel’ is rendered as ‘ru’, which renders the sentence as “*Yuu kan shii ze iiferu tawa*”.

The excerpt from my field notes does not detail this tacit knowledge, yet such ‘analytical self-consciousness’ (Wolfinger, 2002: 88) was crucial for making sense of what I observed. Thus, in writing my field notes I was not simply putting ‘happenings’ into words; I was contextualizing and interpreting what I observed using my accumulated ‘chunked mental models’ (Bloch, 1991) of socio-cultural practices in the Japanese elementary school. This results in data that were both contingent and inimitably ‘mine’ - what I observed, noted, and analyzed was inseparable from the positionality, knowledge, experience, and stance I brought to the field. A different researcher would not be able to reconstitute my methods nor achieve the same outcomes.

4.6.2 The process of writing field notes

Sanjek (1990) suggests a two-stage process in writing field notes: ‘scratch notes’ are first made while in the field. In the second stage these are expanded and developed into more detailed field notes (p.95). Emerson *et al.* (2011: 15) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:142) recommend that field notes be written up as soon as possible after the observed action. Connolly (interviewed in Walford, 2009:124) drives home the importance of this when he reports losing “a fair bit of notes” because he couldn’t understand his shorthand when he came to write up his notes a week after his observations.

My approach to writing field notes followed the procedure advocated by Emerson *et al.* (1995): during the classroom observations I would make ‘mental notes’, subsequently write abridged jottings, then fill in an observation sheet (see Appendix 2), and later the same day I would write ‘full’ field notes.

For the most part I did not write any notes in the classroom as I was wary that such actions could be misinterpreted by the teachers (or ALTs) as form of assessment or judgment. Instead, I adopted a ‘participating-in-order-to-write’ approach (Emerson *et al.*, 1995: 17), so that if a teacher or student requested my participation in an activity I was actively able to engage. Between classes or at lunch time I would make a series of jottings or scratch notes of the significant incidents in the classes just observed and write down as close to verbatim as I could any salient comments from the teachers or ALTs. Such an approach “minimizes the level of interference and the facilitates the construction and reconstruction of the analysis” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 145).

Following the day’s observations, I would get in my car and drive a short distance before parking and completing an observation sheet for each of the classes I had just observed (see Figures 3 and 4). By doing this I was attempting to preserve the immediate “idiosyncratic contingent character [of observed activities] in the face of the homogenizing tendencies of retrospective recall” (Emerson *et al.*, 1995: 13-14). Later that day I would combine my initial ‘mental notes’ with the observation sheets to write up a ‘full’ field note of that day’s observations (Figure 5). In doing this I was rendering the disparate data into a more coherent narrative, a form of ‘sense-making’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2011) that inevitably presents and frames events in particular ways that “reflect and incorporates the sensitivities, meanings, and understandings the field researcher has gleaned from being been close to and participated in the described events” (p.9).

		Comments
Date	Oct - 25	
School	MADENNA St	HAD A special seminar lecture to attend in the afternoon so they were operating on a reduced B schedule today.
Scheduled events		Nobody said the kids of course, so most of admin work will have been a bit late (though I don't think so)
Class	6 th	
Teacher	Azumi	
ALT	ME	
Pre-class meeting: location duration language	Staffroom 5 mins Jap.	Must have been about her previous meetings with Laurel ST & how they communicate.
Written lesson plan	Yes	
Adherence/deviation from i p	Yes	Quite a bit of deviation from the lesson plan which could well be evidence of teacher autonomy or a creative part in that she is getting more comfortable going with the flow? during the class + also responding to my sudden interventions
Post-class meeting location duration language	Brief chat in the staffroom + in the staffroom too	→ Use topics I raise about the legitimacy of going off plan as it were
Other Attendees	Kenta	Made a brief 3 min or so appearance during the middle of the class.
Room	6th	
Seats	Yes	
Tables	No	
No. of Students	11	
Students sitting / standing	sitting	The whole time, which was unusual.
Single / paired / groups	In a free wheel	semi-circle group
Class start time	8:40	
Class end time	10:15	
Language spoken: Greeting Introduction Activity explanation During activity Class management End of class	JAP	
Language spoken: Teacher ALT Students Teacher - ALT Teacher - students ALT - students	JAP ENG/JAP JAP JAP JAP ENG/JAP	should be interesting to record the student interactions to give some idea of the % of Jap - Eng.

Figure 3: Observation sheet for 6th grade, Midori School, October 25, 2012

Location of HRT	Front of class	By window, next to TV.
Location of ALT	"	By door. It is students' book case, A left, B right. They're spread apart.
HRT during class	"	
ALT during class	"	
HRT comments on class	Present them as 3rd level Eng basic stuff	a basic gemi what we were teaching them + that it was considerably more than we think the textbook required.
ALT comments on class	Tensai Gumi 3	

Activity	Duration	HRT	ALT 1	ALT 2
1-60 counting	5mins	✓		
1-60 with a boundary for multiples of 3	5mins	✓		
'what time is it?' - individual in pairs	10mins	✓	✓	
Extra comprehension reports of this etc.				
Listening activity with photos + etc - each 3 students at a time, students write them down.				
Lesson time in class to 10 mins. As comment.				

Materials	Studs	HRT	ALT	Notes
Elge Note	✓		✓	5m time, studs write from down
Notebook				
Pencil				
Crayons				
Flashcards				
CD				
TV	✓	✓		
Computer				
OHP				
Photos				
Other				

Language skills	Individual	Pair	Choral	Interview	Move around
Speaking	✓	✓	✓	+	+
Listening	✓	✓	✓	+	+
Writing					
Reading					

Figure 4: Observation sheet (reverse side) for 6th grade, Midori School, October 25, 2012

* Write up these notes on the afternoon/evening after the class, particularly if I have another school visit scheduled for the Friday.

* Shouldn't always be problems; consider possible solutions too - can't just be a thesis of ~~unredeemed~~ unredeemed negativity.

* Meet the week long shadowing with A sensei next time you meet her.

Thursday 25th October 6th Grade.

I arrived at the school to find the staffroom strongly quiet. Usually there are a no. of teachers about + a bit of hubbub but not this morning. A sensei arrived in at 9:30 or so which is not so unusual but there were no other teachers there. Spent 5 mins discussing today's lesson plan, which was on no's + she willingly accepted my huge suggestion of practicing time expressions. She again asked me if I had the teacher's guide + apologized saying no, but that my wife was going to bring it home tomorrow + I would photocopy it over the weekend. We finished our discussion at 9:35 + then headed up to the class. Oh, point to that A apologized for not having prepared flashcards for 1-60 + also for the activities. She admitted that she only made the plan late last night + hadn't time to prepare this morning. On the way up to the class room I asked about the mats they get for MEXT. She said textbook, TG + STD, + from the latter you

to learn, and to learn more. If ever you wanted proof of hypothesis case of personal development, this was it.

Again, I took over, so to speak, + got each student to ask "what time is it?" + answer, "It's 10 o'clock", in linked pairs, around the class.

It helps too that myself + A sensei tend to be generous with our praise, calling them the "tensei qumi" + telling them how they were now leaving JHS level E.g.

As an aside, definitely follow this group through JHS to check their motivation + E.g. ability. - Motivation Questionnaire in end of Nov/beginning DEC?

We finished up at 10:15, which meant a short, 35 minute class, but one that made up in quality what it perhaps lacked in quantity.

On our way back to the classroom staffroom, a number of interesting things happened. One was that A sensei apologized for how the lesson veered off from the plan + we didn't do what we had discussed what we'd do. But as a pointed out the student's seemed satisfied + I asked her if she was satisfied too. She said yes. Similarly, in the staffroom, she asked if the lesson doesn't go according to plan, it's fine to veer off. Again, she seemed to be in thrall to the plan/curriculum as set out in the TG, but at the same time enjoying the autonomy + spontaneity that goes with just going with the flow.

As an aside, she asked me + I told her how to say 10:01, 02 ~ 09. In front of the students, she related this even though, as she jokingly said, "I went to university". This to my mind is an excellent role model to give to the students that of

be happy, engaged learners of a foreign lang.
 I think that with the AAT present, it's not
 the stud's who are learnin', but the teacher too.
 An aside, in terms of the actual methodology
 this evening. The Q's A. sensei asked me in
 a self-flow, I can we could both her Q's + my steps
 over in E, that is to say, my recollect is
 partially a translated recollection. My mental
 steps are, understandably in E, but it is v. difficult
 one to remember verbatim the quotes in Jap-
 anese this under them less trustworthily, too
 objective perhaps?

5th Graders.
 This is a study in contrasts, not just in terms
 of personalities, but teaching styles as well.
 A sensei is what Jim Scitner describes as
 an enabler, she creates an environment in which

the stud's take chances in learnin' E. T sensei
 by contrast, is an authoritarian, in that control is
 everything; the stud's are there to be taught rather
 than learn + the class is structured around this
 unidirectional flow.

She also, I believe, doesn't really see any benefit
 to E, so perceives it as 45 min's that have to
 be got through via "omoshiroi" games rather any
 specific learning goals per se. Her aim, by + large,
 is fun - A sensei by contrast, is with knowledge,
 we began with the charts, then did the finger
 pointing game twice, then stud's spent 8 min's
 cutting up the alphabet cards @ the back of their
 textbooks, before doing alphabet kanata - all 26
 letters - twice, and then the Dango game, 3
 times. So such was our activity filled class that
 the time ran over + we finished up at 11:20,
 after close on 55 minutes of "E" class. Fur

T sensei this was probably a good class in that
 the kids were happy, they certainly know the
 alphabet, + there is only 30 min's or so left until
 the kids go home as today is a special working day
 + all the teachers are headin' off to a lecture in the
 afternoon.

B And all this was on top of the previous (2?)
 classes when the kids also did the alphabet. Again
 there is just teachin' to the lowest common denominator
 of what is, the bare minimum rather than their
 maximum potential. And it is hard to fault
 T sensei for that as that is all the curriculum
 + by extension NEXT require of her. Why should
 she go above + beyond this when there is no
 need both externally (ie formal assessment) and
 internally (her own motivation to teach the lang).
 Then again, as our 60 second discussions prove
 we have minimal interactions + all I can do

is project my own subjective surmises on the
 masked intentions to my interpretation of her
 actions 'reveal'.

Figure 5: Field notes for Midori School, October 25th, 2012.

4.7 Interviews

Sewell (2005) emphasizes that the seemingly casual elements that shape behavior in a specific situation derive from a wide range of both enabling and constraining factors. Accounting for these constitutive parts requires a broad range of data collection techniques. Although the principal methodology employed in this study was participant observation (documented through extensive field notes), I was conscious throughout my fieldwork that important aspects of what I was observing were not readily visible. As Lamont and Swindler (2014) note, ethnographers have privileged access to immediate interactional situations such as the classroom, but may unwittingly miss important elements of the situation, “the background factors that might shape different people’s actions differently in the same interactional situation” (p.160).

An illustrative example of this occurred during 6th grade class in Midori on September 13th, 2012. On that day the students and their teacher, A. sensei, appeared unenthused and uninvolved in a lesson that “stuttered along” (Field note M/A/6/091312/4) compared to their hitherto positive engagement with the English lesson. In a post-lesson conversation with A. sensei, in reply to my inquisitive comment about the class (“it was an unusually quiet class today”), she explained that today the students were taking the exams for the compulsory national test of academic ability²². Prior to the English class the students had already taken two of the exams and the remaining one was scheduled for after lunch. Both she and the students had been “too caught up” (*makikonde iru*) in preparing for the tests with the result that they couldn’t engage in the English class in their normal manner.

Mere observation would not have elicited this contextual information. Interviews therefore, enabled me to ask and clarify issues of context, facts, beliefs, behavior, and emotions that would not otherwise be readily apparent. According to Richards (2009: 195), interviews “lie at the heart of qualitative research”. They are a widespread data collection technique (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Roulston, 2012; Mann, 2011), that attempt “to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015: 1). DeMarrais (2004) defines the interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p.55). In Dexter’s (1970) succinct summary it is “a conversation with a purpose” (p.136).

However, I concur with Hammersly and Gomm’s (2008) contention that an interview cannot accurately and objectively represent the cognitive and emotional states of the participants. When invited to take part in an interview, participants orientate to different category identifications depending on how they have been approached, the nature of the interview (formal or informal,

²² An explanation of the test is provided in chapter one.

structured or discursive), and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees. For example, being asked to contribute to an interview as a mother or teacher will mobilize different sets of category relevances and activities (Baker, 2004). Different identities are invoked which affects interpretation of the interview situation and can have an impact on the questions asked and responses given (Alvesson, 2003: 20).

Thus, I would circumscribe Dexter's "conversation with a purpose" as more specifically a situated speech event in which context is particularly germane. This approach reflects Fairclough's (2010) suggestion that interviews must be understood at three levels; the discourse (text) produced, the interaction and interpretation by participants, and the context (social conditions that affect both interaction and text). This view also aligns with Holstein and Gubrium's (2003) 'active interview' where both the content of the interview and the interactions of the participants in creating this content are both important. Interviews must also be seen as a social encounter, "not simply a site for information exchange" (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 350). The data generated from interviews must be interpreted in terms of the social context in which they were produced (Pole & Morrison, 2003). This is not to obviate the focus on 'what' is said; rather, we must conjoin content with its construction and pay more attention to the 'how' of interviewing (Mann, 2011).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) propose two ways in which participants' accounts can be used by ethnographers:

"First, they can be read for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer. Second, we can analyze them in terms of the perspectives they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even the psychosocial dynamics they suggest" (p.97).

My approach follows the first of Hammersley and Atkinson's methods in that I conceived of the interview data as explaining and illuminating different aspects of what happened in the teachers' classrooms. This is not to dismiss the second discursive approach, but rather to acknowledge the limitations of the interview data I collected. These included the inadequacy of my Japanese language ability to undertake a detailed conversation analysis of the data; and the specific means of my data collection; much of my interviews were 'spontaneous' conversations with busy teachers, usually between classes, the salient points of which were often hastily scribbled down on pieces of paper before I forgot them.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) helpfully divide interviews into 'solicited' and 'unsolicited'; similarly, Richards (2003) refers to the nature and conduct of interviews as either being 'formal' or 'informal'. In the course of my research I undertook both types of interview.

4.7.1 Informal Interviews

The majority of the interviews I undertook were informal, purposeful conversations. These spontaneous interviews within the professional (and spatial) context of teaching and the school were akin to the on-the-go interview approach espoused by Kusenbach (2003) as ‘street phenomenology’. She describes this approach as a “hybrid between participant observation and interviewing” in that “ethnographers are able to observe their informants ... *in situ* while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time” (p.463). Using this on-the-go ‘street phenomenology’ ameliorates some of the problems raised by Walford (2001) in relation to the artificialness of structured interviews.

As a participant observer, my extended fieldwork naturally encompassed spoken encounters with teachers, ALTs, school principals, and students, all of which were “to all intents and purposes brief and informal interviews” (Richards 2009:184). Much of these conversations, both with the Japanese homeroom teachers and the ALTs, occurred after the English lesson, or, depending on the school, during the lunch break when I would often join either the 5th or 6th grade classes for school-lunch²³. As much as possible I sought out such opportunities in order to clarify certain aspects of what I had just observed or elucidate further explanations as to the teaching approach taken. What was particularly advantageous of this approach was the immediacy of the responses and the ability to promptly clarify issues I had observed during the preceding lesson. Although these short conversations may have lacked the methodological rigour of the formal interviews, their frequency and the relatively spontaneous ‘ease’ in conducting them ultimately provided a richer set of data than those obtained from the formal interviews.

4.7.2 Semi-structured, formal interviews

In this study the term ‘formal interview’ refers to those interviews that were formally arranged with the teachers between school terms (when they had no classes)²⁴, specifically designated ‘interviews’ (*mensetsu*), and were audio recorded with the express permission of each participant. These were semi-structured in that they followed a general interview protocol but, as an ethnographic interview, the aim was “to facilitate a conversation, giving the interviewee a good deal more leeway to talk on their own terms” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 110).

Roulston (2012), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) all emphasize the importance of establishing rapport with the participants so that the data they provide is less likely to be artificially ‘constructed’. One of the aims of my initial year of fieldwork was to develop such a rapport with some of the teachers (though, unfortunately, not all), so that it would facilitate both their agreement to being formally interviewed, and the content of their talk. As a result,

²³ As is the case throughout the country, all of the elementary schools in this study were supplied with warm meals at lunchtime.

²⁴ Although an awkward formulation, ‘between terms’ is not synonymous with ‘school holidays’. In Japan students enjoy ‘school holidays’ but teachers are expected to be in the school for regular working hours during this time. Teachers must formally apply for ‘holiday leave’ if they wish to be absent.

I did not conduct any formal interviews with the teachers until the end of the first year of my fieldwork.

However, I must also acknowledge that where rapport failed to sufficiently develop I shied away from interviewing certain teachers. This is a recognized limitation of the interview data I collected.

4.7.3 Conduct of Interviews

Cohen *et al.* (2007) warn that, “the researcher using interviews has to be aware that they are expensive in time ... [and] they may be inconvenient for respondents” (p.349). This proved to be very true as I found it quite problematic to arrange interviews with teachers in all of the schools. My initial plan was to formally interview a representative teacher from each of the four schools I was visiting at the end of both the first and second years of my research period. At the end of the first year I achieved this, but the second year proved more difficult. I had to withdraw from Chairo²⁵ and could not conduct my second set of planned interviews. At Kiuro the two teachers I approached at the end of my second year there both turned down requests for a formal interview.

In total therefore I undertook six formal, recorded interviews with four teachers and an additional recorded interview with Amy, the ALT at Chairo school (see table 3). The interview with Amy had not been planned, but serendipitously occurred on the occasion I interviewed I. sensei. Amy happened to be in the school on the same day and, when I explained the purpose of my visit, she volunteered to be interviewed as well.

All interviews were conducted in the four schools in either the teacher’s own classroom, or the English room. Conscious of the imposition I was making on the teachers’ time, I brought along some formally packaged ‘snacks’ and a variety of drinks²⁶.

Table 3: Completed interview schedule.

Teacher Name	School	Date	Duration
A. sensei	Midori	March 2012	67 minutes
S. sensei	Aoi	March 2012	41 minutes
K. sensei	Kiuro	March 2012	54 minutes
I. sensei	Chairo	March 2012	47 minutes
Amy (ALT)	Chairo	March 2012	62 minutes
S. sensei	Aoi	April 2013	44 minutes

²⁵ A change in my schedule at the university in the autumn of 2012 meant I could no longer observe classes at Chairo.

²⁶ Bestor (2003), Hardacre (2003), Rupp (2003) and Hendry (1999) all emphasize the importance of symbolic gift-giving in the context of Japanese fieldwork. Hardacre states that "maintaining good relations in the long term is one of the obligations of fieldwork" (p. 85) and suggests that researchers undertaking fieldwork in Japan should include a gift budget in their financial plans. Gordon (2003: 269) is more succinct: "never come to an interview empty-handed".

Teacher Name	School	Date	Duration
A. sensei	Midori	April 2013	104 minutes

I used an interview guide with a number of pre-selected topics and open-ended questions (see Appendix 4), but the exact sequence and wording were not followed with each respondent. In addition, a series of prompts and probes were listed for each topic and I encouraged the teachers to elaborate on any issues they deemed important. The interviews lasted between 40 and 105 minutes with the average length of time being just under an hour. Transcribed extracts from interviews with S. sensei and A. sensei are given in Appendix 5.

4.7.3 Issues of Translation

Roulston (2010) describes the purpose of the ethnographic interview as enabling the researcher to “explore the meaning that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, *expressed in their own language*” (p.19, emphasis added). This has a number of implications for my study where all of the interviews with Japanese participants²⁷, both informal and formal, were conducted in the Japanese language. At the surface level there is the need for fidelity and accuracy in translating data from Japanese to English. At a deeper level I had to constantly evaluate the analytical relevance of the teacher’s talk as this talk was being produced, a process Gibson and Brown (2009) describe as “no small matter as it involves the researcher thinking beyond the unfolding structure of the conversation being held and reflecting on the overall aims of the research” (p.89). At times I found this task difficult to undertake as I tried to mentally ‘keep up’ with the teachers often rushed Japanese language explanations.

Similarly, in the context of the formal interviews I conducted with the teachers they tended to reference conceptualizations of English language learning and teaching that were familiar to both of us which made me wonder if such conceptualizations would be different if they were talking with their peers. Listening to the recorded interviews highlighted the constraints of my Japanese language ability and the desire of the teachers to maintain a comprehensible conversation. This, though, meant they were most likely less inclined to find language (words, idioms, metaphors) that precisely and fully articulated the complexity of their experiences.

Hence, my conceptualization of the interview was not that of an objective means of gathering empirical data specific to the teachers. Rather I considered it a situated action (Donaghue, 2015) for generating data rather than data collection *per se*. In this interpretation, I position the interview as a cross-cultural communicative event whereby participants construct knowledge together and draw on linguistic resources which may alter or develop during an interview as they encounter different topics:

²⁷ Conversations with the ALTs were all conducted in English.

“Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondents’ replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003:114).

Much of their discourse about teaching was intertwined with their professional and social experience as teachers. As a non-native Japanese speaker with limited experience of elementary school teaching, my active knowledge of this discourse was limited which meant I undoubtedly overlooked issues that a native Japanese researcher would have perceived.

However, on occasion my unfamiliarity with certain concepts required the teachers to specifically define what they understood them to mean. In addition, my imperfect formulations in Japanese of questions and comments resulted in both myself and the teachers having to work together to clarify the topic and the nature of the response I was seeking. Somewhat providentially I found that this process initiated the teachers as co-constructors of the interview so that the usual dialectic imbalance (Roulston 2012) between interviewer and interviewee was to a certain extent abrogated. The following example, taken from my second interview with A. sensei at Midori School (April 3rd, 2013), exemplifies this issue.

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | BG | <i>Hi Friends no shidoan ni tsuite ...</i> |
| 2 | A. sensei | Hai |
| 3 | BG | ... hitotsu no koto wo kikitai des ga... |
| 4 | A. sensei | Hai, ahh, shidoan wa, mmm ...
Ahh, ano shodoan no ho ... |
| 5 | BG | Hai |
| 6 | A. sensei | Monkasho kara zenbun wo matome no shidoan desu ka, jibun ga
tsukuta shidoan desu ka? |
| 7 | BG | Monkasho kara no mono |
| 8 | A. sensei | Ahhh, shidosho de shou? |
| 9 | BG | Hai, hai, so desu. |
| | | |
| 1 | BG | <i>The lesson plan for Hi Friends ...</i> |
| 2 | A. sensei | <i>Yes</i> |
| 3 | BG | <i>... I would like to ask a question about that ...</i> |
| 4 | A. sensei | <i>Ahh, the lesson plan is ...</i>
<i>Ahh this lesson plan is ...</i> |
| 5 | BG | <i>Yes</i> |
| 6 | A. sensei | <i>Is it all the lesson plans from MEXT or the lesson plans I make myself?</i> |

- 7 BG *The one from MEXT*
 8 A. sensei *Ahhh, you mean the teachers' guide?*
 9 BG *Yes, yes, that's right.*

Here I had confused the Japanese word for 'the teachers' guide' (指導書 *shidosho*) with the Japanese word for 'lesson plan' (指導案 *shidoan*). However, A. sensei realized my mistake as the interaction developed and helped me clarify my original question.

However, for the informal on-the-go interviews conducted in Japanese my cognitive recall and subsequent note-taking/transcriptions were in English. This meant that linguistic equivalence in Japanese and English was not achieved; according to Muller this is "nigh well impossible" (2007: 207), while Phillips (1960) describes the difficulties of achieving conceptual equivalence across languages as "in absolute terms an insolvable problem" (p.291). Thus, I do not claim that my English translation represents an objective equivalence with the Japanese original, but rather is a contingent interpretation both of its linguistic meaning and cultural context.

4.7.4 Issues of Transcription

Similar problems of interpretation attach to the issue of transcription. Any form of transcription inevitably loses data from the original interview as the process "represents the translation from one set of rule systems (oral and interpersonal) to another very remote rule system (written language)" (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 367). As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 177) suggest, the prefix 'trans' indicates a change of state or form; transcription is selective transformation. "Therefore, it is unrealistic to pretend that the data on transcripts are anything but already interpreted data" (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 367). When the research is being carried out bilingually then the data goes through another level of interpretation again, not just between Japanese and English, but also between the differing cultural concepts and mental schema that the teachers and I possess, what Torop (2002) terms cultural decoding. Indeed Muller (2007) goes so far as to argue that it is translating these cultural meanings rather than language *per se* that, "constitutes one of the most challenging tasks of translation. For this reason, translation as the transference of meaning can always only be partial and never total" (p. 207). Similarly, Rosaldo (1993) asserts that, "Even when knowledgeable, sensitive, fluent in the language, and able to move easily in an alien cultural world, good ethnographers still have their limits, and their analyses are always incomplete" (p. 9).

There is a tendency within much of language policy research written in English by (presumably) non-native speakers of the language to render their translated research as, what Muller (2007) terms, *a fait accompli*. We would assume that policy research into elementary school English in countries as diverse as Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011), Turkey (Kirkgoz, 2008), and Poland (Enever, 2008) was carried out in each of these countries respective languages, then subsequently translated

and published in English. Yet, in none of the three papers listed above are methodological details provided on how this translation occurred.

For both types of interview, I converted my oral Japanese data into English text in a way that was easy to write, easy to read, easy to learn from, and easy to analyze, following Flick's (2008) criteria of manageability, readability, learnability, and interpretability (p. 350). I did not face any difficulty in linguistic, syntactical or grammatical aspects of translation as I was not aiming for exact equivalence, but rather for a serviceable 'inexact equivalence' (Halai, 2007) in order to convey the essential meaning of the teachers' speech. Kvale writes that the pertinent question researchers should ask themselves is, "What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?" (1996: 166). I translated the interview text in such a way that the basic requirements of (a) meaning, (b) conveying the tone and manner of the original Japanese; and (c) explaining any cultural contexts that would be needed to make full sense of the teachers' talk, were all met. Following from Halai's (2007) suggestion these self-translated interviews are best thought of as "transmuted texts" (p.352), I tried to ensure that the essential meaning of the Japanese was retained while recognizing that in the methodological transformation from oral Japanese utterances to written English text, some changes have undoubtedly taken place.

In selecting a transcription system, I was guided by Ochs' (1999) observation that an important feature of a transcript "is that it should not have too much information. A transcript that is too detailed is difficult to follow and assess" (p.168). She stresses though that the basis for the selective transcription should be clear (*ibid.*). For my purposes of discussing general features of talk, a standard form of transcription was sufficient. I relied on most of the conventions in Richards (2003: 173-174) and added one other, a different font type, for translated text.

In my analysis section I have used translated words and phrases as direct quotes. Where words and phrases lack an equivalent English translation or require a more detailed elucidation of the original Japanese meaning, I have written them in Japanese in the text and provided an explanatory footnote.

4.8 Ethics

4.8.1 Introduction

According to Cameron *et al.* (1992) researchers "cannot help being socially located persons" (p.5). By 'socially located' they mean that the researcher is part of a complex web of interaction determined by both overt and covert socio-cultural rules. This is a particular concern for the researcher working in a foreign environment where such rules may not be fully comprehended. Hence, "the essential ethical issue of naturalistic observation is the extent to which the researcher accepts the existing social context, and particularly the norms and values in that context" (Oliver, 2003: 46).

Such a stance had implications for how I approached and dealt with ethical issues during my research. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) conceive of ethics in qualitative research as a procedure-practice dichotomy:

“‘Procedural ethics’ concerns approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans, while ‘ethics in practice’ refers to the ‘everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of research’” (p. 263).

I will follow this dichotomy in outlining the ethical approach I took to this study.

4.8.2 Procedural Ethics

Prior to the commencement of my fieldwork I submitted a detailed description of my study to Aston University’s Ethics Committee who in turn granted me formal approval to conduct the study. In the application form, I answered questions on obtaining relevant permissions at the fieldwork sites, having respect for participants’ rights and dignity, maintaining confidentiality, obtaining participants’ consent, storing and protecting data, and my plans for dealing with possible ethical dilemmas that might arise in the course of the study.

Although these a priori steps were an essential part of the ethical process, they were what Dennis (2010) terms the “standardized ethical expectations” (p.124) of undertaking the research. More challenging was the need to recalibrate my ethical position (or rather, positions), during the course of my fieldwork.

According to Dennis, “Ethnographers locate ethical decisions as internal to the research process itself, linked to the everyday interactions and ongoing research activities rather than a set of principles established external and prior to the conduct of the research” (p. 124). As Graves and Shields (1991) argue, researchers do not operate as “omniscient and autonomous agents” (p.145) within their field sites. Rather, undertaking ethnographic research is “a social process that often involves shifts and changes in the understandings of participants through time under changing conditions of work” (*ibid*). Static institutional protocols often fail to address ethical issues that can arise as researchers negotiate dynamic field sites

An early example of this came with my initial attempt to obtain participants’ consent using a translated informed consent form that had already been approved by the Ethics Committee at Aston University. When I presented the form to the vice-principal at Chairō and politely requested his formal stamp²⁸, he was quite taken aback. His hitherto attitude of openness and cooperation turned to one of, if not ‘doubt’, then ‘wary puzzlement’. Why, he wanted to know, did I need such 詳細な (*shosaina*, ‘highly-detailed’) approval to undertake the research? What exactly was I planning to do

²⁸ In Japan documents, both personal and professional, are stamped rather than signed as the principal means of legitimizing them.

in the classroom? Would my research have a detrimental effect on the students and teachers? Perhaps he needed to contact the students' parents. And what was I going to do with the data I collected?

Fruhstuck (2007), in an overview of the ethical considerations surrounding fieldwork in Japan, claims that such considerations have become reductively "urban, cosmopolitan, and Western" (p.610). Bestor *et al.* (2003) emphasize that in Japan the "careful cultivation of interpersonal trust is given far greater weight than formal contracts" (p.14), and that Western academic informed consent requirements "would not only be culturally unfamiliar but call into question the researcher's cultural understanding and trustworthiness" (*ibid*). Lewallen (2007) states that the use of written consent forms can be "a conversation stopper in a Japanese context" (p.160).

This is not to suggest that different ethical standards can and should be applied to different research settings. Rather, in my presenting the informed consent form to the vice-principal I was unwittingly betraying my 'cultural naivete'. What I failed to recognize was that my wife had, through her explanations to the vice-principal, vouchsafed for my professional integrity as somebody who could be trusted to carry out the research ethically. My 'standardized' consent form was a medium communicating an unintended message, a misconstrued 'warning' that my research could be potentially harmful in some hitherto unseen way. Reconciling this quandary required an approach that was "much more independently and situationally forged" (Dennis, 2010: 123).

Hence, I followed Kato's (2010) suggestion of using a 誓約書 (*seiyakusho*²⁹, 'oath' or 'written pledge'). In Japanese I wrote a general description of the aims, methods, and potential uses of my research; I listed the participants rights to refuse, question, or withdraw from the research at any time; assured them of their rights to confidentiality and privacy; promised not to undertake any form of research that could cause harm, discomfort or undue inconvenience to the participants as perceived by the participants themselves; and provided the contact details of both the university I work for and Aston University (a English translation is provided in Appendix 6).

For each of the four schools I made a specific *seiyakusho*. I brought two copies of this document to each of the vice-principals, explained them orally, answered any questions they had, then stamped both documents, giving one to the vice-principal and keeping one myself. In addition, a similar form (in Japanese and English) was given to each homeroom teacher and ALT on the first day of observations. In doing this I was able to I was achieve a more pragmatic and situationally specific form of informed consent, though with the awareness that such an approach was necessarily incomplete: "an ethnographer often does not know what will be involved, certainly not in any detail; even less, what the consequences are likely to be" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 210).

²⁹ The use of *seiyakusho* is widespread throughout Japanese society as a form of personal guarantee with legal obligations. It is commonly used for commercial privacy disclosure forms, non-disclosure agreements, employment contracts, market research, and weddings.

4.8.3 Practical Ethics

In conducting an ethnography “caring interactions are established and maintained over time rather than a contract that once signed is forgotten” (Milne, 2005: 31). Doing so provides an additional safeguard against harm, particularly since maintenance of this relationship is beneficial to both the researcher and the participant. This greatly reduces the likelihood of deliberate harm by the ethnographer while greatly increasing the likelihood that the ethnographer ensures the safety of the participants (Atkinson, 2009: 19–20).

However, maintaining an ethical relationship with the participants over the two-year period of this research highlights how conforming to procedural ethics does not “help you when you are in the field and difficult, unexpected situations arise, or when information is revealed that suggests you or your participants are at risk” (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 273). Awareness of such situations and knowledge of the potential means to ameliorate them requires a great deal of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, what O’Leary (2004: 11) describes as, “the ability of the researcher to stand outside the research process and critically reflect on that process”. In practice, this involved continuously questioning the ethical appropriateness of my methods and whether I had respected the autonomy, dignity and privacy of the participants, as well as considering the risks of unintended harm.

Such a conception of ethics as a [research] life lived, rather than an institutional obligation met, accords with Duranti’s (1997) view of qualitative research ethics as a way of professional being whereby knowledge of ‘social sensibilities’ must inform the appropriate behaviour in each situation (p.102). Similarly, Pring (2000) emphasizes the importance of “‘virtuous’ researchers” with “a respect for persons” (p.115). McNamee (2002:11) suggests ethics is “not ... grounded in duty or consequence but in character”. Duranti (1997) continues this theme of consequence when he states that “respect for our hosts’ sensitivity should always override our desire for ‘good’ data” (p.102).

In maintaining a ‘way of professional being’, I was at all times conscious of how I was an imposition upon the teachers, their students, and the ALTs. My most pressing concerns were twofold: one was to avoid at all costs doing or saying anything that the teachers might construe as evaluative or critical. The second was to be, as much as possible, a constructive and emphatic presence in the classroom, even if that meant no more than maintaining a benign smile. I was conscious too that my access to the four schools depended on my dual status as both a husband of an elementary school teacher working in the same region (and known to some of the participants³⁰), and as an academic at a nearby national university. My ethical responsibilities thus extended beyond my immediate fieldwork sites to include both personal and professional domains, and consequently the potential for unintended harm was considerably expanded.

³⁰ As my research progressed I became aware of just how interlinked the various personal networks were amongst the four schools. Some examples include: the wife of the vice-principal in Kiiri was the school nurse at my wife’s school, Chairō; The husband of the 3rd grade teacher in Kiiri was the vice-principal at Chairō; the vice-principals of Midori and Chairō had both attended university together and taught together in the same school; while S. sensei’s son was in the same swimming class as my son.

4.8.4 Openness and silence

The differing way the schools and teachers engaged with me was very similar to Bondy's experiences in researching Burakumin communities in Japan (2013). He used the dichotomy of 'openness' and 'silence' to represent the various levels of participation he encountered and the nature and extent of the data he collected. Referring to the (pseudonymous) communities where he carried out his research he states that

“In Kuromatsu, silence shaped my entrance and was something I had to continuously negotiate throughout the research process, while in Takagawa, the openness enabled my access, and it too was negotiated through my interactions while in the field” (p.581).

I found that such a dichotomy was evident not just between schools, but within schools as well. In Chairo, for instance, the vice-principal was an enthusiastic supporter of my research and did much to facilitate it, yet the teachers whose classes I observed were wary of engaging with me. What was interesting was that their 'silence' was, somewhat paradoxically, articulated through politeness. It was not that the teachers did not answer my queries or comments, but rather the manner in which they replied was overly polite and quite formal. Takeda (2013) relates a similar experience in his study of Japanese women married to Australian men where, despite his shared ethnicity with his subjects, he found that “the politeness inherent in Japanese cultural practices created an environment that only allowed for formal and polite questioning and did not allow for questioning on a more deeper level” (2013: 293). Hendry (1989) has highlighted how politeness in Japan is often used for indirection or oblique communication in order to maintain face and intentionality. She draws upon the Japanese custom of elaborate gift wrapping, 贈答品包装 (*zotouhin housou*), to explain the use of politeness as a discourse strategy by Japanese “to protect themselves from the harshness of direct exchanges by appropriately wrapping their *honno*, their individual opinions and views, so that exchanges may be made without loss of face” (1989: 627).

Conversely, A. sensei was quite forthcoming in talking with me, engaging in 裸話 (*hadaka hanashi*, literally 'naked talk'), expressing in frank language her hopes and frustrations with the new curriculum. I thus found the use of politeness to be less of a generalized cultural convention and more of an individual screen behind which some participants could hide.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explained in detail the research design and procedure adopted for this study. It began by justifying the socio-cultural research paradigm adopted and followed this with a detailed description of the qualitative research design and methodological procedures for participant selection, data collection and analysis. In addition, issues relating to ethnography, participant

observation, research positionality, field notes, field sites, access, participant relations, translation, and ethical issues were all examined. The following chapter will focus on the use of critical discourse analysis as a necessary means of contextualizing the classroom ethnography.

Chapter 5: A Critical Discourse Analysis of English language education policy in Japan

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will utilize critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the discursive construction of elementary school English language policy within the broader context of educational policy reform. The first section will focus on policy-as-discourse illustrating why and how a policy-as-discourse approach can be usefully employed in analyzing educational change in Japan. It will outline several different approaches to analyzing policy-as-discourse, before utilising Johnson's (2011) discursive-historical approach to examine English language education policy in Japan. Specifically, this chapter will analyze the 2008 Course of Study policy document, which officially promulgated the introduction of the foreign language activities subject in 2011.

5.2 Policy-as-discourse approach

A 'policy-as-discourse' approach seeks to understand and explain the means by which social processes and interactions shape different realities (Bacchi, 2000; Fairclough, 2000). Historically linked to the literary disciplines, it is highly critical of rationalist approaches that are thought to have limited capabilities for considering complex policy environments (Dryzek, 1987). Instead, it draws upon interpretive approaches (Yanow, 2007) that demonstrate how actions are interconnected and shaped by the social and political contexts in which they take place, both national and local; and how discourses regulate knowledge of the world and our shared understanding of events (Shaw, 2010). Policy therefore needs to be analysed qualitatively, paying particular attention to the social and political contexts in which it is formulated and implemented.

Such an approach shares many features with the analytical concept of 'framing' (Entman, 1993), whereby the pre-determined ways in which issues are publicly represented by state actors inherently, though not explicitly, limit the range and impact of potential solutions. Framing can be thought of as a form of critical policy analysis (Stevens, 2009), an approach that uncovers how issues get represented in ways that mystify power relations and assign responsibility to individuals for policy 'failures' (e.g. teachers), drawing attention away from the structures that create unequal outcomes (Baachi, 2000). Focusing on 'the ways issues get represented' necessitates a focus on language and 'discourse', meaning the socio-linguistic frameworks available to describe social processes. The premise behind a policy-as-discourse approach is that it is specious to uncritically accept governments as responding to 'problems' that objectively exist 'out there' in society. Rather 'problems' are 'created' or 'given shape' in the very policy proposals that are offered as 'responses'. In Goodwin's (1996) words, a policy-as-discourse approach "frames policy not as a response to existing conditions and problems, but more as a discourse in which both problems and solutions are

created” (p.67). Hence, the focus for policy-as-discourse theorists is not ‘problems’, which are often the presumed starting place for policy analysis, but an uncovering of the *a priori* construction of problematizations.

‘Problems’ are framed within policy proposals and how they are framed affects what can be thought about and acted upon (see, for instance, Johnson’s (2011) work exploring how bilingual education was reframed as English education for non-native speakers in the United States). It is through language that politicians and policy-makers communicate ideas and promote policies. Hence a policy-as-discourse analysis not only emphasizes the way in which language, and more broadly discourse, “sets limits upon what can be said” (Bacchi, 2000: 48), but it also illuminates the role of structured power relationships and dominant ideologies in the policy process (Lupton, 1992).

5.2.1 Policy

According to Shaw (2010), policy is,

“a set of processes and actions (or inactions) that have some broad purpose (rather than a discrete decision or programme administered at one moment in time), which embraces both what is intended and what occurs as a result of that intention” (p.201).

Unlike conventional accounts that separate politics from policy and focus on ‘what governments do’, policy-as-discourse theorists see them as inherently intertwined. In this light policy is regarded as “a set of shifting, diverse and contradictory responses to a spectrum of political interests” (Edelman, 1988: 16).

In this conceptualisation of policy, as something ‘governments do’, policy is best understood as an ongoing action, a verb if you like, rather than a static reified text, an immobile noun. Hence, “policy is both text and action, words and deeds: policy as practice is created and its effects need to be understood in context” (Ball, 1994:10).

Policy also embodies ethical choices. Whereas traditional rationalist models of the policy process assume a standpoint separate from, and unconcerned with, the political views of those who make and use policy, policy-as-discourse theorists argue that policy is inherently ideological and policy making is based on strategically crafted arguments (Fischer, 1998). Rather than explicating agreed upon rules and norms for conducting policy, the discourse approach examines how the different methods by which policy problems are identified and potential solutions proposed occurs in “competing languages in which people offer and defend competing interpretations” (Fischer, 1998: 141). Policy-as-discourse theorists therefore reject rationalist approaches to political analyses because the latter assume that social actors have ‘fixed’ interests and preferences (relating to, for instance, calculations of economic self-interest) (Shaw, 2010). Instead, they acknowledge the central role of theoretical frameworks in delimiting their work and, in so doing, reject empiricist and

positivist approaches (Howarth *et al.*, 2000). This focus on language and discourse is crucial as it effaces the professed objectivity of the policy planner, ensuring that no one can claim to stand ‘outside’ the policy process.

5.2.2 Methodological approaches

Given the expansive field of investigation the policy-as-discourse theorist can potentially explore, it is no surprise that the proposed research methodologies are similarly broad. All of them though, begin from a qualitative approach to research, grounded in the desire to illuminate the processes whereby reality comes into being (Yanow, 2007). In doing so a policy-as-discourse approach aims to explain “historical and social change by recourse to political factors and logics” (Howarth *et al.*, 2000: 6). The focus on discourse entails a recognition of the significance and structuring effects of language which leads to a close examination of language and a focus upon the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which language and interaction occur (Ball, 1994). Such an approach enables us to see how discourse, or sets of discourses, follow certain rules, share a common logic and vary historically as distinct ‘discursive formations’ (Baachi, 2000), that we find around certain societal themes such as ‘compulsory education’ or ‘educational equality’. A possible starting point might then be a close analysis of “items that do make the political agenda to see how the construction or representation of those issues limits what is talked about as possible or desirable, or as impossible or undesirable” (Bacchi, 2000: 49). In Levinson *et al.* (2009) succinct phrasing, our analysis of policy is governed by the need to answer the seemingly simple question, “what the heck is this?” (p.770), but in doing so we need to look beyond the policy text to the practices, structures, and agents that produce, implement, appropriate, and alter the policy.

