English Language Education Policy in Japan: At a Crossroads

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Abstract Ever since 1989, there has been an intensification of efforts to reform English Language Teaching (ELT) in Japan. Policy initiatives such as "The Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities" launched in 2003, the implementation of "Foreign Language Activities" in elementary schools in 2011, the "Global 30" Project in higher education to promote English-medium learning in 2009 and the 2013 implementation of the revised national senior high school foreign language curriculum are all efforts initiated by the Japanese government to improve ELT practice and increase international awareness among Japanese learners. In spite of these initiatives, however, a continued disconnect between policy declarations and the realities of pedagogical practice has resulted in stasis in terms of policy implementation. We argue that the central agents of English language education policy in Japan – the teachers – are often left to their own devices to interpret and deliver policy initiatives that themselves may have conflicting messages, and may not provide teachers with specific educational tools to engage in meaningful, substantive pedagogical change. This disconnect must be addressed systematically in order to better empower teachers at the local level.

Keywords Language education policy • Japan • English language teaching • Teacher education

1 Introduction

Ever since the arrival of Commodore Perry to the Japanese archipelago in 1853 (Seargeant, 2011), Japan and the English language have been said to have a "love-hate relationship" (McVeigh, 2004, p. 211), which is "polarized around

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ambivalence and/or enchantment" (Rivers, 2012, p. 251). Though the role of English in Japan may be influenced by the its rise in status as a language of wider communication, Hashimoto (2013) proposes that, "English remains the Other in Japan" (p. 15) and similarly, Tan and Rubdy (2008) assert that "[d]espite the rhetoric of a globalized world, English is kept at *arm's length*" (p. 2, emphasis ours). They further point out that "English as the global language is accepted in Japan, but not before taming it and Japanizing it and rendering it acceptable for Japanese consumption" (p. 2). This point of tension is key in helping to understand the complexities in the formulation of English language education policy (LEP) in Japan, especially within the last two and half decades. As the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) aims to reform English language teaching methodology, it has placed strong emphasis on the adoption of communicative-oriented approaches in rhetoric, but not necessarily in practice, which has significant implications for the future of English language teaching in the Japanese educational system.

English LEP efforts in Japan continue to intensify; the most recent initiative announced is the *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization* (MEXT, 2014) in which English will be introduced as foreign language activities in 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school, and will become a full subject in 5th and 6th grade. In addition, junior high school English classes will be expected to be taught in English, similar to the requirement for senior high school implemented since 2013 (MEXT, 2011). Despite this continued intensification of English LEP, however, researchers consistently note gaps between such declarations and the feasibility of policy implementation at the local level (Butler & Iino, 2005; Glasgow, 2014; Gorsuch, 2000; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; LoCastro, 1996; Machida & Walsh, 2014; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; Seargeant, 2008; Robertson, 2015; Underwood, 2012). In this chapter, we note these gaps but scrutinize the policy messages from the macro-level, and how these messages are received at the local level. We would like to propose that teachers in Japan, in response to English LEP, have had to make sense of what Butler and Iino (2005) have referred to as "conflicting ideological orientations" (p. 25) in policymaking, and as a result, may resort to resistance or non-implementation. They attempt to "interpret policies for themselves, but may not have the background needed to do this successfully" (Diallo & Liddicoat, 2014, p. 113). We contend that without significant attention paid to how teachers interpret English LEP reform messages in Japan, and the professional learning process that they undergo in pre- and in-service teacher education, the most recent reforms put into place will continue to be largely cosmetic and ultimately fail to change teaching practices as intended, even though the rationale for the changes may be well justified.

In this chapter, we explore English LEP in Japan, drawing on a cognitive perspective on policy implementation (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Rather than viewing teachers as passive implementers of LEP, we see them as active sense-makers who attempt to construct meaning out of the policy environment in which they find themselves (Spillane et al., 2002; Menken & García, 2010). The review will begin with a discussion of this conceptual framework that we apply to the situation in

Japan. Next, the chapter turns to a brief overview of English LEP initiatives in Japan since the Meiji Period and potential contradictions that may lead to problems in teachers' implementation. We then explore the role of the institution as an enabling or constraining factor in the agency of English teachers when it comes to policy reform. Afterwards, we explore how English teachers themselves, through their beliefs, knowledge and education, come to engage with or reject policy based on the previous factors discussed. After surveying the English LEP landscape in Japan, the paper moves to suggestions for future research and highlights implications for future policymaking and professional development. Our discussion primarily draws upon literature about English education at the upper secondary level, where a significant amount of literature on EFL education in Japan has been conducted; however, we also refer to LEP changes in elementary and tertiary education in order to provide a broad-based understanding of the dynamics that we discuss.

2 Contemporary Discussions on Language Education Policy: Agency in Policy Implementation

Research in language education policy implementation has increasingly focused on *micro language planning* (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008), or the role of micro-level agents (including educators in the interpretation, negotiation and implementation of LEP). This "bottom-up" perspective puts the educator at the center of the policy-making process and acknowledges his or her role in the interpretation of policy directives. Teachers in language education exercise *agency*, also known as the socio-culturally mediated degree to which someone can act, or be in control of his or her situation (Ahearn, 2001 in van Lier, 2008). Agency can also be seen as *action potential* (van Lier, 2008), and may be affected by "social, interactional, cultural, institutional and other contextual factors" (van Lier, 2008, p. 171). Johnson (2009) states that "human agency is central because teachers are positioned as individuals who both appropriate and reconstruct the resources that have been developed and made available to them" (p. 13), which is why they play a central role in policy implementation.

