ADocumentary Analysis of Government-Assigned Provisions of Primary School English in the 1990s: Time, Age and Aims

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Introduction

This paper presents the first report of a documentary analysis of a selected group of government-assigned and school-based exploratory studies on primary English teaching in the 1990s. The new millennium has attested the newer explorations in this new educational area in Japan: the government-assigned research studies on primary English teaching as a school subject matter which are now under exploration at a very small number of primary schools in the public sector; and widely spread English conversation activities now under implementation along with the new Course of Study at about half of the public primary schools in this country, although on a very small scale.(1) Examinations of these newer practitioner ventures may well be increasingly needed. Why an examination of the 1990s studies under the present state of affairs? The basic assumption of the present study is that the frameworks and methods used, the observations made, and the problems and issues identified by the teachers themselves in the earlier studies can all be resources for further teacher exploration. Further, a review of some studies on the 1990s school-based explorations suggests that it is necessary to look more into those earlier explorations with the use of a review of studies on primary foreign language teaching from outside Japan.

What did the teachers and schools intend to accomplish? What approaches to English teaching did they work out for their pupils? How and why did they formulate those approaches? I shall explore these general queries in this paper, through an analysis of the official reports written by a group of twenty-one local primary schools. Under the limited scope of this paper, the analysis is confined within three factors of primary school English teaching: time, age, and aims; with other issues left open for further documentary analysis. The discussion of the results of the present analysis is based on my previous literature review (Fukushima 2004).

1. The 1990s government-assigned studies on primary school English provision

1.1 Requirements from the government

Unlike secondary education, curriculum guidelines and textbooks were not offered by MEXT for the government-assigned studies in the 1990s, and in this sense the studies were individual school based. The

schools were expected to work out sessions for English within the time allocations set up in the former Course of Study for Primary Schools, by reducing time for school subjects and/or other categorical aspects of the primary curriculum. Unlike their usual teaching practice, teachers were not required to give their children assessment of their individual term-by-term progress in English-related activities. This condition and the absence of entrance examinations for local lower secondary schools may well have produced a much less tense teaching situation than in secondary English teaching.

On the whole, each school developed its own curriculum, planned courses, devised teaching methods, and produced its own teaching materials. The results of each school's research studies on English provision, in terms of the development of pupils' English skills and English-related affective variables, have not been the subject of a national assessment to be announced to the public. Instead, each school conducted its own programme evaluation, mainly with the use of observations and questionnaires.

There are two sources of information available to the present study which are vaguely suggestive of the government requirements. One is a piece of information which was obtained in my fieldwork (Fukushima 2001) from a participant teacher who had been playing a leading role in the English teaching at her school. According to this teacher (whose utterances are recorded in my field notes), the administrative people from MEXT and those from the local board of education showed an overall permissive attitude towards what she and her school might project and implement. What were advised by those supervising people were: "Don't attempt to introduce the things being taught at the early stages of secondary English teaching" and ""The written aspect of English learning does not need to be tackled." As for curriculum, the teacher mentioned that her school developed its own curriculum by reference to some forerunner schools.

The other information source is from the title of the government-assigned exploratory studies which was given by MEXT. According to Nishikawa (2001:3), the term used by MEXT for the assigned task slightly varies according to the time of its assignment. The official terms listed in Nishikawa's study contain Japanese terms equivalent to "foreign language learning" (offered in 1992 and 1994) and "English conversation" (given in 1996), and also some specifications of curriculum context which are translatable into "as part of the education for international understanding" (provided in 1992) and "in the Period for Integrated Study" (offered in the last period of time for government-assigned studies, 1997). The whole title given in 1996, which applies to the school research studies to be examined in the present study, was "Teaching English conversation at primary school."

Some of these terms suggest a particular framework of study which may have influenced teacher's conceptions. The use of the equivalent term to "English conversation" shows the focus placed on the oral aspects of learning and using English. The school reports examined in the present study show this highlighted area, taking explicit statements about the focus placed in speaking and listening. The term might also suggest a specific type of instruction which sheds light on oral verbal exchange. Another intriguing aspect of the study is the concept of "international understanding" which was offered at the very beginning stage of the government-assigned research studies in the 1990s. The school reports indicate that this phrase, which is often used without definition, has been utilised in such a way as to explore a

conceptual relationship between English learning and what is implied in the term 'international understanding,' and also to offer sessions for cultural understanding and/or direct human contact with people from other countries. Still another is the new curriculum component "the Period for Integrated Study", to which foreign language conversation is now attributed as its optional element. It is likely that this notion has enhanced some sort of cross-curricular perspective.

1.2 Teacher learning opportunities

If one has never been trained to be an English teacher and has never been expected to teach the language, and then, at some time in his or her professional teaching career, his or her school is required to conduct English teaching, involving the teacher him- or herself, what would the teacher and the school do? Where would they start? How would they attempt to project and accomplish their responsibilities? The innovative situation calling forth these questions to an outsider English teacher, like myself, applies to many of the Japanese teachers who were involved in the 1990s government-assigned studies.