5.2.3 Applying a policy-as-discourse approach

There is no unitary discourse ‘method’ for analysing policy-as-discourse: the transmission of discourse can happen at a number of different (often interconnected) levels and this guides researchers along different pathways through the landscape of discourse theory and methodology (Shaw, 2010). Research might focus at the micro linguistic level on words and their connotations in, for example, classroom conversation analysis; to a macro examination of social and historical contexts, such as the varied roles assigned to English education in Japan. A number of authors have developed broad analytic frameworks to guide discourse analysis and these vary in scope and theoretical underpinnings including, for instance, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 2000); critical linguistics (Wodak, 2006); analysis of linguistic repertoires (Potter and Wetherall, 1987); critical policy analysis (Tollefson, 2013); analysis of societal discourse (Burman and Parker, 1993); rhetorical analysis (Billig, 1988); interpretative policy analysis (Yanow, 2007); and linguistic ethnography (Copland and Creese, 2015).

In the field of language-in-education policy studies, critical discourse analysis (CDA) in particular has been widely utilised (Bubikova-Moan, 2016; Shi, 2016; Johnson, 2011; Hashimoto, 2011; Kubota, 2010; Ramanathan, 2005; Yoo, 2005). For instance, Li (2010) used CDA to explore the relationship between state English language policy and its implementation by teachers in China. Similarly, Lee (2014) employed CDA to examine the policy documents behind the introduction of early English language education in Korea.

Fairclough (2010) refers to CDA as having multiple ‘versions’, though all are concerned with analysing discursive events, defined as “an instance of language use, analysed as text, discursive practice [and] social practice” (2010: 95). Wodak (2001) proposed a discourse-historical approach to examine the influence of wider socio-historical factors on discourse interpretation and analysis, what Shaw and Greenhalgh (2008) term “the means by which societal discourses facilitate transmission of basic values at a broad cultural level” (p.2509). Johnson (2013), building on Wodak’s formulation and Tollefon’s historical-structural approach (2013), developed a four-level discursive-historical framework for analysing language policy (Table 6).

Table 4: The Discourse-Historical Approach: four levels of context for language policy analysis

1: Text-internal analysis	Focuses on particular themes, topoi, or linguistic constructions; semantics; deixis; grammar
2: Intertextual connections	Analyses connections to past and present policy texts and discourses - including the multiple drafts, reauthorisations, and/or revisions of a particular language policy, or relations across different language policy documents - and the interdiscursive connections to past and present discourses about language, language users, and/or language education.
3: Extra-linguistic social variables	These include the institutional and sociolinguistic contexts in which language policies are created, interpreted and appropriated, i.e. the multiple layers of context in which language policy activity takes place.
4: Sociopolitical and historical contexts	The sociopolitical and historical contexts include the historical, political, and social impact of a particular language policy, the institution(s) involved in language policy processes, and the beliefs and actions of language policy agents.

The benefits of this discursive-historical framework are that it both “attends to the multiple layers of sociocultural context ... and includes a close analysis of the language within the text and links between the multiple levels of sociocultural practice” (Johnson, 2013: 158). This framework is

particularly apt for the current study as it was conceived of as part of the methodological approach to the ethnography of language policy (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Hornberger & Johnson, 2011; see also Chapter 3). It has been used to investigate majority and minority language policy and practice in Laos (Cincotta-Segi, 2011); elucidate the role television plays in the positioning of languages within the language ecology of Sweden (Hult, 2010); and examine policy change and communicative classroom practices of teachers in Paraguay (Mortimer, 2013).

5.3 Issues surrounding CDA

However, these ‘multiple layers’ of context and the concomitant ‘multiple versions’ of CDA have been criticised for their failure to establish an agreed upon definition of what constitutes CDA. Widdowson (1995) has argued that CDA results in interpretation rather than rigorous analysis, whereby practioners “read their own reality” (p.168) into the text. Compounding the problem is the fact that many language policy documents, such as the 2008 Course of Study, are the product of a committee whose individual intentions most likely varied (and may well have at times conflicted). The result may be a multi-authored compromise resulting in a ‘generic’ policy (Johnson, 2013), that obscures and confounds attempts to uncover authorial intentions.

A related criticism is that CDA is being increasingly applied to translated policy texts, either translated by the researcher (Li, 2010), or an official translation (Lee, 2014), without significant consideration given to issues surrounding the text’s interpretation and translation. In her account of the challenges of working with data in both English and Urdu, Halai (2007) outlines how subtle nuances and meanings may be lost. Pavlenko (2005) argues that representation of findings may be affected by the researcher’s limited knowledge of the participants’ language. Ramanathan (2014), in her study of minority language education in India, described the issues she faced in “presenting the non-West to the West” (p.262):

“Translated texts are rife with severings, deracinations, and shreadings as the translated piece is lifted out of its sometimes extremely different milieu of origin, and transplanted and made intelligible in another context. The foreign text, then, is not so much presented and interpreted as it is constructed and inscribed with the receiving culture’s vested intelligibilities and interest” (2014: 262).

Hence, CDA of a translated text can, if no due consideration is given to the ‘severings, deracinations, and shreadings’, result in a personal interpretation rather than a rigorous analysis. This is particularly true of micro-readings at the linguistic level which focus on features of syntax, grammar, genre, and rhetoric (Fairclough, 2010). As House (2014) notes, “one might say that a translated text is in principle ‘second best’, that is, a kind of inferior substitute for the ‘real thing’ ... translation is by definition a secondary act of communication” (2014: 2).

It is with these caveats in mind that I employed the most pertinent sections of Johnson's Discourse-Historical approach to analyze the 2008 Course of Study. Although MEXT (2009b) issued an official English language translation of the original Japanese language document (see Appendix 1), my insufficient Japanese language ability precluded a detailed textual analysis of semantic and grammatical features of the original Japanese language document, thus precluding an analysis of intertextual connections with previous policy documents (Levels 1 and 2). I did undertake a comparison of the Japanese original and the English translation to highlight certain areas of discrepancy, thus validating Ramanathan's (2014) concerns about the fidelity of translations, official or otherwise.

Hence, my critical discourse analysis of the Course of Study document concentrates on Levels 3 and 4 of Johnson's framework, examining the wider sociolinguistic, political, and historical contexts within which the text was formulated and refers to. The next section will provide an overview of the Course of Study, the integral part it plays in Japanese educational policy, and the actors and agents involved in its formulation and implementation.

5.4 The Course of Study

Educational equality is enshrined in the Japanese Constitution under Article 26 which states that, "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law" (1947). The Article was promulgated into law under the Basic Act of Education which states that:

"Citizens shall all be given equal opportunities to receive education according to their abilities, and shall not be subject to discrimination in education on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin" (MEXT, 2007).

On the basis of this Act, schools must provide a uniform level of education from the start of primary school to end of compulsory education in junior high school. The Japanese Ministry of Education has sought to satisfy these constitutional requirements of educational equality through establishing mandatory requirements for school buildings, facilities, and equipment; imposing basic national standards for teacher qualifications and salaries³¹, and maintaining public expenditure on students at the same level throughout the country³² (Nakayasu, 2016).

³¹ However, with salaries the position is a bit more nuanced. Half of teachers' salaries are paid for by the Ministry of Education, with the remaining half being paid for by the prefectures in which the teachers work. These payments differ by prefecture, a reflection of each area's financial resources. In Hokkaido, for example, since 2009 public school teachers have had their salaries cut by an average of 1.5% each year.

³² Again, this relates only to the expenditure paid for by the Ministry of Education. Prefectures and local municipalities are permitted to provide additional funding on top of this.

In implementing the Basic Act of Education MEXT enacted the *Enforcement Regulations for the School Education Law*. This ordinance applies to both primary and secondary levels and mandates such issues as the subjects to be taught and instructional hours. As part of this ordinance the Course of Study defines the national standards for each subject and the details the various curricula required to meet these standards. The first Course of Study was issued in 1947 and has been totally revised around once every ten years (in 1951, 1958-1960, 1968-1970, 1977-1978, 1989, 1998-1999 and 2008-2009) (MEXT, 2013b). According to MEXT,

“the Courses of Study have been established as general curriculum standards for children at educational levels ranging from kindergartens to senior high schools, to make sure that they can receive a uniform level of education no matter where they might live in Japan” (MEXT, 2013b).

However, there were criticisms that the regulatory and policy emphasis on a ‘uniform level of education’, and the assumed heterogeneity of the public school student population, belied the varied reality in classrooms across the country (Nakayasu, 2016). In particular, the Course of Study was accused of being overly inflexible and stifling school and district initiatives to better meet the requirements of their local students (Hirahara, 2002). Criticism was also levelled at the emphasis across the curriculum on rote learning at the expense of independent thinking and problem solving (Hashimoto, 2009). In response, the revised Course of Study of 1999 introduced the ‘Period of Integrated Studies’ which was intended to foster students who could “think in their own way about life through cross-disciplinary studies and inquiry studies” (Nakayasu, 2016: 137). The subject was part of an overall educational strategy to promote ‘relaxed’ (*yutori*) education to alleviate the pressures of the hitherto formal system of education, which had been blamed for an increase in social and educational problems such as bullying and violence at school (Kingston, 2004). The aim of the policy was to create some flexibility in the curriculum in order to maximise the potential of individual children outside the normal framework for academic learning, although it was subsequently criticised for contributing to the decline in students’ academic performance (Tsuneyoshi, 2004).

Schools and local districts were expected to develop and conduct their own Integrated Studies classes in accordance with the circumstances and abilities of their students (MEXT, 1998). Subsequently, in 2003 the government established special zones for structural reform with the intention of encouraging regional and local municipalities to develop their own socio-economic initiatives (Yashiro, 2005). As part of this process schools could apply to MEXT to design their own curriculum, partially exempting them from the Course of Study³³. Such curricular initiatives included:

³³ As of 2015 MEXT has granted permission to 2,960 primary and secondary schools to develop their own curriculum (MEXT, 2015).

- Formally teaching English in primary school.
- Combining primary and lower secondary level schooling into a single nine-year school.
- Establishing a separate subject to teach Japanese literacy to children with poor reading skills.

Although such a decentralisation policy has its merits, from the point of view of primary school English language education the results were less than equitable. As Chapter 2 outlined, schools differed greatly in the quantity and quality of the English lessons they conducted as part of the Period for Integrated Studies. These disparities in provision in schools across the country undermined the Japanese Constitution's core commitment to provide an egalitarian education to all students. Compounding the problem was the increased emphasis by the government on the economic importance of English, particularly the 2002 and 2003 policy proposals to 'Cultivate Japanese with English abilities' (MEXT, 2002; 2003). The result was a revision of the Course of Study in 2008-2009 that formally mandated the teaching of 'Foreign Language Activities' as a mandatory class in the upper grades of public primary schools across the country. By doing this MEXT hoped to mitigate the inequalities that had resulted from the 'individualised' provision of various forms of English language teaching that had occurred as part of the Period for Integrated Studies (Butler & Inoe, 2005).

5.5 The 2008 Course of Study³⁴ for 'Foreign Language Activities'

Although all the schools in this study termed the subject 'English' (*eigo*), and much of the media discourse was about 'early English language learning' (*soki eigo kyouiku*) (Yano, 2011), the official term for the new subject was 'Foreign Language Activities' (*gaikokugo katsudo*). The term 'activities' was first used in the 2003 Action Plan (MEXT, 2003), where the inclusion of English in the Period of Integrated Studies was defined as 'English conversation activities'. The Plan emphasised 'experimental learning' (though without defining what this meant) with the aim "that the motivation and attitude for children to communicate positively is fostered" (MEXT, 2003). However, in 2006 the Central Council for Education's final report recommending the introduction of English in primary school omitted the term 'conversation', abridging it to 'English activities'. This purposeful use of the term 'activities' was a tacit acknowledgement that 'education' would not be a realistic goal given the lack of trained primary English language teachers, and that even 'conversation' had proved problematic with teachers (Butler, 2004).

In relation to the use of the term 'foreign language' rather than 'English', Hashimoto (2011) has argued that such phrasing allowed for an oppositional discourse contrasting Japanese language and culture with an amorphous, generalised foreign 'other'. In this way "elements of Japanese

³⁴ For the purpose of this analysis I have used the official English language translation issued by MEXT which is reproduced in Appendix 1. For a critical discourse analysis of the original Japanese language document, see Yano (2011).

language and culture are actually incorporated in the TEFL curriculum” (Hashimoto, 2011: 175). This is evident from the content description in Section II of the Course of Study.

II. CONTENTS

[Grade 5 and Grade 6]

Instructions should be given on the following items in order to deepen the experiential understanding of the languages and cultures of Japan and foreign countries:

- (1) To become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of the foreign language, to learn its difference from the Japanese language, and to be aware of the interesting aspects of language and its richness.*
- (2) To learn the differences in ways of living, customs and events between Japan and foreign countries and to be aware of various points of view and ways of thinking.*
- (3) To experience communication with people of different cultures and to deepen the understanding of culture. (MEXT, 2009b)*

The emphasis on Japanese language in the new curriculum can be interpreted as a policy compromise reflecting the contentious debate concerning foreign language (English) and Japanese language education in primary schooling. In 2006, the then Minister of Education Ibuki commented that it was not necessary to make English compulsory in primary schools because there was no value in having children learn a foreign language when they had not yet mastered the “beautiful Japanese language” (Asahi Shimbun, 2006). Similarly, in 2009 a survey carried out by the *Asahi Shimbun* (with 7,133 respondents) about the introduction of Foreign Language Activities found that 43% opposed the proposal, with ‘Japanese language education should be prioritised’, being first amongst eight reasons for respondents’ opposition.

This disparity highlights the contending discourses surrounding the introduction of foreign language activities. A progressive, utilitarian discourse emphasises the economic rationality and necessity for learning English, situating the language as a potential natural resource (Hashimoto, 2009). In contrast, there also exists a conservative, reactionary discourse that fears that English language education will insidiously undermine the use and appreciation of the Japanese language (Gottlieb, 2008). The Course of Study, by specifying how ‘foreign language activities’ can also promote the appreciation of Japanese language and culture, is an attempt to reconcile these seemingly contradictory aims for different discursive communities. As official educational policy it represents a settlement among competing political interests, including the state’s own.

Takayama (2009) contends that the Japanese state has to reconcile two apparently insoluble functions: capital accumulation and political legitimacy. In response to shifting economic, technological, and social needs, the state needs to revise and reform the educational system to meet these emerging requirements, of which English education has an integral role. Yet, the state also

must legitimise these changes by making them politically acceptable, situating them as externally determined (e.g. the effects of globalisation), a seemingly reluctant response to a changing world.

5.5.1 Communication as ‘skill’

When appropriated in official policy, keywords become “multi-accentual” (Takayama, 2009), meaning that they encompass multiple and sometimes contradictory aims for different discursive communities. In the Course of Study ‘communication’ is a key policy word. The term is used in the document a total of 22 times, yet the intended meaning of the term is not uniform throughout (see Appendix 7 for a complete word frequency analysis of the English version of the 2008 Course of Study).

The majority of instances refer to its seemingly pedagogical function as an essential aim of foreign language activities: “engage in communication in a foreign language” (Section II, 1.); “to experience communication with people of different cultures” (Section II, 2. (3)); and, somewhat optimistically, “to experience the joy of communication in the foreign language” (Section II, 1. (1)). This usage follows from iterations of the word in previous policy documents; for instance, in the 2003 Action Plan, “develop communication abilities through the repetition of activities making use of English” (MEXT 2003); and similarly, in the 2002 Strategic Plan, “it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English” (MEXT 2002).

This discursive coupling of ‘communication’ and ‘skill’ (or ability) involves promoting particular interactional norms, genres, and speech-styles, that are considered both integral to English language use, and “maximally ‘effective’ for purposes of ‘communication’” (Cameron, 2001: 69). The implied contrast is with Japanese speech norms which favour indirectness, hesitancy, ambiguity, and social ranking (Yano, 2011)³⁵. Hence, the specification in the Course of Study for “native speakers” or “local people who are proficient in the foreign language” (Section III, 1. (5)) who are, it is presumed, innately endowed with a working knowledge of these interactional norms.

At the same time, English communication is not meant to supplant the use of the Japanese language, but rather supplement it as a skill or ‘tool’ so that, “the values and traditions embedded in the Japanese culture will be retained, and cultural independence will be ensured” (Hashimoto, 2009: 27). As a skill, English is an essential requisite of what Gee *et al.* (1996) have called ‘the new work order’, an order that reflects the decline in traditional manufacturing industries and the rise of the service sector with its emphasis on linguistic skills. This has resulted in the formalisation of

³⁵ Hashimoto (2009) makes an interesting lexical comparison between the different varieties of the term ‘communication’ used in the Courses of Study for Foreign Language Activities and the Course of Study for the Japanese language (or more precisely, *kokugo*, literally the ‘language of the country’). In the original Japanese language documents, ‘communication’ in Foreign Language Activities is written as ‘コミュニケーション’ (*komyunikeshun*), an assimilated rendering of the original English term. In the introduction to the Course of Study for *kokugo*, the overall objective is ‘To develop in pupils the ability to properly express and accurately comprehend the Japanese language, [and] to increase the ability to communicate’. Here ‘communicate’ is written as 伝え合う (*tsutaegou*), an original Japanese term (MEXT, 2009).

‘communication’ as a performative activity that has standardised and measurable attributes (Cameron, 2001). In the case of English as a foreign language this readily apparent in the proliferation of ‘official’ language tests and their gatekeeping roles in further education³⁶, and employment³⁷.

However, Kobayashi (2007) has challenged this socio-economic affirmation of English education, calling into question the standard discourse that extolls economic benefits accruing to all parts of Japanese society. This echoes Pennycook’s (2007) criticism of the dominant discourse that English language ability enhances people’s socio-economic opportunities. Terasawa (2017) analysed data from the Japanese General Social Surveys to show that English ability and wages are only loosely correlated, and only in certain areas of employment. Yamagami and Tollefson (2011) argue that,

“the major beneficiaries of English language ability in Japan are a relatively small number of middle- and upper-class individuals: employees in international companies, international organisations...and students who attend university outside of Japan” (p.32).

Thus, whereas the introduction of the Foreign Language Activities was discursively framed (Edelmann 1988) in policy documents as a response to inequalities in previous provision, in practice it can do little to ameliorate these disparities.

5.5.2 Communication as ‘cure’

The second use of the term ‘communication’ in the document refers to what Butler (2007) has described as “the (unwarranted) perceptions of English as a potential solution for communication-related behavioral problems” (2007: 137). The continuing prevalence of the social phenomenon *hikikomori* (literally ‘pulling inward, being confined’), whereby predominantly young people deliberately isolate themselves from society, has been associated with a growing lack of communication and social interaction skills among Japanese youth (Suwa & Suzuki, 2013; Kingston, 2011). The Course of Study carefully positions communicative competence as a ‘social skill’ that can be nurtured through foreign language learning, with the presumed intention of transferring this skill to Japanese language interactions. In the introductory section detailing the overall objectives for the Course of Study, the first line states that the aim of the new course is “to form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities *through* foreign languages” (Section I, my italics), rather than *in* any specific foreign language. This aim is repeated throughout the document with references to “fostering a positive attitude to communication” (Section I), “to learn the importance of verbal communication” (Section II, (3)), “improving the relationship with a communication partner”, and “stimulating a

³⁶ In the 2016 national university entrance exams (commonly known as the *Center Shiken*), 529,688 examinees sat the English exam (by subject the highest number of examinees), whereas 507,791 students took the Japanese exam (National Center for University Entrance Exams, 2017).

³⁷ The Japan Business Federation (more commonly referred to by its abbreviated Japanese name *Keidanren*) in 2016 issued a policy proposal entitled ‘Basic Thinking on Education Reform’. In the section on ‘Aptitudes and Capabilities for the Next Generation of Human Resources’ (sic), the federation specified ‘the ability to communicate in foreign languages’ as one of the chief requirements for the future growth of the Japanese economy (Keidanren, 2016).

communication partner into action” (both Section III, 2.(1)E [Examples of Functions of Communication]).

The use of this particular discourse of ‘communication’ highlights how,

“Keywords become ideologically effective only when they are carefully employed to speak to people’s genuine feelings of anxiety, despair, hope and aspiration. People are not simply manipulated to consent to policies that are likely to benefit those in power. They consent to a policy only when they see an element of good sense in the proposal” (Takayama, 2009: 129).

In this way the Course of Study appropriates people’s genuine concerns about social issues and proffers a potential solution. It further expands the legitimacy of introducing the course in non-linguistic terms, by positioning it as a means of engaging students in social interaction via English.

5.5.3 English as the only foreign language

In Section III, Lesson Plan Design and Handling the Content, the first two directives are:

1. In designing the syllabus, consideration should be given to the following:

(1) In principle English should be selected for foreign language activities

(2) Taking into account the circumstances of pupils and the local community, each individual school should establish objectives of foreign language activities...

The first directive, despite the conditional ‘should be’, is in fact a tacit declaration of English being the only, and therefore, compulsory language of instruction. All of the teaching materials supplied by MEXT such as the *Hi Friends* course book, teachers’ guide, audio-visual DVDs, and flashcards (what Johnson (2013) refers to as the ‘products’ of policy development), are for teaching English. There are no course materials provided for any other foreign language. Hence, as the *de facto* compulsory foreign language in elementary school, English is not an individual choice for pupils (or schools), but an imposed choice. This is in keeping with the utilitarian discourse of foreign language learning in Japan which, “is designed to protect and enhance Japanese national interests, rather than to provide wider opportunities for individual students to expand their knowledge and experience and to engage with the world” (Hashimoto, 2009: 34).

It also contradicts the second directive and its explicit linking of objectives with the specific circumstances of pupils. According to MEXT (2014b), in 2014 there were 29,198 foreign children³⁸

³⁸ There were 18,884 students at primary school, 7,809 at junior high school, 2,272 at high school, and 133 at schools for students with special educational needs (MEXT, 2014). Tsuneyoshi (2011) details the problems facing such children including academic difficulties in learning curricular content through Japanese, school absenteeism, social discrimination, and economic hardship. See also Shimizu (2011) for an ethnographic account of immigrant students attending a public junior high school.

in Japan's public primary or secondary schools who needed instruction in the Japanese language³⁹. For these students it could be argued that Japanese is in fact their *de facto* foreign language. Yet, 'local circumstances', being subordinated to the policy of English in principal, deliberately conceives of such circumstances as extant on a discourse of Japanese-English bilingualism rather than a wider appeal to multilingualism.

Such a narrow dichotomous view also extends to international understanding. Section III 2. (1) D states:

Teachers should enable pupils to deepen their understanding not only of the foreign language and culture, but also of the Japanese language and culture through foreign language activities.

That foreign language and culture may in fact be a part of Japanese culture is elided by separating the two, a distinction premised on a taken-for-granted (Kubota, 2010) division between foreign and domestic. Such a distinction is inherent to the concept of *kokusaika* or 'internationalisation', which is predicated on the view that Japan and the rest of the world are distinct entities. Hashimoto (2009) argues that this is a deliberate approach to resisting the cultural hegemony of increased globalisation and the perfidious effects from the spread of English, what Tsui and Tollefson succinctly term "deconstructing English and reaffirming Japaneseness" (2007: 10).

Kubota (2002; 2010), however, takes a less benign view, contending that *kokusaika* is a manifestation of nationalism through linguistic and cultural essentialism. Instead of promoting a form of cosmopolitan pluralism, *kokusaika* has implicitly endorsed a concept of foreign language education where:

"the 'foreign language' is English;
the model for 'English' should be standard North American or British varieties;
learning English leads to 'international/intercultural understanding';
national identity is fostered through learning English" (Kubota, 2002: 19).

This emphasis on national identity, a distinct homogeneous conception of Japaneseness also relies on a discourse of distinctness. This is apparent in the Course of Study document with its repeated emphasis on the need to learn and 'appreciate' the various differences between Japanese and the foreign language (English). This is most evident in Section II 'Content', 2. (1), (2), and (3). In each clause the words 'differences' and 'different' are used in relation to "language", "in ways of living, customs and events", and "cultures". The dominant assumption here of course is that it is a

³⁹ I have deliberately chosen to focus on immigrant children who need Japanese language assistance as there are detailed statistics available. However, such children would only be a minority of the minority as it were. There are a far greater number of bilingual/multilingual students attending public schools across the country. Unfortunately, Japan does not gather any statistics on the language use of its residents so definitive numbers of such students are unknown.

single, unified, monolingual and domestic Japanese culture that is being compared with a diverse array of external foreign languages and cultures. That Japan is not, in fact, such a unitary society and contains within its borders (and classrooms) a wide variety of peoples from many different places is deliberately omitted. Parmenter (2006) has noted that whereas being a diverse member of the family, school, community and region are accepted and actively promoted, “once it comes to the sphere beyond the nation, the only identity that is permitted and encouraged in Japanese education policy and curriculum is identity as a Japanese person” (2006:145). Similarly, Chapple (2009) has highlighted how pluralism in Japanese education means teaching students to “act cordially with people of other cultures but not to develop [as] intercultural citizens” (2009: 8). He describes the aim of such education as a “banal cosmopolitanism...in which brands, icons, foreign travel and food, etc., are accepted by society but they alone do not necessarily equate to ethical and moral commitments to a global community” (2009: 7).

What the policy document essentially does is draw a distinction, via language, between domestic society (Japanese) and foreign society (everywhere else outside of Japan). That representatives of the latter do in fact constitute members of the former highlights the major gap between policy discourse and public practice.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have utilised Johnson’s Discursive-Historical framework to undertake a critical discourse analysis of the 2008 Course of Study policy document on foreign language activities in elementary school. I adopted an interpretive approach to demonstrate how policy formulations and action plans are interconnected and shaped by social and political contexts within Japan, and how these discourses have regulated the understanding, practice of, and access to foreign language education. My focus has been on the significance and structuring effects of language, and upon the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which language and policy formation occur.

In doing so, I have examined a number of discourses that are critical to understanding how the Course of Study frames ‘foreign language activities’ and justifies such an approach. These can be recapitulated into three main themes: (1) a continuation with previous iterations of educational policy on foreign language education that have made English the *de facto* language of study while simultaneously positioning it as an economic resource to be utilised by the Japanese speaking majority; (2) the clear distinction drawn between domestic (Japanese) and foreign languages (specifically English) through the deliberate promulgation of a distinct, unified conception of Japanese language, culture, and identity; and (3) the elision of the inequality that currently exists in the quantity and quality of resources are available to different regions and schools.

However, I must also acknowledge that my analysis is necessarily limited. Wodak (2006) defines language policy as,

“every public influence on the communication of languages, the sum of those ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ political initiatives through which a particular language...is supported in their public validity, their functionality and their dissemination” (p.170).

My sums don't quite add up as this present analysis has principally been concerned with state mandated ‘top-down’ initiatives as they manifest themselves in policy documents. A more thorough examination of ‘bottom-up’ influences such as media representations of the new Course of Study, or local non-governmental organisations teaching foreign languages other than English for immigrants (Okano, 2013), are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present study, but are acknowledged as having a significant, albeit localised, part to play in language policy implementation.

To return to Shaw's (2010) definition of policy as a process that encompasses “both what is intended and what occurs as a result of that intention” (p.201), this chapter has used discourse analysis to scrutinise the intention of policy makers. In the next chapter I will provide a ‘rich description’ of the FLA class as it was taught in the four case study schools.

Chapter 6: An Interpretative Synecdoche of the Case Study Schools

6.1 Introduction

One of the central arguments of this study is the importance of context in understanding the different ways the Foreign Language Activities (FLA) curriculum is implemented in schools and classrooms. Context here covers a multitude of variables, from the socio-economic hinterland surrounding each school, to the English language proficiency of individual teachers. To try and capture some of this complexity this chapter provides a detailed, ‘thick’ description of each of the four schools in my case study and what I consider a ‘typical day’ in each school. Doing this provides the necessary context for my subsequent thematic analysis of the factors impacting on the new Course of Study. This ‘day in the school’ approach allows me to illustrate aspects (though not the totality) of FLA in the classroom, enabling me to highlight practices and actions that would not have been elicited through other forms of data collection.

In qualitative case study research Hancock and Algozzine (2006) insist that accounts should be “richly descriptive” (p.16), while Peattie (2001) emphasizes descriptive ‘density’ rather than mere ‘summing up’ as a guiding principle. Gillham (2000) goes so far as to claim that “meticulous description of a case can have an impact greater than almost any other form of research report” (p.101). Wenger (1998) used a narrative based on composite observations of his ethnography of bar patrons to represent a typical case, an approach subsequently adopted by Romero *et al.* (2016) in their ethnographic account of English language teaching in Mexican primary schools.

Although coming prior to the analysis chapter, these ‘rich descriptions’ of the four case study schools are in fact an initial form of data analysis. Erickson’s (1986) concept of ‘analytic induction’ informed this preliminary process of data analysis. Analytic induction involves combining assertions, vignettes, quotes, interpretative commentary and theory to explicate research findings. In particular, vignettes provide “focused descriptions of a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic” of the accumulated data (Miles *et al.*, 2014: 182). In compiling the vignettes, I wanted to preserve the richness of my field note data while conveying the analytically critical features, both common and specific, of each school.

For the purposes of this chapter I am guided by Richards (2011) recommendation to render an “an adequately complete and accessible representation” (p.214) through the use of what he terms an ‘interpretative synecdoche’:

“This involves selecting and presenting in fine detail some part of an embedded unit or feature to stand for the whole. The resulting description then provides the reader not only with an impression of the relevant unit but also with a sense of its significance to the case as a whole” (p. 214).

According to Jessor *et al.* (1996), the use of synecdoche in qualitative research enables the reader to understand the fieldwork both “at a more immediately experienced level”, and in “propositional terms” whereby the wider context can be incorporated into our understanding (p.499). My rich descriptions of each school are an attempt to “give the context of an experience ... and reveal the experience as a process” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 205).

Whilst rich these descriptions should not be considered exhaustive. The necessity of filtering the vast amount of data I collected has undoubtedly caused me to overlook or neglect other aspects of data that may have had a bearing on my analysis. Unfortunately, in an ethnographic study like this one there is no easy way to ameliorate the inherent tension between rich, inclusive description and the atomized focusing on discrete items of data. My intention though was not to be exhaustive in my descriptions, but rather to aim for informed verisimilitude; to recount various aspects of the different FLA classrooms and the factors influencing their pedagogical approaches.

6.1.1 Participants

Tables 7 and 8 (below) summarise the salient features of the teachers and ALTs who were part of this study. For the Japanese teachers unrelated initials were used instead of their real names, while pseudonyms have been used for the ALTs. In doing this, rather than just using initials for everyone, I have made it easier to distinguish between elementary school teachers and ALTs.

Table 5: Summary of the principal teachers featured in this study.

Teacher	Gender	School	Class	Number of students	Teaching experience	Years at current school	English language qualification	English education professional development
A	f	Midori	5th	11	14 years	1 year	none	none
M	f	Midori	6th	26	19 years	4 years	none	none
S	f	Aoi	6th	31	16 years	3 years	Eiken level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JHS English teaching license. • J-Shine certificate for TEYL (correspondence course)
F	m	Aoi	6th	32	11 years	4 years	none	none
O	m	Aoi	5th	33	27 years	5 years	none	none
E	f	Aoi	5th	33	27 years	3 years	none	none
P	f	Kiiri	5th	7	4 years	1 year	none	none
K	m	Kiiri	6th	19	12 years	6 years	none	none
N	m	Chairo	6th	27	20 years	2 years	none	none
Y	f	Chairo	6th	27	23 years	2 years	none	none
I	f	Chairo	5th	28	29 years	3 years	none	none
T	m	Chairo	5th	29	13 years	5 years	TOEIC 400+ *	none

* TOEIC = Test of English for International Communication. T. sensei had taken this test in university but couldn't recall his exact score.

Table 6: Summary of the ALTs featured in this study.

	Mary	Amy	Felix	Mike	Catherine
Nationality	United States	United States	New Zealand	United States	United States
Age	(unknown)	23	36	38	22
Undergraduate degree	None	East Asian Studies	Education	English literature	Business Communications
Postgraduate degree	None	None	None	English literature	None
Primary teaching qualification	None	None	Yes	None	None
TEFL qualification	None	None	None	None	None
Japanese language ability	JLPT Level 1	JLPT Level 2	JLPT Level 2	n/a	n/a
Teaching experience in Japan	34 years	1 year	11 years	5 years	none
Length of time in current position	7 years	1 year	5 years	1 year	new
Length of time in Japan	39 years	1 year	12 years	5 years	new

Note: JLPT refers to the Japanese Language Proficiency Test⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ The Japanese Language Proficiency Test is a standardized criterion-referenced test to evaluate and certify Japanese language proficiency for non-native speakers, covering language knowledge, reading ability, and listening ability. There are five levels, with level 4 being the lowest and level 1 the highest level of certification. It is administered by MEXT and results from the test can be used for acquiring employment visas, university admissions, and sitting professional licensing exams.

6.2 Midori Elementary School

Midori Elementary School is a small rural school of 69 students. It is situated in rolling farmland about 10km from the town of Takaha-shi (population 35,803). The school is surrounded by farms and the view stretches to the mountains to the west and the sea to the east. This sense of space is reflected in the school grounds. In front of the school building there is a small gravel car park, a large, well tended carp pond, and some swings and see-saws. At the back of the school building there is a large sports field, beside it a large flourishing vegetable garden, and beside that again a large green house.

The staff room is just inside the main entrance of the school on the left. Along the corridor leading to the staff room is the school's 'wall of fame'. Here are certificates of commendation for both academic and sporting prowess; newspaper clippings about the school; photographs of students engaged in various activities; an inspirational letter from a (somewhat) famous ex-student; and photographs of all the teaching and administrative staff (including the principal and vice-principal) holding their favourite books along with brief written descriptions of each volume's merits.

The staff room is a large, rectangular room with a wall of windows on the south side that look out onto the carp pond and the playground area. The teachers' desks are arranged in a hollow rectangle facing into the centre of the room. Here there are two photocopiers, a laser printer, assorted stationery and supplies, and in front of the vice-principal's desk a small low table and 'dwarf' armchairs for visitors. Behind the vice-principal's desk, running the length of the wall, is a large green blackboard divided vertically into 31 strips, one for each day of the month along with a larger section to the right that details today's schedule and important events and activities. I always check this section to see if there are any special events planned for the day such as open class days, research classes, school festival preparations, tests, etc., as the busyness or otherwise of the schedule is usually a good indicator of how much time the homeroom teachers (HRT) will have to discuss the class with me. At the bottom of today's list are the words 'ゲイナー先生来校' - 'Gaynor (teacher) comes to the school'. However, when Catherine, the town ALT, visits her name is omitted. Her visit is rendered simply 'ALT 来校' - 'ALT comes to the school'.

I say hello to the vice-principal who is usually the only person, along with the school secretary, in the staff room when I get there at 9:10. First period is from 8:40 to 9:25 and all the teachers are in their classrooms. On the low table are two printed lesson plans, one each for the 5th and 6th grade classes. The lesson plans are prepared by the respective HRTs and they follow the same format. The plans are written predominantly in Japanese with the only the lesson's key vocabulary and phrases written in English. Each plan is divided into six sections:

- 1: 過程 (*kado*) section
- 2: 児童の活動 (*jido no katsudo*) student activities
- 3: 指導者の活動 (*shidosha no katsudo*) instructor activities, which is further divided into HRT and ALT activities
- 4: 指導者の留意点 (*shidosha no ryui ten*) things to pay attention to
- 5: 評価の観点 (*hyoka no shiten*) evaluation
- 6: 材料 (*zairyo*) materials

This lesson plan format is taken from the CD-ROM that accompanies the teachers' guide to the students' *Eigo Note* course book, and the contents of the lesson plan closely follow the plan proposed in the teachers' guide (see Appendix 8 for an example).

Just before 9:25 M. sensei, the 6th grade HRT, comes to the staff room and sits down to talk with me. She has been a teacher for 19 years and this is her second year teaching foreign language activities - she taught the same students the previous year when they were in fifth grade. Usually, we spend about three minutes discussing the class in Japanese based on the lesson plan and clarify what M. sensei would like me to do in the class. She hurriedly leaves just as the chime sounds for the start of the second period at 9:30. The established routine is that I then wait in the staff room until two students come to 'escort' me to their classroom. Each week is a different pair of students. As we walk I chat to them about their first period class to try and gauge their mood.

The FLA classes are not held in the students' regular classroom. Instead, the students move to a multi-purpose room down the corridor. It is directly over the staff room and faces south too. As we are the first class to use the room that day the hitherto closed room is stiflingly hot from its exposure to the strong morning sun. At the top of the room there is a wall mounted blackboard with a small ABC poster above it. Next to it is a much larger poster with the words to the school song written in Japanese. In front of the blackboard and slightly to one side is a large 50-inch color television connected to a computer. On the screen is a picture of the first page of unit 5 from the students' *Hi Friends* textbook. The screen is an interactive touchscreen and through the connected computer, contains all the audio and video recordings for the entire textbook along with expansion activities and supplementary materials. Behind the TV is a small table with upon which there are some worksheets. The corridor side of the room is hung with student paintings. At the back of the room there is a large collection of collapsable tables and folding chairs all stacked up against the back wall.

The 26 students in the 6th grade sit in four rows on the floor. All of them are wearing badges with their names handwritten alphabetically. On the ground in front of them they have their textbooks and pencil cases. The students are quiet and subdued.

M. sensei announces the start of the class in Japanese. The clock on the wall reads 9:39. She begins as she always does with “Good morning everyone”, to which the students chorally reply, “Good morning Ms. M”. Then it’s my turn. I say a big, loud enthusiastic, “Good morning everyone” to which I receive a less enthusiastic reply. I then ask them, as I always do, “How are you today?”, “What is today’s weather?”, and “What day is it today?” I had tried to introduce some variation to these questions such as asking if the students were hungry or tired, but M. sensei has told me she preferred if we stuck to the same routine.

Today’s class is the start of Unit 5 on the theme of buildings and places. M. sensei’s lesson plan adheres closely to the teachers’ guide so much so that she has photocopied the relevant pages from the TG and highlighted the sections she wants me to say out loud. M. sensei explains in Japanese to the students that they are going to be learning about places and directions. She then directs them to open their textbooks. The first activity is a listening one where students have to match the textbook characters with the places they are going to. The listening and answer checking are done using the interactive TV. Then I say the place names (“police station, bank, post office, hospital, etc.”) and the students chorally repeat after me. This is followed by another listening activity to introduce ‘turn left’, ‘turn right’, and ‘go straight’. Again, I say the phrases and the students repeat after me. Using a simple town map on the TV, M. sensei calls on five students to explain how to get to various places. She then uses the TV for another listening activity whereby students have to listen to directions and decide where each character is going. To check the answers the TV repeats the directions and also draws a line on the screen showing each character’s course. Following each answer M. sensei translates each of the TV audio explanations in to Japanese. Although there is a pair speaking activity detailed in the lesson plan, this is not included in the class. Throughout the class the students remain seated on the floor.

M. sensei finishes the class at 10:14 by saying, “That’s all for today. Goodbye everyone” to which the students reply in unison “Goodbye Ms. M.”. And in turn I do the same. M. sensei then distributes class evaluation slips which students fill in Japanese and return to M. sensei. The evaluation sheet asks students to respond to the following three statements about the class by circling either ‘definitely did’, ‘did’, ‘sort of did’, or ‘not really’.

- 1: Did you interact with your friends and teacher?
- 2: Did you listen attentively to what your teacher and friends said?
- 3: Did you use the new expressions you learned in class?

There are also two open-ended questions which the students have to complete (though not all of them do every time). These are:

- 1: Please write down what you could do, couldn’t do, and worked hard to do?
- 2: Please write down what you noticed about your classmates’ speaking?

M. sensei usually gives the students around three minutes to complete these sheets or until the chime sounds at 10:20. Once completed, the students return the sheets to M. sensei and go back to their usual classroom. M. sensei says she uses the sheets to gauge the students progress and whether they are enjoying the class or not. At the end of the week she pins the notices to the wall of the (usual) classroom so that students can read each other's evaluations. It should also be noted that the same evaluation sheets with the same questions are used for Japanese, Maths, Science, and Social Studies.

After the class M. sensei quickly returns to her classroom and I go back down stairs to the staff room. Between the second and third periods there is a twenty minute break. Most of the students go outside to play and the teachers return to the staff room. There is much banter between them as grab a quick cup of coffee, do photocopying, mark some homework, or read and respond to the seemingly never-ending flow of paperwork that crosses their desks.

During the break time A. sensei, the 5th grade homeroom teacher comes over to talk to me. She has been teaching for 14 years but this is her first year in Midori elementary school. It is also her first year teaching the FLA course. Due to both the twenty-minute break time and her personality, A. sensei is less rushed about discussing the lesson plan and more flexible in making alterations to it.

Today's lesson is focused on colours and clothes. In Japanese we review the lesson plan and discuss some changes and the use of some extension activities, time permitting. A. sensei has said that she normally makes the lesson plan on a Sunday evening but last weekend she was away and didn't get around to preparing it until late last night. She apologizes for the few errors apparent in it. As the weekly schedule for FLA is always the same (day and time), our pre-lesson meeting during break time usually means that we have the opportunity to discuss more general issues to do with English language education. A. sensei is always quite interested to know what other schools are doing and how her students compare in ability and attitude.

The chime sounds five minutes before break time ends alerting students to return to their classrooms and prepare for the next lesson. Myself and A. sensei slowly make our way upstairs whilst having a conversation about the difficulty of students remembering English when they can't write it down.

There are 11 students in the fifth grade and when we enter the multi-purpose room they are sitting on chairs in a semi-circle facing the blackboard. There is a chorus of spontaneous 'Hello's' and comments in Japanese directed towards me. My relationship with this class is by far the best of all the schools I visit, and I think (hope) they respond to the evident pleasure I display at being in their company.

Although the 10:40 chime has sounded the class doesn't officially begin until A. sensei formally announces its commencement. Like the 6th grade class there are a series of greetings and questions to begin the class though each of the students are individually asked "How are you today?" This usually elicits a range of imaginative responses from "Not very well" to "I could eat a horse".