The question remains as to the degree to which agency is in the hands of teachers who implement LEP reform, particularly in centralized education systems like Japan, where top-down LEP directives are implemented without much teacher input (LoCastro, 1996). In their influential volume on how teachers negotiate and interpret language education policies, Menken and Garcia (2010) state that "educators *always* seem to negotiate the language education policies they enact in their schools, even in countries where the ideological or implementational spaces for resistance or change are small" (p. 4, emphasis in original). However, other authors, such as Li (2008), interpret teachers' roles in LEP differently. In a multimethod study in the People's Republic of China (PRC) involving policy document analysis, interviews and questionnaires, Li finds that though the Chinese governmental educational policy

documents frame teachers as having a major role as policy implementers, teachers "in a centralized polity like the PRC, are not yet ready or are not yet able to play a role in educational policymaking" (p. 227). She attributes these issues to teachers' lack of pedagogical knowledge, their lack of policy awareness and their tendency to be "victims of the examination-oriented educational system" (p. 228). This point is reinforced by Shohamy's (2006) observation that teachers are expected to "carry out orders by internalizing the policy ideology and its agenda as expressed in the curriculum, its textbooks and other materials" (p. 85). Also, Baldauf (2006) argues that "agency remains firmly located in the macro" (p. 27); he notes that "tensions may arise between macro-level policy and the micro situation" (p. 28). In these situations, teachers may conform to policy or resist it by doing what is appropriate for their situations in their institutions. Hence, the agency that teachers are demonstrating in these situations can be characterized as "negative"; they act to accommodate to the complexities of their situations, which may often be at variance with how educational reform policies position them (Johnson, 2009). This accommodation may involve, according to Baldauf (2006), teachers resorting to cram methods to enable students to pass high stakes entrance examinations at the secondary school level, an established practice in many Asian societies, instead of teaching using communicative methods. It may also involve teachers resorting to first language use as a way to meet the needs of students who cannot cope in an English-medium classroom.

As Japan also possesses a highly centralized education system, the aforementioned issues are critical in understanding how teachers perceive their roles in the implementation stage, and how the policymaking structure in English education affects their roles and capacity to act individually and at the institutional level. In order to better understand the complexities of English LEP in Japan, we draw on a sociocultural model of cognition in policy implementation proposed by Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002). Spillane et al. account for the role of the educator in education policy implementation by advancing the following propositions:

1. Teachers make sense of policies based on their *understanding of policy representations*. According to Spillane et al. (2002), policies are "represented through verbal and written media, including regulations, directives, legislation, workshops and pamphlets of various sorts" (p. 414). These representations of policy are similar to what Johnson (1989) refers to as *products* of policy development, such as national curriculum guidelines, teachers' handbooks and manuals, student textbooks, or local syllabi. Through these tangible sources, policymakers face challenges when they attempt to make their intentions clear to teachers in terms of how new initiatives or approaches in language teaching will be implemented. These products are well known in the literature as *policy texts* (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Johnson, 2013; Liddicoat, 2013), which have associated *policy discourses*, and it is the discourses from these texts that trans-

mit assumptions and values about the phenomena they seek to address (Liddicoat, 2013). As teachers in Japan are expected to make sense of new policy reforms, they may vary in the degree to which they engage with – or understand – these representations.

2. In addition, teachers make sense of policy based on their *situation, or context* within which they find themselves. Spillane et al. (2002) view sense-making to occur in a social context. As teachers come to make sense of their roles in policy implementation, their cognitions are mediated by the institutions within which they work (Borg, 2006). These institutions may possess specific normalized practices. Therefore, teachers' reactions to a new policy innovation are embedded in social situations, and are influenced by the way in which these new ideas interact with the beliefs, practices and culture of groups in the institution. Groups would need to be in some sort of harmony in order to engage with new ideas, since, according to Spillane et al. (2002), "organizational arrangements can hamper or enable interactions among implementing agents about policy and practice" (p. 408). If there is a culture of conformity that resists reform, then this tension may influence how teachers come to see their roles. The suggestion here is that English LEP initiatives can be subverted at the contextual level unless there is institutional support to advance professional learning and implementation.
3. Thirdly, teachers construct meanings emanating from policies based on their own *individual cognitions*. They are influenced by their previous knowledge, professional backgrounds and identities. A teacher would map his or her existing knowledge onto the new forms of knowledge of teaching that he or she is expected to acquire. Based on teachers' individual cognitions, teachers adapt, interpret, transform or reject policy messages as they attempt to put them into place (Coburn, 2005). The fact that teachers interpret policies in a variety of ways is a manifestation of their individual agency, however this is mediated by the immediate context and by the way in which they engage with the representations of the policy they are expected to implement.

We find this cognitive perspective useful in exploring English LEP in Japan to provide a nuanced account of how teachers negotiate their roles based on the nature of their policy environment. Therefore, while some (Li, 2008) may not see teachers as able to play a role in making or influencing policy-making in a centralized education system like China, we raise the question of whether or not teachers *are* playing a role in policy-making by actively choosing to accommodate to their micro situation in the best way that they can cope. We draw upon the framework to describe the situation in Japan after we give a brief historical overview of English education in the Japanese context.

3 A Historical Overview of English Education in Japan

English has been the main foreign language ever since the modernization of Japan in the Meiji period (Gottlieb, 2013). In fact, Kubota (2002) has contended that "foreign language" is essentially synonymous with "English" in Japan. English became the major foreign language taught by native speakers of English who were Christian missionaries (Butler & Iino, 2005). The acquisition of the English language was seen as critical for the advancement of the nation at that time, with Japanese statesmen such as Arinori Mōri even proposing that English become an official language (Seargeant, 2011). Furthermore, according to Butler and Iino (2005), "[d]uring this period, virtually everything Western was thought to be advanced while traditional Japanese systems (whether they dealt with education or other social aspects) were seen in a negative light" (p. 27), further prompting Japan to determine how best to position itself as a nation in a rapidly modernizing and competitive world.

After the turn of the century and wars with China and Russia, however, the roles of Japanese teachers became more prominent, as they replaced native English speakers (Koike & Tanaka, 1995), and their teaching of the language employed the use of Japanese texts (Kitao & Kitao, 1995). The years leading up to World War II and during the war saw ultra-nationalistic tendencies in Japan, which eventually led to the suppressing of English, as it was seen as the enemy language. However, after Japan's World War II defeat in 1945, and during the post-World War II period, interest in the language began to rise again. During this time, as the schooling system changed to a 6-3-3-4 system, which was known as the second major educational reform after 1868, elementary and junior high school became part of compulsory education. In 1947, English became a subject, with its inclusion in the Course of Study[1] as an elective. Nine years later, English became a subject on the university entrance exams, establishing English as the *de facto* foreign language of study (Butler & Iino, 2005). Therefore, its position as an academic language of study remained entrenched in the education system.