The teachers' research situation was not totally new to them. First of all, what was facing them was something concerning 'teaching' or 'education' in more general terms, so the teachers could bring whatever they, as teachers, had already acquired. The teachers also had past experience in learning English as students, at least over the period of eight years (i.e., six-year English instruction at lower and upper secondary schools and two-year general English provision at university). Further, the government's yearly assigning of research studies on an educational area to a selected group of schools has been an established practice in this country since 1976, and primary school teachers have also been familiar with giving lesson demonstrations to people from outside their schools. Despite these treasure resources, however, the exploratory nature of their studies may well have been strengthened by such factors as no previous training and education in English teaching, no formidable competence in English, and no curriculum guidelines, textbooks or teaching manuals offered by the government. It seems to me to be reasonable to assume that what may be called 'teacher learning' evoked in a dynamic way during their exploratory work, with common practice and frameworks, newly introduced information and ideas, and gradually developed observations and views activated in the process.

Then, what have the teachers' learning opportunities been like? I am not aware of any long-term programmes which were offered specifically for the teachers involved in government-assigned research studies in the 1990s, except for some postgraduate programmes which have been open to in-service teachers in general; Imai (2000) and Nishikawa (2001) are sample studies conducted by the primary school teachers who, after experiencing three-year English provision, were sent onto a postgraduate programme. On the whole, however, for most teachers, learning on such an advanced programme is a rare opportunity. In a more collective domain, the school reports show several types of human contact for teacher learning which were available to those involved in government-assigned studies, such as activities conducted within each school (e.g., research committee meetings, classroom observation and feeding-back among colleagues), exchanges with other primary schools conducting government-assigned studies and nearby lower secondary schools, administrative supervisory work by a local board of education, and university faculty involvement.

It has also been possible for primary school teachers, perhaps for a small portion of those involved in the government-assigned exploratory work in the 1990s, to participate in the research association concerning early English, JASTEC (the Japan Association for the Study of Teaching English to Children, which was established in 1980). However, it has not been until the more recent stage of development that groups of primary school teachers from the public sector have started participating, in a conspicuous manner, in JASTEC or in those associations which have been traditionally occupied by people engaged in secondary and higher education. It was not until the year of 2000 that the first research association specifically addressed to primary English teaching (i.e., the Japan Association of English Teaching in Elementary School) had been established in this country.

1.3 Studies on the 1990s government-assigned primary English provisions

Government-assigned, school-based studies on primary English teaching in the 1990s have been examined either by outside researchers or by insider teachers involved in the studies. Three studies are available for the present study: Kikuta and Muta (2001), Imai (2000) and Nishikawa (2001). Kikuta and Muta (2001) is an outsider empirical study and is said to be the most comprehensive documentary analysis of the 1990s government-assigned studies. It deals with a collection of 58 official reports from the identical number of primary schools. The other two studies are among the insiders' studies conducted by the teachers who were involved in government-assigned studies and were sent to postgraduate programmes. Imai (2000) presents a comprehensive survey of 46 school's government-assigned studies through examining their official reports, whereas Nishikawa's study (2001) is oriented towards a systematic approach to curriculum development and is specifically for her school.

Kikuta and Muta (2001) investigate the influence of learning environment factors on children. The children's variables examined in their study include "interest in English conversation activities," "positive attitudes towards communicating in English," "cultural understanding" (i.e., getting familiar with people from other countries, and developing interest in foreign cultures), and "native speaker teachers' influence" (e.g., acquiring good pronunciation). It is worthwhile to note here that the evaluation of children's variables was made indirectly, through looking at what is stated in the schools' reports (e.g., teachers' observations and results of questionnaires). As we will see later, the group of variables examined in Kikuta and Muta's study (2001) reflects the fact that the 1990s government-assigned studies were geared towards motivational and attitudinal attainments to a greater extent than towards the development of language proficiency in English.

The environmental factors showing statistically greatest significance in Kikuta and Muta's study (2001) are mainly concerned with "facility arrangements" and "human contact." Among instructional variables, only "teacher-students classroom interaction" shows up. The results suggest: 1) the influence of "setting a special room for English conversation class" and that of "teacher-student classroom interaction" on "children's interest in English activities"; 2) the effect of "contact and talk with people from other countries" on "children's positive attitudes towards communicating in English"; and 3) the influence of "putting displays on a school bulletin board" over "children's cultural understanding."

The results of Kikuta and Muta's analysis (2001) also suggest some relationship between classroom instructional variables, such as: "teacher mutual understanding" (team teaching with a native speaker teacher) possibly affected by "clarified role division," "team teaching frequency," and "the length of time of programme implementation in the past"; and "the teacher-student interaction" influenced by "setting up situations for enjoyable activities for communication," by "teacher mutual understanding" and by "team teaching frequency."