To introduce the lesson theme myself and A. sensei enact a short skit to introduce colours and then I use picture flashcards to practice meaning and pronunciation. We do a similar set of activities to introduce and practice vocabulary about clothes. Whilst doing this A. sensei mispronounces the word 'blouse'. I don't explicitly correct her but recast it when I am leading the students through pronunciation practice. However, A. Sensei notices her mistake and gets me to say the word again which she repeats a number of times in front of the students. I explain how 'blouse' is actually a French word and the pronunciation of it in Japanese (ブラウス) mirrors this. This is followed by a listening activity - not in the lesson plan - whereby I describe what one of the students is wearing and they have to guess who it is. The final activity has the students paired up. One student describes a photograph of a person's clothes and their partner has to draw it. When they have finished describing/drawing, they reverse roles. As there are an odd number of students I pair up with one of them.

The class ends with a formal 'goodbye' greeting at 10:15 and, like the 6th graders, the students fill in the same class evaluation sheets. A. sensei reminds them to finish their preparations for the maths lesson and they need to set up the projector. They then fold and stack their chairs before returning to their usual classroom. As the chime hasn't sounded yet A. sensei and I have a short post-class discussion about what went well and what could be continued when Catherine, the ALT, comes next week. A. sensei says that because Catherine's Japanese is not very good it is hard for her (A. sensei) to explain what she wants her to do in class. This often results in her assigning mere pronunciation practice activities to Catherine which she feels guilty about, but she doesn't know what else to do.

Usually A. sensei accompanies me back to the staff room but today she has to return to her classroom to supervise the set-up of the projector. I go downstairs that again only has the vice-principal and the school secretary present. The vice-principal invites me to stay for lunch, but I regretfully decline. Thursday afternoons are always filled with faculty and departmental meetings at the university and I have to return.

6.3 Aoi Elementary School

Aoi elementary school is, by rural Hokkaido standards, a large elementary school with 387 students. It is situated in a quiet, middle-class neighbourhood in what is a predominantly blue-collar town of 90,000 people. The rather rundown school building is in the shape of a large 'H', three stories high. However, one of the long sides of the building is no longer used due to declining student numbers and is blocked off. There is a large sports field in front of the school and a small playground to one side. To the side of the school is a now disused, rusty open-air swimming pool which is out of bounds to the students. On the other side is a large gravel car park.

The first floor of the school contains the first and second grade classrooms along with the sport's hall and a number of disused rooms. The second floor is home to the third and fourth grade classrooms, along with the staff room. The top floor is where the 5th and 6th grade classrooms are along with the 'English room'.

The school is situated on the slope of a hill and from the large, south-facing staff room you can look across a kilometre of rooftops to the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean beyond. There is a tsunami warning poster at the entrance to the staff room along with an official sign stating that the school is 22 metres above sea-level.

In the staff room teacher's desks are grouped by floor so that the 5th and 6th grade teachers have their four desks grouped together with the two teachers from each grade facing each other. There are also another pair of desks beside them for the ALTs who come to the school. The desks are at the far end of the staff room from the vice-principal's desk and unlike Midori elementary school, it is difficult to see what's written on the schedule board.

Aoi school is unusual in that it has its own ALT who is directly contracted by the school. None of the other schools in the study had such a system. In addition, the school also receives scheduled visits from the ALT's employed by the town, though not every week. Mary, the school's ALT, is an expatriate American who has resided in the city for 31 years. She lives in the school catchment area and her own children all attended the school. She was initially invited to do some volunteer teaching nine years earlier and it became a paid position five years ago. Her hourly fee is paid for by funds from the school's parent-teacher association and the school's discretionary budget. English classes are held every Friday and follow the same sequence: second and third periods are for the 6th graders, while the 5th graders are taught before and after lunch in fourth and fifth periods. When I enter the staff room at 9:20 all the teachers are still in class for first period. Mary has not arrived but Mike, the city ALT, is already present. Unlike Midori, there are no preprepared lesson plans on the desk. This is not unusual. On occasion there is a short, handwritten note for the ALT informing them of which page in the textbook to do, but usually there is nothing. This suits Mike as he confides that he "doesn't like planning. I prefer to be spontaneous, to make things up as I go along".

Just before 9:30 and the start of second period, a rushed S. sensei, one of the 6th grade teachers, appears in the staff room. In my field notes I repeatedly describe her as 'harried', 'flustered', 'hassled', and 'agitated'. Much of this can be attributed to the additional responsibility she has as the school's coordinator for English education⁴¹. This includes, amongst other tasks, planning the year-long curriculum for both grades, liaising with both her fellow teachers and ALTs, preparing classroom materials, explaining lesson plans, and setting up the audio-visual equipment in the FLA class for each week's set of lessons.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that the Japanese title of her position is 英語教育担当者 - *eigo kyouiku tantousha*: English Education Coordinator. The official policy designation of 'foreign language activities coordinator' is not used.

She has been a teacher for 16 years. This is her third-year teaching in Aoi and her second year teaching FLA. Although she is the official English coordinator, as a homeroom teacher (HRT) she can only be present in her own English class and entrusts much of the implementation of her lesson plans to Mary. However, Mary is repeatedly late coming to school and thus pre-class meetings with S. sensei tend to be rushed. Mary justifies this by explaining how she has taught the lessons many times before and so she knows what to do from experience.

Mary finally arrives into the staff room at 9:33 with a cheery '*gomen ne*' (I'm sorry). Mary is twenty-two years S. sensei's senior so there are never any words of admonition from her, but it is clear Mary's tardiness irritates her though even in her interviews she never explicitly said so.

We arrive in the English room on the third floor to find that Mike has already begun the class. He instructs the class to say "Good morning" to Mary and S. sensei and then continues teaching the months of the year with flashcards.

The English room is a large room at the end of the corridor next to the cooking room and across from the toilets. It is equipped with a blackboard, whiteboard, projector, a large TV, a CD player, some speakers, and an assortment of tables and folding chairs. Above the blackboard are three posters written in Japanese, extolling the merits of learning English. Large windows face south looking out onto the school ground, while on the opposite wall there is a large alphabet poster, three poster sized handwritten introductions by Mary and two of the other city ALTs (though none of Mike). Underneath these posters there is a small set of bookshelves that hold fifteen copies of Japanese-English young learner dictionaries, along with assorted teaching materials and listening CDs. On the back wall there are a series of photographs showing the other city ALTs engaging in activities with the school's first grade students. There is also a poster with the handwritten lyrics to the 'Hello' song, and beneath that a small bookshelf with small selection of photographic travel books introducing different countries written in English. The students are sitting on chairs, loosely clumped together in three large groups. There are 31 students in the class (and the same number in the other 6th grade class).

Mike continues to teach the class only calling upon Mary to explain in Japanese the differences between the American and Japanese school years. There is a palpable tension between Mary and Mike, and S. sensei is clearly uncomfortable with how the class is progressing. She is constantly wringing her hands behind her back and restlessly moving from one side of the room to the other.

The class ends when the chime sounds and the students return to their classroom. Mary and Mike both leave the room, albeit separately, while S. sensei stays behind to check the AV equipment which Mike didn't use at all in the previous lesson. There is a twenty-minute break until the start of the third period and I always try to have a quick chat with S. sensei. She is careful not to explicitly criticize either Mary or Mike, instead focusing on the activities in class, what the students learned, and what could be improved. She does admit that she is concerned for F. sensei's 6th grade class in

the next lesson. Because the previous lesson was taught by Mike, she wasn't able to teach the agreed lesson plan, so she doesn't know how well it works and thus can't advise F. sensei and what to do.

Mary arrives back in the room five minutes before the end of the break and goes to the top of the room. The students file in followed by F. Sensei. He has been teaching for 11 years, four of these in Aoi school, and this is his second year teaching the FLA class. He is clearly quite happy to let Mary take the lead in teaching the lesson, though he willingly participates in various role plays and activity explanations with Mary.

Mike arrives in the classroom just before the chime sounds and takes a seat at the back of the room. Mary teaches the class from start to finish only calling on Mike to clarify some pronunciation issues. Throughout the class Mike stays in his seat checking his mobile phone. Even during the main activity of the class, a question and answer survey to practice the use of 'can' and 'cannot', Mike remains sitting while Mary, F. sensei, and even I participated.

The break between the third and fourth periods is only five minutes long, so Mary remains in the room while Mike returns to the staff room. There are 33 students in each of the fifth grade classes. Unlike the 6th graders they make use of tables, pushing them together to make groups of six and seven. Before the start of the class Mary has a quick discussion with O. sensei, the HRT, about the lesson and what she would like to do. O. sensei is a 'veteran' teacher of 27 years though this is his first time formally teaching FLA. Whereas F. sensei was quite willing to participate in the class despite his rather poor English, O. sensei clearly conceives of his role as one of classroom management only. He sits to one side of the room behind the AV equipment and occasionally admonishes the students about their behaviour. As a result, Mary has to involve Mike in the class more for role-playing and demonstrating activities. However, during classes when there is no city ALT present, Mary has to use a lot more Japanese to explain what she wants the students to do.

The other fifth grade class, held after lunch, is almost a carbon copy of the O. sensei's class. The HRT teacher, E. sensei, has also been teaching for 27 years and, again, this is her first year teaching a formal FLA class. She too conveys a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the lesson, though unlike O. sensei, she continuously moves around the class monitoring the students. As Mary is fluent in Japanese E. sensei discusses the class with her to the exclusion of Mike, whose Japanese ability is quite poor. For both fifth grade teachers it is apparent from their actions that they take their roles to be primarily classroom management, ensuring that students stay focused on Mary's teaching. They are highly reluctant to do any English teaching themselves. This was brought home to me unexpectedly on a different occasion in E. sensei's class. There was no city ALT present and Mary was late returning to the school after the lunch break. As usual, I was sitting in the back corner of the room trying to remain inconspicuous. I was therefore rather startled when E. sensei suddenly announced, in Japanese, to her students "Alright everyone. Let's begin the English class. Mary sensei is not here yet so today Gaynor sensei will start the class. Gaynor sensei please". And for ten minutes or so until Mary belatedly arrived I 'taught' the class.

What enabled me to do this was that the same lesson had been taught just prior to lunch in O. sensei's class so I basically knew what to do. The grades and lessons are scheduled in the same order each week. This usually results in the second lesson in each grade being more pedagogically effective. The second lesson is usually a 'revised' version of the preceding lesson with account taken of what did and didn't work in that class. When the same lesson is taught the second time, these revisions and alterations result in a 'smoother' more comprehensible class, particularly in terms of activity explanations. Mary had raised this issue with S. sensei to see if the sequence of classes could be reversed but S. sensei explained that she had to schedule her class first in order to have time to set up the necessary equipment in the English room and she didn't have any input in the weekly class timetable for the 5th grade classes.

After the final fifth grade class has finished, myself, Mary, and Mike return to the staff room. Although classes have officially ended for the day all the fifth and sixth grade teachers are in their classrooms supervising the students' daily cleaning routine and won't be back for some time. Mike leaves almost immediately to return to the city's Board of Education while Mary stays for a little longer and talks to me about the upcoming special program the students will do in the FLA class.

The program is S. sensei's idea. During the autumn term both the fifth and sixth grades undertake a video exchange program with another school. The students are put in groups of four and they are assigned topics based on school life and their city. Each group then has to research the topic and write a short explanation about it in Japanese. They then translate this into English, practice saying it, and finally record themselves on video. All the video explanations are transferred to a DVD and sent to the participating school.

In my first year at Aoi I arranged to have my local primary school in Ireland participate. When I went to Ireland I brought the DVD to the school, showed it to the Irish 5th and 6th class students and videotaped their reactions, comments, and questions. Unfortunately, when I showed this video to the students at Aoi their lack of English ability meant that they couldn't understand what the Irish students were saying with the result that myself, Mary, and S. sensei had to provide a Japanese translation throughout.

In the following year the special program was repeated but this time the DVD was sent to an elementary school in Honshu where an acquaintance of Mary's worked. Although this school had initially agreed to respond in kind, for varying reasons it didn't make a DVD and instead sent some postcards with simple English messages of thanks written by the students. This wasn't well received by some of the Aoi students, one boy commenting "*kokunai da kara, omishirokunai. Dono gakkō demo onaji desu*" (It's only in Japan and that's not interesting. All schools are the same." Field note: A/S/6/010213/4).

Similar comments were also made by the homeroom teachers. O. sensei observed that the special project had very little to do with English education as most of the preparation was in Japanese ("*junbi wa hotondo nihongo da. Eigo amari tsukawanai*" Field note: A/O/5/100512/4). Similarly, E. sensei found the autonomy granted the students (to research their topics students went to the school

library or the computer room to use the internet) caused them to become too noisy and boisterous, commenting that the students were forever coming and going and being disruptive (*“achi kochi ni mawatte, jugyou ga gucha gucha ni naru.”* A/E/5/100512/5). Even S. sensei, in the second year, seemed to doubt the program’s benefits, noting that because the other school was in Japan, the students didn’t find it all that interesting (*“ryoho no gakko wa nihon ni aru kara, seitoutachi ni taishite, sonani omashiroi to omawanai.”* Field note: A/S/6/010213/4).

Following the second year of the special program I wrote in my field notes the following observation: *‘the special project (sic) is very much dependent on the enthusiasm and willingness of S. sensei. Should she leave then I cannot see the project continuing’* (Field note: A/S/5/031113/4). And so it proved. In April 2014 S. sensei moved to another school and according to Mary, who still teaches at Aoi, the special program didn’t happen the following autumn.

6.4 Kiiro Elementary School

There are only 65 students in Kiiro Elementary School, which is located in small rundown fishing village of 2,300 people about an hour’s drive from the region’s largest city. The village is strung out along the coastal road with no discernible centre. Like similar villages throughout Hokkaido, there are numerous abandoned houses and boarded up shops. The school is set back about half a mile from the coast, separated from the sea by a busy national road and an equally busy railway line.

The school stands amidst a large, wooded area, with a set of teacher’s houses to one side of the school car park. The sports field is on the other side of the school and beside it there is a small vegetable garden and small polymer green house. In front of the school is series of concentric flower beds, a small pond - now frozen - and a large copse of tall cedar pine trees.

To enter the school, I have to press the intercom, announce myself and wait for the school secretary to let me in. The current school building is 63 years old and it feels almost as cold inside as it does outside. My breath clouds in front of me as I hurriedly walk the short distance to the staff room. On the wall opposite the staff room there is a series of display panels with photographs and text explaining the school’s history. Beside the door there are a collection of framed photographs of all the past principals of the school dating back to 1923. The staff room is small and cramped with the teachers’ desks in a tight square facing an oil-fired stove. Space is at a premium and when teachers move to and from their desks it necessitates squeezing past their colleagues. There is a small low table set tight in front of the secretary’s desk and two small chairs wedged either side of it. I angle my body into one of the chairs, uncomfortably close to the stove which is emitting a fierce heat. Besides the usual green schedule board and class timetable there are three large posters supplied by the Hokkaido prefectural Board of Education extolling the importance of the national academic ability test, and exhorting teachers to improve their students’ scores.

I arrive at 10:05, during the second period. This ends at 10:15 when there is a twenty-minute break before the start of third period at 10:35. At 10:20 Felix, the ALT arrives. In his late thirties and fluent in Japanese, he has lived in Japan for over twelve years and worked in Kihiro for the last seven years. He is employed by the town of which the village is a part and he teaches at five other elementary schools. At 10:25 Nomu-san arrives. She is in her early thirties and also works as an ALT but only at Kihiro and also as a part-time instructor in a national *eikaiwa* (English conversation) chain in the large city to the north. Until last year she had been employed by the local town's Board of Education to teach the first to fourth grade students in all the municipal elementary schools. However, from this school year she has been employed by the Hokkaido prefectural Board of Education who stipulated that she can only assist in the compulsory FLA classes for fifth and sixth grades.

As there are not enough seats at the low table for us all, I willingly move to let them both sit down. During the break the fifth and sixth grade homeroom teachers return to the staff room but neither of them come to talk with Felix and Nomu-san immediately. As with the other schools the weekly schedule for the lessons are fixed: the fifth graders are third period from 10:35 to 11:20, and the sixth graders from 11:25 to lunchtime at 12:20.

P. Sensei, the fifth grade home room teacher (HRT) comes over to talk to Felix and Nomu-san. She has only been teaching for four years since graduating from university and this is her first year at Kihiro. She has copies of a printed lesson plan prepared which she gives to Felix and Nomu-san. She also has copies of the relevant pages in the teachers' guide for the two ALTs. As she discusses the lesson she mainly refers to the teachers' guide rather than her own lesson plan. Felix and Nomu-san ask some clarifying questions and the whole discussion takes just under three minutes.

K. Sensei, the 6th grade HRT, comes over next. This is his sixth year teaching in Kihiro and he has been teaching for twelve years in total. For both teachers this is their first time formally teaching the FLA class. K. Sensei is the fourth homeroom teacher the 6th grade students have had in the past four years. This is highly unusual. The norm is for the same homeroom teacher to stay with the same class for two successive years, e.g. one teacher for 3rd and 4th grades, a different teacher for the subsequent 5th and 6th grades.

K. Sensei brings over the teachers' guide and says that he would like to teach unit 7 on the topic of 'countries'. The aim of this unit is to practice the forms 'This is...' and 'You can...'. He says he is going to use the lesson plan in the teachers' guide and asks Felix to help with pronunciation practice. Felix agrees, and the discussion is over in less than two minutes.

The chime sounds and the two ALTs and myself go upstairs to the 5th grade classroom which is on the second floor along with the 6th grade classroom. The lower grade classrooms are on the first floor. P. Sensei is helping the students push a large moveable stand into the classroom upon which sits the big interactive television.

The room, although standard sized, appears large and spacious because there are only seven students in fifth grade. The students sit at their individual desks spaced apart in two lines of three and four. The room faces east and with the large trees fronting the school the room gets less sunlight than

Midori or Aoi schools. Inside the classroom along the corridor wall there are a series of notices, essays by the students, and a large poster of kanji phrases and words. At the back wall there is a row of cubby holes for the students' school bags and above that a shelf with an array of clay models the students had made in art class. The window side of the room has two large oil-fired space heaters and an aquarium. As it is winter both heaters are on and their noise along with the constant bubbling of the aquarium means there is a constant background noise present throughout the lesson which at times makes things hard to hear, particularly when Nomu-san is speaking. Between the front and back of the classroom at head height a clothes line is strung upon which are pegged various maths equations and explanations. On the blackboard various geometry problems and solutions from the previous maths class remain written on it.

The television stand is wheeled to the front and centre of the class effectively blocking the blackboard. The television is quite old and there is a yellowish hue to the screen (a problem that was never resolved during my two years of visits to the school).

The lesson begins with a series of formalized greetings: 'How are you?', 'What day is it today?', 'How is the weather?' to each of which the students reply in unison. P. Sensei explains in Japanese that today's lesson is going to be learning 'What is this? It is a ...'. She then proceeds to do a picture quiz in the students' textbook for nearly twenty minutes. P. Sensei calls upon Nomu-san to say the answers and then gets the students to practice pronouncing the different objects by repeating after Nomu-san. Where she thinks it necessary Nomu-san gives an explanation about the object in Japanese. Felix is at the back of the room standing next to me, occasionally chatting about a number of personal matters. The picture quiz is followed by a simple question-and-answer dialogue based on an object each student has drawn in their textbook. Felix and Nomu-san model the dialogue first and get the students to repeat after them. As there are an odd number of students Nomu-san pairs up with one while Felix moves around the class monitoring the students. P. Sensei finishes the class three minutes before the chime sounds. P. Sensei, Nomu-san and Felix, in that order, individually say goodbye to the students and they all respond in unison. The two ALTs return to the staff room while P. Sensei helps the students unplug the television and wheel it into the adjoining 6th grade classroom.

When the chime sounds for the start of the fourth period Felix and Nomu-san come back upstairs to the 6th grade classroom. There are 19 students in the class. They are sitting in pairs in three rows facing the blackboard. This room also has an aquarium and two space heaters so again there is a constant background noise throughout the lesson. Along the back wall, above the cubby holes for their school bags, are pinned individual student project reports about their autumn school trip to Hakodate. There is a large bookcase in the back-left corner of the room. Beside it is a table displaying various pottery figures the students had made. Along the corridor wall is a small book case and above it a series of notices about the cleaning schedule, that month's menu for school lunch, a forthcoming health check, and largest of all a countdown calendar to the student's graduation ceremony. Today there are 42 days to go.

K. Sensei announces the start of the class in Japanese and calls on Felix and Nomu-san to greet the students. K. Sensei then gets the students to watch the television and chant along with animated characters practicing ‘Do you have a...’ and various items of clothing. Some of the students listlessly say the words, others say nothing while a number of boys at the back talk noisily amongst themselves. The main aim of today’s lesson is to practice a shopping routine involving vocabulary about clothes, colours, and numbers along with the interrogative forms ‘Do you have...?’ and ‘How much is it?’. The lesson plan in the teachers’ guide requires the students to use the blank clothes outlines in the back of their textbooks. This involves each student tearing out the relevant page, cutting up the clothes cards, and colouring them in. All this takes approximately twenty minutes of class time to do. As a boy has forgotten his textbook, K. Sensei has to go down to the staffroom to make a photocopy of the relevant page. While he is gone a fight breaks out between two boys which Felix has to intervene in to stop them punching each other.

Upon K. Sensei’s return he and Felix confer and consult the teachers’ guide to decide what to do next. To practice saying the necessary phrases for the activity K. Sensei announces that they are going to do a listening activity first. This elicits some groans from the students and one boy says loudly “*gemu wa saki da yo!*” (“the game should be first!”) (Field note: K/K/6/020813/4). For the listening activity the students are supposed to listen to four conversations and then draw a line between the characters and the clothes they want to buy. Conscious perhaps of the time left in the lesson K. Sensei plays the four conversations consecutively without pausing between each one for students to check their answers. The volume on the TV is quite low and with the noise from the heaters and aquarium some of the students at the back of the class can’t hear it properly. I mention this to Felix who in turn asks K. Sensei to play the conversations again with the volume raised. Again, the four conversations are played without pausing. K. Sensei then directs the students to look at the TV screen as he draws the necessary lines showing the answers. There are now 14 minutes of lesson time remaining.

K. Sensei hurriedly announces that they are now going to play the ‘*shoppingu gemu*’ (‘shopping game’) and calls on Felix to come to the front of the class to model the necessary dialogue.

K. Sensei: Do you have blue pants?

Felix: Yes I do. Here you are (hands over the relevant clothes card).

K. Sensei: Thank you.

Felix: Do you have a green hat?

K. Sensei: I’m sorry. No I don’t.

Felix: Okay. Goodbye.

K. Sensei: Goodbye

(Field note: K/K/6/020813/4).

The two teachers model the dialogue a second time and then K. Sensei translates each sentence into Japanese and explains what the students are supposed to do. Although the students had practiced the ‘Do you have...’ interrogative pattern the previous week and heard it again today during the listening activity, they are less sure of colour and clothing vocabulary. Nomu-san, who has hitherto not been involved in the lesson, is asked by K. Sensei to pair up with one of the students. K. Sensei and Felix move around the class answering the students queries on how to say different colours and clothes in English. As there are no visual orthographic reminders of the dialogue some students have difficulty remembering the target dialogue and simplify their requests to ‘Blue pants?’ with single word ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. To clarify meaning they also resort to Japanese a lot.

The chime sounds before the students have finished the activity which is competitive in nature; students have to try and get the most of items of clothing. There are some groans and one boy asks/demands “*sensei raishuu mo okanau ne*” (“Teacher, we’ll do this again next week, right”), to which K. Sensei replies with a non-committal “*tabun*” (“maybe”) (Field note: K/K/6/020813/4). K. Sensei, Felix and Nomu-san all say individual goodbyes to the class and then the students rush off to get the school lunch ready. On the way back to the staffroom both Felix and Nomu-san remark on the difficulty of teaching the 6th graders. Felix says that of all the classes he has taught in his seven years in working for the town, they are by far the most difficult and he singles out one boy in particular for his disruptive behavior. Nomu-san agrees that they are “*taihen muzukashii*” (‘very difficult’) but also says that the class is akin to some of the classes she teaches at the English conversation school. That school is located in a large shopping mall and she says some of the parents use it as a child-minding service while they go off shopping.

In the staffroom Nomu-san gets her bag, says goodbye to the vice-principal and leaves. Myself and Felix are asked by the vice-principal to have lunch with the 5th grade students. For lunch students and teachers eat prepared hot meals together in the classroom. The students have put their desks in a circle with two extra desks for myself and Felix. I always feel a little guilty about eating lunch as I suspect my presence means that the students’ portions are reduced in order to feed me. Myself and Felix chat with the students in Japanese about the foods they like and dislike. I had hoped to ask P. Sensei some questions about teaching FLA, but she sat at her desk hurriedly eating her lunch while correcting student worksheets.

After lunch students have to clean the classrooms, corridors, and toilets. Felix and myself return to the staffroom and get ready to leave. As we are doing so we hear a loud crash and the sound of breaking glass. A few moments later the disruptive boy Felix had mentioned previously is led into the principal’s office accompanied by a resigned looking K. Sensei. We learn from another teacher that he broke a window with a broom whilst sweeping the corridor.

Myself and Felix both leave the school at 1:15pm. Felix has not spoken with either of the two HRT’s about next week’s lessons, but he says that is normal. After classes he usually goes back to the board of education in the main town, but as the weather is sunny today he decides to go for a walk along a nearby beach instead. We say our goodbyes and I return to the university.

6.5 Chairo Elementary School

Chairo elementary school is situated in a town of 50,000 people whose local economy is based on tourism and small manufacturing businesses. The area where the school is located used to be a fishing community and its current catchment area lies in the poorest part of the town. Close to the school are a number of large public housing complexes and compared to the other schools in this study, a significant number of the students come from single parent homes.

There are 266 students in the school with two classes each in the 5th and 6th grades. The school itself is 48 years old; the main building is run down and in need of refurbishment but there are plans to merge the school with another elementary school within the next five years, so recent maintenance has been minimal. The school stands beside a busy four-lane highway on the other side of which there is a petrol station, car dealership, convenience store, and ramen restaurant. Behind these are some old houses clustered around the small but still functioning fishing port. The elementary school shares a large, windswept sports ground with the neighbouring junior high school. The location of the school is flat and exposed and as a result it is continually buffeted by wind from all directions of the compass.

The building is two stories high in the shape of an 'n' with the entrance at the top of the 'n'. Immediately inside the entrance there is a large aquarium, approximately 3m x 2m, which was donated by and stocked with fish caught by some of the students' parents. Next to the aquarium is a display cabinet with a small selection of sports trophies and official certificates of commendation for various volunteer activities. The staffroom is adjacent to the entrance. As with the other schools, the wall in front of the staffroom features students' work, newspaper clippings, and notices. Today the wall is hung with a series of handwritten kanji the fourth-year students did in their calligraphy class.

The staffroom is large and spacious with the teachers' desks arrayed in the same formation as in Aoi school - 5th and 6th grade teachers have their desks set in a square with each grades' homeroom teachers facing each other. The principal and vice-principal's desks are at one end of the room in front of the standard large green schedule board. On the wall above the teachers' desks are timetables, three posters about bullying prevention, a child safety warning, two posters about the national academic test, and a poster about the towns promotion of education. Beside the staffroom door close to the vice-principal's desk there is a low table with two small sofas either side of it for visitors. This is where I sit when I visit the staffroom. I would like to be inconspicuous, but my wife works in this school so upon my arrival I am greeted with a chorus of 'Good morning' from the teachers present and on occasion one or two of them will stop by to say a few words.

Checking the schedule board I see that today is *sankanbi*, parent's day, for the 5th and 6th grades. Because of this all the homeroom teachers are wearing suits. Amy, the American ALT, is already in the staffroom when I arrive and she comes over to talk to me. This is her second year working in Chairo and her last; she is planning to return to the U.S. in the summer to attend graduate

school though she hasn't informed the school or town of her intentions yet. As an undergraduate she studied Japanese and is fluent in the language and able to communicate effortlessly with both the teachers and students. Amy is popular with the students and well-liked by the teachers. Of the six ALTs I encountered over the course of my research, she was the only one who stayed in the school after classes were finished to meet with the homeroom teachers and plan the following week's lessons. Oftentimes the meetings didn't take place until after 5:00pm.

All the English classes are scheduled in the morning: first and second periods are for the two 6th grade classes while third and fourth periods are for the 5th graders. The first period begins at 8:30 and at 8:25 myself and Amy go upstairs. The room used for English classes is at the end of the corridor on the second floor and spans the width of the building. On the right of the room as you enter there are a number of tables pushed together upon which the students' science projects are displayed. To one side of the tables are a large number of folding chairs stacked together and on the other side are ten large burlap sacks filled with pull tabs from canned drinks. There are another eight sacks of tabs stacked against the back wall to the left of the door too. According to my wife, the collected tabs are sold to a recycling firm and the money is used to fund various school events.

At the front of the room there is a large blackboard. Above the blackboard there is an alphabet poster, a poster showing how the Japanese hiragana script is written alphabetically, and two Japanese language science posters about the planets and the water cycle. The teachers desk is to one side of the blackboard in the top left corner of the room.

It is February and the room is bitterly cold. The windows are frosted on the inside and gusts of wind rattle the window frames and send constant chilly gusts into the room. There is a single large blow heater in the far corner of the room which the homeroom teacher switches on as soon as he comes in the room.

The homeroom teacher, N. sensei, is in his early forties. He has been teaching for twenty years though this is only his second year of formally teaching FLA (he did it the previous year with his class in 5th grade). The chime sounds at 8:30 and the 27 students in N. sensei's class file into the room carrying their seats from their regular classroom. Amy approaches N. sensei and has a hurried discussion with him about what she is going to do in class. Although Amy has a printed lesson plan, it is in English and she doesn't have a copy for N. sensei.

Amy begins the lesson with a loud "Good morning everyone" to which the students dutifully chorus a reply of "Good morning Amy". She then explains in Japanese that they are going to start the class with some phonics practice. Since the start of the second term in September, Amy has been teaching simple letter-sound representation to the students. Using flashcards she begins with a review of last weeks sounds though it is clear that most students have trouble remembering them. She then introduces seven new letter-sound combinations and gets the students to repeat them and then say the sound when she shows the card. During this activity N. sensei sits down at the teacher's desk and starts correcting students' math worksheets. However, a group of boys are talking amongst

themselves and not following Amy's instructions, so N. sensei goes over and admonishes them for their behaviour before returning to his desk once more.

Following the phonics Amy, again in Japanese, explains that the main theme of today's class is jobs - a continuation of last week's class. Using flashcards she quickly reviews the English for different occupations before moving on to a 'bingo' activity. This necessitates the students cutting out nine job pictures from their textbook and arranging them in a 3 x 3 grid. To do this requires the students to kneel on the cold floor and use their chairs as desks. Some students have forgotten their scissors and have to return to their classroom to get them. As students are cutting out the pictures Amy walks around the room offering words of encouragement in Japanese. When everybody is ready the bingo activity begins. Amy says a job and the students turn over the relevant picture until they get a three in a row at which time they stand up and say 'bingo!'. After saying each job Amy shows the relevant flashcard so that the students can check the meaning. She repeats the activity twice.

Following this Amy introduces a short oral activity to practice the question and answer form 'What do you want to be? I want to be a...'. Amy calls upon a surprised N. sensei to model the dialogue with her. He's not sure what he's supposed to do, and she has to explain the activity to him while he tries to find the correct page in the *Hi Friends* Teachers' guide. They then model the dialogue a number of times varying the occupations. She then gets the students to chorally repeat the question and answer after her a number of times. Amy then instructs the students to line up in three rows to play Chinese whispers based on the dialogue they have just practiced. It is supposed to be a race between the three lines to see who finishes first. However, a number of boys in two of the lines haven't been paying much attention throughout the class and they can't repeat the dialogue, so the activity breaks down. This clearly frustrates Amy and N. sensei, sensing this, strongly, and at length, reprimands the boys and warns them to do it properly. Before beginning the activity again Amy gets the whole class to repeat the question and answer three more times. She then does the Chinese whisper activity two more times, but N. sensei's scolding seems to have cast a pall over the class and the students do it quietly and without much enthusiasm. Amy then tells N. sensei that is all she has planned for the class, so he announces the end of the class and instructs the students to quietly return to their classroom. The room is empty by 9:11.

The second period commences at 9:20 and during the interval myself and Amy stay in the room. When the chime sounds Y. sensei leads her 27 students into the room. The students don't bring their chairs with them, so they sit on the floor instead. Y. sensei has been teaching for 23 years and like N. sensei this her second year teaching FLA. The lesson was a repeat of the previous class, but Amy made a number of changes, notably for the 'What do you want to be?' dialogue. This time she wrote the dialogue on the blackboard and pointed to each word separately as the students repeated after her. In addition, before beginning the Chinese whisper activity she asked a number of students individually 'What do you want to be?' so as to elicit the correct response. Unlike N. sensei, Y. sensei constantly moved around the class motoring the students' behaviour and ensuring they were focused on Amy's teaching and properly participated in the various activities. Amy was clearly more relaxed

in this class as the students were better behaved and more motivated which, as a result, meant the lesson flowed much more smoothly than the preceding class. The class finished just as the chime went. As the students were returning to their classroom Amy had a short discussion with Y sensei about next week's class. As today is *sankanbi* Y sensei has to meet with the students' parents all afternoon and won't have time to meet with Amy later on.

Between the second and third periods there is a twenty-minute break so we return to the staffroom as even with the blow heater on the classroom is still quite cold. Amy tells me that after classes are finished she stays on in the school planning the lessons for next week. Because the homeroom teachers are quite busy it is usually after 5:00pm before she can meet with the teachers to discuss her lesson plans. She explains to the teachers what she is going to do, what she would like the teachers to help her with (role-playing, dialogue modeling, skits, etc.), and any special supplies she may need for the class. As she admits herself, because of the week-long gap between her meeting with the teachers and the subsequent classes, the teachers often forget the lesson plan and what they are supposed to do. Nor does Amy have an opportunity to talk with them early in the morning before lessons begin as they are all homeroom teachers and are in their classrooms with their students from 8:10 onwards, before she arrives at the school.

The third period begins at 10:25. We arrive back in the 'English' room and the first class of fifth grade students are already sitting at their desks. They have carried both their desks and chairs from their normal classroom. I. sensei, their homeroom teacher, is in her early fifties and has been teaching for 29 years. She hasn't taught formal FLA before and spends most of the class standing to one side observing the students' behaviour. Her class is well-behaved, attentive and free of the messing prevalent in the 6th grade classes.

Amy begins the class with her usual greeting and moves on to doing the same phonics practice as she did with the 6th grade classes. Following that she announces in Japanese that the theme of today's lesson is learning how to say the months of the year in English. She gets the students to open their textbooks where there is an exercise in matching the months (written in Japanese) with the relevant seasonal festivals (shown by a simple illustration). It quickly becomes apparent from the students' growing confusion that this is quite difficult for them to do. The reason for this is that the festivals used in the textbook are based on those that occur in Honshu, the main island of Japan, and these differ from those celebrated in Hokkaido. This is particularly so for events held between August and November. In order to complete the exercise I. sensei, who is from Honshu, has to explain what the Honshu festivals are and how and why they differ from the festivals the children are used to here in Hokkaido. The need for this explanation means that what was essentially a short warm-up activity takes over 15 minutes to complete.

When the task is finished Amy continues with the theme of months and festivals but this time American ones. She stands at the top of the room and uses A4 sized flashcards to introduce both: the months are written on one side and on the reverse is a photograph of an associated festival. Unfortunately, some of the photographs are quite small and it is hard for some of the students at the

back to see. (Amy doesn't use the interactive TV or a computer and for listening activities just uses a portable CD player.) For each American festival Amy gives a short explanation in Japanese. Some, like Valentine's Day, the students recognize, but others, like Thanksgiving and Groundhog Day, are difficult for them to grasp.

Amy then gets the students to practice pronouncing the months by repeating after her and does this twice. She then moves hurriedly on to do the 'keyword game'. This involves Amy choosing a month - the 'keyword' - and students sit in pairs facing each other with an eraser on the desk between them. Amy then says a list of months and when they hear the keyword month they have to grab the eraser. Unfortunately, the protracted festival explanation means that the students can only play the game twice before the chime sounds and the class ends. The students ask Amy "*raishuu mo onegaishimasu*" ("Can we do this again next week, please?") (Field note: C/I/5/012612/3). and Amy agrees.

There is only a five-minute break between third and fourth periods which begins at 11:15. With students laboriously exiting the room and the next class coming in, and both groups carrying their desks and chairs, Amy can only manage a quick word with T. sensei, the second fifth grade homeroom teacher. T sensei has been teaching for 13 years and this is his third year teaching formal FLA classes. After high school he won a six-month scholarship to play rugby in New Zealand though he stresses he didn't learn any English - only drinking games. That said, he is the only one of the four homeroom teachers who continuously takes an active part in the lesson; when she asks him at the start of the class "How are you, T. sensei?", he cheerfully explains how he is "very hungry because his bad wife didn't make him breakfast". Later, his loud, boisterous voice joins in with the students as they practice pronouncing the months of the year.

This lesson is an edited repeat of the previous one; Amy omits the month and festival activity and instead starts the topic by introducing the months and their associated American festivals. This leaves her with considerably more time at the end of the class to do the 'keyword game'. As a result, the lesson finishes at 11:56 and the students hurriedly return to their classroom so that they can begin their school lunch preparations.

Amy and myself return to the staffroom which is empty except for the vice-principal and the school secretary. Amy usually has lunch with the students in the *tokubetsu gakuen* (the special support class) as she doesn't normally teach the students in that class. I am usually invited by the vice-principal to stay and have lunch in one of the classes. Today it is I. sensei's fifth grade class. I try to engage her in some conversation about the earlier FLA class, but she is reluctant to talk and doesn't appear particularly happy about me being there. My wife later tells me that this is because she is embarrassed about her poor English ability (even though all my attempts at conversation were in Japanese) and professional pride keeps her from commenting on the FLA lesson. Her students on the other hand are delighted to see me and spend the whole of the lunch break quizzing me about school life in Ireland.

When the break is over I return to the staffroom and have talk with the vice-principal. I got to know him quite well two years previously when my wife was hospitalised and he was instrumental in facilitating my access to Midori elementary school - he and the vice-principal there worked together as teachers for a number of years and were both promoted to vice-principal at the same time. Invariably there is a query as to what my opinion is of FLA in Chairō and how it compares to the other schools in my study. My reply is studiously diplomatic noting how each school is decidedly different and how class size has a significant effect on the quality of teaching. He seems satisfied with this answer and I, sensing the opportunity for a graceful exit, say my goodbyes and return to the university.

6.6 Conclusion

Through my use of ‘interpretive synecdoche’ (Richards, 2011) in representing a ‘typical day’ in the four case study schools, I have detailed many of the contextual factors affecting the *de facto* implementation of the new Course of Study. These include teacher motivation, language proficiency, homeroom teacher and ALT roles, student ability, the use of the *Hi Friends* teachers’ guide, the physical environment, and the normative status of FLA within the wider school curriculum. Underlying all these factors is a notable tension between the official aims of the curriculum and how FLA classes are conducted in practice. A more detailed examination of this tension and how it manifests itself will be the focus of the next chapter. I will analyze the data from the four case studies to show how the official policy document is interpreted and enacted in the classroom.

Chapter 7: Data Analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter details how the data gathered from my ethnographic classroom observations over the period from April 2011 to March 2013 were analyzed. It explains the inductive analytical stages involved to code and categorize the data and demonstrates how the resulting analytical themes emerged. These eight themes were then examined in more detail using excerpts from the primary data to highlight issues in classroom practice as evidence of contextual variability in policy implementation.

7.2 Analyzing in the Field

My different methodological approaches resulted in a vast amount of data. Table 9 below summarizes my accumulated data set.

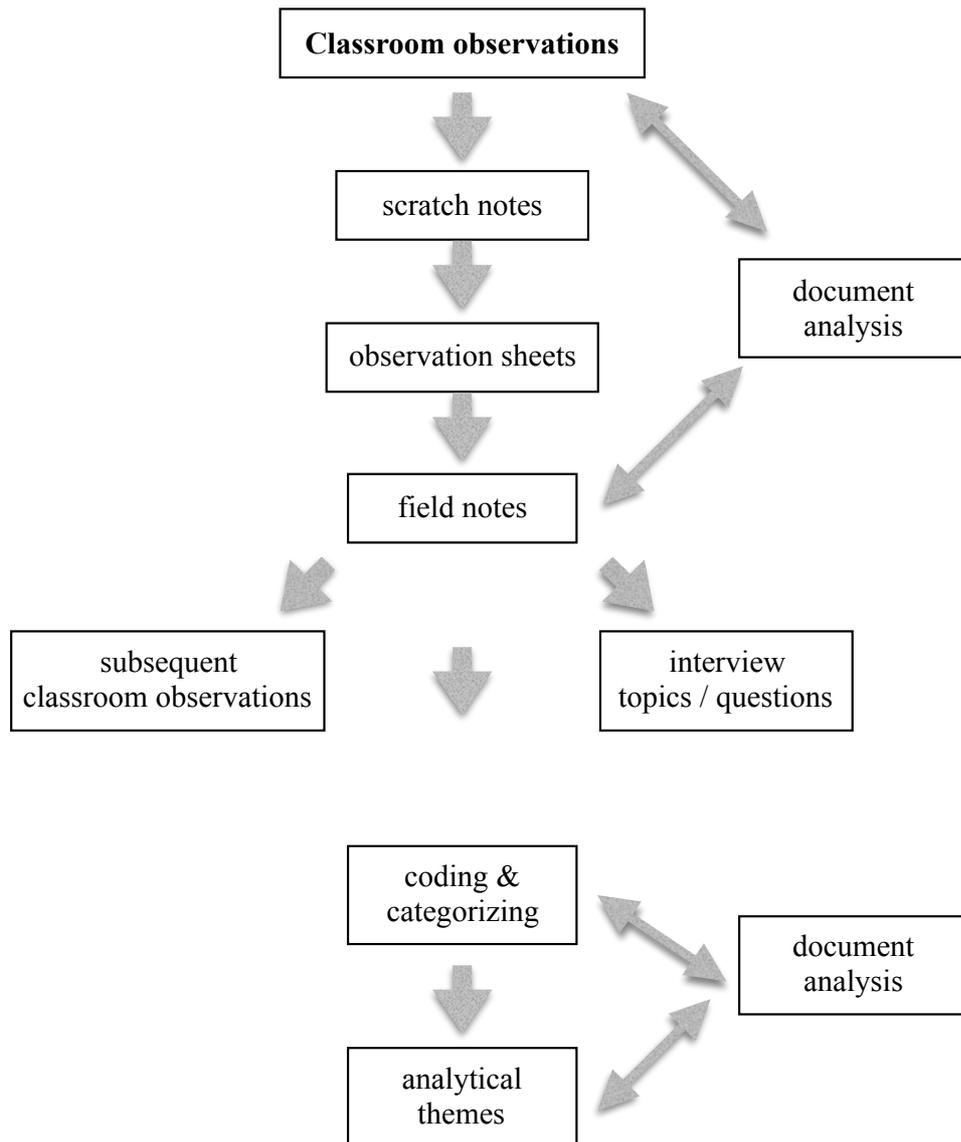
Table 7: Summary of data collected.