The popularity of English continued to grow through media and public interest (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Yoshida, 2003), as the re-emergence of Japan to the world stage came through the hosting of the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and then the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. The need to communicate in English and to interact with the outside world was realized even more. However, it was not until considerable revisions to the Course of Study for Foreign Languages in junior and senior high schools were made in 1989 that the word *communication* (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Yoshida, 2003) appeared in the national curriculum for foreign languages. Japan's economic rise on the world stage prompted the government to

[1] The *Course of Study* is the Japanese national curriculum. It is revised approximately every ten years and encompasses what subjects and courses are to be taught. There is a Course of Study formulated for elementary and secondary education in foreign languages.

further make decisions to upgrade the country's English skills and to improve its integration with the global community, leading to major policy initiatives implemented to promote internationalization, or *kokusaika*. One initiative, The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET Programme), was established in 1987 in order to expose Japanese youth to foreign cultures and improve their communicative English skills, stemming from its precursors known as the Mombusho Fellows Program and the British English Teachers scheme (MEXT, 2002). The idea for JET rose out of the well-known "Ron-Yasu" summit, in which U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone held a series of meetings to mend U.S. – Japan relations, which had soured by trade disputes due to Japan's rising competitiveness in the global market (McConnell, 2000).

Another initiative spearheaded in 2003, The Action Plan to cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities", was a comprehensive reform effort that sent teachers overseas for in-service training opportunities, created Super English Language High Schools (SELHi), public and private institutions intended to enhance curriculum innovation, promote the use of English in EFL classes and increase the presence of native English-speaking teachers in junior and senior high schools. English activities at the elementary level were also promoted through the Action Plan, although not at a national level (Honna & Takeshita, 2005). The Action Plan intended to improve students' communicative abilities, with the main initiatives in achieving this goal being (1) using English to teach English; (2) dividing classes based on students' ability and smaller class sizes; (3) promoting innovative programs and teaching in SELHi; (4) sharing information between schools on effective and best practices and (5) studying overseas to increase teacher and student exposure to English (MEXT, 2003). Another effect of this comprehensive initiative was to revise the standardized Center Examination for colleges to include a listening component from 2006. In the Action Plan, MEXT made further suggestions to focus on speaking abilities in entrance exams for high schools and universities by using assessments such as TOEFL, TOEIC, STEP EIKEN (Test in Practical English Proficiency), and Cambridge ESOL (Butler & Iino, 2005), demonstrating MEXT's push towards eliminating the negative washback from grammar-centered assessment practices. Some observers have pointed out positive improvement of student skills through the SELHi program (Noguchi, 2015). Nonetheless, these successes, along with moderate changes to the listening component of the University Center Exam were not enough to ensure that most teachers would use English in their classes; Aspinall (2013) cites a 2006 study by MEXT stating that only 1.1 % of Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) in public senior high schools conducted their classes in English.

Even after these initiatives, Japan's current emphasis on reforms in English language-education showed no signs of abating, especially in recent years with the launching of the following initiatives: (1) English education in elementary school under the name of "Foreign Language Activities" in 2011 (Hashimoto, 2011); (2) the senior high school requirement in the new Course of Study that EFL classes be taught in English implemented since 2013; and (3) the "Global 30" Project in higher education to encourage foreign students to pursue degree programs in Japan by through studying content courses with English as the medium of instruction initiated

in 2009. The "Global 30" Project intends to increase Japan's internationalization of its universities (see Rivers, 2010). However, despite the recently announced *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization* (MEXT, 2014), the question of how prepared teachers are to deliver them continues to remain critical; LoCastro (1996) contends that "there is a particularly tightly woven web of influences in the Japanese context which makes change problematic" (p. 54). We show next how those influences serve to be problematic, and may cause problems for teachers as they attempt to locate their role in policy change.

4 Representations of Language Education Policy in Japan: Areas of Conflict

Drawing upon our conceptual framework of English LEP representations in the Japanese context, we find three major areas of tension regarding the representation of LEP initiatives in Japan: (1) translation-based versus communicative language teaching methodologies; (2) the continued promotion of so-called "English-only" instructional initiatives and (3) conflicts in policies intended to promote intercultural exchange. We contend that with respect to these three strands of English LEP representation, while policymakers propose pedagogical solutions as a way to address these strands such as curriculum revisions, methodological reforms and recruitment policies, the inherent conflicts within them have the potential to result in teacher misinterpretation and non-implementation at the local level.

4.1 Translation Versus Communication in Policy Implementation

Firstly, in English education in Japan, there has been tension between the representations of English as a language to decode Western texts and contrast them with Japanese, as opposed to English as a language for practical communication. This tension has continued to affect English LEP and practice in Japan until this day. In English education, there came to be two schools of thought known as *hensoku* and *seisoku* in Japanese. *Seisoku* is known as the so-called "regular" way of learning English from native English-speaking teachers through the target language, and *hensoku* is the so-called "irregular" way, learning from Japanese teachers through translation (Butler & Iino, 2005). Koike and Tanaka (1995) note that a struggle exists between those who prefer translation methods and those who prefer communicative methods, and that MEXT supports the communicative orientation, as seen through the language of the Course of Study guidelines for elementary, junior and senior high school ever since 1989. However, it is questionable as to what extent communication in the classroom can actually be fostered if there are conflicts in

terms of implementation; for example, in senior high school, the university entrance exams remain focused on assessing grammatical knowledge, and ministry-approved EFL textbooks influence teachers' instruction by essentially "keeping 'traditional' teaching practices in place with textbooks that predominantly focus on grammar" (Gorsuch, 1999, p. 5), a point which we shall revisit later. The translation-communication debate is a prime example of contradiction in the policy formulation process, where the *de jure* policies manifest in the senior high school Course of Study through the revisions of its subjects and the creation of textbooks, contrast sharply from the *de facto* practices found in both public and private academic senior high schools, which privilege *juken eigo* (or English for the purpose of university entrance exam preparation).