On the whole, the results of Kikuta and Muta's analysis (2001) seem to be instructive to those teachers currently engaged in English provision in this country, regarding environmental factors to be considered. Their 2001 report, however, does not offer a full description of their measuring procedures, except for notes on an eighty-eight percent accord obtained among the examiners of schools' reports in terms of their way of extracting relevant information, and high α coefficients gained among six people involved in an eleven-leveled evaluation of variables.

The major areas covered in Imai's survey (2000) are aims of English provision as shown in the stated themes of the schools' studies, ways of setting up teaching content (e.g., teaching units, activities, linguistic items), teaching techniques, and teaching procedures of English lessons. The survey is not oriented towards an evaluation of the programmes surveyed, in terms of time given to English, and the methods of programme evaluation used by the schools and the results obtained through those methods.

Imai (2000) moves on to discussions on four issues requiring greater clarification than observable in her data: 1) primary-secondary liaison: familiarizing primary school children with sound features of English as basics, introducing basic vocabulary items at primary schools, and the need for a consideration of primary school children's experiential, holistic acquisition, as opposed to secondary school students' analytical learning; 2) teacher's conceptions of English teaching and education for international understanding: the need to give priority to the kind of English teaching which cultivates the ability to use this language and positively communicate with other people; 3) development of teaching content: a list of 860 words and that of expressions grouped into communicative functions; and 4) major aspects of teacher learning: brushing up English, learning about the history of English teaching and English teaching methodologies, being informed of primary English teaching in other countries, and understanding language acquisition processes (2000: 53-91). In short, Imai (2000) shows an English teacher's perspective, namely, an orientation towards language teaching and learning.

Nishikawa (2001) is aimed at developing a more systematic and more productive framework of syllabus designing for her school, in terms of the cultivation of children's communicative competence and the accomplishment of her school's aims. She first sets up her own concept of communicative competence: the ability to use language (which, in her framework, entails sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence, as originally derived from Canale and Swain 1980), intercultural competence, and attitudes towards conversational exchange. Nishikawa then examines what the process of acquiring each component is like. This shows that Nishikawa, as a teacher, has started developing a way of looking at actual conversational events in the classroom from the viewpoint of the development of communicative

competence. The preface of Nishikawa's study (2001) indicates that the following view which she developed during her visits to primary schools underlies her orientation towards the development of communicative competence: "Fun activities are being offered but they may not be opportunities for real communication." In addition, she presents a view suggestive of a comprehensible input hypothesis. My interpretation of her remarks in Japanese follows: "It is said that children need to receive ample language input showering down to them, but they might stay dry if the input is impenetrable to them."

The key concept of Nishikawa's approach to syllabus designing is children's "linguistic experience." She uses the components of her school's educational aim as scope and a three-stage division of children's growing social perspective as sequence, and then rearranges, within this framework, the titles of the teaching units used by her school during its government-assigned study. An assumption underlying this systematic approach is refered to in the preface of Nishikawa's study (2001). My translation of her remarks: "If teaching content is selected haphazardly, it might not be appropriate for the stages of children's cognitive development." Whether a systematic approach can work well with teachers is another matter. Nishikawa mentioned in a conference that her framework seemed to her colleagues at her school to be a little too complicated.

In summary, the three studies reviewed in this study show varied approaches to an examination of the 1990s government-assigned primary school English provisions. They are addressed to these issues respectively: What environmental factors would affect children's learning?; What were the government-assigned school explorations like and what issues need to be explored; How can and should curriculum and syllabus be developed more systematically and productively for children?

What might these studies suggest regarding the three factors to be examined in the present study? As for children's development as aims, Kikuta and Muta's study (2001) confines itself mainly within the motivational and attitudinal framework of the government-assigned studies. The time factor, which has been viewed as important in the literature on foreign language teaching (see Fukushima 2004), is examined in Kikuta and Muta's study (2001). However, "yearly time given to English" statistically shows no significant relationship to children's variables in their study. If this is related to some sort of unanimous way of offering small amount of time in the 1990s government-assigned studies, a motivational and attitudinal focus of the programme might be a reasonable solution, as suggested by Johnstone's "awareness" and "encounter" models (1994) and Driscoll's "sensitization" model (1999). Whether offering a small amount of time is common among government-assgined studies should be a query to examine in the present study. By comparison, Imai (2000) and Nishikawa (2001) are more future oriented than Kikuta and Muta (2001) in that they focus on language proficiency and communicative competence. The amount of time which might be suitable for this orientation towards language acquisition is not discussed in their studies.

As for the age factor, the three studies are not specifically concerned about the relative advantage of an earlier, or later, start, although Imai (2000) and Nishikawa (2001) show their interest in characteristics of the primary school children's language learning process and their cognitive and social development.

Whether the 1990s government-assigned studies treated pupils in different years of primary education in diverse ways can be a query for the present study.