Data Collection Method	Purpose	Notes
Classroom observations	Observe how Foreign Language Activities (FLA) classes are conducted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 79 school visits. • 214 classes observed. • (See appendix 3)
Completed observation sheets	Post-observation note taking in order to retain the most important/salient points from the classroom observations.	214 completed observation sheets (one for each class observed).
Field notes	Expansion of the observation sheets into detailed, written-up field notes.	Four separate notebooks of field notes (one for each school).
Formal, semi-structured interviews	Recorded interviews with teachers and ALT to gain further insights into their thinking and opinions about the FLA classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 interviews with Japanese teachers. • 1 interview with ALT. (see page 77 for details).
Informal interviews	‘Conversations with a purpose’ with teachers and ALTs to uncover or clarify issues surrounding the FLA classes.	Based on references to ‘talks’, ‘chats’ or ‘conversations’ in my field notes, I conducted 37 informal interviews.
Document analysis	To understand (a) the policy context surrounding the FLA classes; and (b) examine the pedagogical approach espoused by the mandated textbook and teaching guide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 Course of Study for FLA (English language versions). • 2008 <i>Shogakko gakushu shido yoryo: dai 4 sho gaikokugo katsudo</i> (Japanese language version). • Commentary on instruction guidelines for elementary school foreign language activities (in Japanese). • <i>Hi Friends</i> textbooks for 5th and 6th grades. • <i>Hi Friends</i> teachers’ guides for 5th and 6th grades (in Japanese).

The chronological presentation in this dissertation of my differing forms of data collection may suggest that the different types of data were collected independently. This, though, was not the case. Instead, these multiple forms of data collection were a form of ongoing synthesis with, for

example, the initial classroom scratch notes being more formally recorded in the post-class observations sheets, which in turn were the basis for my field notes. These in turn were used for determining the formal interview topics and questions. In addition, the process of writing up my field notes sparked areas of interest and lines of inquiry that would then feed into how I conducted my subsequent class observations. Figure 6 provides an outline of this process.

Figure 6: Data collection process.



Initial analysis of the data began as soon as my fieldwork commenced for the inherently selective nature (Emerson *et al.*, 2001) of the process requires analysis by omission as “field notes never provide a complete record” (Atkinson, 1992: 17). In addition, my field notes did not simply

record an objective reality mirroring what was happening in front of me. Rather, my descriptions embodied and reflected particular purposes and commitments on my part and involved active processes of interpretation and meaning-making (Emerson *et al.*, 2001). Although Johnson (2013) maintains that data interpretation should be kept separate to, and follow from, description, my data collection was, from the start, inherently inductive (Merriam, 2009). In my field notes I assimilated what I recorded with previous observations and readings of the literature as a form of initial interpretation and analysis.

As my fieldwork progressed I adopted a more systematic approach, utilizing Emerson *et al.*'s (2001) concept of 'commentary', "a more elaborate reflection on some specific event" as a means of recording "tentative interpretations" (p.362).

7.2.1 Analysis after fieldwork

Upon the completion of my fieldwork I commenced a systematic analysis of the data. In doing this I followed Yamagata-Lynch's (2010) suggestion of a two-step process beginning with an inductive examination of the data through a process of constant comparative analysis (Creswell, 2007) in order to preliminarily identify possible categories that best represent what was inherent in the data. Once these preliminary categories were developed and elaborated upon, I subsequently applied them to the analytical framework offered by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2005). Designed to examine how language in education policy occurs from 'the bottom up', the framework is a means of integrating "macro and micro perspectives, specifically state and institutional policymaking processes on the one hand and local practices in classrooms, families, and other social groups on the other" (Tsui and Tollefson, 2017: 24). For the purposes of analyzing how policy is implemented through 'local practice in classrooms', Kaplan and Baldauf's framework divides language-in-education policy into seven areas of investigation. These are:

- **Access policy:** the language(s) to be studied and the educational level at which formal instruction will commence.
- **Personnel policy:** teacher recruitment, teaching qualifications, pre- and in-service training and professional development.
- **Curriculum policy:** concerned with issues of curriculum aims, content, and assessment.
- **Methods and materials policy:** examines the proposed pedagogical approach(es) and the provision and/or production of learning materials.
- **Resourcing policy:** concerned with how resources (primarily financial and human) will be allocated to implement the policy.
- **Community policy:** this is concerned with the attitudes of the community (public) towards language teaching and its effect on policy success.

- **Evaluation policy:** this examines what the criteria are for determining the success of the policy and how they are used for measuring the program’s effectiveness.

A more detailed explanation of the framework is given in Chapter 8, but it should be stressed at the outset that its use was not an inherent refutation of the analytical categories suggested by the data. Rather, the framework, in conjunction with the emergent categories, enabled an expansion of the analytical focus; it widened the lens to encompass the complex macro-micro process of language policy as part of a wider, socioculturally situated activity, rather than maintaining a narrow gaze on limited, classroom-bounded, occurrences.

Hence, analysis of the data involved the following approaches:

- (1): A critical discourse analysis of the official Course of Study document and related policy documents (chapter 5).
- (2): Initial data selectivity (what counts as data?) and analysis during fieldwork.
- (3): Systematic analysis of the data through a process of comparative analysis.
- (4): Definition and elaboration of the resulting analytical themes.
- (5): Examining the themes that emerged from (4) through the explanatory framework proposed by Kaplan and Baldauf (chapter 8).

Hence, I separated my analysis of the accumulated primary data into two main analytical stages in order to reveal a progressively more layered and complex picture of FLA policy implementation in each school. An overview of this process is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 8: Overview of the analysis process

Phase	Analysis	Data sources	Interpretive strategy	Outcome
1	Coding & categorizing	Field notes, interviews (formal & informal), documents	Emergent Inductive	Analytical themes
2	Language-in-education planning framework	Analytical themes & primary data	<i>A priori</i> Applied	Policy process explanation

In doing this I am adhering to Holliday’s (2007) dictum to show the workings of the analytical procedure and thus provide a demonstrable justification for any claims made about the data. This chapter will therefore unveil the “mysterious process” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:

162) by which the data were coded and categorized to arrive at the analytical themes. These themes will be then elaborated upon using specific instances from the primary data to justify their saliency.

Stage 1 of Analysis: Constant comparison of classroom observations and teacher/ALT interviews (formal and informal)

Analysis of the fieldwork data began with the coding of the accumulated data. Coding occurred in multiple phases:

- 1) Initial line-by-line open coding of classroom practices (including pre-class meetings with the ALT)⁴² and of the transcripts from the formal, recorded interviews;
- 2) Further coding based upon emerging categories within the open codes that were related to my research questions and what Rivas (2012) terms ‘theoretical sensitivity’: “the researcher’s sensitivity to concepts, meanings and relationships within the data ... [that] comes largely from professional and personal experience” (p.368);
- 3) Selective focused coding to organize the categories into overarching themes;
- 4) Reviewing the themes, determining analytical categories, and operationalizing them for working definitions to assist with the subsequent language-in-education framework analysis.

To give a representative example of this analytical process, I will detail how I used the above four-step process to analyze my field notes⁴³. Below is an extract from my field notes for the 6th grade class at Midori elementary school, taught by A sensei. In that school my role was that of a participant observer as I was acting as the ALT during my visits. The original (handwritten) field notes and observation sheet can be seen in Chapter 4.

⁴² Although occurring before the lesson (though not necessarily outside of the classroom), for ease of analysis and explication I have included preparatory meetings between the homeroom teacher and the ALT as part of classroom practices.

⁴³ For the purpose of this explanation I will detail my analytical process in a linear fashion. However, in practice the process was much more circular and recursive. Codes, categories, and themes were all continuously reviewed in order to repeatedly engage with the data in an iterative process of discovery and understanding.

Table 9: Example of coding from field note (M/A/6/251012/3).

Field notes	Initial coding
<p>I arrived at the school to find the staffroom strangely quiet. Usually there are a number of teachers about and a bit of hubbub, but not this morning. A. sensei arrived in the staffroom at 9.30 or so which is not so unusual but there were no other teachers there. We spent five minutes discussing today's lesson plan which was on teaching numbers and she willingly accepted my bingo suggestion for practicing time expressions. She again asked me if I had the teachers' guide for <i>Hi Friends</i> and I apologized saying no, but that my wife was going to bring it home tomorrow and I would photocopy it over the weekend. We finished our discussion at 9:35 and headed up to the classroom. Oh, prior to that A. sensei apologized for not having prepared flashcards for the numbers 1 to 60 and also for the activities. She admitted that she had only made the plan late last night and hadn't time to prepare properly this morning. On the way up to the English room I asked her about the materials they got from MEXT. She said textbook, teachers' guide and DVD and from the latter you could print out the various templates for the different flashcards to be used in the class. I think, given my somewhat awkward Japanese, she may have thought I was implicitly criticizing her for her lack of preparation but I assured her all I was interested in was determining what was supplied by MEXT and what the homeroom teacher was supposed to do.</p> <p>Class started at 9:40 and finished at 10:15. I wonder if she thinks that lesson discussion/preparation with me is part of class time - she certainly seems to treat it as such. Once in the class we did the greeting and then A. sensei realized that she had forgotten something and ran from the class. I greeted each of the kids in turn. Then onto 1-60 review, each student saying the numbers individually, then every '3' and multiple of same they had to clap. Kocho sensei wandered in for a brief while at one stage. Must as A. sensei if he does this during her other classes too. Then onto time. Initially I elicited the question "what time is it?" by getting them to tell me what <i>jikan</i> and <i>nan</i> are in English. Students were typically very good taking educated guesses at what the interrogative form could be. For choral practice I got them to repeat after me using the hand chopping notion to demonstrate that there are 4 words in the question. Then again I attempted to elicit the answer in English for "It's 10 o'clock". Again, they responded well but part of that was because the the answer was written on the blackboard.</p> <p>While we were practicing time expressions the students had a number of questions like 'how do you say 10:30' and 'am/pm' in English. What was wonderful was their evident eagerness to learn, and learn more. If you ever wanted proof of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, this was it.</p>	<p><i>not normal day</i></p> <p><i>lesson planning time</i></p> <p><i>lesson goal</i></p> <p><i>teaching suggestion</i></p> <p><i>teachers guide</i> <i>Needed by ALT - essential</i></p> <p><i>start time</i></p> <p><i>lack of materials</i></p> <p><i>inadequate preparation time</i> <i>last minute</i></p> <p><i>MEXT materials</i> <i>sources of materials</i></p> <p><i>translation issues</i> <i>criticism</i> <i>maintaining relationship</i></p> <p><i>clarification</i></p> <p><i>class duration</i> <i>class time includes preparation</i></p> <p><i>forgetting - distraction / inadequate planning</i> <i>greeting and review</i></p> <p><i>school management observation</i> <i>routine or only English class</i></p> <p><i>lesson goal</i></p> <p><i>L1 language use translation as learning opportunity</i> <i>motivated students</i></p> <p><i>ALT led</i></p> <p><i>written prompts</i></p> <p><i>student interest and motivation</i></p> <p><i>ZPD</i></p>

<p>Again I took over, so to speak, and got each student to ask ‘What time is it?’ and answer ‘It’s 10 o’clock’ in linked pairs around the class.</p> <p>It helps too that myself and A. sensei tend to be generous with our praise, calling them the <i>tensai-gumi</i> and telling them how they were learning junior high school level English.</p> <p>We finished up at 10:15 which meant a short, 35 minute class, but one that made up in quality what it perhaps lacked in quantity. On the way back to the staffroom, a number of interesting things happened. One was that A. sensei apologized for how the lesson veered off from the plan, and we didn’t do what we had discussed what we’d do. But as I pointed out the students seemed satisfied and I asked her if she was satisfied too. She said yes. Similarly in the staffroom she asked if the lesson doesn’t go according to the plan, if it is fine to veer off. Again, she seemed a bit in thrall to the plan/curriculum as set out in the teachers’ guide, but at the same time enjoying the autonomy.</p> <p>As an aside she asked me how to say 10:01,02 ~ 09 in the staffroom before the class. In front of the students she related this even though, as she jokingly said, ‘I went to university’. This to my mind is an excellent role model to give to the students, that of the ongoing, engaged learner of a foreign language.</p>	<p><i>ALT led</i> <i>communicative practice</i> <i>pair work</i></p> <p><i>positive feedback</i> <i>motivating students</i></p> <p><i>class time</i> <i>learning quality</i></p> <p><i>informal conversation</i> <i>veering from lesson plan</i> <i>apology - guilt/unprofessional</i></p> <p><i>lesson objective - satisfaction</i></p> <p><i>need to adhere to lesson plan</i> <i>seeks approval (from me)</i></p> <p><i>potential autonomy</i></p> <p><i>teacher learning</i></p> <p><i>share with students</i> <i>university English - forgotten?</i> <i>teacher as role model</i> <i>engaged learner</i></p>
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Step 1

In the first step broad open codes were created and compared across contexts and data types (Table 9 below). Using these initial codes, I also wrote informal memos in order to more clearly define the emergent categories and think about how the codes and categories related to, or differed from, each other (Rivas, 2012).

Step 2

Using these initial codes across the four case study data I created categories. When rereading the data, I wrote down words or phrases as I noted recurring topics, language, and activities throughout the data. These were then evaluated for emergent categories across all the case studies and the data was re-coded and organized into varying groups to understand larger patterns (Richards, 2003).

Thus, from the above extract the initial codes *lesson planning time*, *start time*, *inadequate preparation time*, *last minute*, *class duration*, *class time includes preparation*, and *class time* were all grouped into the related categories of **preparation time**, **meeting time (with ALT)**, **class time**, and **class scheduling**.

Table 10: Coding and emergent categories

Field notes	Initial Coding	Emergent Categories
We spent five minutes discussing today's lesson plan	<i>lesson planning time</i>	Preparation Time / Meeting time
We finished our discussion at 9:35 and headed up to the classroom.	<i>start time</i>	Class time
she had only made the plan late last night and hadn't time to prepare properly this morning.	<i>inadequate preparation time / last minute</i>	Preparation time
Class started at 9:40 and finished at 10:15.	<i>class duration</i>	Class time
I wonder if she thinks that lesson discussion/preparation with me is part of class time	<i>class time includes preparation</i>	Preparation time
We finished up at 10:15 which meant a short, 35 minute class,	<i>class time</i>	Class time

Step 3

For the third step I undertook selective coding whereby categories were compared for similarities, areas of overlap, and contrasting characteristics in order to uncover underlying concepts, what Corbin and Strauss (2008) refer to as, "the act of relating concepts/categories to each other" (p.198). In order to facilitate this process, I continuously questioned the data, adapting Seale's (2013) list.

- **Words:** In my field notes and in both formal and informal interviews and discussions, what specific terms occur and how often are they used?
- **Context:** What are the differences and similarities in when, where, who, and how the foreign language activities lesson is taught?
- **Consistency:** What frequently occurs?
- **Rarity:** Are there anomalies, instances of divergence?
- **Extensiveness:** What is covered in the lesson, and what is omitted?
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Who decides, plans, leads, evaluates?
- **Speech and silence:** What is spoken about, what is omitted? What is the intensity of actors' comments?
- **Big picture:** What are themes or trends that cut across all cases?

The categories were then grouped together into overarching themes. To develop analytical categories I compared each theme to other themes, and then compared the categories within each

theme. Themes that overlapped were combined into one larger analytical theme. Table 10 below shows the resulting themes, the categories they contain, and their defining features.

Table 11: Analytical themes

Category

Label	Defining Features	Analytical Theme
PRP		
Preparation	Pre-class meetings with ALT; printed lesson plans; worksheets; materials.	Professionalism
C/T		
Class Time	Start of class; end of class; time spent teaching	Time
C/S		
Class Scheduling	Class period; day of the week; school events	Discordance
L/C		
Teacher Language Competency	English language usage; lexical, grammatical and pronunciation issues	Professionalism
T/M		
Teacher Motivation	Role in class; attitude: use of Japanese and English	Pedagogical Competence
RO		
HRT & ALT Roles	Division of roles and responsibilities; HRT/ALT as primary or assistant instructor; interaction with each other;	Roles
C/L		
Classroom Language	Use of Japanese and English in classroom by teachers, ALTs, and students.	Classroom Languages
R/W		
Reading and writing	Use of reading and writing in English in class. Use of explanatory <i>katakana</i> .	Language Learning
L/P		
Lesson Plan	Who makes lesson plan; use of a prepared lesson plan; adherence or deviance from lesson plan.	Professionalism
TB		
Textbook	Use of textbook in class; deviance from or non-use of textbook.	Pedagogical Competence

C/M

Classroom materials	Use of worksheets; realia; non-textbook materials.	Pedagogical Competence
S/A		
Student Activities	Speaking and listening activities; choral, pair, individual speaking practice; interaction with other students / teacher / ALT. Static or moving around;	Language Learning
S/B		
Student Behavior	Adherence to teacher's instructions; Japanese language chat; off task interaction.	Discordance
Mgmt		
Classroom Management	Effectively motivate students; class control; pace of lesson; explanations and instructions; monitoring and feedback.	Professionalism
I/C		
Intercultural Communication	Explanations of and encounters with foreign cultures; Comparison and contrast between Japan and other countries; non-English language learning.	Intercultural Communication

In developing these themes, I drew upon Asvoll's (2014) concept of analytical induction whereby themes are the result of both inductive data analysis and the accumulation of tacit knowledge during fieldwork. Themes were generated from a rigorous interpretative review of the data corpus and then supported and illustrated through what Saldana (2011) terms 'narrative vignettes': "reconstructed stories from field notes, interview transcripts, or other data sources that provide a vivid profile as part of the evidentiary warrant" (2011: 119)⁴⁴.

To produce these written 'narrative vignettes' I also followed an "integrative strategy" (Emerson *et al.*, 2001: 364) which entailed weaving together field notes and interpretation⁴⁵. This involves 'reworking' the original fieldwork accounts to produce "a smooth thematically focused text with minimal spatial markings to indicate where the field note ends and interpretation begins" (*ibid*). According to Emerson *et al.* such a strategy is particularly well suited "for bringing together observations and occurrences, scattered in different places in the field note record, to create a coherent ... account" (*ibid*).

⁴⁴ See also Chapter 6.

⁴⁵ For examples of this approach see Nguyen, 2011; Ives, 2012; and LaRossa, 2012.

My initial analytical themes are therefore very much descriptive rather than prescriptive; they are used to organize the issues that emerged from the data rather than to stipulate how the data *fits* a particular theoretical or ontological position (Holliday, 2007). My aim is to let the data ‘speak for themselves’ before engaging in broader comparisons beyond the four case study schools (the focus of Chapter 8).

7.3 Time

The most readily apparent theme to emerge from the data was ‘time’. For the purpose of analysis, I have broken this theme down into a number of overlapping sub-themes, each of which will be examined individually. These are:

Teaching time

Preparation time

Scheduling time

7.3.1 Teaching time

According to the official Course of Study document, a mandatory 35 hours of FLA classes should take place in a single academic year. However, it needs to be pointed out that a classroom hour is not equivalent to 60 minutes. Rather, it is defined as a period of 45 minutes (MEXT, 2009a). This means that for a school year, students should receive a total 1,575 minutes of classroom instruction in FLA.

Tables 11 and 12 below show the average class times for 5th and 6th grades in the four schools.

Table 12: Observed classroom time - 5th Grade

	No. of observations	Average class time	Extrapolated yearly total (mins)	Required yearly total (mins)	Difference: time / %
Midori	31	43 mins	1505	1575	70 mins / 4.4%
Aoi	15	41 mins	1435	1575	140 mins / 8.9%
Kihiro	17	39 mins	1365	1575	210 mins / 13.3%
Chairo	13	41 mins	1435	1575	140 mins / 8.9%

Table 13: Observed classroom time - 6th Grade

	No. of observations	Average class time	Extrapolated yearly total (mins)	Required yearly total (mins)	Difference: time / %
Midori	33	42 mins	1470	1575	105 mins / 6.7%
Aoi	19	40 mins	1400	1575	175 mins / 13.3%
Kihiro	17	38 mins	1295	1575	280 mins / 17.8%
Chairo	13	40 mins	1400	1575	175 mins / 13.3%

I want to emphasize that the extrapolated figures and the time differences are based on the classes I observed only. It may well be the case that in classes where I wasn't present raised the average times. Nevertheless, should we take my extrapolated time as a relatively feasible indication of total class duration, then the time discrepancies across schools between the policy defined annual requirement and actual teaching time is quite striking. Midori school, for instance, had the highest average class times for both 5th and 6th grades yet even here the time difference led to the 5th grade 'losing' one and a half classes, while the 6th graders 'lost' over two classes during the course of the year. In the case of Kihiro elementary school, the number of classes 'lost' during the year totaled more than 4 classes for the 5th grade students and over 6 classes for the 6th grade students.

There is also a notable 'deflation' of average class times between the 5th and 6th grades. Whereas with the exception of Kihiro, the other three schools 'lost' time for the year was under 10%, in 6th grade only Midori managed to limit its 'lost' class time to less than 10% of the annual total. The formal interviews I conducted with three of the 6th grade teachers shed some light on this discrepancy. All of them emphasised how busy they were. M. Sensei at Midori explained,

"the whole year is busy as everything is the student's last time to do things...It is their last time to do the school sport's day, the school festival, their school trip, so everything must be perfect and this takes a lot of planning, a lot of time and preparation... And of course the school graduation ceremony which means so much work in the third term with the planning and rehearsing and practice." (Interview: A/Midori/040313)

S. Sensei in Chiribestu Elementary School highlighted the preparations for both the graduation ceremony and their entrance into junior high school.

"It takes weeks and weeks of planning for the graduation ceremony and sometimes it feels like that is all that I do ... I stop being a teacher and become a planner, an event coordinator...And then I have to meet with the teachers from the different junior high schools my students will

go to, and prepare so many forms and reports. I have very little time for teaching.” (Interview: S/Aoi/040313)

I. Sensei at Chairo Elementary School explicitly contrasted teaching FLA in 5th and 6th grades.

“When my students were in 5th grade we could have more fun ... I could plan the lessons better, I had more time to think and I could talk with Amy and we could, we would make good plans together. But in 6th grade I don’t have that time anymore... I am so busy I can’t find the free time to plan. I have to place the burden for the class on Amy.” (Interview: I/Chairo/032712)

For the 5th grade teachers this sense of constant busyness was not present, but they did allude to how temporal events would affect their classes. A. Sensei in Midori school noted that,

“when we have the school sports day the classes for two weeks before are tough as the students are always practicing [for the sports day] and they are tired so I try not to do too much.” (Interview: A/Midori/040313)

These comments are indicative of both how busy the teachers of the senior grades are, and their curricular priorities. A survey conducted by Benesse (2010) about the implementation of the new elementary school curriculum in its first year found that the majority of teachers weren’t able to cover the required coursework. Yano (2011), in her study of the problems surrounding the implementation of the FLA class, quotes a teacher as saying, “In elementary school we are in charge of various [academic] subjects and we also have to do practical research [in these subjects]. Teaching FLA on top of that is impossible” (p.62).

If looked at in isolation the 35 hours of instruction, averaging one 45-minute class a week, does not seem too imposing. However, as generalist teachers who were also tasked with a variety of demanding extra-curricular activities, the introduction of FLA was perceived as an unwelcome imposition on their already busy schedules.

7.3.2 Preparation time

Another notable factor behind the reduced teaching time during the FLA class is that very often preparation time either commenced at the same time as class time, or finished after class time had begun. I define ‘preparation time’ to mean preparatory activities such as discussing the class with the ALT, consulting the teachers’ guidebook, preparing class materials, setting up audio-visual equipment, or moving classrooms. Many of these activities were what I came to term ‘chime dependent’: when the chime sounded for the start of the class the homeroom teacher would check

the teacher's guide or speak with the ALT. This was most apparent in the two larger schools in my study, Aoi and Chairo elementary schools.

In Aoi elementary school S. Sensei was the overall coordinator for FLA in the school. She would usually meet with Mary, the school's ALT, on a Tuesday afternoon and discuss that week's classes. At this meeting S. Sensei and Mary would prepare plans for both grades' classes. However, none of the other 5th and 6th grade teachers would be present at that meeting and neither would be the town ALT. S. Sensei was aware of these shortcomings:

"I know the plan and I want to teach it and what I want Mary to do. But often the other teachers don't understand my ideas, my explanations, or why I want to teach this and in this way."
(Interview: S/Aoi/040313)

With regard to the town ALT she said,

"On the days he comes to the school I have to find him something to do. Also, I don't meet him until the start of the class and I can't explain what I want to do so with some ALTs he does his own thing, and another ALT doesn't really participate in the class, or he doesn't understand what to do... It can be a very difficult situation." (Interview: S/Aoi/040313)

From my observations it was clear that for the other homeroom teachers the main point of reference for what that day's class was going to be about was what page they were on in the textbook. At the start of the class Mary would explain what she was going to do and if there were any activities (such as modeling a dialogue or doing a skit) which would require the participation of the homeroom teacher. Such explanations usually took place after the chime had sounded and the class had officially commenced.

A similar situation existed at Chairo Elementary School. Although Amy, the ALT, would stay in the school until late on Thursday afternoon in order to meet with the four homeroom teachers and plan next week's lessons, this was not always achievable.

"The teachers are very busy and they have lots of meetings... they have so many meetings... so they are not always around to talk to and I can't stay here until they are free... this means that for some teachers I only meet them, only talk to them about the class at the start of the class and this is usually, like, me telling them 'we're doing this, this and this. Okay?' also they sometimes, like, forget what we discussed, what the plan we talked about was, and I have to remind them again, the next week at the start of the class." (Interview: Amy/Chairo/032712)

That preparation was the responsibility of Amy was explicitly stated by I. Sensei, one of the 5th grade homeroom teachers:

“I don’t know how to prepare lessons...Amy is in charge of the class and I think she can make a much better class [than me] ... my English is very bad ... I am not an English teacher so I think it is much better if Amy teaches them.” (Field note: C/I/5/012612/3).

This specification of preparatory roles was also clear from my classroom observations where Amy assumed responsibility for the pedagogical arrangements while the homeroom teachers looked after the ‘logistics’ of the class such as setting up the audio-visual equipment, turning on the heaters in the English room, making sure students have their textbooks and other necessary materials.

In Kiiro school the preparatory meetings between the two homeroom teachers and the two ALTs took place during the twenty-minute, mid-morning break between second and third classes. These meetings were brief and usually occurred at the end of break time as the teachers were very often absent from the staff room for most of the 20 minutes. Although Felix, the ALT, had been teaching FLA at Kiiro and other elementary schools in the town for seven years, his assumed role was that of an implementer of the lesson plan rather than an instigator like Amy in Chairō. He was usually content to teach the sample lesson plan outlined in the teachers’ guide.

“I don’t really plan the lesson as I’ve, because I’ve taught the class or the lesson before. So then I know what works, what to do with the students, what games to use... so when she [the homeroom teacher] says ‘today is lesson 5’ or whatever, I know what to do.” (Field note: K/Felix/061512/lunch).

Although never directly alluded to by either the homeroom teachers or Felix, from my observations it was apparent that P. Sensei planned and prepared her lessons in advance. Her lesson plans, although photocopied from the teachers’ guide, had the roles for Felix and Nomu-san clearly highlighted in different colours while activities that required any extra materials such as cards, dice, cutouts, prints, etc., were always prepared in advance.

K. Sensei by contrast displayed no such preparations. The brief meeting time before the start of the lesson was often a subtle invitation for Felix to suggest, if not a plan, a succession of activities to fill the allotted class time. Thus, K. Sensei would approach Felix in the staff room and say, “Today, I would like to teach lesson 7, about clothes and shopping...” and pause, whereupon Felix would suggest a series of activities. Sometimes, time and circumstances would not permit such a discussion in the staffroom and it was in the classroom, after the chime had sounded, that K. Sensei would have a hurried discussion - with reference to the teachers’ guide - as to what they were going to do in the lesson.

Midori was the only school to have printed lesson plans prepared (see Appendix 8 for an example). This had been school policy for at least 4 years prior to my research (nobody was quite sure when the policy had begun). There was a standard format to both plans adopted from the

teachers' guide. The homeroom teachers also drew upon the plans from previous years but these, as A. Sensei pointed out, were of limited value as they were not based on the new FLA curriculum introduced in 2011.

In preparing for their classes both teachers drew up their lesson plans prior to the actual day of classes. A. Sensei said she tried to make the plan on a Sunday evening during her overall preparations for the coming week's classes, but often,

"I am too tired and I don't get to start it, so it is often not until Wednesday night that I make it." (Field note: M/A/5/100611/4).

For M. Sensei, she made her plan on a Wednesday night,

"as doing that [means] the plan is fresh in my mind when I go to teach on Thursday". (Field note: M/M/6/100611/3).

Interestingly, both teachers referenced their ALT's lack of Japanese ability as a determiner on how they made their lesson plans. For A. Sensei,

"Because Catherine doesn't understand Japanese and my English is not good, I have to think when I am making the plan, 'how do I explain this in English' and 'Will Catherine understand this activity?'". (Field note: M/A/5/100611/4).

Similarly, M. Sensei said,

"I can't write the plan in English and Catherine can't read Japanese, so we struggle to understand what we need to do". (Field note: M/M/6/100611/3).

Their preparations therefore involved considering not just what the students would do but how to facilitate understanding of the proposed lesson with the ALT.

7.3.3 Scheduling time

In Midori, Kiiri, and Chairo the FLA classes were scheduled on the same day each week, at the same times, and in the same sequence. The only exception was in Aoi when, during the special project in the autumn, some classes were scheduled on a Tuesday rather than the usual Friday. For all of the schools the day allotted to the FLA class was decided upon in consultation with the local Board of Education. This was to ensure that there was an ALT present for the class. Again, the exception here was Aoi who had Mary, their 'own' ALT, present for all classes, but did not have a

town ALT at all the classes. This was not deliberate school policy but rather as a result of demand for the town's three ALTs who between them had to rotate around 18 elementary schools and 9 junior high schools.

This dependence on the presence of an ALT meant that there was a built-in inflexibility to each school's schedule which, on occasion, led to less than ideal teaching circumstances. For example, one day at Midori FLA classes were scheduled the same morning as the 6th graders interviews for admission to junior high school, while, on another occasion, in Chairo the 5th grade classes were scheduled after they had spent the morning at swimming lessons.

Inflexibility was also an issue in how the classes were scheduled within the two larger schools, Aoi and Chairo. Each week the classes for 5th and 6th grades occurred in the same sequence. This resulted in the second class in each grade being 'smoother' in that the ALT had learned from the previous classes' experience and adapted her lesson plan accordingly. Mary, the Aoi ALT, made explicit reference to this:

"I don't understand why each week they schedule the classes in the same order. It's not right. My second class is much better than my first ... because I know what works, what's going to go better...they should change it [the class order] each week". (Field note: A/Mary/031412/lunch).

7.4 Discordance

The theme of 'discordance' was encapsulated by the remarks of O. Sensei, one of the 5th grade homeroom teachers at Aoi school:

"I don't really understand why students have to learn English at elementary school...they need to learn Japanese first, their own language...Many students are not good at Japanese and they need to learn, to live in Japan... junior high school is the proper place to learn English, but first Japanese". (Field note: A/O/5/111511/4).

For O. Sensei the FLA class, or what he simply termed 'English class', distracts from the student's mastery of their native language. None of the other teachers in the study were as explicit in expressing their doubts about the appropriateness of FLA in the elementary school curriculum, but there were subtler indications of the subject's perceived lack of importance. A. Sensei in Midori referred to the class as 'play time' (遊び時間 *asobi jikan*) and highlighted how, unlike other subjects, FLA levied no academic responsibilities on the students:

“They have no tests, they don’t get homework, and if they forget what they learn in class, well that’s not really a problem”. (Interview: A/Midori/040313)

A. sensei’s comments reflect the official designation of FLA as a compulsory though non-academic subject in the curriculum. It is akin to Art or Music, but even these subjects have more validation in the eyes of both teachers and students. In the case of Art much of the students’ work is displayed in the classroom and at the end of each term each student takes home her or his art work to show to their parents. Similarly, music is an integral part of the ceremonial functions of the school, witnessed by all, parents included, at the entrance and graduation ceremonies, and the school festival. FLA by contrast, is limited to the confines of the classroom and does not feature in the performative role of education.

This sense of dislocation was also manifest in the physical displacement of the FLA lesson from the students’ usual classroom to the ‘English room’. The need to change classrooms in three of the schools (Aoi, Midori, and Chairo) was undertaken for practical reasons: many of the activities used in the FLA lessons required space for students to move around. Yet, this also highlights how the pedagogical methods involved in FLA differ from the methods used to teach Japanese or Maths. This is not to say that Japanese and Maths lessons are strictly bound to the classroom; depending on the aim of the lesson students may measure the school grounds for maths, or research Japanese language topics in the library. But such activities tend to be the exceptions that prove the rule: usually students remain desk bound in their classrooms (c.f. Sato, 2004; Cave, 2007).

FLA, by contrast, represents a seemingly discordant break in this pedagogical routine. The movement to another physical space often, as in the case of Midori and Chairo, without using desks or seats, could be thought of as a metaphorical movement from an established Japanese pedagogy to a foreign form. Even in Kihiro, the one school that didn’t change classrooms, this sense of discordance was nevertheless present. This was particularly the case in the 5th grade class. The blackboard would often still have explanations from the previous class written on it, though blocked by the positioning of the large interactive TV.

The presence of one or more ALTs added to this sense of discordance; the students’ usual homeroom teacher would be, depending on the school, augmented or displaced by a foreigner who, once a week for approximately 45 minutes, assumed control of their classroom.

7.5 Language Competence

In all of the six formal interviews I conducted the teachers commented on their lack of English language proficiency and how this hampered their teaching of FLA. For A. sensei it was a case of

“I can’t teach English because I am very bad at English”. (Interview: S/Aoi/040313)

I. sensei noted the extended gap since she last encountered English.

“I learned English in junior high school and high school and university, but then I stopped... I became an elementary school teacher and I didn’t need it...I forgot it and now, what, 20 years later, I can’t remember the English I learned”. (Interview I/Chairo/032712).

For M. sensei,

“English is difficult...I can’t think of the right word to say or how to say or explain something in English”. (Field note: M/M/6/111112/3).

Although T. sensei spent six months in New Zealand he too claims that his English is poor:

“I can’t speak English ... it is better that Amy does the talking so the students can hear proper English”. (Field note: C/T/5/030812/5).

Even S. sensei in Aoi school, who had passed level 2 of the Eiken Test and had holidayed in both the USA and Australia, was unconfident of her English ability.

“I am not good at English. I have no confidence when I speak English...I don’t think I am very good teacher of English”. (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

What none of the teachers did though was clearly articulate what level of English ability was needed to teach the class. Many of their evaluative criteria for language competence were linked to issues of pronunciation or English vocabulary knowledge, but this, perhaps, resulted from the presence of a native English speaker in the classroom and measuring themselves against the perceived ideal. S. sensei described her desired competency as,

“I know it is only beginner’s English but a teacher should be able to pronounce words correctly and explain what different words mean and answer students’ questions about how you say a Japanese word in English”. (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

This could be seen as a problem of professionalism rather than simply language competence *per se*. As educated and experienced generalist teachers their professional role as teachers encompasses teaching a variety of different subjects along with nurturing the personal development of their students. Much of their status and authority as teachers is based upon their

professional expertise in educating their students. Their lack of English language ‘expertise’ undermines their sense of professionalism, particularly when the comparison with an expert language user, in the form of the ALT, consistently highlights their linguistic shortcomings. I. sensei in Shiroy school made this clear when she apologized to my wife for not talking to me about her FLA classes, citing her embarrassment at her inability to speak English. Similarly, M. sensei in Midori school commented that,

“If my students think I am bad at English they may think, ‘she’s not a good teacher; she can’t teach us English’”. (Field note: M/M/6/111112/3).

7.6 Pedagogical Competence

Teachers differing language capabilities, both self-perceived and actual, affected how they taught lessons. Teachers with confidence in their pedagogical abilities deviated from the curriculum suggested by the *Hi Friends* teachers’ guide. A. sensei in Midori school successfully got the students to put on a small play about one of the stories featured in the textbook. S. sensei in Aoi school devoted almost a fifth of the annual curriculum to doing the special project. In contrast, M. sensei in Midori and both the teachers in Kiroy school closely followed the lesson plans in the teachers’ guide. In Chairo school all the classes were led by Amy with the homeroom teachers (self) regulated to supporting roles.

Of the nineteen teachers I observed over the course of my research only S. sensei had received any formal training in teaching English to young learners. She had completed a twelve-month correspondence course offered by ARC, a large Japanese educational publishing company. As ARC is a private company the qualification she received is not officially recognized by MEXT though within boards of education and schools it is widely accepted as proof of competency to teach young learners. The knowledge she had acquired was evident in her year-long curriculum where she ‘cherry picked’ her way through the curriculum suggested by the *Hi Friends* teachers’ guide. As almost a fifth of her classes were devoted to the special project she did not cover all of the units in the textbook, nor did she follow them in the order suggested. Even in those classes that did follow the textbook, she did so selectively, often only using the *Hi Friends* textbook for its listening activities and then using her own expansion activities to practice and reinforce the language learned. In both Midori and Kiroy elementary schools the teachers adhered closely to the curriculum detailed in the textbook and teachers’ guide. For A. sensei in Midori school the textbook,

“makes it much easier to teach the class ... if I didn’t have Hi Friends it would be impossible”.
(Interview A/Midori/032912).

Similarly, her colleague M. sensei said that,

“it contains lots of activities and explains how to do them”. (Field note: M/M/6/072111/3).

However, she did note that there was too much teaching content:

“It is impossible to do everything in the teachers’ guide. There is not enough time in the class to do it”. (Field note: M/M/6/072111/3).

The case of Kiuro school highlights the enforced dependency of teachers on the textbook. Neither P. sensei nor K. sensei had taught the FLA class before and the teachers who had taught the FLA classes the previous year had both been transferred to other schools. This meant that within the school there were no ‘experienced’ teachers to whom P. and K. sensei could turn to for advice. P. sensei said that she didn’t have time to plan the FLA classes and the textbook provided a ready-made plan. She also said that she just had to tell Felix, the ALT, what unit and what page she wanted to teach. She would give him a photocopy of the relevant pages in the teachers’ guide and, because of his Japanese ability and teaching experience, he would know what to do.

Chairo school presented an interesting exception to the other schools in that it was Amy who led the classes and often included her own activities, such as her phonics program, or the explanation of American seasonal holidays. These, however, were component parts of, rather than replacements for, the *Hi Friends* curriculum. She highlighted the importance of both the quantity and quality of the listening activities in the textbook:

“FLA classes are based on listening and speaking. Students don’t learn to read or write...so we need a good, a really good listening program with lots of listening examples and conversations and examples of easy to understand talking...I wouldn’t be able to do that. There’s no way I could. I mean where would you begin to make all that”. (Interview: Amy/Chairo/032712).

Amy also noted that the textbook provided a structure to each lesson:

“I don’t think we need to follow it exactly, or like follow it all. But it’s good, you know what to teach and then what to teach next, and it’s clear where there’s this and then this and this and so on”. (Interview: Amy/Chairo/032712).

The teachers differing conceptions of teaching ‘competence’ was reflected in their classroom instruction. Teachers who believed themselves ‘less’ competent (A. and M. in Midori, O. in Aoi, P. and K. in Kiuro) relied closely on the *Hi Friends* textbook and associated teachers guide (see Chapter 8 for a fuller discussion) for determining their instructional content and approach. In

contrast, S. sensei exhibited a confidence in her approach that manifested in a willingness to experiment, both in pedagogical approaches and subject content.

7.6.1 Professional development opportunities

During my two-year research period, of the nineteen teachers I had observed only A. and M. senses in Midori school had attended a single afternoon workshop for teaching English organized by their local board of education. However, they found the workshop to be of little practical benefit as the activities were focused on the junior high school English curriculum. They were aware of other workshops and courses offered by the Hokkaido University of Education, but these, as they pointed out,

“were always held in Sapporo... If they are on a workday we can't go, and if they are on the weekend it means spending the whole day travelling there and back for only a few hours of the course...For teachers based in Sapporo it is much easier to attend, but coming from [our town] it is impossible”. (Interview A/Midori/032912).

Geography though wasn't the only impediment to availing of such professional development opportunities. There were also the issues of the content and perceived worth of the courses offered. In September, 2011 I attended a one day research course (研修日, *kennshuui*) organised by the Hokkaido prefectural board of education for English teachers at all levels of primary and secondary schooling, along with ALTs and relevant members of municipal boards of education. It was held in Maruyama, a large city about a ninety-minute drive from where I was conducting my research. From the four schools I was then observing only S. sensei had said she would attend, but on the morning of the course one of her students was involved in a traffic accident and she couldn't go.

The course was split into a morning and afternoon session. The morning session was led by Professor Olenka Bilash from the University of Alberta in Canada. She conducted her session entirely in English with no translation, much to the consternation of the group of elementary school teachers I found myself sitting with. One of the teachers, from an elementary school in Maruyama, informed me that she had been told only that morning by her vice-principal that she had to attend the course. She was quite annoyed by this as (a) she had to hurriedly arrange with another teacher to oversee her 6th grade class; and (b) now that she was here, she couldn't understand what Professor Bilash was saying. She also couldn't understand why a Canadian professor was leading the course when she was sure there were Japanese experts who could have fulfilled the role just as well and presented in both English and Japanese.

In the afternoon session we observed a forty-five minute ‘show class’ held at a local elementary school. The lesson was not conducted in the students’ normal classroom, rather it was held in the school’s gym. The 34 students were seated on the floor and were taught to by their homeroom teacher and an ALT. They were observed by approximately 40 people, some of whom were taking photographs of the proceedings. Prior to the start of the lesson copies of the lesson plan (in Japanese) were distributed to all attendees. The unusual location and the presence of so many people had an inhibiting effect on the both students and teachers. The homeroom teacher and the ALT proceeded methodically through the lesson plan but without any engaged enthusiasm on the students’ part. Following the lesson, the homeroom teacher and the ALT, along with the attendees, moved to a meeting room for a fifty minute discussion on the lesson. Many of the comments were concerned with deviations from the lesson plan, team teaching roles, and issues of time management. There was less attention paid to pedagogical factors and learner aims.