Another issue needing clarification is the actual meaning of "communication" in English education in Japan- a concept that has never been problematized (LoCastro, 1996; Seargeant, 2008). In 1989, a significant revision to the senior high school Course of Study was made and subsequently implemented in 1994; courses with the name *Oral Communication* were added to the curriculum to emphasize the new focus on speaking and listening. Promoting communication through enhancing the oral capabilities of Japanese students was of major importance to MEXT (Yoshida, 2003), as students were required to take one of three new *Oral Communication* courses introduced. According to the 1989 revisions, *Oral Communication A* developed conversation skills with an emphasis on speaking, *Oral Communication B* focused on listening, while *Oral Communication C* intended to improve students higher-order thinking skills in English where students were meant to give speeches and conduct discussions and debates in English. The changes in courses are shown in Table 1, contrasting the 1978 Course of Study for Foreign Languages (implemented from 1982) from its predecessor in 1989 (enacted in 1994) (MEXT, 1978; 1994):

In the 1989 curriculum (see Table 1), one may plausibly infer that "communication" refers to speaking and listening skills. To be sure, the overall objectives of the 1989 curriculum suggest that communication refers to speaking, listening, writing and reading. Wada (2002) determined that a little over a third of the teachers surveyed in a study on curricular implementation actually used English in their classes, and virtually none of the teachers reported teaching *Oral Communication C* classes. Also, with the arrival of native English-speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) from the JET Programme, as well as the educational practice of contracting native speakers to teach in private institutions, ALT roles had become increasingly

Table 1 Course of Study for Foreign Languages (upper secondary school: 1978 & 1989)

1978 Course of Study	1989 Course of Study
English I	English I
English II	English II
English II A	Oral Communication A
English II B	Oral Communication B
English II C	Oral Communication C

associated with teaching oral communication while the JTEs taught English using contrastive, translation-based methods. This suggests that "communication" has a localized meaning in Japan, where it seems to represent the involvement of native English speakers in the teaching of speaking and listening skills rather than both JTEs and ALTs teaching all four skills in an integrated manner, creating a dichotomized curriculum (Sakui, 2004). We return to this point later when discussing curricular organization in senior high school institutions. Though "CLT became the center of attention among general English language educators and policy makers" (Butler, 2011, p. 39) in Japan and several other Asian countries, the Course of Study does not explicitly state that CLT is to be employed as the preferred teaching methodology. Similarly, according to LoCastro (1996), there was no definition of communicative ability articulated in the Course of Study enacted at the time of her analysis. This suggests that "communication" as it is practiced in Japan is not necessarily the CLT that emanates from the west, but it has been localized in Japan in a way that has the potential to circumvent MEXT's policy aims.

Therefore, a major challenge for Japan will be to rethink how to bridge the divide between the *de jure* methods policy (communication) and the *de facto* methods policy (translation-based methods) which will hopefully lead to a pedagogy that melds exported teaching methods with the local culture of learning (McKay, 2012), a central principle of pedagogy in English as an International Language (EIL). Applying communicative practices to the EFL classroom have been challenging as the literature has shown (Gorsuch, 2000; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008), suggesting that a more contextually relevant approach will need to be developed (see McKay, 2012).

4.2 "English-Only" Initiatives

Another major discourse in English LEP in Japan is that of the perceived need for "English-only" classrooms. For example, policy texts such as the Action Plan of 2003 to have called for the majority of an English class to be conducted in English in senior high school (MEXT, 2003). This message has been reinforced by the latest Course of Study implemented in 2013, which states the following:

> When taking into consideration the characteristics of each English subject, classes, in principle, should be conducted in English in order to enhance the opportunities for students to be exposed to English, transforming classes into real communication scenes. **Consideration should be given to use English in accordance with the students' level of comprehension** (MEXT, 2011, p. 7, emphasis ours)

However, the statement above requires further analysis. With phrases such as *in principle* and *in accordance with the students' level of comprehension*, the question arises as to what quantity of English is to be used. The use of such language leaves specifics regarding implementation ambiguous, couched in vague terms that may be interpreted in a flexible way, and potentially result in non-implementation (see

Bamgboṣe, 1991; Glasgow, 2014). As a result, the policy language may raise questions as to the degree to which the ministry fully commits resources to teachers to effectively deliver the 2013 Course of Study establishing English as the main language of instruction. To be sure, while LoCastro (1996) states that it is not such a surprise that courses of study might be written in vague, unclear terms, this issue becomes more problematic when specifying a particular approach to classroom teaching. Furthermore, a more detailed teachers' resource that provides information about the "English in English" initiative states that Japanese *can* be used provided that the lesson is centered on communication and not grammar translation methodologies (MEXT, 2010). It has been reported in local studies on the issue that JTEs have become anxious about the new initiatives (Yamada & Hristoskova, 2011). Additionally, teachers in similar contexts interpret such initiatives in line with their own immediate situations, which may prompt them to opt out of implementing English-only policies (see Chung and Choi, this volume, about the Teaching English in English (TETE) policy in South Korea). JTEs in pre-service teacher education, if not properly prepared, also may be prone to misinterpret the directives as meaning "100 % English-only" classes (Miura, 2010), a further example of how policy representations can be mischaracterized by teachers.