2. Method

2.1 Data gathering

The period of government-assigned studies chosen for the present study was the three school years between April 1996 and March 1999, as this was the time when the scope of government assignment was expanded to all prefectures, which enables this study to look at an embryonic stage of teacher exploration with a wider geographical scope than with its previous years. According to charted information in Kageura (1997), in 1996 school-based exploratory studies were being conducted at fifty-one schools: twelve schools in the final year of their three-year studies and thirty-nine schools newly assigned by the government, among these public schools were two national schools.

The process of school selection for the present study started with prefectures (I refer to highest local administrative areas.). Employing a commonly used regional division, all the 47 prefectures in Japan were first grouped into 10 regional areas. Random numbers were assigned to all the prefectures in each area, with the use of a computer programme, and then, according to the order expressed in the assigned numbers, a group of prefectures were selected, area by area. Considering a workable amount of data for one examiner, about half of the prefectures in each area were chosen: 1 from the area of 1 prefecture, 2 from the region of 4 or 5, and 3 from the area of 6 or 7. In addition, in order to obtain a group of schools with similar situations, priority was given to the local school which started its exploratory study in 1996 in the context where there were two relevant schools in one prefecture. Where there was one relevant school in a prefecture which had started before 1996 or which was a national school, the school was skipped over to the prefecture of the next random number, which produced in one region a reduction of the intended number of selected schools. The whole process made a total of 21 schools.

The material chosen for an examination of the school explorations were the official reports submitted to MEXT. The regionally based selection of schools in this study was not intended to draw out any regional characteristics of these school-based research studies, as the total number 21 was too small to lead to any significant statistical generalisations. It was assumed that an explanatory and qualitative examination of the reports would be useful.

The process of gathering the above-mentioned official reports had three major phases: 1) my initial contact with the local board of education with which each school was working, the purposes of which were to explain my study and my request to the school for its reports and to obtain some information on the school to enable me to contact it (e.g., the name of the principal); then 2) telephone conversation with the principal, vice-principal or teacher in charge of curriculum matters; and finally 3) sending a formal letter to the principal of each school under the seal of the dean of my university, to ask for their documents. The main

reason for the adoption of these formal procedures was uncertainty about the degree of formality preferred in primary school education. During the time of contact, it was suggested that direct sending of my personal letter might have been easily accepted by some schools. It was also found that, in a collective sense, copies of the schools' reports had been popularly requested by teachers and researchers from outside the school. This made it hard for some schools to offer me their final reports.

In the letters to the principals, I requested copies of the school's yearly reports which they had submitted to MEXT, in the stated hope to receive the final (i.e., the third year) report, and also more classroom instruction-related materials available. As a result, I obtained packages of reports and other materials from all the schools.

2.2 Method of analysis

The following documents were used for the present study, on a one-school-one-document basis: the final-year reports, which came from fourteen schools; the journals from two schools which were substitutable for their final reports; the first- or second-year reports from four schools; and the fourth-year report from a school which continued its research after their government-assigned three-year exploration. The organisation of these documents was examined first, and this showed that they commonly contained sections concerning six categorical contents: 1) outline of the exploratory study (e.g., aims, hypotheses, frameworks); 2) developmental path of the study (i,e., records on the research activities conducted both within the school and with people, schools and boards of education from outside the school, which include lesson demonstrations and visits to other primary schools; 3) content of the programme (e.g., time allocations, yearly course plans, teachers' role divisions, sample reports on lessons) ; 4) reports on a survey conducted with pupils, parents, teachers, and nearby lower secondary school students with the use of questionnaires [2]; and 5) perceived effects of the programme; and 6) issues and problems for further exploration. The results of the school survey (# 4 above) is presented in a separate section, or as part of the content section (#3 above) or the effect section (#5 above). Effects and issues/problems (#5 and #6) are described in two separate sections or together with in a section.

The next step was to identify a core of areas and issues commonly extractable from the above-mentioned organisational elements and then to set up a collection of ethnographical and more exploratory questions to which the document analysis could be addressed. The present study addresses two among those issues: a) How much time and to which years, and why?; and b) What is intended to be accomplished?; and why?

The documents analysed in this study are written in Japanese. It can be assumed that the conceptual frameworks and educational ideas utilised in the government-assigned exploratory studies are not always expressed in an explicit manner, partially because some sort of widely accepted common practice was used in their projection. Relying mainly on what is expressed in the documents, I attempt to interpret part of the results obtained from them. The specific method of analysis used for a given issue will be mentioned in the following section where it is necessary. Alphabets are assigned to all the schools in a geographical order, and they are not concerned with the real names of the schools.