This form of in-service training is predicated on the drip-down approach to knowledge dispersal whereby teachers who attended the course would return to their schools and disseminate what they learned to their colleagues. However, as none of the teachers I was observing attended that clearly was not the case here.

In December 2013 I was asked to co-deliver a seminar on ‘*Global best practices for teaching English to young learners*’ as part of a day long professional development course organized specifically for in-service elementary school teachers by the Hokkaido University of Education in Sapporo. It was held in their ‘satellite campus’ next to the main Sapporo train and bus station. Unlike the Maruyama event, this was held entirely in Japanese. The program was broken into five one-hour sessions. These were:

- 1: Effective communication activities
- 2: Teaching without letters
- 3: Keys to successful English pronunciation
- 4: Classroom English
- 5: Global best practices for teaching English to young learners

There were 122 attendees from all over Hokkaido but, again unfortunately, none from any of the schools I was observing. The difference between this course and the one organized by the prefectural board of education in Maruyama was striking. There was no show class and the focus was firmly on learners rather than on a single lesson plan. Each of the sessions were expert led with the emphasis on disseminating best practices on various aspects of teaching English to young learners. Yet, even with the provision of such a quality course only 122 out of 19,637 practicing teachers in Hokkaido (Hokkaido Board of Education, 2013) attended the course. This exemplifies the difficulties in attracting teacher participants to professional development courses, an issue that will be examined further in Chapter 8.

7.7 Classroom Roles

7.7.1 Status of ALT

According to the official Course of Study document,

“Effort should be made to get more people involved in lessons by inviting native speakers of the foreign language or by seeking cooperation from local people who are proficient in the foreign language, depending on the circumstances of the local community” (MEXT, 2009b).

Although couched as a suggestion - “inviting native speakers” - in practice the “circumstances of the local community” meant that for Midori, Kihiro, and Chairo schools, the only means of ensuring a native speaker in the classroom was for the respective boards of education to employ ALTs. As we have seen, Chiribestu school was exceptional in directly employing Mary as their own ALT. Table 2 below shows the four school districts and the number of ALTs employed in each district.

Table 14: The number of ALTs in each school district

School District	Population	No. of elementary/junior high schools*	No. of ALTs	Proportion of ALTs to schools	ALT Hiring Method
Midori	36,278	$10 / 5 = 15$	2	1 : 7.5	JET Program
Aoi**	94,535	$18 / 9 = 27$	3	1 : 9	Direct
Kihiro***	19,376	$6 / 4 = 10$	2	1 : 5	Direct
Chairo	51,526	$8 / 5 = 13$	4	1 : 3.25	JET Program

* ALTs based in each district’s board of education teach at both elementary and junior high schools, so it would be misleading to compare the number of elementary schools only. These ALTs do not teach at high schools. Compulsory education finishes at the end of junior high school so responsibility for and oversight of public high schools, including the dispatch of ALTs, is undertaken by the Hokkaido prefectural board of education.

** As she was directly employed by Aoi and worked solely for them, Mary is not included in the district’s total number of ALTs.

*** Nomu-san in Kihiro school was employed directly by the Hokkaido prefectural board of education so she too is omitted from the district’s total number of ALTs.

From the table we can see that the presence of an ALT in the classroom depended on the hiring practices of each district. In the case of the school district Aoi was in, the number of ALTs

was insufficient to ensure one in every school and classroom when the FLA class was being taught. This, as Mary informed me, was the principal reason Aoi school had employed her; to have a native speaker in the class for all of the FLA lessons.

I questioned a board of education official⁴⁶ about the insufficient number of ALTs in the city and he told me it was a question of finances; the city was not willing to employ full time the number of native speaker ALTs necessary to ensure one in all FLA and English classes at all the city's primary and secondary schools. Instead, it employed three local Japanese people proficient in English to work on an hourly basis as ALTs in different schools. In addition, the city had embarked on a program of closing and merging both elementary and junior high schools in response to the ongoing decline in the population of school-age children. Hence, in 2013, when I completed my research there were 18 elementary schools and 9 junior high schools. By 2015 those numbers had fallen to 15 and 7 respectively.

In contrast, Chairō district had prioritized English language education. The then newly elected mayor in 2011 had pledged in his campaign to have an ALT in each 'English' classroom and he subsequently doubled the number of ALTs from two to four. Midori and Kiirō benefited from the relatively small sizes of their respective towns and the number of schools in each which meant both districts could have an ALT in all of the FLA classes.

There was also the issue of how the ALTs were hired. The towns in which Aoi and Kiirō were situated all hired and directly employed their own ALTs. The towns Midori and Chairō were situated in employed their ALTs via the JET program. For the two towns that directly hired their own ALTs, the principal advantages were that they could screen applicants who were (1) proficient in the Japanese language; (2) had experience working in Japan as an ALT; and preferably (3) had lived in Hokkaido previously. However, each town had to assume the full cost (in terms of salaries, health insurance, and housing) of employing the ALTs.

In the cases of Midori and Chairō, the town's participation in the JET program meant that 77% of these employment costs were covered by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT 2015c). However, the town could not stipulate a Japanese language proficiency requirement, nor could the ALTs decide to voluntarily come to the town. Decisions relating to the dispatch of ALTs were taken by the Ministry without consultation with either the town or the ALT. The result of this imposed system was that in the Midori district there was a steady turnover of ALTs. From 2010 to 2014 the town employed six different ALTs, five of whom only stayed for a year, the sixth staying for two years. In contrast, Felix in Kiirō had worked there for seven years and Mike had worked in the Aoi town district for four years. This meant that in Midori school there was a reoccurring 'churn' of inexperienced instructors, both Japanese homeroom teachers and ALTs, assuming responsibility for the FLA classes each year. Such 'churn' imposed burdens on both the homeroom teacher and the ALT. For Catherine, the ALT at Midori during my research period, this was her first time in Japan

⁴⁶ The official was attending an FLA 'show class' at Aoi as a potential model for best practice.

and she only had a very rudimentary grasp of Japanese. This resulted in considerable communication difficulties with A. and M. teachers as their English wasn't sufficient to explain their lesson plans to Catherine. As A. sensei remarked,

“Because she [Catherine] doesn't speak any Japanese and my English is not good, I can't explain to her about the class. I can't make her understand what I want to do. She usually just says words, pronounces them for the students to repeat, and uses flashcards, and I feel very embarrassed for her”. (Interview A/Midori/032912).

7.7.2 The role of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in the classroom

The differing roles of the ALTs in the four schools was very much dependent on the role of the homeroom teacher in the classroom. On a continuum ranging between complete to minimal involvement, Amy's role at Chairo school would be located at the complete end, while Mike at Aoi could be placed closer to the minimal end of the scale, with Mary, Felix, and myself, falling somewhere in between these points.

Midori School

The provision of a formatted, printed lesson plan each week for each class meant that (a) it was clear to me (as the ALT) what the aim of the lessons were and the teaching methodology we were going to use to achieve these aims; (b) the plan clearly delineated my expected role in the classroom; and (c) allowed me to consider and suggest alternative approaches and activities to those detailed on the plan. However, I found that in the classroom the personality of the homeroom teacher had a significant influence on how closely we adhered to the proposed lesson plan. M. sensei always sought to impose a controlled structure on her class and rarely deviated from the prepared plan. A. sensei by contrast, was much more willing to change, or even on occasion abandon the plan completely, depending on circumstances.

Aoi School

S. sensei, the school's FLA coordinator, and Mary planned each week's lessons for all the classes, usually on a Tuesday afternoon. They had been working together since 2009 when S. sensei was transferred to the school and seemed quite comfortable with each other's classroom presence. However, the situation was a bit more problematic with the other three homeroom teachers, particularly the fifth-grade teachers O. and E. Mary complained that they contributed very little during the lesson and she often had to teach most of it on her own. Matters were complicated further on the days Mike, the town ALT, was scheduled at the school. Both Mary and Mike informed me (on separate occasions) that they thought the other's lessons were in some ways problematic. According to Mary, Mike 'never follows the lesson plan... he just does his own thing without

checking with us first' (Field note: A/Mary/5/061011/4). For Mike, Mary 'uses too much Japanese in the class...she should speak more English'(Field note: A/Mike/5/091611/4). Although S. sensei did try to include Mike into the lesson, the lack of a prepared printed lesson plan and no meeting prior to the start of classes, meant that Mike usually didn't know what his role was expected to be. This often resulted in him either assuming the entire responsibility for the lesson or disengaging with the class completely.

Chairo School

Although the Course of Study states that, '*Homeroom teachers ... should make teaching programs and conduct lessons*' (MEXT, 2009b), this did not occur in Chairo. In all four classes Amy planned and taught the lessons. The homeroom teachers were willing to concede this role to Amy, explaining their reticency in terms of their poor English ability and lack of experience in teaching FLA. When Amy called upon them to role-play or demonstrate an activity they would, depending on the teacher, willingly or reluctantly participate, but for the majority of the lessons the teachers would assume responsibility for classroom management and student behaviour. Of all the ALTs I observed Amy was the only one who stayed in the school after her lessons were finished to meet with the teachers and plan the following weeks lessons. However, this was dependent on the teachers' schedules which often precluded them from meeting with Amy.

Kiiri School

Felix had been working as an ALT at the school for seven years and hence had considerably more experience in teaching FLA than the homeroom teachers, both of whom were teaching the subject for the first time. However, despite this he did not take the lead in lesson planning or preparation. His role was that of an implementer rather than an instigator (as exemplified by Amy), or collaborator (as Mary was), though this was influenced by the teacher he was working with. P. sensei adhered quite closely to the lesson plan in the teachers' guide and expected Felix to follow the directions for the ALT's role as detailed in the guide. K. sensei was more eager to draw upon Felix's experience and would seek suggestions from him as to what to do in class. However, given the problematic nature of the 6th grade students the elicited suggestions were usually for activities that the students would potentially find面白い (*omoshiroi* interesting), rather than for their pedagogical appropriateness. Matters were further complicated by the presence of Nomu-san. Although her and Felix had an amicable relationship, there was little meaningful collaboration between them. Again, the homeroom teacher determined their respective roles. P. sensei involved Nomu-san much more than Felix in her lessons, asking her to pronounce vocabulary, model conversations, and explain cultural issues in Japanese. In contrast, in the 6th grade class Nomu-san was a peripheral figure while Felix fulfilled the role of the ALT.

All of the teachers I interviewed emphasized the importance of having an ALT in the classroom. For A. sensei in Midori school,

“If an ALT did not come to school it would be impossible to teach FLA”. (Interview A/Midori/032912).

Likewise, T. sensei in Chairo school described Amy as “essential”. He remarked that,

“without Amy I don’t know how to do the class...I perhaps could teach a class, but it would be a very bad class”. (Field note: C/T/5/061812/5).

A number of the teachers described the value of the ALT in terms of the use of ‘correct English’ and pronunciation issues. M. sensei in Midori school said she was afraid that if the students heard her ‘bad pronunciation’ they would end up learning the wrong way to say English words. S. sensei in Aoi school made a similar comment:

“I don’t want students to hear my mistaken pronunciation as they could learn the same mistakes and always say the English words the wrong way”. (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

Across all four schools there were no evidence of standardized appropriation of classroom roles by either the homeroom teacher or the ALT. Even within schools there was distinct variation in how roles were assigned or adopted. This highlights how ‘team-teaching’ (see also Chapter 8), does not entail fixed roles, but is a fluid concept that shifts according to how the ‘team’ is constituted by both personality and circumstance.

7.8 Language learning

The official Course of Study policy document states that,

“... teachers should focus on the foreign language sounds and use letters of the alphabet and words as supplementary tools for oral communication, in an effort not to give too much burden to pupils” (MEXT, 2009b).

Formal EFL literacy instruction does not commence until the start of junior high school. This does not mean that literacy instruction is forbidden in elementary school - Kumazawa (2013) outlines a successful beginner literacy scheme carried out in Kanagawa prefecture - but none occurred in the schools I observed. In addition, the *Hi Friends* textbook and teachers’ guide provide no instructional guidance in teaching reading and writing.

Unfortunately, the lack of such guidance has the unintended effect of interfering with the students learning of 'foreign language sounds'. This problem was exemplified by the special project organized in Aoi school. For the project students in both grades had to make a video introducing their school and the town they lived in. This involved gathering information, selecting the pertinent details, filming them, writing explanations in Japanese, translating them into English, memorising them, and finally saying them on camera. The students used Japanese-English dictionaries to initially translate their explanations and these were subsequently checked and corrected by S. sensei and Mary. However, even with the correct English sentences the students could not read the words. This meant that the sentences had to be rendered phonetically in syllabic katakana script to enable the students to pronounce them. The consonant-vowel combination of katakana does not marry well with English pronunciation so that reliance on this script detrimentally affected the students' pronunciation. Thus, a sentence such as 'This is our classroom' was rendered as '*Dizu izu auwa- kurasu rumu*'.

In addition, writing as a mnemonic device for students also had to rely on the katakana rendering of English words. The difficulty students had in remembering key phrases for various communication activities meant that some of the teachers resorted to writing them in English and katakana on the blackboard. A. sensei in Midori school recognized the shortcomings of such an approach stating that,

"I know the katakana is not the same, the right way to say it in English, but some of my students, especially those not good at English, find it very difficult to remember what to say. They need to see it in order to say it". (Interview A/Midori/032912).

K. sensei in Kihiro similarly said,

"It is easier for the students. They need hints and reminders of what to say. They can't be expected to remember everything from last week's class". (Interview K/Kihiro/032712).

A further issue with the lack of formal literacy instruction is that it undermines the perception of FLA as a legitimate form of language learning. S. sensei in Aoi school remarked that,

"In Japanese students must practice writing kanji everyday, again and again. With English classes we don't do that at all. There is no writing, just speaking and listening and games. I think students think it is not proper learning. It is not serious to them". (Interview: S/Aoi/040313)

A. sensei made the point that the lack of English literacy meant that English learning was confined to the forty-five minute, once a week lesson.

"I can't give them homework or worksheets to practice and review, so the students find it difficult to remember the English they learn... they can't remember what they learned the week before". (Interview A/Midori/032912).

K. sensei in Kihiro school linked literary instruction with classroom management as a means of regulating student behaviour.

"Writing calms students down. They have to concentrate more, on their own, when they are writing. I think too much of English class is games and fun activities and students get too excited...It is hard sometimes to control them". (Interview K/Kihiro/032712).

Although the teachers recognized the shortcomings of an oral-aural based communicative curriculum, they were also adamant that they would not be able to teach English reading and writing themselves. A. sensei remarked that,

"I do not have the knowledge to teach English reading and writing... I don't know how to do it". (Interview A/Midori/032912).

S. sensei noted the extra burden this would put on teachers:

"We would have to learn how to teach it [reading and writing in English] and that is very difficult...we have no time to learn that". (Interview: S/Aoi/040313)

According to T. sensei in Chairō,

"It is better to start it in junior high school. The teachers there are English experts and know how to teach reading and writing". (Field note: C/T/5/090811/5).

S. sensei also highlighted the related issue of the time that would be necessary to teach it in elementary school:

"You cannot teach it once a week. You would need many more English classes each week if you were to teach it. This would mean either more classes in total, or less classes in some other subject, and that is not easy to change" (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

The curricular emphasis on lessons centered on oral communication activities raised issues of classroom management and how the lack of English literacy instruction impacted on using writing as a mnemonic aid to scaffold learning. However, teachers also stressed that introducing literacy

instruction in English was something they believed they were not professionally qualified to do and was better left to the secondary school stage.

7.9 Intercultural communication

In all of the schools I observed the weekly timetable referred to the lesson as 英語 (*Eigo*, English). Similarly, in my conversations and interactions with the teachers they all referred to it as the 英語従業 (*eigo jugyou*, English lesson), rather than its official title 外国語活動 (*gaikokugo katsudou*, Foreign Language Activities). Yet, this designation of ‘English lesson’ tended to obscure the pedagogical aims of the subject as outlined in the Course of Study and detailed in the teachers’ guide. The Course of Study states that students should “learn the differences in ways of living, customs and events between Japan and foreign countries”. This is operationalized in the teachers’ guide through a distinct section in each unit given over to intercultural communication. For example, unit 4 in the fifth grade on the topic of ‘likes and dislikes’ includes an activity on getting students to say what sports they like or don’t like. As an expansion of this activity there is an explanation on various sports that are not played in Japan but are popular in other countries such as *kabaddi* (Pakistan) and *sepak takraw* (Malaysia). This explanation is enhanced by a pair of short videos on the interactive TV showing the two sports. When A. sensei did this unit with her class, she showed the students the video while reading the explanation directly from the teachers’ guide. Similarly, when Amy in Chairō did her class on festivals in America and Japan, her explanation was entirely in Japanese, as was Mary’s when she was talking about Thanksgiving to the students in Aoi school.

From my observations it was apparent that there were a number of effects from this aspect of the FLA classes. The first, and most obvious, was that the use of the Japanese language to explain intercultural topics reduced the students exposure to the English language during the lesson. A subtler point was that the legitimate use of Japanese during the commonly termed ‘English lesson’ which reinforced the Japanese homeroom teacher’s confidence and sense of authority over the students. This was never directly alluded to by any of the teachers in either the formal or informal interviews I conducted with them, but it was notable how their attitudes changed when they spoke in Japanese about other countries and cultures. This was exemplified by I. sensei in Chairō school. In the eleven times I observed her class she was usually, as I wrote in my field notes,

a quiet and reticent presence...she only speaks to manage or discipline the students and even then only speaks quietly to them individually. (Field note: C/I/5/052611/5).

Yet, in the class on festivals (as described in Chapter 5), when Amy and the students had trouble assigning months to each event, I. sensei provided a detailed and animated explanation, and took an active part in questioning and elaborating on Amy’s explanations of American festivals. In

doing so I. sensei was able to claim some form of pedagogical authority over a subject she was otherwise weak in (“*I am embarrassed about my lack of English*”). Whether this was the intention of the writers of the teachers’ guide is unknown, but the inclusion of a series of intercultural communication topics enabled some of the homeroom teachers to legitimately use Japanese in the classroom. This in turn mitigated against their poor English ability and their sense of professional inadequacy.

7.10 Language use in the classroom

In order to quantifiably assess how much English and Japanese was being used in their classrooms in the autumn of my second year of research I approached A. sensei in Midori school and S. sensei in Aoi school with a request to video record a number of their lessons. I deliberately chose these two teachers as I felt I had developed the best rapport with them over the preceding twelve months. Surprisingly, both of the teachers refused. A. sensei said that the school principal had refused permission when she had asked him, while S. sensei said she would not be comfortable having her lessons recorded. Hence, my analysis of classroom language is drawn entirely from my field notes and unfortunately can’t be objectively verified.

Based on my field notes and completed observation forms, I separated language use into the following two interrogative categories:

- (1) When were the languages used and for what purposes?
- (2) Who used the languages and how much English and Japanese was used?

7.10.1 When were the languages used and for what purposes?

In my observation form I divided language usage into the following approximate categories:

- Greetings
- Introduction
- Activity explanations
- During activities
- Classroom management
- Questions and explanations
- End of class

In all of the schools greetings served a ritualistic function in that the utterance “*Good morning everyone*”, rather than the clock or chime marked the true start of the lesson. Greetings were also the only consistent event, both across lessons and schools, when English was used without

recourse to Japanese. The key here of course is repetition; unlike much of the rest of the curriculum greetings were reinforced weekly so that they were said by students and teachers alike automatically and fluently.

Introductions, which I define as explanations to the students as to what the lesson's aims were and what the students could expect to learn, were predominantly in Japanese. A. sensei in Midori was the exception here. She would give a short simple explanation in English, often with recourse to gestures, and then encourage her students to figure out (in Japanese) what the aim of the lesson was. In the case of topics such as 'foods', 'colours', or 'numbers', many of the students often understood key English vocabulary and could quickly intuit what the lesson was about. For slightly more abstract topics like 'self-introductions', A. sensei would provide a supplementary explanation in Japanese.

In Aoi school there was an interesting disparity between S. sensei's lesson and the other teachers' lessons. In S. sensei's lesson both herself and Mary would often do a short skit in English as a means of introducing the day's topic and S. sensei would follow this up with a brief Japanese explanation. However, with the other teachers Mary would omit the skit and simply provide an explanation of the lesson in Japanese. In Chairo school Amy provided a short explanation in Japanese and usually followed this with an English vocabulary warm-up activity related to the topic. In Kiiri the explanations were entirely in Japanese and were often preceded by an instruction to students to open their *Hi Friends* textbooks to the relevant page for that day's lesson.

Activity explanations were a mixture of Japanese and English, the predominance of one language over the other dependent on the teacher and whether the students had undertaken the activity before. Although A. sensei in Midori attempted an English explanation for most activities, she always provided a supplementary Japanese explanation stating that,

"I'm not sure all the students can understand ... some students aren't very good at understanding even in Japanese and to do the activity right I need to make them understand".
(Field note: M/A/5/061011/4).

Similarly, S. sensei noted that,

"To do the activity right they have to understand it, so I need to explain it in Japanese to them". (Field note: M/A/5/061011/4).

These comments were to a certain extent proved valid by omission. In Chairo school Amy would usually only explain the activity in English, relying on a model demonstration of the activity (either with the homeroom teacher or a student) to get the meaning across. Unfortunately, this didn't always happen. I. sensei would not participate in the model demonstration (and as a senior teacher in the school, Amy was reluctant to force her). In N. sensei's class a number of students continually

‘disengaged’ from the lesson so that when it came time to do the activity they did not know what to do and hence disrupted the lesson until the process was explained to them again. In Kihiro activity explanations were consistently given in Japanese. Indeed, in all my observation forms for that school I did not record one instance of any activity explanations being given in English.

During activities the students used English for their communicative practice though any negotiations of roles, priority, meaning, content, or clarification took place in Japanese. Similarly, teachers monitoring the activity would provide support and clarification in Japanese.

The language used for classroom management depended on how the students were being managed. For pedagogical related tasks such as opening textbooks, preparing pencils, listening to the sound recording, making groups, etc., the instructions would be given in either Japanese or English, depending on the teacher. For behavioural issues the language was solely Japanese.

In the majority of classrooms in all four schools the end of the lesson was signaled first by the homeroom teacher announcing in Japanese that the lesson was finished. Even in Chairō school, where Amy led the lesson, she would first tell the homeroom teacher she was finished who in turn would announce this to the students. The inevitable final English greeting of ‘goodbye everyone’, said first by the ALT and then the homeroom teacher, served the same temporal demarcation function as the opening greeting in that it, rather than the clock or the chime, marked the de facto end of the lesson.

7.10.2 Who used the languages and how much English and Japanese was used?

The limited once-a-week 45-minute lesson and the reliance on students’ memorization of limited oral/aural input, rather than more comprehensive written texts, meant that there was a necessary reliance on Japanese by all parties to the lesson: teachers, students, and ALTs.

Teachers, as we have seen, self-described their English language ability as poor. In addition, the *Hi Friends* teachers’ guide is written primarily in Japanese with the only English sections being the transcripts of the listening activities. Thus, teachers in following the proposed curriculum in the guide, had no need to use English beyond what was detailed for instruction to the students. The guide may therefore be seen as prescribing a minimum English requirement for teachers to use in class with no ‘official’ expectation that they exceed this requirement.

As Sasaki (2014) noted, the presence of an ALT in all schools and classes further reinforces this interpretation. The ALT, as a native speaker, is expected to provide the necessary English input during the lesson; they, rather than the teachers, should be the source of much of the ‘extra’ English the students hear. Yet, the hiring practices in the municipal districts of two of the schools (Aoi and Kihiro) ensured that the ALTs employed had an intermediate or better ability in Japanese. This in turn had an impact on their language choices in the classroom where activity explanations, interactions with teachers, off-task interactions with students, communication repairs, individual student advice,

and inter-cultural topics were predominately explained in Japanese. Indeed, the ALTs were aware of this issue themselves. Amy said,

“I wish I didn’t use so much Japanese in the class. But it’s hard not to. I need to talk to the teachers and the students and they don’t understand English and it’s just easier, just smoother if I say it in Japanese” (Interview: Amy/Chairo/032712).

Similarly, Mary in Aoi school noted,

“To explain everything in English takes too much time ... Maybe with S. sensei I could talk in English about the lesson but definitely not with other teachers... Their English is terrible... They can’t talk in English”. (Field note: A/Mary/031412/lunch).

Students language use could best be separated into on and off task language, though this neat binary division masks a number of more subtle variations. On task language was English, though meaning clarification and extraneous talk (for example, about the actions of their partner during a game activity) were in Japanese. Some of the students in the different schools (most noticeably Aoi) were attending after-school supplementary English lessons and the English language usage of these students tended to be more developed, exemplified by longer utterances and a larger active vocabulary.

Off task language was primarily Japanese, but again there were exceptions. In Midori school the 5th grade students used Japanese to ask me how to say certain words and phrases in English which they would incorporate in their dialogue practice.

From my observations it also became apparent that for motivated students there was a frustrating gap between what they wanted to express in English and the minimal ability the FLA lessons equipped them to say. This is obviously a feature of any beginners’ class in a foreign language where the cognitive dissonance between learners L1 and L2 abilities is a source of frustration, but in the FLA class this gap was widened by the ‘sensitizing’ approach promoted by the official Course of Study. I base this insight primarily on my role as a participant observer (ALT) in Midori school where I visited the most over two years and hence got to know the students quite well.

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter began with an explanation of the process of data analysis. This involved an inductive approach to coding and categorizing the data which uncovered eight principal analytical themes. These were Time, Professionalism, Discordance, Pedagogical Competence, Roles, Classroom Language, Language Learning, and Intercultural Communication. These themes were then elucidated in more detail using substantial excerpts from the primary data. The examination of

the themes demonstrated how implementing the FLA Course of Study in the classroom is subject to a diverse and constantly interacting series of factors, encompassing teachers, students and school contexts.

In order to situate these emergent analytical themes within the wider socio-cultural milieu, the following chapter will use Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005, 1997) analytical framework for language-in-education planning in order to examine policy implementation as a 'process', an act of doing rather than just being (McCarty, 2014). Using this framework allows me to 'unpeel' (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996) this process to go beyond the classroom and account for other variables that shape and determine policy implementation.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed and elaborated upon the major analytical themes that emerged from the data derived from the four case study schools, descriptive evidence of what Graves (2008) terms the enacted curriculum. The chapter detailed how teachers' beliefs about, and active interpretations of, policy, curriculum, pedagogy, ALTs, and students critically influenced their classroom instruction. The chapter also showed how teacher agency, in implementing policy, was enhanced, constrained, or nullified by factors both intrinsic and extrinsic to them. The resulting individualization by teachers of policy implementation resulted in disparate, subjectively enacted curricula determined by a complex interplay of various issues, rather than the intended homogeneous curriculum envisaged by the Ministry of Education.

This chapter will widen the analytical focus further in an attempt to reconcile the specific findings of this research with more general trends, both national and international, relating to language policy in education and the introduction of primary school English foreign language learning. Johnson (2013) asserts that,

“For any language policy, one must consider the *agents, goals, processes, and discourses* which engender and perpetuate the policy, and the dynamic social and historical contexts in which the policy exists” (2013: 239).

Several researchers (Fullan, 2015; Kırkgöz, 2008; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005) have suggested a number of broad issues that need to be examined in the implementation of any state-led educational policy-based program. These include: clarity of long-term aims and short-term objectives, financial support, teacher supply, teacher-support services, and co-ordination of foreign language teaching with the rest of the primary curriculum. A number of analytical frameworks have been proposed as a means of organizing and examining what is a multifaceted and complex process. Zhang and Hu (2010) used a three-level framework of curriculum processes in their examination of the introduction of a new task-based English language teaching program at the primary level in China. The three levels were: the institutional, the programmatic, and the classroom.

- (1) The institutional level examines the interaction between society, culture, and schooling, detailing the linkages between education and a country's social and cultural systems.
- (2) The programmatic level is how the more abstract educational goals of society are translated into operational curricular frameworks for the delivery of schooling.
- (3) The classroom level is concerned with examining the enacted curriculum, the “processes of interpretation and construction that transform the institutional and programmatic curricula into curriculum events in a particular classroom” (Zhang & Hu, 2010:126).

Use of this three-level process enabled them to take an ‘enactment perspective’ (Graves, 2008) to focus on how the new task-based curriculum evolved as a joint construct between teacher and students. Their methodological approach was based on teacher interviews and classroom observations and they sought to situate the introduction of task-based learning with the overall framework of English language education policy in China.

A more detailed and more widely used approach is provided by Kaplan and Baldauf (2005, 1997). They proposed a comprehensive framework for language-in-education planning divided into seven interrelated implementation goals (summarized in Table 1).

Table 15: Kaplan and Baldauf’s Framework for Language-in-Education Planning

Language in Education Planning Goals	Examines
Access policy	Who learns what and when?
Personnel policy	Who is the teacher and how are they trained?
Curriculum policy	What are the curriculum goals for teaching / learning?
Methods and material policy	What methodology and materials are used? What are the total classroom teaching hours?
Resourcing policy	How is the curriculum financed?
Community policy	Who is consulted and involved in designing and implementing the policy?
Evaluation policy	How is the curriculum evaluated? How is the assessment linked to the curriculum goals and the methodology used?

This framework provides the basis for understanding language-in-education policy and specific issues associated with its implementation, many of which are related to the more general educational conditions for language policy implementation. It has been used to examine English language policy at the primary level in individual countries such as mainland China (Hu, 2007), Malaysia (Ali, Hamid, & Moni, 2011), South Korea (Garton, 2014), Poland (Enever, 2007), Taiwan (Chen, 2013), Thailand (Fitzpatrick, 2011), Turkey (Kirkgoz, 2008), and Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011). Butler (2015) has also used it as an effective way to synthesize early English language policy research in East Asia. This widespread use of the framework enables wider comparisons to be made between Japan and other polities, an explanatory advantage that recommends it over Zhang and Hu’s approach.

In the following sections each of Kaplan and Baldauf's seven language in education planning goals are discussed. These discussions draw upon findings from the four case studies and reference examples from the wider literature on language-in-education planning.

8.2 Access policy

Access policy designates who learns what languages at what age or at what level. This is important as it provides guidelines to the design and development of school-based language programs in order to meet the social, economic, and political needs of a particular country (Kaplan and Baldauf, 2005). Beginning with the major policy initiatives at the start of the new millennium (MEXT, 2003; 2005), the chief policy aim of English language education in Japan has been to 'develop Japanese who can use English', and this utilitarian approach has guided policy ever since (Liddicoat, 2014). In turn, this overarching aim determines when such language education should begin. Similar economic, rather than purely educational, rationales are evident in other countries' policies too. For instance, in Turkey in 1997, to meet the political, social, and economic needs for increased English language competence, English was introduced as a compulsory subject from Grades 4 and 5⁴⁷ at the primary level, and students then continued English studies into tertiary education (Kırkgöz, 2008). In Bangladesh, English became a compulsory subject in Grade 1 in 1992 as there was a need to increase the levels of English nationally to support the national development agenda in an age of globalisation (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). In South Korea primary English language education was introduced in 1997 from age 8 as it was considered a prerequisite for ensuring the country's competitiveness in the global economy (Lee, 2009).

Access policy determines when foreign language learning commences and for how long it continues. As the Table 2 below⁴⁸ shows, Japan is at the later end of the age spectrum. It also lags behind other Asian countries in when it introduced compulsory English education at the primary level.

⁴⁷ As countries educational systems differ and thus to avoid confusion I have used age rather than primary school grade/class as the point of comparison for the commencement of compulsory English language learning.

⁴⁸ The starting ages for the different countries were obtained from the websites of each country's Ministry of Education (or equivalent) and the global survey carried out by Rixon (2013).

Table 16: Starting age of compulsory English language learning in selected countries.

5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years
France Netherlands	Austria Bangladesh Estonia Sweden Croatia Italy Poland	Finland	Belgium Bulgaria China Greece Korea Taiwan	Argentina Lithuania Romania	Brazil Japan Turkey Hungary

In Japan, prior to the introduction of the compulsory Foreign Language Activities subject in 2011, English had been an optional subject taught at the discretion of the individual school. This had resulted in different schools adopting different approaches to both initial starting age and the subsequent intensity of the classes. This in turn had resulted in learners with differing English abilities entering the secondary school system which led to mixed level classes and complaints from both secondary school teachers and parents (Butler and Iino, 2005).

Although the introduction of the Foreign Language Activities course was supposed to ameliorate these age and instructional discrepancies, the new policy still permitted schools to teach English from an earlier age if they so wished. In the four schools I observed pre-compulsory classes, i.e. for grades one through four, occurred. However, each of the schools took a different approach to these classes, particularly in terms of intensity. These are summarized in the Table 16 below.

As can be seen from the table the smaller schools had the most classes, with both Midori and Kiiro having a set curriculum (monthly classes). In contrast, the two larger schools had less classes. These differences between schools can be attributed to two interlinked factors: school size and the availability of the ALT.

The two smallest schools in the study, Midori (47 students) and Kiiro (34 students) each only had one class in each grade. This meant that when the ALT visited he or she only had two compulsory classes to assist in (for 5th and 6th grades) and was then available to teach in the lower grades. In both schools this meant that the ALT, after teaching the 5th and 6th grades, would then subsequently teach either the 3rd and 4th grades or the 1st and 2nd (though not necessarily every week).

In the bigger schools by contrast, there were two classes in each grade which meant four compulsory English classes in total. As none of the ALTs taught the first period at either of the two schools⁴⁹ this left five periods in which they could assist in classes. As four classes were assigned to the 5th and 6th grades, this then left only one period 'free' to teach a lower grade class. In each school

⁴⁹ In both schools the ALTs were employed by their respective Boards of Education to work from 8:45 to 5:15. This precluded them from teaching first class which in Chairō commenced at 8:30 and in Aoi at 8:35.

grades one to four had a total of eight classes. In all of the four schools English education in the lower grades only occurred when the ALT was present. Thus, in Aoi and Chairo schools, with only an average of four teaching periods a month in which to have the ALT present in the classroom, there simply wasn't enough time for the ALT to teach all the classes in all the lower grades.

In Chairo this problem was 'solved' by having the ALT teach each class six times over the course of the school year. In Aoi no such policy was in place. Classes and scheduling were left to the individual homeroom teachers who in turn approached the ALT dispatched by the local board of education⁵⁰ and negotiated a suitable time and day when the ALT could attend the class. However, such visits were infrequent and in my two years at Aoi I only recorded the ALT teaching in a lower grade class on four occasions.

Table 17: English classes in grades 1-4.

School	Lower grades instruction and intensity
Midori	1-4 grades: one class a month for 45 minutes
Kihiro	1-4 grades: one class a month for 45 minutes
Chairo	1-4 grades: 6 classes a year, each class for 45 minutes
Aoi	1-4 grades: no set policy. Classes decided by individual homeroom teachers.

These institutional differences in approach to the age of instruction exemplify what Bauldauf (2005) has termed micro-planning. In contrast to traditional top-down approaches to examining the implementation of language-in-education policy, micro-planning refers to cases where “businesses, institutions, groups or individuals hold agency and create what can be recognised as a language policy and plan to utilise and develop their language resources” (Bauldauf, 2005: 156). In her study of policy implementation of second language education in Australian primary schools, Breen (2002) found that specific policy development and implementation – the reality of what happens in schools and classrooms – occurred at the regional and school levels, with only generalised reference to national policy.

Such micro-planning effects were evident in how school principals and local boards of education approached English education. Cissie and Okato (2009) has highlighted the importance of the school principal in setting the ‘educational vision’ for the school. In both Midori and Shiroi the principals evinced a positive attitude towards English language learning. The principal in Midori specifically termed it “necessary” and considered it one of the essential skills, akin to knowledge of Japanese and Maths, that a student needs in contemporary Japanese society: “*we live now in an*

⁵⁰ Although Mary was employed directly by the school she was only contracted to teach the compulsory English classes to 5th and 6th graders. She did not teach the lower grades.

international society, not just a Japanese society, and we all need to speak English” (Field note: M/Kocho/072111).

The principal in Kiiro drew upon his own professional experiences to explain his advocacy of English education. He had spent 5 years working as a Japanese language teacher in Mexico and experienced at first hand the need for English.

“When I lived in Mexico I spoke very little Spanish and the Mexicans didn’t speak Japanese. So we needed to use English to communicate. And with so many people in the world, and speaking so many languages, we can’t learn them all. We need to have a common language to talk and communicate. And that’s English.” (Field note: K/Kocho/lunch/092011).

In the case of Chairō elementary school the initiatives were the result of municipal policy measures; the requirement of 6 classes a year for grades 1-4 was set by the local board of education. The city mayor had promised during his reelection campaign to prioritize English education in the city’s primary and secondary schools. This pledge manifested itself in two notable ways. The first was the hiring of four native speaker ALTs to ensure one was present at all classes for 5th and 6th grade English classes in all elementary schools. The second was the requirement for all elementary schools to have a minimum of 6 English classes a year for grades one to four. The content of the classes was left up to the individual schools.

In Aoi, the lack of a distinct policy for learning English in the lower grade classes was explained by the vice-principal as a need to focus on learning Japanese. He emphasized that the students needed to

“Learn the Japanese language first. They are Japanese students learning Japanese in Japan. If they can’t communicate in Japanese then learning English won’t help them.” (Field note: A/Kyoto/lunch/092112).

The vice-principal is not alone in holding such views. Sakamoto (2012) has found similar opinions in her survey of elementary school teachers in southern Japan. Suzuki (2001) has argued that the policy of early English language learning burdens children with learning a foreign language at a stage when they are still only becoming familiar with L1 Japanese literacy.

These findings evince what one might call the ‘zero-game’ approach to foreign language learning: the belief that learning English at an early age will hinder the acquisition of students’ Japanese (Otsu, 2004). In addition, as languages are also regarded as conveyers of culture there is a further concern that the introduction of English will have a detrimental effect on Japanese national identity and language (Kawai, 2007). It should be noted in passing that such concerns are not unique to Japan; similar doubts about the introduction of primary English have been aired in countries as

diverse as Cameroon (Kuchah, 2009), Oman (Al-Zedjali and Etherton, 2009), and Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011).

A final issue that needs to be considered when discussing access policy was students' enrolment in private English language education. Although I couldn't accurately quantify the total numbers, comments by both teachers and students in the fifth and sixth grades indicated that in the two schools situated in urban areas (Aoi and Chairo), there was a significant minority of pupils attending a variety of private English language courses. Some students had been doing this for a number of years; one student in Aoi informed me she had been learning English since the age of two. Mary also ran her own *eikaiwa* (English conversation school) in the same area. In the 2012 school year, by her estimate, there were 23 students from the 5th and 6th grades in Aoi school attending her *eikaiwa*.

In contrast, the two rural schools, Midori and Kiuro, had minimal students attending private English courses. In Midori there was only one sixth grade student attending an *eikaiwa* in the county town. In Kiuro none of the students in either fifth or sixth grades attended any form of private English classes. In the case of Kiuro it should be noted that there was no provision of private English education in the village. The closest facility was a thirty-minute drive away.

Hence, in trying to answer the question of at what age English instruction begins, the results of the research highlight the complexity underlying the policy document's simple specification of 'from the 5th grade'. In particular, Butler and Iino's (2005) suggestion that the introduction of compulsory foreign language activities in elementary school may be a means of ameliorating the educational and social imbalances in the provision of public English education is still contentious. While 'access' may now be institutionalized within the educational system, as this research has found it is still susceptible to socio-economic factors which in turn effect both teaching and student learning outcomes⁵¹.

8.3 Personnel policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (2005) emphasize that when a new language policy is introduced, the authorities need to consider the issues of teacher selection, supply, and training and the rewards available to the teachers. The role of language teachers is undoubtedly critical in implementing a new language curriculum program (Bland: 2015; Fullan, 2015; Moon, 2006; Gorsuch, 2000). Research on new educational innovations demonstrates that teachers have a large impact on the success of implementation of new policies. As Fullan (2015) has explained, "it is the teachers who are responsible for passing on the changes through their teaching to their students" (p.4). A number of

⁵¹ According to the results of the most recent national survey conducted by the MEXT in 2007, 32% of fifth graders and 48% of sixth graders were receiving some form of private English language education. At that time the average monthly amount a family spent per child on private education (not just English) was ¥18,472 for *juku* (cram school), and ¥22,578 on individual home tutoring (MEXT, 2008).

researchers (e.g. Chua & Baldauf, 2011; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005; Spolsky, 2004) agree that if the policy does not effectively deal with issues related to teachers, failure to achieve policy goals is inevitable.

8.3.1 English language proficiency

In many of the country reviews on the introduction of English education in the primary school, the policy documents require English teachers in primary education to have a certain level of language proficiency and a teaching certificate (Hamid & Honan, 2012; Baldauf *et al.*, 2011; Hayes, 2008; Moon, 2006; Nunan, 2003). However, many of these same studies also show that in many non-English-speaking polities in which English was initially introduced at the primary level, the quantity and quality of teachers required to implement this policy have not been met; there has been a tendency to “use untrained and limited competence teachers as a stop-gap measure” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 130).

In this study the teachers themselves consistently flagged their own lack of English language proficiency as the biggest obstacle they faced in conducting successful English classes. This reflects the findings of surveys on Japanese teachers (Benesse, 2006; 2010) which have consistently shown proficiency to be the Japanese teacher’s principle concern. Nor are their concerns misplaced. Research has shown (Detemple & Snow, 2003) that the characteristics of teachers talk such as the quantity and quality of vocabulary, speech use, prosody, and pronunciation are all positively associated with students’ language skills. Rixon (2015) emphasizes that teachers’ subject knowledge and skills in English need to be more than basic: “They need a confident and fluent command of English if interaction and linguistic accommodation to the learners are to be feasible in the class” (p.42). Similarly, Enever acknowledges that the required English proficiency for the primary school teacher is subject to some contextually imposed variation but should, at a minimum, enable teachers “to respond to the many informal uses of language that are likely to occur in the young learner classroom” (2016: 22). Unsworth *et al.* (2014), in their investigation of factors affecting early foreign language in the Netherlands, found that

“when divided into teacher proficiency groups, and after controlling for minutes/week, children with a non-native speaker teacher at CEFR-B level only were found to score significantly lower than the other groups and they had developed significantly more slowly over time” (p.13).

Unsworth *et al.* conclude that the teacher’s lack of productive English skills affected the quantity and quality of the English language discourse they produced, which in turn affected their students’ acquisition of the language.