In team-teaching, the ALT role has been viewed as a primary motivator, and a model of the target language. But, studies have shown that JTEs carry out the role of "interpreter" in a class that they share with a native speaker of English (see Tajino & Walker, 1998). In other words, they use Japanese to interpret the instructions of the native English-speaking teacher. By resorting to such a role, JTEs reinforce perceived anxieties in using the target language in the classroom, a problem common to non-native English-speaking teachers, and an issue known to have had a devastating effect on their self-esteem (Hall & Cook, 2012). Therefore, it is unclear how the 2013 curriculum will affect team-teaching, where the ALT has been expected to use the English language in class, and courses that center on reading and writing skills, where the JTEs have tended to use traditional teaching methods centered on grammar translation and Japanese as a language of instruction. More studies are desperately needed to investigate the impact of the new senior high school policy, and how classes are to be transformed into real communication scenes (MEXT, 2011) by teaching English in English.

The "English in English" initiative is part of the revised curriculum for senior high schools implemented since 2013, which is the latest attempt by MEXT to improve the English curriculum with a total revision of the subjects offered (see Table 2). It is said to be quite ambitious, with a higher emphasis on academic proficiency and an increase in the acquisition of vocabulary (Noguchi, 2015; Stewart, 2009; Yoshida, 2009). As shown in Table 2, the current Course of Study can be distinguished from its predecessor due to the renaming of the subjects.

However, the descriptions of the courses themselves shows that their contents may not significantly change, which may further leave teachers with conflicting information. LoCastro (1996) noted that the policy language in the 1989 Course of Study "remains grammar-oriented – paying only lip service to communicative skills", (p. 44), further arguing that "there is little help for teachers in this regard

Table 2 Changes in the Course of Study for Foreign Languages for upper secondary school 1999 and current (implemented since 2013) (MEXT, 2003; 2011)

1999 Course of Study	Current Course of Study
English I	Communication English Basic
English II	Communication English I
Oral Communication I	Communication English II
Oral Communication II	Communication English III
Reading	English Expression I
Writing	English Expression II
	English Conversation

since a clear outline of what the graded syllabus may be for each level is not provided" (p. 44). Glasgow (2014) shows that the course descriptions in the current Course of Study, despite the name changes, differ little from the previous curriculum. In his study of senior high school JTE and native English-speakers' perceptions of teaching English in English, JTEs who teach alone reported that they were more inclined to use predominantly to entirely Japanese in classes in the previous Course of Study, in courses such as English I, English II, Reading, and Writing, and were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their own language use, which has implications for the implementation of the current Course of Study. Research on this area is still scant, and whether conducting English classes in English is the "best practice" still has yet to be determined, especially in the midst of significant evidence of the reality and benefits of classroom code-switching and use of the first language (L1) (Barnard & McLellan, 2014; Hall & Cook, 2012; Hawkins, 2015).

Another initiative, The "Global 30" Project in Japanese higher education, attempts to promote content courses taught in English to appear internationalized. As pointed out before, Japanese universities that participate in this project aim to attract foreign students to study in Japan. Rivers (2010), however, points out that practical issues surrounding the project remain uncertain such as the assessment of international students, the assessment of Japanese academic staff in their ability to deliver lectures in English, and the extent to which "Global 30" will be truly multicultural, as Japanese nationals are prohibited from participating in it. The exclusion of Japanese students from the program at some universities further accentuates an "us-them mentality" through "ethnolinguistic segregation through the denial of entry into the Global 30 programs for Japanese students" (Rivers, 2010, p. 449). Hence, Global 30 serves as a mechanism to promote Japan by attracting foreign students for study rather than as a tool to foster genuine cultural pluralism. Students in Global 30 are part of a carefully tailored environment that precludes cross-cultural dialogue with Japanese students (Hashimoto, 2013). Also, Ikeda and Bysouth (2013), who investigate the language use of international students at a private Japanese university, note that while some foreign students are choosing to use English as a lingua franca in their school environments, others are determined to use Japanese as a lingua franca between them instead, suggesting that their personal language choices might not be in congruence with policy initiatives.

Therefore, the aforementioned policies in senior high school and university show that Japanese policies in language education have asked for classrooms to be conducted in English only. However, each of them falls short of establishing English as a *medium of instruction* across all subjects in the curriculum, which would clearly require a deeper commitment by the ministry in terms of assessment and resources to ensure that they are implemented systematically and successfully.

4.3 The Paradox of Intercultural Exchange and Understanding

The final representation to be explored here is Japan's efforts to promote intercultural exchange through the study of English. As Japan rose to economic prominence in the 1980s, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone spearheaded the third educational reform in Japan, which was intended to promote intercultural exchange between the Japanese and non-Japanese in the world. *Kokusaika, or* "internationalization", was a major component of this reform, promoting the mutual understanding of Japanese and non-Japanese perspectives through educational, social and cultural opportunities. However, through both content analysis and discourse analysis, researchers pointed out that this form of internationalization was meant to promote the *Japanese language and culture* rather than the acquisition of English skills in particular (Hashimoto, 2000; Kawai, 2007; Liddicoat, 2013). Kubota (2002) notes that *kokusaika* discourses reflect "Japan's struggle to claim its power in the international community through Westernisation (Anglicization in particular) and to affirm Japanese distinct identity" (p. 17). Liddicoat (2013) makes note of the claim that the rationale behind English teaching is to foster Japanese identity in his analysis of the policy texts and discourses behind the senior high school Course of Study, as well as Japanese language spread policy. With statements such as the need for Japan to express itself appropriately to other countries in the world, he asserts that the study of EFL becomes framed in a way that makes "intercultural exchange" mean the monodirectional expression of culture from Japan to the rest of the world.