3. Results

3.1 Time

The reports suggest that time given to English-related instruction can be chategorised into three groups: 1) time given to English lessons or English conversation activities (in all the schools); 2) time offered to sessions for cultural learning being conceived of as relating to language learning (applicable to 7 schools); and 3) curricula categories for occasional contact with people from other countries (offered by 20 schools; e.g., in-school gatherings, visiting a nearby American school, letting children go out on the street to talk to persons from other countries). Table 1 shows each school's arrangements for these elements. The age of children in each year: Year 1 children, aged 6 to 7; Year 2, aged 7-8; Year 3, aged 8-9; Year 4, aged 9-10; Year 5, aged 10-11; and Year 6, aged 11-12. The number in parentheses for "weeks a year" in the English column indicates the number of weeks a year for Year 1 children.

As shown in this table, not much time was given to English. The most frequent arrangement is 45 minutes (i.e., one class hour) a week to all years; and 35 weeks a year to Y2-Y6 and 34 weeks to Y1. This applies to six schools (Schools A, D, J, P, Q, and S). Three schools (I, L, T) offered the same time allocation as above, either to the upper or lower years, and one school (K) also provided the same amount of time to all years with the length of a lesson shortened. As for the total yearly amount of time, the remaining schools gave one either slightly below '35 class hours a year' (C, E, F, H, M, O, U) or above (B, G, N, R). The largest amount of time found in the data is for Years 5 and 6 in School L (70 class hours a year).

With the exception of Year 1, many schools offered the same yearly amount of time to all years, whereas four schools (I, L, T, U) gave more time to older pupils and one school (G) more time to younger ones. It is worthwhile to add that School G is explicitly positive about the introduction of English into Years 1 and 2, both in planning and evaluation.

What are the reasons for these rather small amounts of time? School J mentions that they consider the number of class hours which can be obtained for English in the future new curriculum category 'Integrated Study' and the maximum amount of instructional time which is possible in terms of teachers' workload, and thus ends up with one class hour a week. With no other arguments on the reasons in the other reports, it is necessary to note that all these schools were required to work out time for English-related activities within the previous national time allocation by using part of the time given to school subjects and other curriculum categories. This reduction of time and its effects seem to have been primary interests. All the schools describe where the time for English was obtained and, among those schools which took time for English from school subjects, several schools give information on the teaching units taken out from the relevant subjects and the results of standardised tests in Japanese language and mathematics.

Twelve schools gave sessions shorter than one class hour (45 minutes), either entirely or partially. Motivation for provision of the shorter sessions varies: as additional sessions to 45-minute-lessons (Schools B, E, G, N, R); for Year 1 children or lower grades (C, H, I); as a mixed arrangement for all (A, E); based on a

Table 1　Time given to English teaching

	English			cultural learning		human contact
school	years of recipients	time<min> x frequency/wk	wks/yr	years of recipients	time<min> x frequency	frequency/yr [recipients]
A	all	45x1/30+15/15x3	35 (34)	all	30x12/yr	2 [all]
B	(a) all	45 x 1	30-34	__	__	1 [Y6]
	(b) all	15 x 1 (video)	35 (34)			
C	all	45 x 1	30 (29)	Y3-6	6-12hrs/yr	5 hrs [all]
		(Y1: 20 x 2)		Y1-2	in school sbj	
D	all	45 x 1	35 (34)	—	—	3 [all]
E	(a) all	15 x 2 (prep.)	35 (34)	__	__	1 [all]
	(b) all	45 x 1 or 20 x 2	8			
F	all	20 x 2	35 (34)	—	—	2-4 [all]
G	(a) Y1-2	45 x 1	32			
	Y3-6	45 x 1	15	all	45 x 3/yr	1 [Y5-6]
	(b) all	15 x 3 (review)	35 (34)			
H	all	45 x 1	20-28	all	in school sbj	3 [all]
		(Y1: 2/45 x 2)				1 [Y6]
I	(a) Y1-3	15 x 1	35 (34)	Y4-6	45 x 1/mon	4 [all]
	(b) Y4-6	45 x 1	35	Y1-3	in school sbj	
J	all	45 x 1	35 (34)	all	45x 20-25/yr	3 [all]
K	(a) all	30 x 1	35	__	__	9 hrs [all]
	(b) all	30 x 1	17.5			
L	(a) Y1-4	45 x 1	35 (34)	__	__	occasional
	(b) Y5-6	45 x 2	35			
M	all	45	24-26	—	—	1 [all]
N	(a) all	45 x 1	30	__	__	5 hrs/yr [all]
	(b) all	5 x 3	35 (34)			
O	all	45 x 1	26	—	—	7-11 [all]
P	all	45 x 1	35 (34)	—	—	1 [all]
Q	all	45 x 1	35 (34)	—	—	1-3 [all]
R	(a) all	45 x 1	25-30	__	__	3 [all]
	(b) all	20 x 1	35 (34)			
S	all	45 x 1	35 (34)	all	20x 2-3/mon	1 [all]
T	(a) Y1-3	45 x 1	18	__	__	__
	(b) Y4-6	45 x 1	35			
U	(a) Y1-2	20 x 1	34	__	__	1-4 [all]
	(b) Y3-6	20 x 2	35			

stated consideration of pupils' span of attention (K); as the arrangement for all years (U); and in an innovative framework of twenty-minute modules applied to the school's whole curriculum (F).