Similarly, in Japan Cisse and Okato (2009) found that teachers' English language ability affects both students' vocabulary scores and their affective liking for the subject. Nishizaki (2009) found that in lieu of more language-based communicative and content instruction, homeroom teachers tended to focus on surface features of English (pronunciation, singular meaning), or Japanese language explanations of the pragmatic differences between English and Japanese.

Competency in English though should not be perceived as an individual failing, but rather a structural one inherent to the current educational system (Butler and Iino, 2005). For teachers in all of the four schools, opportunities for improving their English proficiency in the form of publicly provided language classes were not available. Although the official Course of Study implicitly demands a certain level of the English on the part of the homeroom teacher in order to conduct classes on 'communicative activities', no official structures are in place to enable teachers to attain that goal. Rather, the prevalence of native-speaker ALTs and an official emphasis on team-teaching, both nationally (MEXT 2011b) and locally (Noboribetsu, 2015), as the preferred pedagogical approach (see below) could be construed as partial, if undeclared, response to homeroom teacher's insufficient English proficiency.

8.3.2 Required Proficiency

The teachers in this study were aware of their shortcomings in terms of their English language ability, but they were less clear in what form of proficiency was required for teaching at the elementary school level. Desired competency was conceived of in terms of communicative ability and/or surface features of the language. A. sensei in Midori school prioritized pronunciation and "clear use of the language". S. sensei in Aoi school wanted to be able to "explain things in English to students and not have to use Japanese" (Interview: S/Aoi/040313). M. sensei wanted to be able to "talk with the ALT in front of the students so they can see a good role model for communicating in English" (Interview A/Midori/032912).

The homeroom teachers' preferred target language domain (Bachmam and Palmer, 1996) was pragmatic in nature, concerned with the effective use of English within the classroom and as a tool for teaching. None of the teachers expressed their ideal competency in terms of standardized test scores or assessment rubrics. Rather, they exhibited a desire for what Freeman *et al.* (2015) terms 'English-for-Teaching', focusing on "the actual language they use to carry out classroom instruction and manage predictable interactions on a daily basis" (p.131). Their desired competency is professional rather than general, conceived as a form of English for Specific Purposes which prioritizes "the specific English skills that teachers need for the work they do in their classrooms" (Freeman *et al.*, 2015: 137).

8.3.3 Generalist teachers

Japan, as with many other countries at the primary school level (see Garton *et al.*, 2011), has to rely on existing ‘generalist’ homeroom teachers who are not trained to teach TEYL. This in turn has an impact on learner outcomes and demands a realistic assessment of what can be achieved in elementary school.

Such issues were mirrored in the four schools. With the exception of S. sensei in Aoi school, none of the other teachers had any formal training in teaching English to young learners. Nor were there any experienced ‘mentors’ in place from whom the teachers could seek advice. This gave rise to a problem of teacher individualism: in each of the schools, successful classroom initiatives and effective methodology, such as S. Sensei’s exchange project, were the result of individual teacher’s initiatives rather than arising from established school practices. Such a situation resulted in quality teaching being personalized rather than institutionalized, with the accumulated experience and development of ‘best practice’ (Rixon, 2015) being associated with the teacher rather than the school. As teachers rarely teach the same grade in successive years, the pedagogical experience gained in the English class is subsequently dissipated. Of the 19 teachers I observed in all four schools, none of them taught the same grade two years in a row. At the end of my first year of observation in March 2012, all the 6th grade teachers were either reassigned to teach in grades one to four, or were transferred to another school. This meant that at the start of my second year of observations, none of the teachers in either 5th or 6th grades had taught English before at that grade level.

Such teacher ‘churn’ is endemic to the Japanese school system. Teachers are usually assigned to a class for two successive years, so when a homeroom teacher is appointed to a 5th grade class, the likelihood is that she will also be their 6th grade teacher too. However, 6th grade is regarded as the toughest teaching position in elementary school. As M. sensei in Midori school described it:

“the whole year is busy as everything is the student’s last time to do things...It is their last time to do the school sport’s day, the school festival, their school trip, so everything must be perfect and this takes a lot of planning, a lot of time and preparation... And of course the school graduation ceremony which means so much work in the third term with the planning and rehearsing and practice” (Interview A/Midori/040313).

Their ‘reward’ for teaching the ‘busy’ 6th grade is to be assigned to one of the lower grades the following year where the workload is not as demanding.

All class assignments are decided by the school principal. He⁵² appoints teachers on the basis of factors such as experience, class management skills, class size, subject strengths, parent teacher relations, and teacher requests (Cave, 2007). The only school where English teaching ability

⁵² During my two-year observation period all the school principals were male.

was taken into consideration was in Aoi school. This occurred after my research had finished when S. Sensei was appointed to take charge of the 5th grade students for the 2013-2014 school year. She had already taught a 5th grade class (and the subsequent 6th grade class) in 2010-2012, so it was highly unusual to have her reassigned to another 5th grade class so soon. According to S. Sensei the reason was the principal wanted to ensure “the quality English program” she had developed, but she herself believed that “it’s because none of the other teachers wanted to do it”.

8.3.4 Professional development opportunities

Unfortunately, the problems associated with poor English ability and the rotation of teachers is exacerbated by the shortfall in quality pre-service and in-service teacher training. Rixon (2015) has stated that,

“At the heart of most successful learning in a school situation are teachers professionally trained and experienced to provide, at a minimum, appropriate input, structured learning opportunities and feedback that supports learning” (p.40).

As English is not an academic subject there is no specific qualification in teaching English to young learners (TEYL) offered at any of the 56 national educational universities in Japan (Gaynor, 2014). The non-academic status of English also affects in-service training opportunities for teachers; greater emphasis is placed on career training in teaching Japanese, maths and science. The result is that, with the limited time they have for in-service training, teachers understandably opt for training in those courses upon which they and their students are formally evaluated. Of the 19 teachers observed in the study, only two teachers, M. and A. from Midori school, had attended a seminar on English education. However, the seminar, organized by local board of education, was about junior high school English education and they found it

“... not interesting. It was all about junior high school English and there was nothing you could use in an elementary school classroom... it was really quite boring” (Interview A/Midori/032912).

The lack of participation in in-service teacher training by the majority of teachers is reflected across the country. According to the results of a nationwide survey conducted by Izumi (2009) 41% of elementary school teachers had never participated in a teacher training course related to elementary school English education.

Compounding the problem is the fact that most in-service training is conducted by local boards of education (BoE); there are no set standards for such courses and the quantity and quality of provision is very much subject to the resources available to the individual areas (Benesse, 2010). This is part of what Enever (2016) has described as a “general trend towards increased inequalities

between urban and rural environments” (p.25). Whereas a BoE in a large urban area situated close to one of the national universities of education can call upon such expertise⁵³, such an option was not available to the teachers working at the four schools in the study.

Even the MEXT mandated courses teachers must take every ten years in order to renew their teaching licenses are not standardized but left to individual prefectures. In turn, prefectures ask universities to organize and run these courses so that the subject offering is dependent on the expertise, availability, and motivation of each university’s faculty. It is indicative of the neglect at the policy level in this area that the only recourse available to in-service teachers in rural areas seeking some form of comprehensive training program in TEYL are those offered by private companies via distance learning⁵⁴, the expense of which must be borne by the teachers themselves (Akiyama, 2010).

8.3.5 Competency and professionalism

The Japanese homeroom teachers, despite their proven capabilities as elementary school teachers, had low self-esteem in terms of their pedagogical capabilities in the English class. A. sensei in Midori school explicitly stated “I can’t teach English”, while S. sensei in Aoi school similarly stated “I don’t think I am a very good teacher of English”. The ALTs were more direct in their criticism. Felix, in Kihiro school, speaking about the 6th grade teacher K. sensei, described him as:

“Not a good teacher, not good at all. I mean not just at English. He’s got terrible English, can’t speak at all, but also how he, he controls the class. He can’t control the class. He just doesn’t know what to do” (Field note: K/Felix/061512/lunch).

Amy in Washibetsu contrasted the different levels of engagement of the teachers:

“I. sensei let me do my own thing in the class because I think, she can’t, I means she can’t teach English cause she can’t speak English, right? And T. sensei, is better, he wants to help and get involved, but N. sensei, aww, he’s just, like not there. He doesn’t care. While that’s great, I can do what I want to, it’s, I need help with the class, with the students cause they’re some boys in that class who are, you know, not, you know, they’re ... eh, clowns and don’t care, he (N. sensei) just sits at his desk and, nothing, sees nothing, doesn’t do anything” (Interview: Amy/Chairo/032712).

⁵³ Naoyama (2006) gives details of one such course offered by Kyoto University of Education in Kyoto city. It was an intensive thirty-hour course held over five days. The program included classes on “Research into elementary school English activities”; “Theory of second language learning”; “Classroom English”; “Skills for elementary school English”; and “Current research on English education”. However, as Izumi (2009) noted, this course was optional and the intensity falls short in comparison to what is mandated in Taiwan and Korea. In the former 360 hours of professional development are required, while in Korea it is 245 hours.

⁵⁴ The most popular is the course run by J-Shine.

Teachers are categorizing themselves and being categorized by ALTs based on what occurs during the English language class. This in turn gives rise to a sense of professional inadequacy, what S. sensei described as ‘not knowing how to do what I should do’ (Field note A/S/6/020113/4).

Butler (2004) has suggested that the issue is not just one of poor English proficiency, but also of differing pedagogical approaches to student instruction. The Course of Study explicitly emphasizes a communicative approach to the English class; in the four-page policy document the word ‘communication’ is mentioned twenty-one times. However, such an approach may not coalesce with teachers’ approaches in other subjects, what Cortazzi and Jin (1996: 169) describe as the “taken-for granted frameworks of expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs about what constitutes good learning, about how to teach or learn”. Cave (2007), in his ethnographic account of elementary school teaching in Japan, describes the teaching of *kokugo* (Japanese) as a ‘community of inquiry’ where “teaching and learning practices [are focused] on open-ended tasks, cast the teacher in the role of constructive facilitator, and encourage children to share and engage with one another’s perspectives” (2007: 108). Similarly, Sato (2004) and Lewis (1995), in their accounts of Japanese elementary school education, note how the teacher herself and her students perceive the teacher as the “expert role model” (Sato, 2004: 108), who teaches students as much by example as by instruction.

Given this different pedagogical approach, and the teachers own harsh perceptions of their abilities, the English class could be said to undermine this professional ideal, an ideal that is erroneously formulated on English language proficiency and the constant comparison with the ALT native speaker ‘norm’.

Although Japanese teachers in the Japanese educational system may be ‘non-specialist’, ‘non-native’ speakers of the language they teach, they are ‘native’ in terms of their situational teaching competence – which is a much more important part of their professional expertise than their language competence (Shin and Kellogg, 2007). Unfortunately, such situational teaching competence seems not to be available to them when they are teaching English.

8.3.6 Assistant Language Teachers

According to the Course of Study document (MEXT, 2009b),

“Homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities should make teaching programs and conduct lessons. Effort should be made to get more people involved by inviting native speakers of the foreign language...”

The emphasis is clearly on the homeroom teacher assuming responsibility for the class, an emphasis that, as Kano, *et al.* (2016) points out, has a basis in legislation rather than pedagogy. According to the Basic Education Act (MEXT, 2007) only qualified teachers possessing a certified teacher’s

license can officially take charge of class in elementary school. In practice though, the “effort to get more people involved” in all four schools involved some form of team-teaching with an ALT, a reflection of the predominance of the approach throughout Japan (MEXT, 2015d).

In the lessons observed there was no notable uniformity in the team-teaching approaches taken, either among the four schools or within individual schools themselves. For example, in Kihiro school, P. sensei, the fifth-grade teacher, designed the lesson plan and led the lesson with Felix and Nomu-san playing designated supporting roles. In K. sensei’s 6th grade class by contrast, Felix took the lead in the class with K. sensei supporting him while Nomu-san had little involvement.

Aline and Hosoda (2006) have identified 4 roles of team-teaching based on a continuum “from little to greater participation in the main [class] interaction by the HRT, or from greater sharing of teaching responsibilities with the ALT to less sharing” (2006: 9). In all four schools differing points along this suggested continuum were observed, but these points weren’t fixed; they varied across both teachers and time. However, even Aline and Hosoda’s continuum doesn’t quite capture the complexity of the interactions in the classroom. For example, in Chairo school I. sensei’s participation in the class was seemingly minimal; Amy led the class while I. sensei was seemingly a bystander, interacting minimally in English with Amy. Yet, this seemingly passive role actually served an important function in the management of classroom interaction. I. sensei was continually monitoring the class to ensure that students were paying attention to Amy, (physically tapping students on the shoulder if they were talking or their attention was elsewhere), and ensuring that students, in the various communicative activities, engaged in them properly. In doing this I. sensei may not have conformed to the usual definition of team-teaching, but she was fulfilling an important role in ensuring language learning through efficient, disciplined interaction between the students and the ALT.

8.4 Curriculum policy

Curriculum policy refers to the objectives of teaching and learning the target language. Unlike the formal teaching of English in primary schools in neighboring China, Korea, and Taiwan, FLA is not an academic subject in the Japanese primary curriculum, but rather a form of language awareness, what Butler (2015) describes as an “exploratory program that focus almost exclusively on the oral domain” (p.306).

In Japanese primary education subjects are divided into *kyouka* and *ryouiki*. Both subject groupings are compulsory for students, but only *kyouka* subjects are academically evaluated. Table 17 below shows the curriculum subjects for sixth grade in Japanese elementary schools along with the annual total of ‘class hours’ assigned to each.

Table 18: Japanese Elementary School Sixth Grade Curriculum

	Subject	Total hours of annual instruction
<i>Kyouka</i> subjects (academically assessed)	国語 Japanese	175
	社会 Social Studies	105
	算数 Mathematics	175
	理科 Science	105
<i>Ryouki</i> subjects (not assessed)	音楽 Music	50
	図画工作 Arts and Crafts	50
	家庭 Home Economics	55
	体育 P.E.	90
	道徳 Moral Education	35
	特別活動 Special Activities	35
	総合学習 Integrated Studies	70
	外国語活動 Foreign Language Activities	35

As can be seen from the table ‘Foreign Language Activities’ is categorized as a *ryouiki* subject, akin to Music and Art. Along with Moral Education and Special Activities, it is assigned the lowest total of class hours for the academic year. Furthermore, the subject’s secondary status on the curriculum hierarchy is compounded by the importance attached to Japanese, Maths, and Science. In addition to the introduction of the new FLA subject, the revised Course of Study also mandated an increase in total teaching hours for 5th and 6th grades, from 945 to 980 hours. As can be seen in Table 18, Maths and Science were the subjects with the largest increase in class hours. Along with Japanese, these three subjects are evaluated both within the school and nationally as part of

Table 19: Japanese Elementary School 6th Grade Curriculum - class hours pre/post 2011

Subject	pre-2011 hours	post 2011 hours	Change (hours)
国語 Japanese	175	175	-
社会 Social Studies	100	105	+5
算数 Mathematics	150	175	+25
理科 Science	95	105	+10
音楽 Music	50	50	-
図画工作 Arts and Crafts	50	50	-
家庭 Home Economics	55	55	-
体育 P.E.	90	90	-
道徳 Moral Education	35	35	-
特別活動 Special Activities	35	35	-
総合学習 Integrated Studies	110	70	-40
外国語活動 Foreign Language Activities	-	35	+35
Total Hours	945	980	+35

compulsory annual Test of Academic Ability carried out by MEXT. Based on the results of this test, schools are evaluated and ranked at the national, prefectural, district, and municipal levels. This form of ‘high stakes testing’ (Menken and Garcia, 2010) puts schools and teachers under intense pressure to improve their students scores⁵⁵. Within the larger educational district in which this study took place, the regional board of education requires all elementary schools to set targets for students’ performance and publish school development plans that elaborate on how the school is reaching its targets (Hokkaido Board of Education, 2016). As a consequence, “teachers have to complete massive

⁵⁵ This pressure has resulted in schools ‘cheating’ with teachers altering their students’ answer sheets before submitting them to MEXT (Kuramoto & Koizumi, 2018).

amounts of paperwork, such as target-setting and self-review documents, which leave them with little time for lesson preparation and communication with students” (Katsuno, 2012: 2).

This is particularly an issue for Hokkaido where prefectural test scores remain among the lowest in the country (Hokkaido Board of Education, 2016). In all the schools I observed, the staff rooms had posters issued by the Hokkaido prefectural Board of Education exhorting teachers to improve their students’ results in the test.

The designation of FLA as a *ryouki* subject also means that it is not a required subject for in-service teachers’ professional development courses. In Hokkaido these courses, known as 教員研究実習実習 (*kyouinn kenkyuu jisshu*), are held during the winter and summer holiday periods. Teachers are compelled to attend workshops and lectures on the *kyouka* subjects, but attendance at other subject courses is optional. Of the 19 teachers I observed during my study, none had attended a professional development course on FLA⁵⁶. This was mirrored nationally where a survey conducted by MEXT (2013a) found that 57% of elementary school teachers had not attended any professional development courses⁵⁷ for teaching FLA⁵⁸.

This would suggest that the low priority the teachers in the study assigned to developing their skills and pedagogical knowledge for FLA was not solely an issue of individual demotivation. The prioritizing in the curriculum of other subjects, along with the increase in overall teaching hours, meant that teachers were expected to cover an increased range of content in addition to teaching a new subject. Rather, teachers exhibited a pragmatic response to the curricular status assigned to FLA in response to the ‘structural pressure’ of the inherent curricular hierarchy.

8.4.1 Curriculum objectives

The curriculum deliberately eschews measurable objectives, concentrating instead on developing language awareness rather than language learning *per se*, what Edelenbos *et al.*, terms ‘language sensitization’ (2006). Butler (2015) succinctly summarizes the aims of the subject as (1) to develop basic communicative abilities in English; and (2) to enhance cross-cultural and cross-linguistic understanding. Elaborating on Butler’s précis, I would posit that the following five goals were achieved, to differing degrees, in the four case study schools:

1. to increase students’ motivation to learn languages;

⁵⁶ Although not investigated for this study, this could well be because no courses on FLA were offered. However, during the winter vacation period of both 2015 and 2016, the author, in conjunction with the prefectural board of education, offered an (optional) course on FLA methodology for elementary school teachers. In 2015 there were no applicants for the course, and in 2016 there were only 4. Prior to the closing date of the 2016 course, I contacted 18 elementary schools in the wider region to publicize the course and seek possible participants. However, the schools responded that teachers had to take the mandatory professional development courses and were either not interested and / or too busy to participate in the FLA course.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that ‘professional development course’ was defined quite broadly in the survey and included self study, class observations, lesson study, lectures, workshops, seminars, and ‘other events’.

⁵⁸ Johnstone (2009) has described the lack of importance attached to primary foreign languages in the curriculum as “widespread across many countries” (p.35). See also Garton *et al.*. (2011), and Rixon (2013).

2. to enhance students' linguistic sensitivity as well as their communication skills in both English and Japanese.
3. to instill in students an awareness of the commonalities and differences between Japanese and English.
4. to enhance students' intercultural awareness and understanding;
5. to provide a practical, workable solution to the issue of generalist Japanese homeroom teachers teaching English as a foreign language in elementary school classrooms.

I will now draw on my research to discuss each point in detail.

(1) To increase students' motivation

The emphasis in all four schools on oral communication and 'fun' activities ensured that students were motivated to participate in the FLA classroom. Teachers placed an emphasis on 'fun' or 'interesting' activities, with many teachers prefacing their class preparation meetings with the ALT with the question 'Do you have any fun (*omoshiroi*) activities for this lesson?' In Aoi school S. sensei described a good lesson as a lesson where students wanted to learn and enjoyed themselves. A. sensei in Midori school wanted students to 'enjoy learning a language, to know how much fun it is' (Field note: M/A/5/020212/4). Such statements are consistent with the findings from a national survey conducted by MEXT (2011b) which found that 73% of elementary school students liked the FLA class. Some students in the four schools also exhibited an awareness of the necessity of learning English in preparation for their secondary schooling and university entrance exams. Related indicators of individual extrinsic motivation were manifest in students stated aspirations to travel overseas, talk with foreigners, or hoped for careers such as becoming a flight attendant or a professional baseball player in the United States.

However, a number of students, particularly in the 6th grade classes, expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the repetition of activities (from the 5th grade) and the emphasis on beginner level vocabulary and simple phrases. There was evidence of a lack of cognitive challenge (Pinter, 2011) for learners, the introductory content of the FLA subject being considerably lower than the level at which students are engaged with in other subjects in the curriculum.

(2) Linguistic sensitivity and communication skills

In the classrooms linguistic sensitivity manifested itself in two main ways: pronunciation and pragmatics. Both teachers and the ALTs implicitly adopted a form of constructive analysis to pronunciation highlighting the differences and common mistakes that ensued from phonological transfer of the students L1 onto English. In particular teachers sought to nullify the effect of *katakana*

on the pronunciation of English words⁵⁹ through ALT led pattern practice and repeated choral drilling.

Pragmatic awareness was concerned with the use of appropriate language in social situations, particularly polite language. Japanese has an intricate linguistic system (*keigo*) for expressing politeness and respect, and the vocabulary used depends on the hierarchical social relationship between the interlocutors. In the FLA classes all this L1 complexity was compressed into the correct usage of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. In addition, culturally specific terms were also addressed such as the phrase ‘*itadakimasu*’, said at the the start of every meal, and the lack of an English equivalent⁶⁰.

Communication skills were developed through the use of pair-work and group work activities that relied on verbal interaction between students. Activities included questions, requests, gap filling, and information exchange, though students had a tendency to switch to their L1 on occasions of both communication breakdown and heightened excitement. Given that an essential goal of the Course of Study is “fostering a positive attitude toward communication”, the use of L1 Japanese was often accepted by the teachers. However, the Course of Study’s goal was premised on student-to-student communication whereas a number of teachers arrogated the aim in order to justify the use of Japanese more generally during the lesson. A. sensei in Midori explained how she needed to speak in Japanese in order to confirm that the students knew what to do in the various activities. A similar expediency rationale was offered by S. sensei in Aoi for her use of Japanese as it ‘speeded things up’ (Interview: S/Aoi/040313). Similar justifications are found in the literature for L1 usage including classroom management, grammar instruction, and to demonstrate empathy with learners (Copland & Yonetsugi, 2016).

(3) Awareness of the commonalities and differences between Japanese and English.

According to Gottlieb (2008), the Japanese language contains somewhere between six to ten percent of foreign loanwords, predominantly English derived. The inclusion of such words in normal Japanese usage meant that students had some exposure to a culturally interpreted form of English. This was built upon in the course materials where the 450 words designated to be learned in 5th and 6th grades included 79 loanwords (though this incorporated 27 geographical place names). Teachers in the schools made use of this knowledge in class lessons for introducing new vocabulary and pronunciation practice. S sensei in Aoi would use a quiz format to elicit the English word from her students, “In Japan we say *chouko*, in English we say?” (Field note: A/S/5/060112/3), with students

⁵⁹ As an example, the phrase ‘My name is’ would, in *katakana*, be pronounced as ‘*Mai nemu izu*’ due to the syllabic consonant-vowel rules of Japanese pronunciation. Ohata (2004) also highlights the effect differences in stress, intonation, and rhythm have on L2 English pronunciation.

⁶⁰ On occasion such incidents of pragmatic awareness also indirectly facilitated English language learning. At Aoi Mike, the ALT, explained the lack of a linguistic equivalent for ‘*itadakimasu*’ as, “We don’t say ‘*itadakimasu*’ in America. We don’t say it before we eat like in Japan. We, well some people say a prayer (*joins hands together and makes the sign of the cross*), but not everyone. Not me (*shakes his head ‘no’ and laughs*)” (Field note: A/O/5/102811/4). Their homeroom teacher didn’t translate Mike’s explanations but students, from what I could overhear of their subsequent comments, seemed to readily grasp his meaning.

correctly answering *chocolate*. Similarly, T. sensei and Amy in Chairō, when introducing the topic of sports, enacted the following skit:

T. sensei: I play *basuke*.
Amy: Oh, you play basketball.
T. sensei: No, I play *basuke*.
Amy: Yes, you play basketball.
T. sensei: No, no, I play *basuke*!!

(Field note: C/T/5/070111/5)

To which the students responded enthusiastically and effectively, understanding both the phonological differences and lexical similarities between *basuke* and ‘basketball’. This foregrounding of similar lexical items in both languages was an effective way of instilling confidence in students *vis-a-vis* their ability to learn a foreign language. The individual lesson topics for both fifth and sixth grades were premised on student familiarity with both the underlying communicative functions (e.g. expressing likes and dislikes), and the vocabulary needed to activate these functions, (e.g. food and drink). More problematic for students were lexical items that maintained distinct phonological and categorical criteria in Japanese and English. Months, for example, in Japanese are named using a numerical sequence from 1 to 12 and the term ‘*gatsu*’. Thus, January is ‘*ichi gatsu*’ (literally, ‘month one’), February is ‘*ni gatsu*’ (‘month two’), and so on, whereas English utilizes an apparently random sequence of proper nouns. Similarly, Amy in Chairō, commenced each of her classes with a short ten-minute phonics lesson, but the irregular English sight-sound combinations⁶¹, and the lack of instructional intensity (only once a week), associated literacy practice, and reinforcement activities (e.g. homework), meant that students often struggled to recall the phonemes.

(4) Students’ intercultural awareness and understanding

The emphasis in the curriculum on ‘communication’ also extends to intercultural communication, though such opportunities were quite limited. S. sensei in Aoi, through her video diary project, tried to overcome such limitations, but the asynchronous nature of the interaction and the significant time lag between ‘initiation’ (making and sending the video) and ‘response’ (video and/or written response from the other school), meant such communication was limited at best. In all four schools there were two main approaches for developing intercultural awareness and understanding: interactions with the ALT (both purposefully mediated and spontaneous); and through the lesson plans in the *Hi Friends* textbook.

⁶¹ According to Kavanagh (2007), there are 44 distinct phonemes in standard English (leaving aside for the moment the debate on what constitutes ‘standard English’), 24 consonants and 20 vowels. By contrast, in Japanese there are five vowels and 17 consonant phonemes, which leads Bada (2001) to suggest that “...sound wise, Japanese provides relatively a greater ease for the English speaker learning Japanese than the English system would to Japanese speakers” (p.5).

Purposefully planned cultural interaction with the ALTs included lessons on festivals, calendar events (Halloween, Christmas, St. Valentine's Day), food, sports, and school life. The intensity of interaction was very much dependent on the individual homeroom teacher and the ALT's Japanese language ability. S. sensei in Aoi actively incorporated intercultural awareness as part of her FLA class, through such initiatives as the video diary project, posters on the classroom wall detailing background information about the ALT and their home country, and themed activities such as writing a Valentine Day's card⁶². In Chairó, Amy used photographic flash cards to explain various holidays and festivals in the United States. More spontaneous interactions occurred both in and out of the classroom as curious students engaged with the ALT on an individual basis.

However, these intercultural-awareness raising activities were predominantly communicated through Japanese. Where the ALTs' Japanese language ability was weak, such activities were rather limited in scope and dependent on the homeroom teacher being able to adequately translate the ALT's explanation into Japanese. A further point is that given the nationalities of the ALTs, these instances of intercultural interaction were with first circle (Kachru, 1985), English speaking countries, a situation "in which the foreign world has become largely isomorphic with the English speaking world" (Liddicoat, 2014: 52).

In addition, as part of a once-weekly 45-minute class, intercultural awareness activities were intrinsically limited in nature and evidenced what Yamada (2010) has criticized as shallow interculturalism. Teachers, in setting their pedagogical priorities for each class, were guided by the methodology detailed in the *Hi Friend's* teacher guide (see below), the preparation time available to them, their own priorities, and matching their students' abilities and motivations. The location of all four schools meant that intercultural communication was bounded by the classroom; opportunities for interacting with foreigners or the foreign world outside of the school were extremely limited.

Each lesson plan in the teachers' guide included an initial aim for intercultural understanding and a section at the very end of the plan entitled 'Cultural background knowledge' (文化背景解説 *bunka haiku kaisetsu*). Thus, for Lesson 4 in fifth grade, the three stipulated intercultural awareness goals were⁶³:

- I. To be aware of the difference in vocabulary pronunciation, and to get used to the sound of English.
- II. When introducing yourself, students to become aware of the difference in physical gestures.

⁶² In Japan there is no tradition of sending anonymous Valentine's cards to somebody whom you like. In fact, the established custom is that on February 14th girls give chocolate to boys they like.

⁶³ (I) 単語の発音の違いに気付き、英語の音声に慣れ新しむこと。

(II) 自己紹介の発表をする際のジェスチャーの違いを知ること。

(III) ALT と好き嫌いを尋ね合う中で文化の違いに対する理解を深めること。

III. When asking the ALT their likes and dislikes, to develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences.

The emphasis is on ‘difference’ (違い, *chigai*), on establishing a binary distinctiveness between matters Japanese and foreign. That Japan is, in fact, home to a diverse array of ethnicities and cultures (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2000; Maher & Yashiro, 1995;) is omitted. In three of the schools there were four students of mixed ethnicity (one Japanese-Taiwanese, one Japanese-Chinese, and two Japanese-Australians), but their mixed heritages, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds were not alluded to by their homeroom teachers. When I asked S. sensei about this (she was the homeroom teacher for one of the Japanese-Australian students), she cited the need to protect (守る *mamoru*) the student from being perceived as different (違いがある *chitari ga aru*) by his classmates so as to avoid issues of discrimination or bullying⁶⁴.

Hence, though the curriculum emphasizes differences between Japan and the external world, in the internal world of the classroom such differences are deliberately obscured or ignored⁶⁵.

(5) A practical, workable solution.

According to MEXT (2014b), there are 416,000 elementary school teachers across the country. At some stage the majority of these teachers will have to teach the FLA subject. Low levels of English ability, a lack of confidence in their teaching abilities (Benesse, 2008; 2010; MEXT, 2012), the lack of a structured, comprehensive nationwide professional development program, and the subject’s subsidiary status on the elementary school curriculum, mean that what teachers can teach and how they can teach it is considerably constrained. This mirrors the situation internationally where low-level English language ability and insufficient teacher training have been consistently cited as major obstacles to the successful introduction of primary school English (Hayes, 2014; Rixon, 2013; Garton *et al.*, 2011; Kirkgöz, 2009; Hu, 2007; Nunan, 2003).

For all of the teachers in this study there was a common emphasis on practical teaching ideas and activities that could be easily understood, easily implemented, and matched the abilities and interests of their students. Based on the detailed syllabus provided in the teachers’ guide for the *Hi Friends* textbook (see next section), the teachers employed a range of oral communicative activities to maintain children’s interest and enthusiasm. These included chants, rhymes, songs, game-like activities and role plays, often with visual support. Lessons focused on the word level naming of objects and short question and answer routines to express personal information and explain

⁶⁴ Discrimination and bullying against ethnic minorities, immigrants, and children of mixed parentage has been documented comprehensively in Goodman *et al.* (2012), Kanno (2008), Lie (2001), Roth (2002), and Tsuneyoshi *et al.* (2011).

⁶⁵ Some commentators have criticized such practices as overly assimilationist, inveighing against a *de facto* policy of conformity within the Japanese educational system that deliberately erases ethnic and cultural differences (Hashimoto, 2011; Kubota, 2002). However, it is perhaps unfair to expect a ten-year old child to individually assume the responsibility of being the symbol of cultural diversity within an entire school.

basic information about students' daily lives. The exclusion of literacy teaching necessitated an emphasis on memorization rather than language experimentation, with children expected to produce memorized language items and formulaic phrases rather than their own independent sentences. Some of the children in Aoi and Chairo, who were attending private English education lessons, were able to engage in more sustained dialogues and draw on a more comprehensive range of vocabulary to enhance question and answer routines.

This enacted curriculum was distinguished by the minimal demands it placed on teaching competency in terms of planning and preparation, materials development, audio-visual resources, roles and functions of the ALT, previous FLA teaching experience, and the targeted language of instruction. It was a curriculum that was premised and enacted based on a pragmatic 'fit for purpose' rather than an idealistic and unattainable 'best practice'.

8.5 Methods and Materials Policy

The constraints outlined above surrounding teachers, particularly their low English language proficiency and the lack of systemized professional development opportunities, meant that the teaching materials, and the methodology they espoused, were of particular significance. As we have seen the Course of Study situates the goals of FLA in terms of student's communicative abilities and hence the instructional approach taken is a weak form of oral based communicative language teaching (CLT) (Carless, 2003). This is in keeping with the introduction of early English language education in other Asian countries (Butler, 2015; Lee, 2014; Hayes, 2014a; Hu, 2007), though Garton (2015) has warned of the inappropriateness of introducing CLT into situations where teachers "have received little or no training in its theoretical underpinnings and especially in its practical applications" (p.205). Particularly at the beginner stage many CLT methodologies tend to promote engaging activities such as games, songs, chants, and role plays, but without any clear pedagogical justification for their use (Butler, 2015)⁶⁶.

The Course of Study states that "Homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities should make teaching programs and conduct lessons" (MEXT, 2009b). Such apparent pedagogical flexibility however, presupposes that teachers have the skill, time, and motivation to undertake such tasks. Of the 18 teachers I observed, only Sato sensei in Aoi could be described as independently making a teaching program; the remaining teachers based their curriculum, teaching methods, and materials development on the Teachers' guide that accompanied the *Hi Friends* textbook.

8.5.1 The *Hi Friends* Textbook

⁶⁶ Littlewood (2014) has argued that the emphasis on CLT is inappropriate in ELF contexts with minimal instruction time and classroom bounded foreign language use. See also Larson-Hall, 2008.

The *Hi Friends* textbook is a set of two textbooks for 5th (*Hi Friends 1*) and 6th grade (*Hi Friends 2*) FLA classes. It is written, published, and distributed free by MEXT to all public elementary schools throughout Japan. The accompanying support materials for both textbooks consist of level-specific teacher guides, DVDs, and flashcards. In line with the stipulations of the Course of Study, the textbooks focus on oral-aural activities with minimal writing activities. The unit contents of both textbooks are outlined in the tables below⁶⁷ along with the number of classes recommended to complete each lesson.

Table 20: *Hi Friends 1* contents.

Lesson No.	Lesson Name	Lesson Aims for <i>Hi Friends 1</i>	Number of classes
1	Hello!	Greetings in different languages.	3
2	I'm happy.	Greeting using gestures.	4
3	How many?	Counting different things.	4
4	I like apples.	Talking about things you like.	4
5	What do you like?	Interviewing your friends.	4
6	What do you want?	Finding the letters of the alphabet.	4
7	What's this?	Quiz competition.	4
8	I study Japanese.	Making your dream class timetable.	4
9	What would you like?	Making a lunch menu.	4

Table 21: *Hi Friends 2* contents.

Lesson No.	Lesson Name	Lesson Aims for <i>Hi Friends 2</i>	Number of classes
1	Do you have "a" ?	Making an alphabet quiz.	7
2	When is your birthday?	Finding out your friends' birthdays.	4
3	I can swim.	Introducing things you can do.	4
4	Turn right.	Giving directions.	4
5	Let's go to Italy.	Inviting your friends on a holiday.	4
6	What time do you get up?	Introducing your daily routine.	4

⁶⁷ In the textbooks the 'Lesson Name' for each unit is written in English. The 'Lesson Aims' are written in Japanese and I have translated these into English.

Lesson No.	Lesson Name	Lesson Aims for <i>Hi Friends 2</i>	Number of classes
7	We are good friends.	Making an original story.	4
8	What do you want to be?	Talking about your future dream.	4

The lexical items covered by *Hi Friends* series consist of 335 nouns, 42 verbs, 27, adjectives, 20 adverbs, 10 pronouns, 6 prepositions, 5 interrogative forms, 4 exclamations, and 1 conjunction for a total of 435 items (Adachi *et al.*, 2014). The concern is that, given the lack of professional development for in-service teachers, the *Hi Friends* syllabus promotes a series of ‘simple’, discreet, itemized lessons in order to facilitate teachers lack of methodological preparedness (Cameron, 2001). The use of such an ‘itemized’ syllabus undermines the communicative aims outlined in the official Course of Study document. The *Hi Friends* textbook adopts a linear and atomistic approach to the specification of content; a potentially more effective spiral approach (Nakayasu, 2016) that includes revision activities and exercises for creative language expansion is omitted. The focus on short, oral task completion activities meant that during the FLA lessons many students only produced the minimal display of linguistic output necessary to complete the task.

8.5.2 The *Hi Friends* Teachers’ Guide

According to Pinter (2006) “the most important teaching and learning material that guides teachers’ and learners’ activities in many classrooms seems to be the coursebook” (p.115). McGrath warns that “a book should not be a course in the sense that it determines the totality of the learning experience” (2002: 37), but for the majority of the observed teachers the course book and the manual determined not only the totality of the learning experience, but the teaching experience as well.

Much of the existing literature on materials analysis and evaluation assumes that the teacher is either a native speaker of English or highly proficient in the language, and in both cases is trained in teaching English as a foreign language (Cunningsworth & Kusel, 1991). For this reason, detailed analyses of teachers’ guides tend to be few, either being overlooked completely (McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003; McGrath, 2002) or relegated to admonishments about not over using the guide (Good, 2001). However, such implicit biases are quite untenable in situations such as Japan where the opposite of such assumptions hold true. Rather, the teachers’ guide provides,

“essential support for teachers whose own knowledge of English is shaky and incomplete, who perhaps only have a basic understanding of some of the rudiments of language teaching” (Cunningsworth & Kusel, 1991: 131).

For the teachers in this study, the teachers' guide assumed the role of teacher-training material in that it provided methodological guidance, linguistic information, and background information on cultural issues, thus functioning as a source of professional development (Tomlinson, 2003).

For the FLA classes MEXT published and distributed a comprehensive 81-page teachers' guide that provides detailed instructions on how to teach a full, year-long, 35 hour curriculum. The guide begins with a short introduction stating the overall objectives for the course, provides a curriculum chart showing how each of the nine lessons is divided into either three or four related units, what the main content of each unit is, and the main English phrase around which that lesson is based.

The explanation for each lesson and their units also follow a fixed pattern. Each lesson begins with a description of its objective, and the contents and instructions on how to conduct the lesson. Subsequently, each unit within the lesson is explained in terms of:

- Aims
- English vocabulary and phrases to be learned
- Listening tasks
- Chants
- Language learning games and activities
- Classroom English

In addition, English language transcripts for the contents of the CD are provided along with a complete translation into Japanese. There then follows a detailed plan for teaching the unit, with alternative methodologies suggested along with points to note. At the end of the overall lesson there is a section devoted to vocabulary and language use. For example, in Unit 4 this consists of an explanation of countable and uncountable nouns, second and third person question forms, the use of the term 'juice', and examples of other ways to express gratitude besides 'thank you'. The final section of each lesson is devoted to background information on various aspects of cross-cultural understanding deemed relevant to the theme of that lesson. Finally, at the end of the guide is a list, divided by lesson, of all the English vocabulary (with an accompanying Japanese translation) that appears in the teachers' guide, student's book, and on the CD.

8.5.3 Pedagogical Guidance

The teachers' guide provides comprehensive and detailed instructions on how to conduct foreign language activities for all lessons – it essentially tells teachers what to do and how to do it, from start to finish. For each of the four units contained in every lesson, a detailed, chronological plan is provided, divided into successive time segments, with clearly delineated roles for the teacher, students, ALT, and textbook. In addition, there is explicit guidance on the language to be used, by

whom and when; the activities to be undertaken and in what order; along with details of what supplementary materials are required. In its very comprehensiveness, the guide could well be seen to preclude alternatives or encourage any innovation on the teacher's part. As such the guide could be criticized for 'deskilling' teachers (Richards, 1993: 7), or relegating the role of the teacher to mere 'technician' (Good, 2001: 30).

More specifically the methodological approach adopted in the supplied study materials emphasized students acquiring short, simple 'chunks of language' (Cameron, 2003), whilst excluding discourse management and longer conversational turns. Discrete grammatical instruction is omitted. Language awareness, principally through comparisons with Japanese, does occur, particularly in contrasting the phonology of Japanese 'loan' words (*gairaigo*) and the original etymological English.

Although the teachers' guide explicitly states that it should not be used as the sole basis for teaching, the day-to-day realities of the homeroom teacher's professional responsibilities effectively overruled that stipulation. All the homeroom teachers in this study were tasked with the ongoing and ever-changing demands of teaching a diverse array of subjects, general administrative tasks, and, most importantly, the responsibility for the care and welfare of their students. Limited preparation time, lack of pedagogical experience, circumscribed English language ability, and the low priority they accorded to the FLA class, resulted in their consistent reliance upon the teachers' guide. This dependency was best summed up by A. sensei who said, "*the guide makes it much easier to teach the class ... if I didn't have [the teachers' guide] it would be impossible*" (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

8.6 Resourcing Policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (2005, 1997) initially conceptualized this aspect of language-in-education policy as relating to funding, "how is this going to be paid for?" (Baldauf, Li & Zhao, 2008: 235). Subsequent refinements (Baldauf *et al.*, 2011) have broadened the concept to include access to, and use of, 'expertise' and, in cases of limited resource allocation, the priority accorded to policy implementation. In public education funding is normally the responsibility of the state, but, as the findings from this research show, financing can also be supplemented by municipal, community, and parental sources as well (see also Entrich, 2018).

In Japan funding for primary education is derived from a number of different sources contributing different amounts (Figure 7).