Conflicts in policy messages regarding intercultural exchange can be further understood through examination of the JET Programme, a government-sponsored program initiated since 1987. The program brings young foreign college and university graduates primarily from English-speaking "Inner Circle"[2] countries (according to Kachru (1985)) such as the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand, although recently teachers from Outer Circle countries have been increasing, albeit slowly, to Japan to work with local governments (MEXT, 2002), most of them serving as ALTs in the Japanese education system. The conflict here arises from the fact that there is tension with respect to the main purpose of the program – that is, whether the ALTs are meant to simply expose Japanese students to foreign

[2]We utilize the terms "Inner Circle" and "Outer Circle" derived from Kachru's Three Circles Model for convenience, but fully aware of its possible limitations.

cultures, or to actually help improve the quality of English teaching, a tension in ALT roles that Mahoney (2004) has previously noted in his analysis of JTE and ALT role self-perceptions. Unlike Hong Kong or South Korea, the JET Programme does not require the ALTs to have teaching experience (Jeon & Lee, 2006). Moreover, the term of ALT contracts is three years, with some contracts being extended to five years. Lai (1999) in a critique of these issues of qualifications, asserts that "[t]his further shows that the Japanese Government values no accumulation of teaching experience, nor is it keen to keep competent foreign language teachers in the country" (p. 219). Due to the lack of teaching qualifications of ALTs, and the degree of preparedness of JTEs to host them (McConnell, 2000), intercultural clashes and teachers' problems in interpreting their roles in team-teaching have been documented extensively (Mahoney, 2004; McConnell, 2000; Tajino & Walker, 1998), with ALTs reporting feeling under-utilized as "human tape recorders" who had limited opportunities to actively co-teach, and Japanese teachers on the other hand, feeling linguistically powerless (Miyazato, 2006) due to their negative self-perception of their language proficiency. Lai (1999) maintains that "the JET Program is meant to be an international exchange programme to promote international competence, yet it is a programme to expand the influence of Japan to the world" (p. 225), a further example of the paradox of "intercultural exchange". Therefore, an unfortunate by-product of this contradiction in policy representation is how native English-speaking teachers (whether ALTs or sole teachers) are positioned in their institutions, in which their qualifications (or lack thereof) and their foreign identities may put them at a disadvantage. Literature on intercultural relations in Japan as it relates to English language teaching is becoming more prominent, with Houghton and Rivers (2013) recently noting the existence of a new type of "native-speakerism" in which *native English speakers* find themselves in disadvantaged working conditions that ultimately affect their professional self-esteem and identities, as opposed to traditional discourses of native-speakerism that purportedly privilege them. Therefore, the notion that Japan is actively attempting to encourage cultural pluralism through intercultural exchange through English LEP is undermined by these aforementioned issues.

Problematic issues in the representation of English LEP as it relates to intercultural exchange can also be detected at the elementary school level. Although in 2020 English will become a formal subject in 5th and 6th grade for elementary school (MEXT, 2014), it is presently introduced in these grades as *foreign language activities* in order to expose students to foreign culture through English, officially implemented in 2011. "Foreign language activities" had been finally implemented in the midst of fierce debate amongst some officials about whether learning English at such a young age is acceptable. Many elementary schools had taught English as a result of an Integrated Study Hour program begun in 2002, partially intended to increase intercultural understanding through exposure to English as a foreign language (Honna & Takeshita, 2005). Currently, however, these language activities are officially recognized in the current Course of Study for elementary school for fifth and six graders, where they take 35-credit hours per year. It is stated that the major objective of English in elementary schools is to give students an experience further

leading to a base for communication (Yoshida, 2012). As stated in its Course of Study, the overall objective of the elementary school *foreign language activities* course is:

> To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages. (MEXT, 2009, p. 1)

One major issue with this curriculum is its recognition as a subject. According to Yoshida (2012), the elementary school curriculum "is not a formal 'subject' in the sense that qualified English teachers are required to teach it, it is not graded in the same way as the other formal subjects, and there is no Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) censored textbook provided" (p. 23). Furthermore, Hashimoto (2011) asserts that the title *foreign language activities* is peculiar since the Ministry of Education does not actually promote any other foreign languages besides English. Such issues contribute to confusion amongst teachers as to how the curriculum is to be systematically implemented in elementary school if it is not supposed to be a subject. She also points out that the contents of the foreign language activities curriculum have incorporated an emphasis on Japanese, seemingly as a compromise for dissenting views about the potential interference of learning a foreign language before mastering Japanese. Furthermore, recent research on its implementation (Machida & Walsh, 2014), in a study involving questionnaires, observations and interviews of 37 Japanese classroom teachers and three American ALTs, Machida and Walsh found that Japanese teachers felt anxious about their levels of proficiency with no common strategies for coping with these anxieties. Also, concern was expressed over the teaching qualifications and professionalism of ALTs, especially when they had to share the classroom through team-teaching. The fact that their professional preparation was not focused on language teaching exacerbated this anxiety. In addition, working with ALTs served to be problematic since the Japanese teachers often encountered teachers who were "native English speakers with little or no teaching experience or training and little knowledge of Japanese schools" (Machida & Walsh, 2014, p. 11). Often these ALTs were contracted by city boards of education through dispatch companies. So even though, according to the elementary school curriculum, homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities should "get more people involved in lessons by inviting native speakers of the foreign language" (MEXT, 2009, p. 2), there are implementation problems on the ground in desperate need of addressing. The two authors point out in this study that elementary school teachers in their 50s have "tried to take early retirement to avoid having to teach English" (Fukyuama, 2008 in Machida & Walsh, 2014, p. 13).

To summarize, through the aforementioned issues, we contend that inherent conflicts within the representations of English LEP leave teachers with few resources to adapt and respond appropriately to the initiatives, leaving them to their own devices. Policy discourses in Japan have espoused communicative approaches to teaching English-only classrooms and promoting intercultural exchange, when contextual

realities in institutions provide a vastly different picture. The university entrance exams, with their focus on grammatical competence, remained intact even though communication through English-only approaches were supposed to be utilized in the classroom. Similarly, the Japanese government's call for internationalization conflicted with culturally essentialist discourses that promoted the understanding of Japanese values and cultures, manifested in the JET programme. ALTs were positioned as a way to bring intercultural exchange and modernity to EFL teaching in Japan in principle; however in practice they are limited in terms of agency due to their positioning as "exoticized natives" (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, p. 94) with few opportunities for professional development. In addition, they may encounter implementational challenges in their classrooms, where their lack of qualifications make it difficult to develop a teaching rapport with their JTE colleagues, as noted in the implementation of *foreign language activities* in elementary school. In short, teachers may not possess the professional knowledge, nor sufficient professional support from resources or institutions, to negotiate English LEP change. This point is further illustrated at the institutional level and individually, as shall be shown in the following sections.