As for the second category of cultural understanding, or international understanding or world learning in some schools' terms, it seems likely that instruction is conducted mainly in Japanese where focus is placed on pupils' research study or project work, without particular planned links to English classes. Individual characteristics are revealed in learning content. For instance, School A's stated topics suggest a traditional type of cultural learning: songs and plays in Japan, songs and plays in the world, languages in the world, and customs in the world. School C presents Year 6 pupils' project geared to this modern topic: designing a space station with pupils from an American school. School I encourages children to know more about their own regional area, on the assumption that children's cultivated pride in their home area supports them when they enter the international world. In addition, such modern social topics as volunteer activities and environmental problems are encompassed in most of the seven schools.

In School H, an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher: native-speaker teacher on the JET programme) offered cultural and geographical talks about his home country in teaching some of the usual school subjects. Judging from my fieldwork (Fukushima 2001), this kind of native-speaker teacher talk may also have been included in English lessons, and, where the teacher is fluent in Japanese, he or she may have talked to pupils about his or her home country in Japanese, occasionally or often times. This is a matter of possibility.

The human contact column in Table 1 shows the value placed on offering opportunities for pupils to encounter people from other countries. The regional scope and the types of human exchange depends on the school's situation. For instance, School J offers in-school gatherings which include games and songs, pupils' presentations, and lectures on, or introduction of, various countries in the world, which are given by ALTs or people from outside the school (e.g., teachers from the school's sister school in New Zealand, international students studying at a nearby university). School F also offers in-school gatherings in which pupils can meet foreign guests, and, in addition to this, it sends Y5 and Y6 pupils to a well-known temple near the school so that they may communicate with foreign tourists there.

3.2 Age

As is shown in the previous section, there is a small number of schools among the subjects of this study which set up different time allocations (in terms of yearly time given or the length of a lesson) between younger and older pupils. Discussions on the views and assumptions underlying such age-related time arrangements are scarcely found in the data.

Teachers' acts indicative of their concern for the effects of primary English on secondary education can be found in the documents. Seven schools present the results of questionnaires which they offered to their graduates studying at lower secondary school. Two schools among them involved not only their graduates but also the graduates' fellow members from other primary schools. The questionnaires used by these

seven schools are mostly addressed to students' own perceptions. There is one school which conducted a regression analysis and points out positive influences of primary English on students' recognition of the aims of English learning. In addition, small pieces of information are available regarding secondary school teachers' comments on primary starters' characteristics, which are offered by three schools. Among those fragmentary comments are positive attitudes towards speaking, greater interest in games and conversations than in textbook-centred learning, and seemingly no significant differences in test scores between primary and secondary starters.

3.3 Aims

What was attempted to be accomplished in this particular group of government-assigned studies? For this query, four information resources were found in the reports: 1) stated themes of research studies, which collectively consist of focal elements of children's growth; 2) schools' stated aims of English teaching; 3) expected outcomes of teaching mentioned in the school's hypotheses; and 4) questionnaire items given to children which can be viewed as a method of programme evaluation. All these items were translated into English and then analysed. I discuss themes first, as they show a more general framework than the others, and then examine aims, hypotheses and questionnaires to see whether any tendencies and features in those data might be elicited.

Themes

Elements attributed to children's growth were elicited from the themes, and categorised into four groups under these concepts: general (or holistic), international, communicative, and linguistic. The following table shows the frequencies of these elements and their sample components.

Table 2 Elements of themes

aspects of children's growth	frequency (no. of schools)	sample elements
International	19 (16)	open-mindedness to the world sense of internationality living in the international society international understanding
Communicative	18 (12)	self expression positive attitudes towards communicating communicative competence
General/Holistic	7 (5)	spiritual welfare mental strength
Linguistic	2 (2)	interest in the English language familiarity with the English language

The high frequency of the International group shows generally-held international perspectives for children's growth and their English learning, and in fact, most schools express their views on the place of children in the internationalised Japan and in the international world at the beginning sections of their reports. In the Communicative group, the greatest frequency goes to phrases concerning the ability of self expression; ten phrases in total out of eighteen. The question arises as to whether the focus on the need for self-expression is connected to a perceived national, or local, character (e.g., reserved nature) or whether it stems from teachers' concerns about children's social development in general terms.

Aims

The aims of English teaching stated in the reports are comprised of two groups: general aims from all twenty-one schools and age-specific aims from eleven schools. As for general aims, all the itemised statements were examined to identify categorical groups, with one element or more extracted from each statement. This process has produced six categories. Table 3 shows the elements assigned to each category and their frequencies.