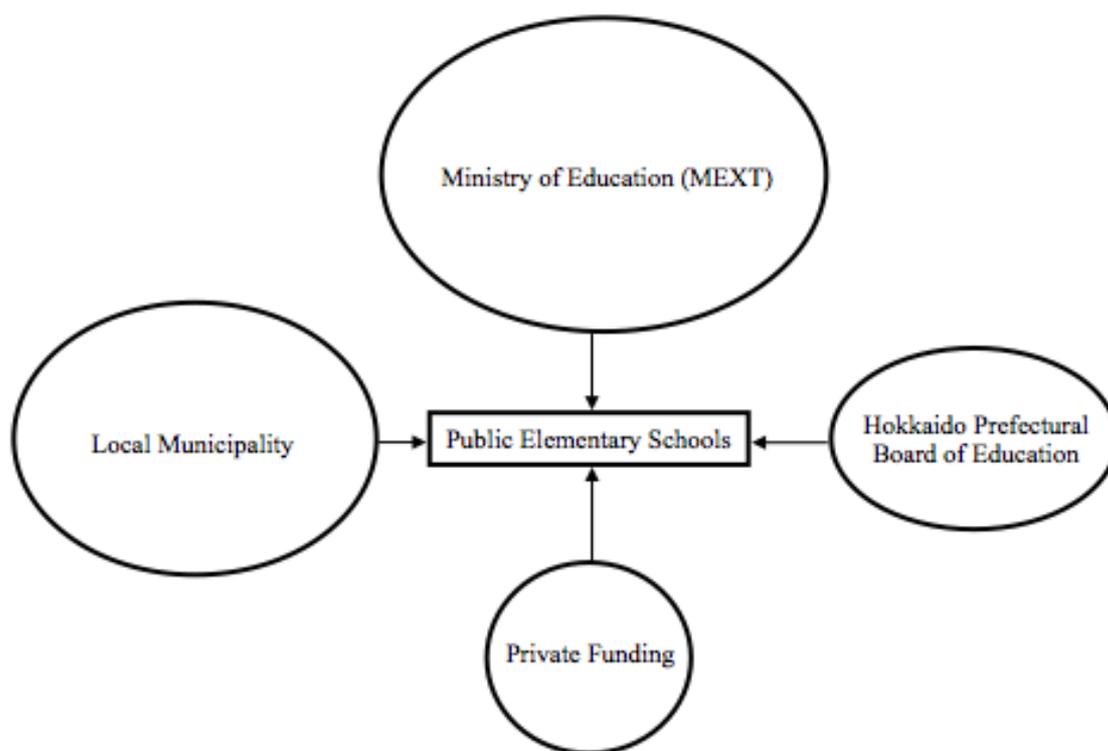


Figure 7: Sources of funding for primary education in Japan.

In relation to the implementation of the FLA policy, MEXT provides the largest amount of finance, paying half of teachers' salaries, and covering the full cost of supplying textbooks, supplementary materials, professional development courses, and surveys.

The Hokkaido prefectural Board of Education is responsible for the remaining half of teachers' salaries, the provision of training courses, audio-visual equipment, and teaching assistants⁶⁸.

Local, municipal funding covers the cost of employing ALTs, teaching assistants, and paying for supplementary materials.

Private funding pays for students' supplementary English education at conversation schools (*eikaiwa*), private tutoring, *juku*, formal English language exams, and in the case of Aoi school, subsidizing Mary's employment as a school-specific ALT.

⁶⁸ For the purpose of clarity, I will refer to foreign, native speakers of English employed by local boards of education as ALTs, while Japanese people employed as English language assistants as 'language assistants'. Although recent literature (Copland *et al.*, 2016) favors the use of the acronyms NEST (Native Speaking English Teachers) and LET (Local English Teachers); these would not be accurate in this particular case as none of the ALTs nor the 'language assistants' were qualified teachers.

Given these disparate sources of funding, it is exceedingly difficult to establish a specific figure for the funding of FLA in each case study school. This opacity underscores how resourcing for FLA is structurally inequitable in that the government mandated policy for all public elementary schools is not matched by a similar commitment to sufficient and fair public funding for all schools⁶⁹. Rather, both public and private spending on education varies according to the financial resources of each municipality, resulting in what has been termed ‘学校間格差’ (*gakkoukankokusai*), the economic ‘gap’ between different public schools⁷⁰ (Kawaguchi & Okamura, 2013; Imazu, 2012). Okubo (2014) analyzed municipal spending on education over a thirty-year period and found a significant correlation between the overall financial status of a municipality and the per school expenditure. Similarly, Sadahiro (2013) undertook a detailed comparison of municipal spending on elementary school education in Aomori and Yokohama cities and found that in Yokohama average spending per school was two million yen higher than in Aomori⁷¹. In relation to English education Haruo (2017) reports that a number of municipalities are now subsidizing the fees for taking the Test of English Ability (Eiken Test) and providing free supplementary after-school English lessons.

In the four case study districts in this study, none of the administrative municipalities provided specific figures for funding the FLA course. Spending on the subject, like all the other subjects in the elementary school curriculum, was subsumed within the overall educational budget for the district. In such a situation Nishi (2016) advocates examining the discernible manifestations of educational spending, such as student-teacher ratios, number of teachers, number of teaching assistants, age of school buildings, and provision of school lunches. Adapting this approach to the present study, the allocation of ALTs and their roles and responsibilities will be examined in order to analyze resourcing policy⁷².

Table 21 below provides an overview of how resources were allocated across the four schools.

⁶⁹ Although students attending a public elementary school in Japan ostensibly receive a ‘free’ education, Nishi (2016) estimates that the cumulative six-year cost of a child attending elementary school is ¥1,845,467.

⁷⁰ This obviously affects more than just the provision of FLA classes. Concerns arising from the economic gap have also been raised in relation to literacy in Japanese (Tobishima, 2016).

⁷¹ Aomori is the prefectural capital of Aomori-ken, the northernmost prefecture on the main island of Honshu. The city has a population of 287,648 and average household income is ¥2.4 million. Yokohama is Japan’s second largest city with a population of 3.7 million and average household income is ¥3.1 million (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2017).

⁷² The bounded nature of my fieldwork did not permit the collection of data on private English education spending. Entrich (2018) provides an in-depth analysis of private supplementary English education in Japan, which usefully summarizes the different educational resources provided by different types of *juku*. For a more global overview of the affects of supplementary (‘shadow’) education on academic achievement and equality, see Bray (2014) and Bray & Kwo (2013).

Table 22: Resources available for FLA instruction in the four case study districts.

School	Type of ALT	Language Assistant	Audio/Visual Equipment	Commercial supplementary materials	Municipal sponsored teacher training
Midori	JET Program	No	Yes - large screen monitor	Yes	No
Kiiri	Directly employed by town	Yes (contracted by Hokkaido BoE)	Yes - large screen monitor	No	No
Chairo	JET Program	No	Yes - large screen monitor	No	No
Aoi	Directly employed by town; contracted by school	No	Yes - large screen monitor	Yes	No

8.6.1 ALTs

In their education budgets for 2011 and 2012, none of the four municipalities in this study itemized the cost of employing an ALT. McCrostie (2016) estimates that employing an ALT via the government sponsored JET program costs ¥5-6 million, though municipalities receive a state subsidy of ¥4.7m per program participant. ALTs directly employed by a municipality cost around ¥3.6 million, while ALTs hired via ‘dispatch’ companies (employment agencies) cost approximately ¥2.5 to 3 million. Midori and Chairo were both assigned JET program ALTs, while the ALTs at the other two schools were directly employed by their respective boards of education. In the case of Aoi, the number of ALTs employed by the city was not sufficient to guarantee an ALT at the school each week for FLA classes. To remedy this the school employed Mary on an hourly basis for all their FLA classes.

According to a survey conducted by MEXT in 2015 on ALT employment status, there were 11,439 ALTs employed in elementary schools across Japan. Of these 18.6% were hired via the JET program, 15.6% were directly employed by municipalities, 24.6% were sourced through employment agencies, 26.9% were Japanese ALTs, and the remaining 14.3% were recruited as part-time workers or were volunteers (MEXT, 2016b). The employment situations of the ALTs in the four cases studies to a certain extent mirrored this national trend, though there was a notable absence of any full-time Japanese ALTs.

The ALTs also differed in the qualifications and experiences they possessed. Table 22 below provides a summary.

Table 23: Key information about ALTs featured in this study.

	Mary	Amy	Felix	Mike	Catherine
Nationality	United States	United States	New Zealand	United States	United States
Age	(unknown)	23	36	38	22
Undergraduate degree	None	East Asian Studies	Education	English literature	Business Communications
Postgraduate degree	None	None	None	English literature	None
Primary teaching qualification	None	None	Yes	None	None
TEFL qualification	None	None	None	None	None
Japanese language ability	JLPT Level 1	JLPT Level 2	JLPT Level 2	n/a	n/a
Teaching experience in Japan	34 years	1 year	11 years	5 years	none
Length of time in current position	7 years	1 year	5 years	1 year	new
Length of time in Japan	39 years	1 year	12 years	5 years	new

Yanase (2016) contends that effective team-teaching in elementary schools in Japan requires ALTs with appropriate teaching qualifications and sufficient Japanese ability to communicate with HRTs. In the present study, only Felix had an academic background in primary education, obtaining a bachelors degree from the University of Waitomo in New Zealand; three of the ALTs possessed academic qualifications not related to education, and Mary had none. This tends to be the case throughout Japan where the 2016 MEXT survey cited above found that only 12.3% of ALTs had some form of primary teaching qualification (MEXT, 2016b).

More prominent factors were the length of time the ALTs had spent both living and working in Japan. The two ALTs employed via the JET Program had only resided in Japan for a short time, whereas the ALTs directly employed by the boards of education had lived and worked in Japan for considerably longer durations. This would suggest that boards of education prefer to hire experienced ‘native’ speakers, preferably with good Japanese language ability, a finding in keeping with previous studies (Machida, 2016; Machida and Walsh, 2015; Ng, 2015).

Although ALTs represented the largest financial expense for implementing the new Course of Study, there were no objective assessments taken of their pedagogical effectiveness in the classroom. Unlike the HRTs who are evaluated annually by both the school principal and the local board of education (Yajima *et al.*, 2017), none of the ALTs had been the subject of a formal review. Instead, there appears to be an uncritical acceptance of the ‘native-speaker norm’ (Kirkpatrick, 2008), whereby there is,

“an automatic extrapolation from competent speaker to competent teacher based on linguistic grounds alone, without taking into consideration the criteria of cultural, social and pedagogic appropriacy” (Seidlhofer, 1996: 69).

In addition, ‘experience’ did not necessarily equate to ‘professionalism’. Mike, for instance, on a number of occasions sat at the back of the classroom and actively disengaged from the lesson by using his mobile phone. Felix openly (and loudly) engaged in general conversations with me at the back of the classroom during a number of my visits to Kihiro. My field notes record that Mary was late to class on four separate occasions; in one instance she was over 25 minutes late and I was pressed into service as an ‘emergency’ ALT. Similar problems were recorded by Machida and Walsh (2015) in their study of elementary school team-teaching. They highlighted ALTs lack of punctuality, lack of professionalism, disdain for HRTs, unannounced absences, and even incidences of theft.

8.6.2 Japanese English Language Assistants

According to Yanase (2016) there are a number of distinct advantages a non-native Japanese speaker of English can bring to the FLA classroom. These include: being a good bilingual learner model; more efficient preparation with the homeroom teacher; providing effective language learning strategies; tactical use of Japanese L1 in the classroom to scaffold tasks and activities; possessing an insider’s knowledge of the educational system; and having an innate understanding of the students’ linguistic and cultural background. Machida and Walsh (2015), in their study of team-teaching, found that the majority of HRTs prefer working with such non-native Japanese speakers of English. However, according to Braine (2010), municipal boards of education preferred unqualified

NS (native speakers) of English instead of qualified local teachers because they wanted stereotypically American-looking teachers (p. 4).

Nomu-san at Kihiro was the sole Japanese ALT employed in any of the four schools during the duration of my fieldwork. She had lived in the United States for 4 years, initially as an English language student for a year, and then subsequently she worked in a community library⁷³. She had commenced working as a part-time teaching assistant in 2010 when she was contracted by the local board of education to teach English part-time in the town's four elementary schools⁷⁴. This involved visiting each school once a month on a four-weekly rotation and teaching English to the lower grades. In 2011 her employment status changed, and she was employed by the Hokkaido board of education. Under the terms of her new contract she was required to assist only the 5th and 6th grade FLA classes. This resulted in her working more as she now visited all four schools every week, but she found the new job frustrating. She now had to work alongside Felix and she complained that there was no clear definition of their classroom roles and responsibilities. Previously she had much greater autonomy when teaching in the lower grades and her role corresponded to Aline and Hosoda's (2006) definition of 'co-teacher' where "both teachers are in the main sequence of interaction, and directly instructing students" (p.8). However, in the 5th and 6th grade classrooms her role depended on the pedagogical functions assigned to her by the homeroom teacher. In P.'s 5th grade class Nomu-san again assumed a 'co-teacher' position as P. sensei would regularly involve her in pronunciation practice, dialogue modeling, pair work, cultural explanations, and Japanese translations. In contrast, in K. sensei's class her role was usually that of a 'bystander' (Aline and Hosoda, 2006) both spatially and pedagogically. She would often stand at the side of the classroom next to the door and only interact with K. sensei and the students when specifically requested to do so.

Although studies (Yanase, 2016; Machida and Walsh, 2014; Butler, 2007) advocate having a non-native English teacher or teaching assistant, the situation in Kihiro was more nuanced. P. sensei clearly preferred working with Nomu-san and included her much more in the planning and teaching of the class. In K. sensei's class the situation was reversed with Felix being the primary assistant and Nomu-san being 'present but passive'. Although both homeroom teachers had their preferred teaching assistants, they had to accommodate both Felix and Nomu-san in their classrooms. The resourcing policy followed by the local board of education was not optimal in terms of classroom effectiveness, but, in the case of Nomu-san, this was not the sole criteria on which her employment was based.

Although Japan's centralized educational system (Butler, 2015) would suggest that resources are uniformly allocated in a top-down manner, the vagaries of funding and resource

⁷³ She had returned to Kihiro to care for her elderly mother.

⁷⁴ Nomu-san explained that caring for her mother meant that she could only work part-time in the locality. Her deceased father had worked for the town office for most of his career and through contacts in the office she was offered the initial teaching assistant job in 2010. In 2011, the town specifically sought the Hokkaido board of education job for her as it offered a greater salary which meant that the town would no longer have to pay her out of the municipal education budget.

allocation at different levels of the system are apparent in this study. There was a wide variation in the experience, qualifications, length of residency and linguistic abilities of the ALTs across the four case studies. In addition, the category ‘ALT’ cannot be regarded as a uniform construct; rather it encompasses a wide range of abilities and pedagogical effects. Similarly, a binary distinction between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ assistants in terms of perceived teaching effectiveness in the primary classroom (Copland, *et al.*, 2016), potentially overlooks the situational constraints imposed by local policy makers. In the case of Kihiro both Felix and Nomu-san were present in the classroom but their subjectively imposed roles, alternating between ‘co-teacher’ and ‘bystander’, calls into question the effectiveness of such resource allocation.

8.7 Community Policy

This aspect of language-in-education planning is concerned with identifying those who are involved in defining and implementing the new policy: “What input does the community have on policy; does it meet their needs?” (Baldauf *et al.*, 2012: 187). Many of the studies in this area are concerned with minority language communities and their political agency in determining the scope and extent of language policies. Hamid and Erling (2016) highlight how the introduction of English teaching in Bangladesh state primary schools marginalized the opportunities for learning indigenous languages. Ali *et al.* (2011), in their investigation of the ‘micro-effects’ on English in primary education policy in Malaysia, found that teachers use of Baha-Malay in English classes represented an appropriation of policy in order to meet localized community goals. Chen (2011) highlighted the controversies arising from the ‘mismatch’ between parents’ expectations of a new primary English education in Taiwan and actual classroom implementation. Butler (2015) calls attention to the increasing influence of private sector language provision and how notions of ‘community’ are not solely linguistic, but also include differentiation according to economic class.

Such issues are also apparent in Japan. The Course of Study assigns English the status of the “de facto compulsory language” (Hashimoto, 2009: 34), and in doing so drastically limits opportunities for learning other foreign languages in elementary school. From 2006 to 2015 there was a 60% increase in the number of elementary school students taking the Eiken English test (Eiken, 2015), evidence of what Haruo (2017) terms ‘英語熱’ (*eigo netsu*), ‘English fever’⁷⁵. Entrich (2015) contends that the burgeoning private English education sector for young learners in Japan is a reaction by parents to both the low level of English instruction at the primary level, and the subject’s importance for high school and university entrance exams. Discursively, the new Course of Study tries to position FLA as a neutral policy concerned with providing opportunities for autonomous, community-based approaches to teaching the subject. The next section examines this in more detail.

⁷⁵ The linguistic equivalent of this term is also used in Korea (*yeongeo yeolpung*) to describe the ‘frenzy’ to learn English (Lee, 2015).

8.7.1 The local community

The new Course of Study, in line with broader changes in educational policy, is an attempt to amalgamate a number of discrepant policy aims. In particular, it must reconcile the legally mandated requirement of educational equality with MEXT's desire to "decentralize" curriculum reform "in order to encourage each school to make use of their originality and creativity in implementing their curriculum" (Nakayasu, 2016:137).

In Section III (2), Lesson Plan Design and Handling the Content, this decentralized approach is made clear:

"Taking into account the circumstances of pupils and the local community, each individual school should establish objectives of foreign language activities for each grade in an appropriate manner".

The term 'local community' recurs three times in the document. It is used in relation to course aims (above), teaching personnel (Section III (5)), and the use of audio-visual materials (Section III (6)). In all three cases this discourse of 'localization' adheres to MEXT's aim of encouraging schools "to make use of their originality and creativity". However, such an aim also absolves of MEXT of having to stipulate specific standards for course aims, teachers, and materials. A survey carried out by the Benesse Corporation found that elementary school teachers ranked the lack of clear instructions on what to teach and how to teach as their biggest concern in implementing the new Course of Study (Benesse 2010).

Conversely, the term 'circumstances of ... the local community', a seemingly benign phrase, masks a widening gap in the socio-economic fortunes of communities across Japan, particularly between rural and urban areas. Nozaki and Matsumura, (2017), in their analysis of student scores on the National Assessment of Academic Ability⁷⁶, found that at the prefectural-level public school spending is correlated with student academic skills. Prefectures containing large urban centers spent more, per student, than rural prefectures and this was reflected in the higher scores achieved by city students on the National Assessment of Academic Ability. While decentralization policies supposedly 'free' schools from imposed bureaucratic regulations and promote their autonomy and innovation, concomitant centralized standards hold them accountable for their educational outcomes. This simultaneous 'loose and tight' approach is what Ball (2008: 48) terms

⁷⁶ The 全国が学力調査 (*zenkoku gakuryoka chousa*: 'National Assessment of Academic Ability') are nationwide exams for elementary sixth grade and junior high school third grade students given annually in April. The tests are conducted by MEXT to assess students' basic knowledge and competency in both Japanese and arithmetic (and science every third year). Each subject consists of a combination of Test A, which focuses on basic comprehension, and Test B, which focuses on applied skills. The results of the scores are intended to be reflected in education policy and subsequently implemented via public school interventions (see Takayama, 2013). Data about the tests and students scores are available on the website of the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, <http://www.nier.go.jp/>.

‘controlled decontrol’ educational management. This will soon extend to English education as from 2019 the National Assessment of Academic Ability will include testing of English for third year junior high school students (MEXT, 2016a).

This emphasis on schools and the local community elides the lack of national structures in place to ensure an equitable provision of educational resources. It is an example of ‘labelling’ (Moncrieffe and Eyben, 2013) whereby solutions are proffered to perceived problems in a manner that make the policy proposals seem inherently effective and indispensable yet maintain unequal power relations and disavow accountability. The Course of Study, by locating both pedagogical content and agency in individual schools and classrooms, implies that success or failure of the new subject will result from what happens within the classroom rather than as a result of the wider, varying socio-economic forces acting without.

8.7.2 Teachers as an unheard community of practice

Although teachers are the main arbiters of educational policy, their input into state policy planning is often minimal (Tollefson, 2013; Rivers, 2011). From 2011 the teachers in this study, like their public school colleagues all across Japan, were assigned a new curriculum, textbook, supplementary materials, and ALT with scant instruction on how to effectively coordinate and use these resources for the best benefit of their students. Nor were their professional opinions sought on the feasibility of implementing the FLA class.

In the formal interviews I conducted with the teachers, I specifically asked them what alterations and/or improvements they would make to their FLA classes. Their answers are grouped into three main categories: class management, English ability, and professional development.

8.7.2.1 Communication and class management

I sensei explained how her concerns about teaching English were not simply a result of her (self-described) poor English ability, but were also related to a lack of experience in managing a class centered on oral communicative activities.

“Many older teachers do not have the experience of learning English in elementary school. We have an ‘image’ of ourselves as maths or Japanese learners, and can teach based on that. However, our experiences of English classes are from junior high school and high school. Because of this we don’t know how to teach an activity based class like FLA” (Interview: I/Chairo/032712).

Teaching is particularly susceptible to the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Borg 2009) — methodological preconceptions, or ‘images’, based on teachers’ own school days—which may retrospectively affect their perceptions of the language classroom. The use of communicative

language teaching (CLT) shifts the focus onto the learner, who are autonomously expected to “negotiate meaning without the direct control or intervention of the teacher” (Littlewood 2007: 244). In contrast, the long-standing traditional approach in many Japanese classrooms (Cave, 2007; Sato, 2004; Benjamin, 1998) has been teacher-centered, with the assumption that students receive knowledge from the teacher rather than co-create it amongst themselves.

A related issue is the emphasis the Course of Study places on oral communicative activities. This may warrant an additional emphasis on speaking over other skills which teachers, as learners, may not have experienced. Teachers assumed that English should be the predominant language of the class yet found that their inadequate ability affected their class management. According to A. sensei,

“In elementary school the homeroom teacher should control the class while the ALT promotes the use of English. However, if I am supposed to speak only in English to the students, then I can’t control or manage the class” (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

For both I sensei and A sensei effective pedagogy was correlated with efficient classroom management. The introduction of FLA, with its focus on oral communication and a pedagogy based on stimulating activities, undermined their sense of control, particularly as they had neither experience nor guidance in this particular style of teaching.

8.7.2.2 English ability

I sensei, drawing on her past experiences as student, explained how her formal English education in secondary school and university did not adequately prepare her for the team-teaching aspect of FLA.

“For most normal teachers, while they studied ‘exam’ English and they can probably still understand grammar and vocabulary. But their English conversational ability is weak. When talking in English with the ALT, we can understand them, but we can’t speak our thoughts and feelings, and we don’t have confidence in our English ability to properly explain the lesson plan” (Interview: I/Chairo/032712).

She believed the new Course of Study did not take into account the linguistic difficulties of team-teaching. While the actual instructional content didn’t require a high degree of English proficiency, preparation and planning with the ALT did.

S. sensei described the difficulty in using the correct English immediately during the class.

“I can speak English before the class when we are preparing the lesson, but if I have to say something in immediately in class, I can’t say it in English. It would be good if teachers could improve their English conversational ability, but we can’t do that right away” (Interview: S/Aoi/040313).

A sensei identified her low English ability as impacting on the quality of English students heard in her class.

“For English I can use one word or a phrase I have previously learned. However, to interact with my students I need to learn how to use more English the students can understand. I think it is very important to learn proper ‘teacher talk’ in English” (Interview A/Midori/032912).

All three teachers recognized the limitations of their English abilities and, in turn, how this impacted on their preparation with the ALT and their effective use of English in the classroom. There was an awareness too that remedying this was not something quickly or easily achieved, particularly given how busy they were⁷⁷.

8.7.3 Professional Development

The teachers’ explanations of the issues surrounding class management and English ability are intricately linked to the insufficient provision of both pre- and in-service training opportunities. A. sensei described how the English education she received at university did not adequately prepare for the challenges of teaching FLA.

“The English I learned at university is good enough for the vocabulary I need to teach in elementary school. That is to say, if I have a class ‘script’ to follow I can just say it out loud. However, during the class if I have to talk to the ALT or explain something [in English], at the moment that is very difficult” (Interview A/Midori/032912).

T. sensei also highlighted the inadequacy of his university English education.

“In my university education we only had a few chances for speaking and listening in English. That’s why I am concerned about my teaching of the FLA class” (Field note: C/T/5/090811/5).

K. sensei acknowledged that teacher training was necessary but didn’t see how it could effectively happen.

⁷⁷ A 2015 MEXT survey of 2,835 elementary school teachers across Japan found that 73% of them worked on average more than 60 hours a week (MEXT, 2016a).

“If we could have some [English language] training I think we would improve considerably. The problem is I don’t know how it can be done, there’s just no time for training” (Interview K/Kihiro/032712).

These comments indicate how the top-down implementation of language policy without due cognizance of the teaching community tasked with implementing it results in a “messy process” (Stritikus, 2003: 50) of partial pedagogy and personalized feelings of inadequacy. Teachers are aware of the linguistic demands that an oral based, communicative approach entails and recognize that, unlike other subjects in the curriculum, issues of class management, teacher talk, and ALT interaction all have to be addressed. However, they also highlight the lack of specific, focused pre- and in-service training that could best mitigate these issues.

Although the Course of Study ostensibly granted the teachers considerable autonomy in how to teach the course, the emphasis on a communicative approach ran counter to their own experiences and beliefs as language learners. Their own ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Borg, 2009) led them to follow teacher-centered approaches that were familiar and comfortable.

8.8 Evaluation Policy

Evaluation policy is concerned with the criteria used to determine the success or failure of a language-in planning program (Baldauf *et al.*, 2011). It is perhaps the most problematic policy area of FLA. There are no systematic measures for assessing students’ language learning or evaluating the affective motivational outcomes the Course of Study espouses.

8.8.1 Informal Assessment

None of the teachers across the four schools engaged in any form of systematic assessment as none was mandated by the policy document or the teachers’ guide. Informal assessment (McKay 2006) did occur in Midori where both M. and A. sensei gave their students simple evaluation sheets to fill in at the end of each class. These sheets were designed to assess the students’ opinions and affective responses to the class⁷⁸. The evaluation sheet asked students to respond to the following three statements about the class by circling either ‘definitely did’, ‘did’, ‘sort of did’, or ‘not really’.

- 1: Did you interact with your friends and teacher?
- 2: Did you listen attentively to what your teacher and friends said?
- 3: Did you use the new expressions you learned in class?

⁷⁸ The evaluation sheets were not specific to the FLA class and were also used for Japanese, Maths, Science, and Social Studies.

There were also two open-ended questions which the students had to complete (though not all of them did every time). These were:

- 1: Please write down what you could do, couldn't do, and worked hard to do?
- 2: Please write down what you noticed about your classmates' speaking?

M. Sensei used the sheets to informally gauge the students' progress and determine whether they were enjoying the class or not. At the end of each week she pinned these sheets (as well as sheets for the other subjects) to the wall of the (usual) classroom so that students could read each other's evaluations.

There were also examples of 'on-the-run assessment' (McKay, 2006: 22), "informal, instruction-embedded assessment ... [that] involves teachers in observation and immediate feedback, usually of individual learners, as they teach". Amy and Felix were regular enactors of this type of assessment, particular during pairwork activities, when they would monitor students and provide individual feedback where needed.

8.8.2 Course outcomes and continuation

The absence of any form of formal assessment of FLA in public elementary schools means there is a corresponding lack of empirical evidence on progression and learning outcomes. Rixon (2015) contends that it is unreasonable to expect suitable age-appropriate assessment procedures when the policy implementation process is still under development. However, as Pinter (2017) points out, some form of assessment is needed to provide evidence of learners' performance and progress in English. Without such evidence various stakeholders in the process (students, teachers, parents, administrators, policy planners) do not have an accurate means of evaluating the curriculum.

This lack of evidence also affects the continuation of language learning into secondary school (Burns, *et al.*, 2013). As a non-academic subject on the curriculum, elementary schools are not required to include the subject on the student evaluation reports they have to provide to junior high schools. In this study none of the teachers reported meeting with junior high school teachers to discuss students' English ability. Although beyond the scope of this research, studies suggest that the lack of evidential learning outcomes often results in junior high schools commencing English education at the absolute beginner level again in order to 'smooth out' individual differences in student ability (Benesse, 2012; Yano, 2011). Related studies have shown a sharp drop in student motivation after the first year of junior high school English (MEXT, 2014a), and that this decline continues as the students progress through school (MEXT, 2016d). This is in keeping with international findings that report a similar gap in motivational levels between primary and secondary schooling (Hayes, 2014; Garton *et al.*, 2011).

8.9 Conclusion

This chapter used the analytical framework proposed by Kaplan and Baldauf (2005, 1997) to situate the specific findings of this research within more general trends, both national and international, relating to language policy in education and the introduction of primary school English foreign language learning. Policy issues relating to access, personnel, curriculum, methods and materials, resourcing, community, and evaluation were all addressed in depth. The next chapter concludes the dissertation with a summary of the principal findings and the major implications of the research.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the principal findings organized according to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Following this, the contribution this research makes to understanding Japanese elementary school English education, along with the broader issues of language-in-education planning in Japan, will be outlined. The subsequent section considers implications of the findings for the field of language policy. Practical applications of this study for elementary school English teaching in Japan will also be proposed. This is followed by an acknowledgement of a number of limitations inherent in the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief personal reflection on the research project.

Research question 1: How is the new Foreign Language Activities course contextually situated within the prevalent language policy discourses surrounding English language education in Japan?

In answering this question, I drew upon the theoretical framework of Discursive-Historical analysis (Johnson, 2013) to undertake a critical discourse analysis of the 2008 Course of Study policy document. This involved adopting an interpretive approach to demonstrate how policy formulations and action plans are interconnected and shaped by social and political contexts within Japan, and how these discourses have regulated the understanding, practice of, and access to foreign language education.

There were three main findings to this question. These are:

- (1) The Course of Study and the new FLA subject represent a continuation of previous iterations of educational policy on foreign language education that have made English the *de facto* language of study. This involves carefully positioning the language as a necessary linguistic resource for Japan's participation in the global economy.
- (2) The Course of Study incorporates a discursive and ideological distinction between domestic (Japanese) and foreign languages (specifically English) through the deliberate promulgation of a distinct, unified conception of Japanese language, culture, and identity.
- (3) The apparent granting of local educational autonomy through the use of the term 'local community' is, my findings suggest, a discursive elision of the inequality that currently exists in the quantity and quality of resources available to different regions and schools.

Research question 2: Within this discursive context, how is the new FLA course interpreted and implemented in public elementary schools?

The findings from my longitudinal ethnographic study demonstrate that the teaching of the FLA course is contingent on the complex interaction of issues inside and outside of the classroom. These issues manifest themselves in the following critical ways:

- (1) Time - this includes the amount of instructional class time and the amount of pre-class preparation time. The consistent abridgment of actual class time across all four schools suggests the exercising of 'language policy agency' (Menken and Garcia, 2010) to contest the introduction of the new course.
- (2) Pedagogical approaches - language proficiency, teaching style, and the importance of classroom management were all found to be crucial determiners of how the FLA class was taught. In addition, teachers' beliefs as to what constituted both effective teaching and efficient learning, based on their past experiences, were undermined or challenged by the new curriculum's emphasis on an oral based communicative approach to foreign language learning.
- (3) Roles and responsibilities - this research has shown that the roles of 'homeroom teacher' and 'ALT' are fluid and dynamic and exhibit considerable variation, both between the four schools and also within them. Explanations for this variability include personality, assignment and adoption of differing roles, English language teaching experience, and Japanese language ability.

Interwoven throughout the ethnographic approach taken is the crucial thread of 'context'. The variability in how the new Course of Study was implemented speaks to wider concerns of equity which, as the answer to the first research question showed, is often masked by a discursive appeal to pedagogical autonomy. Focusing on the classroom, while revealing important issues in terms of classroom practice and potential outcomes, can also obscure the *a priori* decisions - teacher training, ALT provision, mandated instructional time, lack of formal assessment - which effectively undermine the implementation of FLA.

Research question 3: What are the main factors impacting upon the implementation of the FLA policy?

In providing an answer to this question it is necessary to emphasize the contingency upon which the explanation depends. Although there were commonalities of practice across all four schools, this should not be mistaken for equivalence. In aggregating my findings to answer the research questions, such differences were subsumed beneath the requirements of analytical conciseness. I would thus preface my answer with a request to revisit Chapter 6 to remind the reader of these important differences. Nevertheless, there are a number of common features which have a notable impact on how the FLA course was realized.

(1) Communicative language teaching

Teaching in Japan is conceptualized as a holistic meaning-making process based on a set of socially and culturally shared codes and practices that structure both teacher and student behaviour in the classroom (Cave, 2016; 2007; Motani, 2005; Tsuneyoshi, 2004). What teachers know about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come.

Cave (2007), in his examination of elementary school curricular reforms occurring in 2004, described policy implementation as a “partial innovation ... undertaken on bedrock of continuity” (p.215).

For many of the teachers in this study the introduction of the new FLA course, and the communicative approach it espouses, means they don't possess a 'bedrock' of past practices and experiential knowledge upon which to build their teaching approach. Chapter 8 showed how some teachers had trouble reconciling their established 'image' of teaching with the prescribed approach for FLA. In 2011 the 12 homeroom teachers across all four schools were teaching the FLA subject for the first time. In 2012 there were a further 7 teachers who encountered the subject for the first time, while the 6 teachers who had who had 'moved up' with their students to the 6th grade were having to teach that particular syllabus for the first time. This weekly encountering of the 'new' placed professional demands on them that they were at times unwilling or unable to meet. In the absence of any systematic professional development courses and the often very limited pre-class preparation time, the homeroom teachers relied on the *Hi Friends* teachers' guide and the experience and/or initiative of the ALT.

In addition to the demands of the new subject, the homeroom teachers were also required to teach with a foreigner whose knowledge of Japanese primary education was based almost entirely on her or his limited experience of a single curricular subject. Mahoney (2004) emphasizes how team-teaching is the coming together of two disparate cultures in the Japanese classroom, often representing different approaches to teaching and learning.

(2) Language sensitization and cognitive challenge

The FLA classes contributed to the development of children's personal and social learning, and to the development of their intercultural understanding, and communicative skills. However, some children exhibited frustration at the excessive repetition of content, lack of challenging activities, limited opportunities for practicing and expanding upon their L2 knowledge, and the absence of literacy instruction. This highlights the unmet challenges of effective student differentiation (fast and slow learners, high and low English proficiency), the need to incorporate strategies for student progression, and maintaining student motivation at the beginner level. The latter aspect is a particular issue for 11 and 12 year olds where the cognitive demands made upon them in other subjects are not matched in the FLA class.

There are solid arguments for raising language awareness and inculcating positive motivation in young students (for a comprehensive overview see Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006), but less convincing are the reasons for making it the overriding aim of FLA. Pinter (2011) notes that, while it is suitable for 5 and 6 year olds to concentrate on language awareness games and activities, students at the upper end of primary school invariably find such activities childish and do not conform to what they consider learning. Comparisons with other subjects in elementary school curriculum further highlight this pedagogical gap. The cognitive demands subjects like Japanese, maths, and

science make on students' abilities strongly suggests that they are mentally capable of doing more in the English classroom than simply games and oral based activities.

(3) Evaluating policy implementation

The absence of any form of formal assessment of FLA in public elementary schools means there is a corresponding lack of empirical evidence on progression and learning outcomes. This also affects the continuation of language learning in secondary school. As a non-academic subject on the curriculum, elementary schools are not required to include the subject on the student evaluation reports they have to provide to junior high schools. In this study none of the teachers carried out any form of formal assessment, nor reported meeting with junior high school teachers to discuss students' English ability.

Although beyond the immediate scope of this present research, studies suggest that the lack of evidential learning outcomes often results in junior high schools commencing English education at the absolute beginner level again in order to 'smooth out' individual differences in student ability (Benesse, 2012). Studies have also shown a sharp drop in student motivation after the first year of junior high school English (MEXT, 2014a) and this decline continues as the students progress through school (MEXT, 2016d). This is in keeping with international findings that report a similar gap in motivational levels between primary and secondary schooling (Hayes, 2014; Garton *et al.*, 2011).

The effect of this implicit policy of non-evaluation is that the teachers in this study have no objective means of determining whether their teaching actually 'works' - do students successfully grasp the basics of limited English language oral communication, and develop a positive attitude towards future language learning? The Course of Study does not provide any plausible means of answering these questions.

9.3 Contribution of the study

Although a substantial body of research has examined various aspects of early English language learning in different countries and contexts around the world (Butler, 2015; Enever, 2015; Copland *et al.*, 2014; Rixon, 2013; Garton, *et al.*, 2011; Pinter, 2011), there have been very few longitudinal ethnographic accounts of policy implementation, particularly in the foreign language classroom at the primary level (Pinter, 2011). Furthermore, many previous studies have concerned themselves with pedagogical issues in relation to classroom practices, while leaving under-examined the critical interaction between macro (national) and micro (local) contexts that *a priori* determines much of how educational policy is implemented (Menken & Garcia, 2010).

In the particular case of Japan much of the research examining the implementation of the new FLA subject in elementary schools has been small-scale studies investigating specific instances of teacher pedagogy (Butler, 2015), instructional approaches (Butler & Inoi, 2005), learner behaviour

(Honna & Takeshita, 2014), student motivation (Machida & Walsh, 2014), and issues surrounding team-teaching with ‘native speaker’ assistant language teachers (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2013). There have been few holistic approaches that incorporate the discursive, contextual, and sociocultural factors that influence language-in-education policy implementation and how these factors manifest themselves in elementary school classrooms.

This dissertation both identifies this gap and attempts to go some way towards filling it by examining in detail the enacted classroom practices in four public elementary schools in northern Japan using a combination of critical discourse analysis and ethnographic qualitative research (Bouchard, 2017; Barakos, 2016; Johnson, 2016; 2011; Johnson & Ricento, 2013). The study provides a much needed (Enever, 2016) ‘rich description’ of how state educational policy for primary foreign language learning is enacted in public schools. Through a comprehensive qualitative approach over a two-year period it foregrounds the often ‘hidden’ or ‘under researched’ structural, discursive, and individual variables that impact on policy implementation.

Specifically, this research has revealed how curricular status influences both preparation and instruction time, with busy homeroom teachers according FLA a low priority in their professional schedules. In addition, the lack of literacy instruction affects opportunities for scaffolding language learning in the classroom, necessitating the use of Japanese and having a detrimental outcome on students’ phonological development in English. The omission of reading and writing also severely limits opportunities for self-study outside of the classroom and hinders the retention and reuse of learned oral vocabulary during the week-long gap between classes.

Taking a step back from the classroom, this study has shown how effective team-teaching is predicated on personality, experience, common linguistic abilities, and discursively imposed notions of effective pedagogy that uncritically equates the classroom presence of a native speaker with professional practice.

There are also related issues concerning equity and resource provision. The devolvement of autonomy to local municipalities - ostensibly enabling them to implement the Course of Study in accordance with their ‘actual circumstances’ (Section III, 1(5), MEXT, 2009b) - deliberately elides issues of resource provision and state financial aid.

This research also uncovered contestations and contradictions in how different instances of policy were formulated. In line with previous studies (Hashimoto, 2011; Liddicoat, 2007; Kubota, 2002), this study has critically examined FLA in relation to the ideological concept of *kokusaisa*, whereby English education is used as a means to project Japanese cultures and values on to a foreign world. Conversely, this study has also problematized the use of a ‘foreign’ developed instructional approach, communicative language teaching (CLT), within Japanese elementary schools. Both of these oppositional forces highlight how primary foreign language education in Japan is more than just about learning the English language; it encompasses issues of identity, both ideological (at the national level) and professional (the individual teacher), and the contradictions they foment.

The decision to introduce FLA in the primary curriculum must also be weighed against the costs to other components of the school curriculum. The financial and human resources spent on FLA provision could potentially have been spent on enhanced special support classes for intellectually disadvantaged learners, or comprehensive provision of L2 Japanese language instruction to the increasing number of immigrant children attending public schools across the country.

Finally, this dissertation also makes a number of methodological contributions to the literature in undertaking sustained observational research in foreign classrooms. It has emphasized the importance of the researchers 'tacit' knowledge in undertaking an ethnography. The accumulation of such personal, experiential knowledge is not something that can be verifiably explained in a literature review, but nevertheless was crucial to the success of this ethnographic study. Access to the schools, initiating and maintaining relationships with the teachers and other participants, ethical considerations, and the fluid projection of my researcher positionality all depended on my inductive use of sociocultural knowledge gained from my personal and professional experiences in Japan. In addition, the conduct of much of my research was in Japanese which had important, though often under theorized, implications for both data collection and analysis.

9.4 Implications of the research

This examination of language policy implementation strongly suggests that more exacting critical insights are needed into the political, economic, and social factors that are driving the age of initial English foreign language education, both public and private, ever lower. Research studies from the fields of EFL and SLA consistently undermine the popular belief that 'earlier is better'; indicators of the supposed benefits of an early start are equivocal at best and heavily dependent on the quality and quantity of instructional provision (Pfenninger and Singleton, 2017). Yet, the Japanese government, in line with many state policy makers around the world (Rixon, 2013; Garton *et al.*, 2011), mandate such programs regardless. Much of TEYL research seems to accept this as a given and propose pedagogical approaches that can improve instructional practice, learner motivation, and language outcomes while highlighting the need for better trained teachers (Hayes, 2014). The research emphasis tends to be on the English classroom, conceptualizing it both as a source of problematic practice and an opportunity for potential solutions.

Our focus needs to be broader. As this study has shown, much of what occurs in the classroom has already been greatly circumscribed by *a priori* decisions about instructional time, methodology, materials, personnel, and evaluation. Too often the focus has been on how these decisions manifest themselves in the FLA classroom (Butler, 2015) rather than investigating the 'who' and 'why' of policy decision-making.

To effectively investigate these issues involves a range of methodological approaches that move beyond research settings bounded by the four walls of the classroom. This study has proposed

one such method involving a combination of critical discourse analysis and an ethnographic approach to language policy. Undertaking such research is undoubtedly challenging, but if we persist on pursuing methodological ‘easy’ small-scale surveys and classroom observations, then we are going to arrive at apolitical ‘easy’ answers while leaving larger themes of educational fairness and social inequality unexplored.

9.5 Practical applications of the study

It is easy to find fault with the current program of FLA, particularly in its deliberate ambiguity towards defining measurable learning outcomes for students. Less easy to do though is to provide workable solutions. Obvious demands for greater resources, more qualified teachers, better pre- and in-service training, are matched by calls for similar provisions for other subjects in the curriculum along with greater investment in school facilities, particularly in information technology. These competing claims have to be reconciled somehow which potentially involves some form of compromise across the curriculum.

Compromise though shouldn’t constrain possibility. The issue then is to consider what can be done given present circumstances rather than what could be done under ideal circumstances. One such opportunity, requiring little in the way of language ability or specific training, would be to integrate the FLA course with other subjects across the curriculum. Unlike the specialized academic English courses at the secondary level, the Japanese elementary school is institutionally structured to facilitate the natural diffusion of English learning across the whole curriculum and indeed, into most aspects of non-academic school life too. Within her classroom the homeroom teacher could conduct many of the usual routines such as taking attendance or assigning cleaning chores in English. At a more academic level English could be easily incorporated in other subjects such as numbers and calculations in maths, nomenclature in science, geographical features in social studies, and so on (for details, see Edelenbos *et al.*, 2006). Such an approach could draw upon various initiatives developed under the auspices of Content and Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) with an emphasis on developing teachers’ skills in mediating between languages, curriculum content and the development of inquiry and research skills in children (Arnold and Rixon, 2008). None of this requires expertise in English, but rather a willingness to both instigate and maintain such approaches so that the students become used to such linguistic transference and eventually consider them an integral part of their entire learning experience at school. As Sharpe rightly notes, ‘[students] are at an age to be taken along by a committed and enthusiastic presentation without the vulnerable self-consciousness of adolescents. The foreign language is in this way ‘normalized’ (2001: 16).