5 Institutional Challenges in Policy Implementation in Japan

In this section, we document the challenges found in the organizational context with respect to implementing English LEP in Japan. We center on the following aspects of institutional practice: (1) the organization of the school curriculum; (2) the professional culture of the institution; and (3) the quality of teaching resources and materials. The examples we present draw primarily from the upper secondary school context, though similar issues can be found in elementary, lower secondary and tertiary education as well.

5.1 Curriculum Organization

One of the challenges in implementing English LEP, as intended, is the fact that school curricula are often organized in contradiction to reform initiatives, as suggested before. Nowhere is this issue more evident than in upper secondary schools, where there is a "dichotomous curriculum" that essentially bifurcates lessons traditionally taught by native vs. nonnative speakers: reading or grammar classes where Japanese teachers predominate vs. speaking and listening classes where native speakers do. Gorsuch (2002), Law (1995), and Sakui (2004) have noted this division of labor, which implicitly favors university entrance exam preparation through the reading and grammar classes as they outnumber speaking and listening classes. Therefore, the classes that focus on oral communication become a mere token due to the fact that they meet less often. These issues have also been documented in

South Korea in the English Programme in Korea (EPIK) as well (Jeon, 2009) where the oral communication classes of native English-speaking teacher assistants have not necessarily been well integrated with the school curriculum. At the level of curriculum delivery in institutions, the "communication" promoted through government rhetoric fails to translate into congruent practices at the institutional level. The implicit assessment policies of the university entrance exam essentially serve as the *de facto* language policy in the classroom, further reinforcing the *seisoku-hensoku* divide, where native English speakers and JTEs work in what Stewart and Miyahara (2011) would refer to as "parallel universes". These authors similar divisions in their study of a large private university in Tokyo, in which foreign professors participate in a "taught in English programme" that develops academic literacy practices (presentation, debate) while Japanese professors handle the reading classes, with little collaboration between the two groups. As Stewart and Miyahara (2011) state, "the very name of the English programme is an explicit positioning in contrast with the reading courses, which, it is taken for granted, are generally taught in Japanese" (p. 67). Therefore these tendencies can be found even in institutions that are private, and reflect an established cultural approach to organizing the EFL curriculum in Japan that does not work to promote the type of communication the ministry promotes.

5.2 Professional Culture

Aside from the structure of the curriculum itself, in their contexts, teachers may be pressured to conform to the professional cultures of their schools. They carry heavy workloads, said to preclude their ability to implement innovations proposed by MEXT. This is especially the case for Japanese teachers of English at the upper secondary school level. O'Donnell (2005) found that teachers spent more of their work time on non-teaching responsibilities than the actual courses. Some of these responsibilities include the supervision of after-school activities, student counseling, university entrance exam preparation courses, and teaching their homeroom classes. This intense pressure felt by teachers of getting through the day and completing administrative duties (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; O'Donnell, 2005; Underwood, 2012) has been cited as an impediment to reform. Underwood, in a study that applies the socio-psychological framework of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior to examine teachers' interpretations of the new Course of Study, showed that institutional norms conflicted with teachers' individual intentions. He found that for some teachers implementing the new curriculum would be difficult due to contrasting beliefs about the university entrance examinations, as well as social pressures from their institution.

Issues involving professional culture can be found at the elementary school level. In her dissertation research on how elementary school teachers interpret and negotiate the *foreign language activities* curriculum and how they enact it in their

classrooms, Horii (2012) found differences in policy appropriation. In one elementary school, Horii discovered that teachers with lower English proficiency and heavy workloads were limited in their agency to implement the elementary school Course of Study. The textbook created by the ministry of education at the time served as the "*de facto* policy that shaped the school's curriculum, lessons and instruction" (p. 177). In another school, Horii pointed out that the teachers had more time and autonomy to collaborate and plan using materials in addition to the textbook, and that one of the JTEs in this context saw her proficiency in Japanese and English as a strength rather than a weakness. Clearly more research has to be done in this area, but there is evidence that a professional culture that is more nurturing, and that is supportive of teachers will serve to be a better organizational context to promote policy implementation.

Collaboration between native and nonnative English speaking teachers as proposed by ministry directives may not be effectively promoted in the culture of schools, which has implications for policy implementation. The most recent Course of Study for Foreign Languages for senior high schools states that "team teaching classes, in cooperation with native speakers etc., should be carried out in order to develop students' communication abilities and to deepen their international understanding" (MEXT, 2011, p. 7) Research in this area has begun to depict the experience of ALTs who taught at senior high schools (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, Geluso, 2013). They showed that though ALTs were intended by MEXT to foster internationalization, they saw themselves as representing essentialized notions of foreign cultures, which influenced the degree to which they felt integrated in their institutions. ALTs viewed themselves as "the exoticized other, unessential to the classroom, interchangeable and foreign" (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011, p. 96) in their institutions through dichotomized curricula. These examples show that in order for new policies to be implemented as intended, some assistance at the local level is required to ensure that teachers in their contexts are not only able to deliver policy directives, but feel empowered to do so with the professional status they attain in their work (see Jeon, this volume regarding Hong Kong native English-speaking teachers in the NET scheme).

5.3 Ministry-Approved Textbooks

In teaching contexts, due to a lack of knowledge for materials development, teachers have struggled with the gap between textbooks geared toward developing grammatical competence and the communicative orientation of the Course of Study (Gorsuch, 1999; McGroarty & Taguchi, 2005), even though the textbooks have been approved by MEXT for release. The textbooks serve as a manifestation of policy representation, or a tangible product of the intended policies, which is why there may be frustration if teachers detect gaps between ministerial intentions and these resources.