Table 3 General aims

category	elements	frequency
Communication		**35**
	communicative competence	8
	expressing oneself	8
	positive attitudes towards communicating	7
	understanding and listening to others	5
	speaking in English	3
	positive attitudes towards using/speaking English	2
	thinking and acting	1
	using situations for communication	1
Cultural/International		**12**
	cultural understanding	10
	sense of internationality	1
	necessary ideas/attitudes in international contexts	1
Familiarity with:		**9**
	English	7
	people from other countries	2

Enjoyment of:		**7**
	English activities	3
	learning English	2
	using English	1
	singing and playing	1
Human relationship		**5**
	being considerate/kind to others	3
	understanding others	2
Likes for/Interest in:		**4**
	English	3
	English conversation	1

The first communication-oriented group shows the highest frequency, with both ability/competence/skill and attitude included in it. The three groups of familiarity, enjoyment, and likes/interest may be regarded as elementary motivational attainments. All together, they reveal the second highest frequency. The total frequency of the cultural/international group indicates the number of the schools which include this aspect of children's development in addition to the aim/s concerning communication and language learning. It was found that not all these schools have sessions for cultural understanding separated from English lessons, which suggests possibilities for a cultural learning component entailed within English lessons.

The age-specific aims from eleven schools entail all years, except for one school which deals with Y4, Y5, and Y6 only. The way of grouping pupils in different years varies from two- to six-group division. The most frequent is this widely-used three-group division, employed by six schools: Y1/Y2, Y3/Y4, and Y5/Y6. All the age-specific aims were translated into English and examined for their features, in terms of differences from general aims and children's developmental paths implied.

First of all, the age-specific aims can be characterised by the frequent use of terms indicative of linguistic components of English language learning such as "greetings," "words," "sentences," "expressions," "conversations," "the English used in daily lives," and "the English concerning familiar matters." The words "listening" and "speaking" are also used. Unlike general aims, the word 'komyunikeshon' ('communication' in English) and its related forms are scarcely included. Cultural and international learning components were found in five schools, far less often than linguistic components.

The eleven schools' age-specific aims all suggest their ways of projecting children's developmental paths, from Y1 through Y6, or from the simpler to the more advanced, although in a slightly obscured manner. Eight schools' projections (from Schools A, B, C, E, J, P, Q, and U) can be viewed as linguistic (e.g., from simple daily greetings and familiar matters to simple conversations and speaking activities, and then to positive attitudes towards speaking in English, or to daily life situational conversations). All the members in this group show their focus placed on elementary motivational and attitudinal attainments in language acquisition by using phrases equivalent to "get familiar with..," "have an interest in..," "enjoy participating

in..," etc. In addition, School U alone uses the concept of "rhythm and intonation," as well as "words," "expressions," and "talking." It also includes the aspects of learning "the teacher's instructional language" and responding to "the teacher's questions." Among the less linguistic is School N's, which can be viewed as a psychological consideration rather than a projection: from sensitivity to sound and development of auditory sense for Y1 and Y2, to positive attitudes towards things around children and challenging spirits for Y3 and Y4, to development of visual recognition and varied interests for Y5 and Y6. School I's projection is centred around developing self-concept and understanding/valuing others, and School R's ideas around familiarity with, and interest in, English and people/cultures from other countries.

Hypotheses

The documents examined in this study show that 14 schools offer explicit statements of the hypotheses set up for their own research studies. The projected teaching and learning foci as conditions and the expected resultant outcomes were extracted from these hypotheses, and translated into English, while being itemised.

The number of itemised outcomes in each school varies from one to six, and the total number of items is forty-eight. These items are more greatly loaded on motivational and attitudinal effects in terms of elementary language learning and acts of communicating than on communicative competence itself: twenty-four versus five items. Nine items among the others can be classified as cultural/international components.

A wide variety of aspects of teaching can be seen in the teaching and learning foci as conditions : 1) activity-related matters (e.g., activity types, quality of activity such as "enjoyable" and "experiential"); 2) quality of learning (e.g., language exposure, being responsive to children's developmental stages); 3) quality of teaching content (e.g., familiar, concrete, interesting to children); 4) team teaching; 5) pupil-teacher relationship; and 6) assessment (e.g., pupil's own feedback).

Three schools describe the results of their hypothesis testing in a special section, and thus show a coherent way of researching and reporting. School G is the most statistically advanced, dealing with a wide range of variables obtained from questionnaires, which are classified into four groups of factors (i.e., "interest in and motivation for expression," "mother tongue interference," "reliance on teachers," "relationship with ALTs). The other eleven schools offer hypothesis-related results of their programme implementation, in a more sporadic manner, in the summary section concerning programme effects and problems and issues for further research.

Questionnaires for children

Fifteen categories were derived from the questionnaires for children which were obtained from nineteen schools. The categories having five or more school entries and their sample items follow. The number in square brackets after each category shows the total number of schools offering an item or a group of items

suggesting the categorical characteristic.

(1) Resultant changes/feelings/ability/knowledge [16]: e.g.,
"Are you able to make a simple talk in English?";
"What are the changes you have had through learning English?";
"Do you want to be able to speak English?"