Such normalization is particularly apposite in Japan where English, though compulsory, lacks the academic ‘value’ of the other formally assessed subjects in the curriculum. There is a pedagogical case to be made for English ‘attaching’ itself to these subjects through a cross-curricular approach, thereby avoiding the unfortunate impression that learning the language is ‘play time’.

There is a caveat though that needs to be attached to such cross-curriculum integration; in of itself such an approach does not constitute teaching English. Rather it sensitizes students to using English as a means of engaging with different aspects of their worlds, in the same way as they do through Japanese. While the integration of content subjects with language learning may help students' English ability, there is still a need for systematically planned and sustained course of language instruction which, in tandem with a cross-curriculum approach, can potentially raise students' motivation and ultimately their levels of achievement. This in turn requires the sufficient allocation of resources at the national policy level, particularly in the provision of pre-service and in-service teacher training.

9.6 Limitations of the study

Several limitations must be mentioned for the present study. Firstly, the study was necessarily local and small-scale, involving four schools in Hokkaido which means the potential for generalizing from the findings of this study is limited. In addition, the school settings were my imposed research boundaries on the case studies. Supplementary, out of school English language learning by the students could not be covered. Similarly, professional constraints meant that I could not spend extended durations in the schools in order to better understand how FLA 'fitted' into teachers' working days, and the effects of both curricular and ex-curricular demands on their time.

Secondly, much of my data collection and analysis depended on my field notes which could leave the findings susceptible to researcher bias and subjective interpretation. I have tried to counter this by continuously showing the workings of my study. A further methodological issue is the use of Japanese in my formal and informal interviews. My Japanese language ability is strong but not perfect, and there may well be errors of translation which have affected the data. In addition, the use of audio-visual recording methods would have greatly aided observational recall while permitting more precise examinations of such issues as team-teaching roles, classroom language, and instructional approaches. It must also be noted that, as with all ethnographic studies where the researcher is the principle instrument of data collection, what I observed and accorded importance too may well be differently realized by a different observer.

Finally, I was not in a position to undertake research into the higher levels of language policy implementation. Interviews with local and prefectural boards of education, along with officials from MEXT would undoubtedly have shed light on a number of important issues, but as a solo researcher subject to various constraints on my fieldwork, I could not effectively pursue all avenues of potential research.

9.7 Personal reflection

Although not addressed in the main body of this thesis, throughout my research was I very conscious of the need for reciprocity, to give something back to those who were, both willing and unwilling, assisting me. While two years may represent a significant investment in my research project, it was also a two-year imposition on the generosity, time, and patience of the homeroom teachers, their students and the ALTs. The benefits that they could directly derive from this imposition are limited. The end product of my research is this dissertation; however, a 70,000 word manuscript written in convoluted academic English would, I strongly suspect, be of minimal interest or benefit to any of the participants.

I therefore sought other ways to repay my debt. Most obviously I volunteered as an ALT at Midori over the two years of my research; and in Aoi I helped organize the special project which culminated in my visiting an Irish primary school to deliver the Aoi students' video letters and record the Irish students' reactions. In Chairō and Kiirō such opportunities were more limited but when called upon I would engage in the class as best I could.

After the fieldwork my reciprocity has extended to running annual training courses for regional elementary school teachers, and my provision of specialist TEYL courses for teachers renewing their teaching licenses. My research has made me aware of how time and geography limit such opportunities for many teachers working in Hokkaido, and that I am in a position, however incidental, to remedy that.

My research has also made me conscious of the inequality inherent in English education in Japan and how this has potentially far-reaching consequences for children's futures. Working within the field of applied linguistics, I am convinced that we must give far greater emphasis to the 'applied' part of that designation. It is not enough to research a problem; one must take an active role in solving it too.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: 2008 Course of Study for elementary school. Chapter 4: Foreign Language Activities (official English language version).

I. OVERALL OBJECTIVE

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.

II. CONTENT

[Grade 5 and Grade 6]

1. Instruction should be given on the following items in order to help pupils actively engage in communication in a foreign language:

- To experience the joy of communication in the foreign language.
- To actively listen to and speak in the foreign language.
- To learn the importance of verbal communication.

2. Instruction should be given on the following items in order to deepen the experiential understanding of the languages and cultures of Japan and foreign countries:

- (1) To become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of the foreign language, to learn its differences from the Japanese language, and to be aware of the interesting aspects of language and its richness.
- (2) To learn the differences in ways of living, customs and events between Japan and foreign countries and to be aware of various points of view and ways of thinking.
- (3) To experience communication with people of different cultures and to deepen the understanding of culture.

III. LESSON PLAN DESIGN AND HANDLING THE CONTENT

1. In designing the syllabus, consideration should be given to the following:

- (1) In principle English should be selected for foreign language activities.
- (2) Taking into account the circumstances of pupils and the local community, each individual school should establish objectives of foreign language activities for each grade in an appropriate manner and work to realize them over the period of two school years.
- (3) With respect to the instruction on the content mainly concerning 1 language and culture listed in Subsection II-2, teachers should make them link with the content mainly concerning

communication listed in Subsection II-1. In doing so, teachers should try to have pupils understand language and culture experientially, avoiding giving too detailed explanations or engaging pupils in rote learning.

(4) The instruction on the content and activities should be in line with pupils' interest. Effort should be made to increase the effectiveness of teaching by, for example, taking advantage of what pupils have learned in other subjects, such as the Japanese language, music and arts and handicrafts.

(5) Homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities should make teaching programs and conduct lessons. Effort should be made to get more people involved in lessons by inviting native speakers of the foreign language or by seeking cooperation from local people who are proficient in the foreign language, depending on the circumstances of the local community.

(6) When dealing with sounds, teachers should make active use of audio-visual materials such as CDs and DVDs. The audio-visual materials should be selected according to the actual circumstances of the pupils, school and local community.

(7) Based on the objectives of moral education listed in Subsections I and II of Chapter 1 "General Provisions" and in Subsection I of Chapter 3 "Moral Education", instruction concerning the content listed in Subsection II of Chapter 3 "Moral Education" should be given appropriately. The instruction should be in accordance with the characteristics of foreign language activities and should be related to the period for moral education.

2. In the handling of the content listed in Subsection II, consideration should be given to the following:

(1) Consideration should be given to the following points when giving instruction over the period of two school years:

- When giving pupils opportunities to experience communication in the foreign language, teachers should select appropriate expressions, giving consideration to the developmental stages of the pupils and set communication situations familiar to them.
- When giving pupils opportunities to experience communication in the foreign language, teachers should focus on the foreign language sounds and use letters of the alphabet and words as supplementary tools for oral communication, in effort not to give too much burden to pupils.
- Since non-verbal communication is also an essential means of communication, teachers should adopt gestures etc. and help pupils understand their functions.
- Teachers should enable pupils to deepen their understanding not only of the foreign language and culture, but also of the Japanese language and culture through foreign language activities.

- When giving pupils opportunities to experience communication in the foreign language, teachers should mainly set the communication situations and functions listed in the following examples:

[Examples of Communication Situations]

(a) Situations where fixed expressions are often used:

- Greeting
- Self-introduction
- Shopping
- Having meals
- Asking and giving directions etc.

(b) Situations that are likely to occur in pupils' lives

- Home life
- Learning and activities at school
- Local events
- Childhood play etc.

[Examples of Functions of Communication]

- (a) Improving the relationship with a communication partner
- (b) Expressing emotions
- (c) Communicating facts
- (d) Expressing opinions and intentions
- (e) Stimulating a communication partner into action

(2) Consideration should be given to the following points when giving instruction to each grade, taking the learning level of pupils into account:

Activities in Grade 5

Considering that pupils learn the foreign language for the first time, teachers should introduce basic expressions about familiar things and events and engage pupils in communication activities where they experience interactions with one another. Teachers should engage pupils mainly in the activities where the pupils may become familiar with the foreign language or in the activities which are related to their daily lives or school lives.

Activities in Grade 6

Based on the learning in Grade 5, teachers should engage pupils in communication activities, focused on interactions with one another, including intercultural exchange activities, in addition to activities related to pupils' daily lives or school lives.

Appendix 2: Classroom observation sheet

		Comments
Date		
School		
Scheduled events		
Class		
Teacher		
ALT		
Pre-class meeting: location duration language		
Written lesson plan		
Adherence/deviation from LP		
Post-class meeting location duration language		
Other Attendees		
Room		
Seats		
Tables		
No. of Students		
Students sitting / standing		
Single / paired / groups		
Class start time		
Class end time		
Language spoken: Greeting Introduction Activity explanation During activity Class management End of class		
Language spoken: Teacher ALT Students Teacher - ALT Teacher - students ALT - students		

Location of HRT		
Location of ALT		
HRT during class		
ALT during class		
HRT comments on class		
ALT comments on class		

Activity	Duration	HRT	ALT 1	ALT 2

Materials	Studs	HRT	ALT	Notes
Eligo Note				
Notebook				
Pencil				
Crayons				
Flashcards				
CD				
TV				
Computer				
OHP				
Photos				
Other				

Language skills	Individual	Pair	Choral	Interview	Move around
Speaking					
Listening					
Writing					
Reading					

Appendix 3: Complete list of classroom observations.

Midori Elementary School

Sequence of visits	Year	Month	Day	5th grade classes observed	6th grade classes observed
1	2011	April	21	1	1
2	2011	May	12	1	1
3	2011	May	19	1	1
4	2011	June	2	1	1
5	2011	June	16	1	1
6	2011	June	30	1	1
7	2011	July	21	1	1
8	2011	September	1	-	1
9	2011	September	22	1	1
10	2011	October	6	1	1
11	2011	October	19	1	1
12	2011	November	10	1	1
13	2012	January	19	1	1
14	2012	February	2	1	1
15	2012	February	16	1	1
16	2012	March	3	1	1
17	2012	April	26	1	1
18	2012	May	17	1	1
19	2012	May	31	1	1
20	2012	June	14	1	1
21	2012	June	28	1	1
22	2012	July	12	1	1
23	2012	August	22	1	1
24	2012	August	30	1	1
25	2012	September	13	1	1
26	2012	September	27	1	1
27	2012	October	11	1	1
28	2012	October	25	1	1

Sequence of visits	Year	Month	Day	5th grade classes observed	6th grade classes observed
29	2012	November	22	1	1
30	2012	December	6	1	1
31	2013	January	17	1	1
32	2013	January	31	1	1
33	2013	February	21	1	1
34	2013	March	14	1	1

Aoi Elementary School

Sequence of visits	Year	Month	Day	5th grade classes observed	6th grade classes observed
1	2011	April	15	2	2
2	2011	May	20	2	2
3	2011	June	10	2	2
4	2011	July	15	2	1
5	2011	September	16	2	2
6	2011	October	7	2	2
7	2011	October	28	2	2
8	2011	November	15	2	2
9	2012	February	17	2	2
10	2012	March	14	2	2
11	2012	May	18	2	2
12	2012	June	1	2	2
13	2012	June	22	2	2
14	2012	July	13	2	2
15	2012	September	21	2	2
16	2012	October	5	2	2
17	2012	October	26	2	2
18	2013	February	1	2	2
19	2013	March	11	2	2

Chairo Elementary School

Sequence of visits	Year	Month	Day	5th grade classes observed	6th grade classes observed
1	2011	April	22	2	2
2	2011	May	26	2	2
3	2011	July	1	2	2
4	2011	July	14	2	2
5	2011	September	9	2	2
6	2011	October	27	2	2
7	2011	November	17	2	2
8	2011	January	26	2	2
9	2012	March	8	2	2
10	2012	June	18	2	2

Chairo Elementary School

Sequence of visits	Year	Month	Day	5th grade classes observed	6th grade classes observed
1	2011	April	28	1	1
2	2011	May	13	1	1
3	2011	June	24	1	1
4	2011	July	4	1	1
5	2011	September	20	1	1
6	2011	October	21	1	1
7	2011	November	11	1	1
8	2012	March	2	1	1
9	2012	June	15	1	1
10	2012	September	28	1	1
11	2012	October	19	1	1
12	2012	November	2	1	1

Sequence of visits	Year	Month	Day	5th grade classes observed	6th grade classes observed
13	2012	December	21	1	1
14	2013	February	8	1	1
15	2013	February	22	1	1
16	2013	March	1	1	1

Appendix 4: Semi-structured interview guide.

1: Teaching English

- experience
- qualifications
- professional development
- approaches
- place in the elementary school curriculum
- planning
- time

2: Hi Friends textbook

- syllabus
- units
- textbook
- teachers' guide
- audio
- interactive TV
- supplementary materials
- problems / issues

3: Students

- motivation
- learning styles
- English class preferences
- difficulties

4: ALT

- team-teaching
- planning
- classroom roles
- Japanese language ability
- personality
- professionalism
- interaction with students

5: Classroom activities

- speaking
- listening
- songs and chants
- games / activities
- reading and writing

- self-produced activities
- homework

6: Course of study

- have read it?
- compared to other subjects
- perceived importance
- need for evaluation/assessment
- need for literacy teaching

7: English language skills

- English language qualification?
- motivation to learn English
- necessary English ability for FLA class
- self-study?

8: Overall opinion

- good / bad points of FLA course
- recommend any changes
- other thoughts or opinions

Appendix 5: Transcripts of interview extracts.

Extract 1

Interviewee: S. sensi, Aoi elementary school, 5th grade homeroom teacher

Date: April 3rd, 2013

Time: 14:45

Location: Aoi elementary school, English room

Audio file: VN810053.MP3

Duration: 44:42

Link to: Appendix 4 (Semi-structured interview sheet).

Focus of extract: English language teaching qualifications and professional development opportunities.

	Japanese	English
BG	<i>Gaikokugo katsudo no sensei toshite, kotoshi wa sanneni mei desu ka.</i>	This is your third year teaching foreign language activities.
S	<i>Koko no gakkō desu ka.</i>	At this school?
BG	<i>So.</i>	Yes.
S	<i>So desu.</i>	Yes, it is.
BG	<i>Sono mae ha?</i>	Before that?
S	<i>Sono mae wa to chigau gakkō de..</i>	Before that I was teaching at a different school ...
BG	<i>Eigo onaji youna jugyō desu ka?</i>	Teaching a similar type of English class?
S	<i>Eigo dake o chigau gakunen ni oshiete tokoro ga arimasu.</i>	I was only teaching English for different classes [grades].
BG	<i>Hon gaku wa go roku nensei o hajimete, moshikashitara, hisshu kamoku koto ni narimashita kara ...</i>	At this school you started teaching 5 th and 6 th grade classes when [foreign language activities] became compulsory?
S	<i>So desu.</i>	Yes, that's correct.
BG	<i>Hon gaku dake?</i>	Only at this school?
S	<i>So desu. Sono mae ha chugakunen teigakunen deshita ka.</i>	Yes. before that I taught the middle and lower grades.
BG	<i>So desu, hai.</i>	I see.
S	<i>Demo, tatoeba, watashi ga sannensei no tannin datte dakedo, go nensei, rokunensei eigo jikan dake ni shucho shite imasu.</i>	For example, when I was the third-grade homeroom teacher I would teach English to the 5 th and 6 th grade classes.
BG	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.
S	<i>Doshiteka to iu to, tannin no sensei ga yaranai kara to iute,</i>	The reason was the homeroom teacher couldn't do it ...

BG	<i>Yaranai ka yaritakunakata?</i>	Couldn't do it or wouldn't do it?
S	<i>Do yatte ii ka wakaranai kara, yatte kudasai.</i>	... didn't know how to teach the class so I was asked to do it.
BG	<i>Hai, hai.</i>	Yes.
S	<i>Iuwarete itte mashita.</i>	So I was told.
BG	<i>So desu ga. Demo sensei wa, chotto, moushiwake gozaimasen kojintekina shitsumon to omoimasu...</i>	I see. But for you, forgive me this could be a personal question ...
S	<i>Ii desu.</i>	That's fine.
BG	<i>Eigo no shikaku ka eigo no kyoiku shikaku, tatoeba TOEIC toka ...</i>	English teaching qualifications or English language qualifications, for example TOEIC ...
S	<i>So iu no wa nai desukedo, chugakko no eigo no nishu to iu menkyo o motte imasu.</i>	I don't have any of those. I do have a teaching license for teaching junior high school English.
BG	<i>Dakara hon gaku mo mai kai mai kai iriai, kocho sensei ka kyoto sensei ga irai shite imasu.</i>	Therefore, everytime you are asked by the principal or the vice-principal [to teach English]?
S	<i>Hai, so desu.</i>	Yes, that's correct.
BG	<i>Chugakko no eigo menkyo demo.</i>	But you have a junior high school English license ...
S	<i>Shaberanai kara.</i>	But I can't speak [English].
BG	<i>Iie so de wa nai.</i>	No, no that's not the case at all.
S	<i>Chugakko de wa chotto dekinai.</i>	I can't teach at junior high school.
BG	<i>So desu ka.</i>	Really.
S	<i>Jozui jenai. Hanasu toki jisshin ga nai. Yatta kota ga nai.</i>	I am not good at English. I have no confidence when I speak English. I have never done it.
BG	<i>So de wa nai sensei.</i>	That's not so.
S	<i>Yoi eigo no sensei to omoinei.</i>	I don't think I am a very good teacher of English.
BG	<i>Naze nara chugakko eigo menkyou o torimashita ka.</i>	Why did you obtain an English teacher's license for junior high school?
S	<i>Eto, daigaku jidai wa eigo benkyo suru suki datte, shogakko to issho ni menkyo torita node chigau taiin o totte, benkyo shimashita.</i>	Well, at university I liked studying English and I could use the course credit for my license for elementary school teaching.

BG	<i>Hokkaido kyoiku daigaku?</i>	Did you study at Hokkaido University of Education?
S	<i>So desu ne.</i>	Yes, I did.
BG	<i>Sono goro wa eigo no jugyo ga arimashita.</i>	And were there English classes then?
S	<i>Arimashita.</i>	Yes, there were.
BG	<i>Demo, jido eigo kyoin no semontekina jugyo jenai...</i>	But there weren't any specialized classes about English for young learners ...
S	<i>Arimasen deshita. Sono toki wa mada shogakko de gaikokugo wa nakatta node, mattaku nai desu.</i>	No, there weren't any at all. Because at that time there was no foreign language [classes] in elementary school.
BG	<i>Sogotekina eigo dake?</i>	So, only general English courses?
S	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.
BG	<i>Sono ato shogakko sensei ni natte kara ima made ni, tatoeba kenkyukai toka jido eigo koza ni sanku shita kota ga arimasu ka.</i>	From when you became an elementary school teacher to now, have you participated in research conferences or courses on English for young learners?
S	<i>Hai, arimasu.</i>	Yes, I have.
BG	<i>Sore ha Muroran-shi no kyoikuinkai ga kaisai shimashita ka.</i>	Were these organized by the Muroran board of education?
S	<i>Muroran-shi dake jenakute, Sapporo-shi ni mo ikimashita.</i>	Not only Muroran, I also went to Sapporo.
BG	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.
S	<i>Ato, Tomakomai shi de nanika yarimashita.</i>	Also, there was something in Tomakomai.
BG	<i>Watashi mo sanku shimashita.</i>	I attended that as well.
S	<i>Ato mo monbusho no hitotachoi ga Tomakomai ni kuru no de, atsumatte kudasai. So iu kenkyukai benkyukai ga arimashita.</i>	Also, officials from the Ministry of Education came to Tomakomai and we were told to attend. Those sort of research conferences and study workshops.
BG	<i>Nen ni dona gurai sanku shimasu ka. Ni kai, san kai gurai.</i>	In a year how many times would you attend? Two or three times?
S	<i>Gaikokugo wa hajimata toshi wa kekko arimashita. Nan kai daro na. Yon kai gurai.</i>	When the foreign language activities course first started there were many events. How many? About four.
BG	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.
		In that year I went to about four events.

S	<i>Ichi nen ni yon kai gurai dekakimashita.</i>	For example, last year...
BG	<i>Tatoeba kyonen wa ...</i>	I attended nothing last year.
S	<i>Kyonen wa nai.</i>	Really.
BG	<i>So desu ka.</i>	Yes.
S	<i>Hai, nai desu.</i>	And that was because ...
BG	<i>Sore wa ...</i>	Last year the city organized some study workshops which included foreign language activities. I went around two times.
S	<i>Kyonene wa shikyoken, shi no senseigata no benkyokai wa gaikokugo ga haite iru node, sore de ni kai gurai benkyo shimashita.</i>	
BG	<i>Kesa, marrepu shogakko de onaji mendan shimashita. Date shi kenkyukai de sensei ga sanko shimashita. Demo shi no kenkyukai de wa eigo ha chugakko yona koza dake desu ga, amari imi ga nakata to iumashita.</i>	This morning I conducted a similar interview in Marrepu. And the teacher had participated in research meeting organized by Date city. However, the English workshop was intended for junior high school teachers and she didn't think it was very useful.
S	<i>Muroran-shi de wa shogakko de arimasu.</i>	In Muroran we have a [English] workshop for elementary school teachers.
BG	<i>Date wa sho chu issho, demo hotondo no sensei wa chugakko no sensei.</i>	In Date it is for both elementary and junior high school teachers, but most teachers are junior high school teachers.
S	<i>So desu ga. Ichi nen mai wa issho datta, sho chu, dakedo, shogakko no sensei ni totte wa shogakko dake no benkyo o shitai node, wakareta desu, sho to chu. Ima wa shogakko dake senmon de dekimasu.</i>	Really. In the first year it was the same, for both elementary and junior high school teachers, but the elementary school teachers wanted their own study workshop, so it was split. So now you can attend a specific study workshop for elementary school teachers.
BG	<i>Sono shi ga kaisai kenkyukai wa nen ni ikai gurai?</i>	This workshop organized by the city, how many times a year is it held?
S	<i>Ookina jugyo wa ikai. Ato wa, sono jugyo no tame ni naka benkyokai happyokai ga aru.</i>	For the big workshop once a year. And there are other smaller workshops preceding it.
BG	<i>Sore wa gimu koto desu ka. Shi no benkyokai o shusseki shinakareba naranai desu ka. Shi de kisoku ga arimasu.</i>	Is it compulsory? Do you have to attend the city's study workshop? Is it a city rule?
S	<i>Kisoku ga arimasu.</i>	It's a rule.
BG	<i>Sensei no baai ha, kotoshi roku nensei no tannin koto ni narimashita kara, shi no kenkyukai de, gaikokugo katsudo dake</i>	In your case you became a homeroom teacher for the 6 th grade class this year. At the city's study workshop if, at the same

	<i>jenakute, doji ni kokugo toka tsugaku no koza mo areba ...</i>	time, there are courses on Japanese teaching or mathematics...
S	<i>Doji ni aru keredo, gaikokugo ni haite imasu.</i>	There are courses on at the same time, but I attend the foreign language course.
BG	<i>So desu ka.</i>	Really.
S	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.

Extract 2**Interviewee:** A. sensi, Midori elementary school, 6th grade homeroom teacher**Date:** April 3rd, 2013**Time:** 9:20**Location:** Midori elementary school, 5th grade classroom**Audio file:** VN810051.MP3**Duration:** 1:43:38**Link to:** Appendix 4 (Semi-structured interview sheet).**Focus of extract:** English language teaching qualifications and professional development opportunities.

	Japanese	English
A	<i>Chotto hanashi o tsureru ...</i>	To change the subject ...
BG	<i>Ii, ii, hai dozo.</i>	Yes, please.
A	<i>Kogakunen o hazurete, nani ga rakute, gaikokugo ga naku naru koto ga raku.</i>	Leaving aside the higher grade classes, not having to teach foreign languages would be easier.
BG	<i>Oh, so! Doshite?</i>	Really! Why?
A	<i>Yappari, sono shu ni kai no ichi jikan han no junbi wa taihen datta.</i>	Well, the twice weekly one hour and a half preparation is tough.
BG	<i>'Taihen' to iu no imi wa?</i>	What do you mean by 'tough'?
A	<i>Nanka imi ga aru no kana. So datte, tatoeba uchi wa shidoan o tsukuru hokano tokoro wa tsukete inai ...</i>	What do I mean? Well, in our school we have to make a lesson plan but other schools don't have to ...
BG	<i>Hai, hai.</i>	Yes.
A	<i>... bara bara de sho. Yarigata wa bara bara.</i>	... it's disorganized. The methods are disorganized.
BG	<i>Hai, kyotsu no seido ga nai.</i>	Yes, there's no common policy.
A	<i>Kono ichi jikan han wa ne, imi ga aru no ka. Yappari taihenna futan, ma okigata tashika ni.</i>	I wonder if there is any real meaning to this hour and a half. It's definitely a big burden.
BG	<i>'Imi ga aru' to iu no wa, sensei no tachiba ka gakusei no tachiba?</i>	A 'real meaning' for teachers or for students?
A	<i>Ryoho.</i>	Both.
BG	<i>Ryoho?</i>	Both?
A	<i>Dakara ALT hito ga main oshiete iru to ittara, tanjun ni futan ga heru to iu no koto ga yorokubu sensei ga iru to omou. Atashi mo sochi no ho ga raku kana to issho to</i>	If the ALT is the main teacher then the burden is lessened and some teachers will be happy about that. I used to think that before. But, if I leave everything [to the

	<i>omoimashita. Dakedo zenbun maketeshimau to jibun wa kaiwa no soto ni nachau kara ...</i>	ALT], then I am removed from the class ...
BG	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes.
A	<i>... sotogawa ne, ni nachau kara wakanakunaru. Sore wa tannin ni toshite yappari okashii. Sanjugo shu ga aru kara uchigawa ni hairu toshite, yappari, jibun ga nantoka naranai to ii desu.</i>	... I am outside and I don't know what's going on. And for a homeroom teacher that's definitely abnormal. There are thirty-five weeks and being involved is better.
BG	<i>Hai, hai.</i>	Yes, yes.
A	<i>Demo ichijikan han gaikokugo no junbi o suru dattara, ichijikan han sansu no junbi no ho ga ii no kana.</i>	But, preparing for an hour and a half, if that's the case, it's better to spend the time preparing for maths.
BG	<i>Wakaru, hai.</i>	I understand.
A	<i>Dakedo, gaikokugo ga jugyo jenai to ka omoshirokunai so jenakute, kyoka jenai de sho, gaikokugo ...</i>	It's not that foreign language is not a class or not interesting, but it's not an academic class.
BG	<i>Hai, hai.</i>	Yes?
A	<i>... dakara do sureba ii kana?</i>	Therefore, is it time well spent?
BG	<i>Do desho?</i>	I wonder?
A	<i>Demo, jubun mo amari narete nai, tokui no ishiki ga aru nihonjin to iu ne, dakara yokei dokidoki shinagara atashi wa tekitori igakanei eigo de mo iutarra, chigau yo to kureba, ALT ga iutarra, sugu ni chigaimasu to iute kureru, tetsudate kara, yariyasui yatekuru, dakeredemo, amari pa pa pa pa sensei no seikakujo o iuenai hito mo iru, ano gaikokugo tanto suru tannin jitai ga sore ga amari iuenai hito ga iru. Dattara osoroku tsurai, monosugoi tsurai, jugyo de wa so to omou.</i>	But I am not yet used to the class, I am not a Japanese person particularly good [at English], so I teach the class apprehensively and if I don't use the correct English, if the ALT says that's different, that helps me, makes it easier for me. But some teachers can't speak [English] confidently and don't want to be in charge of foreign language classes. In such cases its very difficult, incredibly difficult.
BG	<i>Jugyo toku ni shogakko go roku nensei no baai, dona yona eigo ga hitsuyo to omoimasu ka.</i>	In the class, especially for 5 th and 6 th grades in elementary school, what level of English is necessary?
A	<i>Eigo ga hitsuyo nain jenakute, ah Eigo ...</i>	It's not that English is not necessary ...
BG	<i>Sensei no eigo noryoku wa dono gurai?</i>	What is your English ability?
A	<i>Ah, atashi? Sensei no eigo noryoku?</i>	Me? What's my English ability?
BG	<i>Hai, hitsuyosei. Dona gurai ga hitsuyo to omoimasu ka?</i>	Yes, what English ability do you think you need?
	<i>Shiji daseru gurai ga shitai desu.</i>	I'd like to be able to instruct in English.

A		
BG	<i>So desu ka. Demo so suru to gakusei ga wakaru ka do ka? Wakarani to omoimasu. Tatoeba pera pera namara Eigo o hanishitara gakusei ga rikai dekinai.</i>	Really. But if you did that would the students understand. I don't think they would. For example, if you spoke in fluent English they wouldn't understand you.
A	<i>So ka. Hitsuyonai to iu koto?</i>	Ah, I see. So, it's unnecessary?
BG	<i>Hitsuyonai jenai. Demo, sono umai pera pera ...</i>	It's not unnecessary. But to be fluent ...
A	<i>Noreraru ga hitsuyo jenai.</i>	You don't have to be.
BG	<i>Jenai to omoimasu. Sensei dake jenakute hokana sensei mo sono iken, sono kangaegata ga arimasu. Demo jissai ha, tatoeba, watashi ga kantanna eigo toshite jiko shokai o suru to gakusei ga wakkate morainai.</i>	I think so. Other teachers also have the same opinion about the need to be fluent. But, for example, even if I give a self introduction in easy English, the students don't understand.
A	<i>So desu ka. Demo eigo noryoku yori eigo no oshiegata no ho ga daisetsu. Demo sore mo mada eigo noryoku ga tarinai to omoimasu.</i>	That's true. But rather than English ability, I think English teaching skill is more important. But my English ability isn't enough either.
BG	<i>Doshite?</i>	Why?
A	<i>Daigaku de mananda eigo wa, goi toka tango o oshieru, shogakko de, oshieru tame ni jubun to omoimasu. To iu imi wa, serifu ga areba sono mama de dekiru. Shikashi, jugyo chuu de totsuzen ni ALT to hanashinakareba naranai no baai, moshi wa, eigo de setsumei suru toki wa, sore wa totemo muzukashii.</i>	The English I learned at university is good enough for the vocabulary I need to teach in elementary school. That is to say, if I have a 'class script' to follow, I can just say it out loud. However, during the class if I have to talk to the ALT or explain something [in English], at the moment that's very difficult.
BG	<i>Gakusei ni setsumei suru toki sonani eigo ga hitsuyo?</i>	For explaining to the students do you need so much English?
A	<i>Eigo o tsuyaku suru toki mananda tango ya hyogen o iu koto ga dekimasu. Demo seitotachi to koryu toki de, gakusei ga wakaru eigo o shiyo shinakareba narani to sensei no shido eigo ga totemo daisetsu.</i>	For English I can use one word or a phrase I have previously learned. However, to interact with my students I need to learn how to use more English the students can understand. I think it is very important to learn proper 'teacher talk' in English.
BG	<i>Narahodo ne.</i>	I see.
A	<i>Gaikokugo are dake kodomo tanoshimi yatte nanoni zenzen afurete kakinagatari ...</i>	Although the foreign language [class] is enjoyable for the students we don't do any writing ...
BG	<i>Hai.</i>	Yes
	<i>Nanka iu atta ...</i>	What do I want to say?

<p>A</p> <p>BG</p>	<p><i>Atta ho ga ii to omoimasu ka. Reading to writing?</i></p>	<p>Do you think there should be reading and writing?</p>
<p>A</p>	<p><i>Datte, yappari kodomotachi wa nanka iuteru, chants no kotoba de mo kawaii de mo, atashi gohan kokuban de gatto kaite iru, are mite iro desu yo ne, yomanakute mo, nantonaku tegakari mite iru kara, chotto, yappari atta ho ga ii. Tada sore o zenbun yatte shimau to eigo gidai ni natte shimau kara, sono aru no ga tasuke ni naru teido ...</i></p>	<p>Well, when the students are saying something, chants or conversations, I scribble the words on the blackboard and they look at it. They don't understand it but they look at it closely, so I think we should have it. However, if you do all this it will become the English subject and I wonder if that would really help ...</p>
<p>BG</p>	<p><i>Hai.</i></p> <p><i>... ga eigo mo nihongo to onaji de miraba wakaruu.</i></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>... like Japanese, if you can read English you could understand it.</p>
<p>A</p>	<p><i>So desu ne. Kekko bekyo suru tame ni kokugo no baai kanji toka, kakigata ga oi de sho?</i></p>	<p>Yes, maybe. Indeed, for studying Japanese, kanji and such, there's a lot of writing practice.</p>
<p>BG</p>	<p><i>Kakijun ne?</i></p>	<p>Stroke sequence?</p>
<p>A</p>	<p><i>Hai, so, kakijun desu. Demo eigo wa kakanakute mo ii mitaina, chotto ...</i></p>	<p>Yes, stroke sequence. But maybe it's okay not to write English ...</p>
<p>BG</p> <p>A</p>	<p><i>So kamo.</i></p>	<p>Maybe so.</p>

Appendix 6: Participant consent form (English language version).

Participant Consent Form

Research Project: English Language Policy and Practice in Japanese Elementary Schools

Researcher's Name: Brian Gaynor

Supervisor's name: Dr. Fiona Copland

Please check the boxes to indicate you have understood and agreed to the following conditions:

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to discuss the project with Brian Gaynor and ask any questions I may have.

I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

I understand that I may freely withdraw from the project without giving a reason at any stage, and this will not affect my status now or in the future.

I understand that while information gained from this study may be published or presented, neither I nor my school will be identified and all results will remain completely anonymous.

I understand that I may be interviewed and a recording will be made of the interview.

I understand I may be asked to complete a questionnaire as part of this research.

I understand that data collected will be stored in both paper and electronic form in such a way that prevents it from being accidentally shared or stolen.

I understand that only Brian Gaynor will have access to the data and that some of the data may be shared only with his research supervisors. Data will not be shared with any other people without my express written permission.

I understand that I may contact Brian Gaynor or his supervisor, Dr. Fiona Copland, if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact Aston University's Ethics Committee if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed

Print name

Date

Contact details

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Aston University's Ethics Committee: j.g.walter@aston.ac.uk

Appendix 7: Word frequency analysis of the 2008 Course of Study.

Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word
68	the	5	situations
42	of	5	local
41	and	5	lives
39	in	5	culture
38	to	5	consideration
27	should	4	understanding
25	language	4	sounds
23	foreign	4	pupils
21	communication	4	moral
20	pupils	4	mainly
16	be	4	learning
16	activities	4	learn
13	teachers	4	languages
12	with	4	familiar
9	on	4	expressions
8	instruction	4	engage
8	giving	4	education
8	a	4	chapter
7	school	4	are
7	grade	3	where
7	given	3	through
7	following	3	them
7	content	3	their
6	when	3	taking
6	or	3	related
6	listed	3	points
6	experience	3	period
5	subsection	3	people
3	opportunities	2	order

3	make	2	one
3	Japanese	2	objectives
3	into	2	not
3	functions	2	materials
3	examples	2	made
3	events	2	lessons
3	etc	2	Japan
3	effort	2	its
3	each	2	items
3	deepen	2	interactions
3	cultures	2	help
3	concerning	2	have
3	community	2	handling
3	circumstances	2	from
3	by	2	expressing
3	as	2	differences
3	years	2	daily
2	ways	2	countries
2	visual	2	become
2	verbal	2	basic
2	various	2	based
2	use	2	aware
2	understand	2	audio
2	two	2	appropriate
2	too	2	another
2	that	2	an
2	teaching	2	also
2	such	2	actively
2	set	2	account
2	selected	1	work
2	partner	1	words
2	over	1	who

1	while	1	programs
1	which	1	proficient
1	what	1	principle
1	view	1	positive
1	used	1	play
1	try	1	plan
1	toward	1	overall
1	tools	1	other
1	time	1	oral
1	thinking	1	opinions
1	things	1	only
1	they	1	often
1	syllabus	1	occur
1	supplementary	1	objective
1	subsections	1	non
1	subjects	1	native
1	stimulating	1	music
1	stages	1	much
1	speakers	1	more
1	speak	1	means
1	so	1	meals
1	since	1	may
1	shopping	1	manner
1	self	1	living
1	select	1	1 listen
1	seeking	1	1 link
1	rote	1	1 line
1	richness	1	1 likely
1	rhythms	1	1 life
1	respect	1	1 level
1	relationship	1	1 letters
1	realize	1	1 lesson

1	provisions	1	1 learned
1	joy	1	facts
1	is	1	explanations
1	involved	1	experientially
1	inviting	1	experiential
1	introduction	1	experiences
1	introduce	1	exchange
1	interesting	1	example
1	interest	1	establish
1	intercultural	1	essential
1	intentions	1	English
1	individual	1	engaging
1	increase	1	enable
1	including	1	emotions
1	improving	1	effectiveness
1	importance	1	dvds
1	iii	1	doing
1	homeroom	1	directions
1	home	1	different
1	having	1	developmental
1	handicrafts	1	developing
1	greeting	1	detailed
1	give	1	designing
1	get	1	design
1	gestures	1	depending
1	general	1	dealing
1	foundation	1	customs
1	fostering	1	cooperation
1	form	1	considering
1	focused	1	conduct
1	focus	1	communicating
1	fixed	1	childhood

1	first	1	charge
1	familiarizing	1	characteristics
1	cds	1	alphabet
1	but	1	advantage
1	burden	1	adopt
1	between	1	addition
1	avoiding	1	actual
1	attitude	1	active
1	at	1	action
1	aspects	1	according
1	asking	1	accordance
1	arts	1	about
1	appropriately	1	abilities

Appendix 8: Lesson plan examples for 5th and 6th grades from Midori school.

6年生 外国語活動指導案
The teaching plan @6th G.

Lesson1-4

9:29 ~ 9:39

class 9:40 ~ 10:15

17-May-21

目標 アルファベットの小文字とその読み方を一致させ、積極的にあるものを持っているかどうかを尋ねたり答えたりしようとする。

過程	児童の活動	指導者の活動		指導者の留意点 (.)	教材
		HRT	ALT		
W-UP	1.あいさつ H:Hello, everyone. S:Hello, [redacted] A:Hello, everyone. S:Hello, ALT. H:How are you ,today?	<外国語活動の授業を始める挨拶>			
導入	2.単語練習 大文字と小文字でアルファベットの順番と読み方を確かめる	<単語・表現に慣れ親しませる> ・単語練習(A,B,C... a,b,c...) ALT > STU			単語カード
展開	4.Activity 絵の中からアルファベットを選び、書き写す。	<単語・表現に慣れ親しませる> H: Open the textbook to the page 5. There are many letters .Copy the alphabet letters that you find. Write neatly, 児童が、アルファベットを正しく写しているか確認する			
	5 見つけたアルファベットを発表する 読み方と意味を学ぶ	<コミュニケーションの力を高める> <活動方法> ①みつけたアルファベットをはっぴようする。 ②ことばのはつおんをれんしゅうし、いみを する。 ことばのいみをたしかめる ALT pronounce the words.		○アルファベットや言葉の読み方に興味をもって活動している	
	6 アルファベット探しをする	<単語・表現に慣れ親しませる> <活動方法> ①大文字と小文字のカードを2枚ずつ持つ。 ②同じ読み方のカードを持っている相手を探す ③小文字を持っている人は小文字カードを相手に渡 S1:Hello. S2:Hello. S1:Do you have "a" ? S2:Yes, I do. No, I don't. デモンストレーションする		・デモンストレーションして挨拶や会話の仕方を思い出させる、	大文字カード 小文字カード
まとめ 0:45	6.活動内容をふり返る	<本時の活動を確認する> 児童の英語を使おうとする態度についてよかったところ H:That's all for today. Good-bye everyone. S:Good-bye Mrs.Azumi. H:Good-bye everyone. S:Good-bye ALT.			振り返りカード

- open to suggestions.
- between the two of us came up with good plan
- may have overstaged the movie with the topic the class request.
- Did pair practice together - "I have a..." spell place - stud repeat - where/what is it - then with 4 cards - 2 capital 2 small - ask each other do you have - yes I do no, I don't

1/1 ページ

Begin with complaint about no writing practice for alphabet. Speaking & listening practice is a bit futile.

all the discussion is in Jap. students alluded to the fact that study more topics I was here a lot of.

過程	児童の活動	指導者の活動		指導者の留意点 (.) 評価の視点(O)	教材
		HRT	AET		
W-UP	1.あいさつ H:Hello, everyone. C:Hello, A:Hello, everyone. C:Hello, Mr.ALT. H:Now let's start today's lesson. Are you ready? C:Yeah.	<外国語活動の授業を始める時にとる手だて>			
導入	2.前時の学習内容を確認する。 チャンツを行う。	<前時の活動を想起させるための手だて> .H: Let's say "Chant".			P16 Let's chants 絵カード
	3. キーワードゲームをする。	<表現に慣れ親しませるための手だて> H:Let's play "Key word game" with ALT. A: Child, What do you Like? H: I like Melon. A: Key word is "Melon",O.K? A: I like apples. C: I like apples.		I likeとI don't likeを織り交ぜて行うようにする。 Ask ind	絵カード
展開	4. ジェスチャーゲームをする。	<表現に慣れ親しませるための手だて> H: Let's play "Gesture game" . H: ALT, What do you like? A: I like (ゼスチャーで伝える). H: Did you understand an answer? H: What don't you like? A: I don't like (ゼスチャーで伝える)		児童がルールを理解したら、児童が答える役をやらせる。 p.14/15	絵カード
	5. 集中力ゲームをする。	<表現に慣れ親しませるための手だて> 1. 指導者が言う語の順番や好きか嫌いかなどを聞いて記憶する。 2. 指導者が言い終えたら、児童はその順番に絵カードを並べたり、分類したりする。 H: Let's play "Syucyryoku game" with ALT. H: やり方の説明をする。 H: I like ~ and ~ and ~. A: I like ~ and ~, I don't like ~ and ~.		・最初はペアで行わせ、慣れてきたら個人で行わせる。 ・児童の様子を見ながら、言う語を増やす。 2-3-4-5 - fruits/activities	巻末児童用絵カード
	6. 音声教材を聞く。	<表現に慣れ親しませるための手だて> .H: Open your textbook to page 16 H: Let's listen. H: Let's write a line who likes what.		・登場人物の名前の読み方を確認してから聞かせる。	P16 Let's listen
まとめ	7. 振り返りカードを書く	振り返りカードを記入させる。			