(2) Enjoyment of English lessons, of English conversation activities, of learning English, or of learning English conversation [14]: e.g.,
"Do you enjoy learning English?";
"Do you look forward to learning with John and Kerry [the names of the native-speaking teachers]?"

(3) Predicted behaviour in a hypothetical situation for communication [9]: e.g.,
"What would you do when spoken to by someone or a friend from another country?";
"Would you show the way if asked for by someone from another country?"

(4) Classroom performance [9]: e.g.,
"Are you active during English lessons?";
"Were you able to actively greet and talk to friends and ALT?"
"Are you able to listen carefully to other's talks?"

(5) Likeness for English, for learning English, for English lessons, or for English conversation activities [7]: e.g.,
"Do you like learning English?"

(6) Preference for, or enjoyment of, activity type, staffing, or teaching situation [7]: e.g.,
"Which activity do you like, with your class teacher, with ALT, with ALT and your class teacher, or another type?";
"Which activity do you like? Games, songs, dramas, video letters, playing store, English pronunciation, learning from people from other countries, ……..."

(7) Using English outside class or school [6]: e.g.,
"Are you using the phrases and greetings you have learned outside school? If so, when?"

(8) English TV or radio programmes, picture books, CDs at home [5]: e.g.,
"Do you like watching English programmes on TV?"

Other extracted categories: English lessons taken outside school [3], experiences in encountering people from other countries [3], learning ease/difficulty [3], predicted behaviours when one's English becomes good [3], good things about learning English at school [2], and opinions about whether English is necessary to

learn [1]. A conspicuous feature in these data is that attitudinal and motivational factotrs are more intensely highlighted than in the general aims analysed in a previous section.

4. Discussion

The results of the analysis suggest that the group of programmes examined in this study may be characterised by the "sensitisation" model (Driscoll 1999) and "encounter" model (Johnstone 1994) especially in light of the small amount of time given to English and focus placed on elementary English learning and motivational and attitudinal attainments of learning and communicating in English. Further, more than half of the group members contain cultural and international components of children's learning in their general aims, and one-third of the cohort offer cultural learning sessions, with some other schools suggesting cultural elements entailed in English lessons. This would bring forth the "awareness" model (Johnstone 1994), and might be viewed as evidence of the commonly-held concept of "education for international understanding." It is hard to decide on whether, and to what extent, cultural learning sessions and activities were conducted in English, but it might be assumed that the children's mother tongue was largely utilized.

The themes analysed in this study show the current emphasis on "the holistic, global, and communicative elements of language learning" as pointed out by Curtain and Pesola (1994:4), as well as primary school teachers' concern about children's growth in general terms. The focus on elementary English learning and its motivational and attitudinal aspects, as revealed in age-specific aims and questionnaire items, seems to be plausible in light of the small amount of time given to English. It is worthwhile to add that the schools' time allocations were products of time-related constraints in reality rather than something related to teachers' ideals. By comparison, general aims do not confine themselves within attitudinal or motivational goals. Frequent occurrence of notions oriented towards enhancing communicative competence can be seen in general aims. In addition, some of the schools examined in this study show a range of practice and viewpoints which teachers hold, in search for ways of cultivating communicative competence. These results suggest that programmes for attitudinal and motivational development were not so clearly distinguished from those for language acquisition as in Driscoll's study (1999). What seems to be missing here is a consideration of the time factor. If so, it is necessary for teachers to bear in mind the function of instructional time in foreign language learning. Without a political decision to offer a greater amount of instructional time for English, attempts to cultivate communicative competence, or communication-related abilities, might not be successful.

The present study has found teachers' concerns about the continuous effects of primary English which are related to the issue of the relative advantage, or disadvantage, of primary starters and that of primary-secondary connection. As for the age factor working within primary education, it can be assumed that teachers are concerned with suitability of their instruction for children's developmental stages. This may be found in more instruction-oriented aspects of their programmes such as content selection and teaching methods.

The reports show that efforts were made to develop classroom instruction, drawing on the following aspects of teaching practice: planning a course, using a collection of activity types, developing teaching materials as aids, setting up teacher role divisions, using a set of teaching procedures in a lesson, and employing assessment tools. Any search for ways of helping teachers to develop more workable programmes rests on an examination of these aspects of their explorations.

Notes

(1) This information is from a MEXT website in 2002: http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/5/02/030202.htm. The percentages of schools as to yearly time arrangement show that not much time was given to English: 1-11 hours a year, ranges from 63.0 to 65.4 percent; 12-22 hours, all years slightly above 23,0 percent; 23-35 hours, from 9.8 to 11.8 percent; 36-70 hours a year, ranges from 1.4 to 1.8 percent; 71-110 hours, from 0.1 to 0.2 percent.

(2) Nineteen schools present the results of questionnaires offered to pupils. These schools, except for one, also gave questionnaires to parents. Ten schools present the results of questionnaires for teachers, and seven schools for their graduates studying at lower secondary school.

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