In terms of what Kaplan & Baldauf (2003) refer to as *materials policy*, or the subgoal of LEP that involves decision-making about the content of textbooks (as well as teaching manuals), one major issue is that even though communication is the key cornerstone of the Course of Study, the language input of the textbooks may not necessarily reflect curriculum goals. For example, Gorsuch (1999) pointed out the gap between the 1989 Course of Study goals and the representation of communication as shown through ministry-approved textbooks. This is supported by a previous study by LoCastro (1997) in her findings that Japanese EFL textbooks did not contain pragmatic information on politeness strategies, a critical component of the acquisition of communicative competence. McGroarty and Taguchi (2005), in their research on speech act presentation on *Oral Communication A* textbooks found that activities that prompted students to perform grammatical mechanical operations rather than complete open-ended tasks were the norm rather than the exception. From the data in these studies, it can be suggested that compromises are made by materials developers as they negotiate policy directives. Developers may take a more cautious approach so as not to affect their textbook's market share by creating textbooks that do not seem too radical in their changes, and that are still influenced by the content of entrance examinations (Adamson & Davison, 2003; Kennedy & Tomlinson, 2013). In the current senior high school curriculum in Japan, variance in terms of the degree to which the LEP goals are reflected in the organization of the current ministry-approved textbooks has already been noted (Glasgow & Paller, 2014).

Teachers may also be unaware of the ideological messages that promote a dichotomy between Japanese culture and foreign cultures, and may not know how to counterbalance those messages with more pluralistic ones to prepare students for a global society. Schneer (2007) analyzed the content of Japanese senior high school textbooks and found out that ideologies of western and Japanese difference were conspicuous in textbook content, reinforcing ethno-cultural dichotomies. Similarly, Matsuda (2003) has shown how senior high school textbooks fail to expose students to other varieties of English and cultures rather than simply Anglo-American varieties or cultural topics from Inner Circle countries. These problems may result from the problematic articulation of "intercultural exchange" expressed earlier.

To summarize, the context mediates how institutions respond to the dissemination of a new innovation. The tendency of curricula at the local level to be dichotomized (Sakui, 2004) between English for grammar and English for communication reflected the conflict in how the policy intentions were represented at the macro level, with university entrance exams acting as the *de facto* language policy rather than the intentions of MEXT. As Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) suggest, departmental practices where teachers are pressured to get through the day also preclude aspects of new innovations from being implemented. Governmental efforts to change organizational culture are critical in the success of LEP reform. More research also needs to be conducted on the extent to which there is congruity between textbooks and the Course of Study to improve their quality and to support teachers in compensating for the discrepancies. Textbooks are important since teachers use them in

classrooms, and their success will depend on not only the amount of communicative activities present in them, but also how much teachers are confident that the textbooks will positively influence learner acquisition.

6 Individual Agency and Teacher Cognition

Institutions have the ability to enable or constrain human agency in implementation; however, it is ultimately the teachers who have to make sense of their roles. Teachers who interpret their roles in policy implementation are influenced by their beliefs, education as well as their professional identities, and the intersection of these factors with the institution where they work. This section addresses these issues and shows that teachers lack preparation to effectively negotiate policy issues. Perhaps it is time that, as Shohamy (2006) argues, LEP be made a key component in the professional preparation of teachers so that they can effectively interpret and appropriate the current policy environment.

6.1 Teacher Beliefs

What teachers do in the classroom is based on their beliefs and knowledge. The relationships between schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors and classroom practice construct the beliefs, attitudes and knowledge of a teacher (Borg, 2003). As they relate their cognitions to new policy messages, there is sometimes incongruence between teacher cognition and actual practices (Borg, 2003). Sasajima (2012) further explains by pointing out that the "prior language learning experiences which are gained at school may well in some cases therefore have a strong influence on the cognitions of individuals when they become qualified or accomplished teachers at [the schools where they work]" (p. 75). These cognitions may be fixed due to the weak nature of pre-service teacher education which are not based on specific guidelines requiring skills or competencies teachers need to acquire (Sasajima, 2012). Therefore, when teachers make sense of their roles in policy reform, a key point of reference is the set of skills and knowledge they already possess.

Since the implementation of the 1989 Course of Study, with the inclusion of more emphasis on oral communicative output, communicative approaches in the EFL classroom have been challenging for Japanese teachers of English and other teachers in the Asia-Pacific region due to three main factors: (1) conceptual constraints such as perceptions of communication; (2) classroom constraints such as class size (also see Sakui, 2007); and (3) societal-institutional level constraints, such as the grammar-translation oriented entrance exam system (Butler, 2011). These teachers have had difficulties due to the quality of textbooks, language teaching

methodology and the belief that preparing students for entrance examinations is a primary objective for language learning (Cook, 2010; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; O'Donnell, 2005; Sakui, 2004; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Wada (2002) determined that a little over a third of the teachers surveyed in a study on curricular implementation actually used English in their classes, and virtually none of the teachers reported teaching *Oral Communication C* classes. Furthermore, due to the pressures of university entrance exams, at some schools *Oral Communication C* became known as Oral Communication "G", where "G" stands for grammar (Yoshida, 2003). In other words, senior high school teachers used the intended courses to teach grammar instead, as they were under pressure to enable students to pass the entrance exams. Therefore, as shown here, though the course descriptions in the national curriculum guidelines were intended to change teachers' perceptions of how to teach in these classes, some teachers were unable to perceive of these classes as truly geared towards communication due to contextual pressures.

6.2 Teacher Education and Policy Implementation

Finally, it appears that more needs to be done to educate English teachers about how to negotiate LEP in Japan, as literature on the situation with respect to the professional development of EFL teachers has been lacking in the Japanese context. Clearly, language teacher education is critical, as teachers may not have the procedural knowledge to compensate for perceived gaps between mandated policies and pedagogical practices at the institutional level. Varghese and Stritikus (2005) assert that "spaces must be created in teacher education programs" (p. 84) in order for teachers to explore how they can shape or even create policy. In addition, Johnson (2009) asserts that teachers must be prepared to "scrutinize and navigate the consequences that broader macro-structures, such as educational policies and curricular mandates, have on their daily practices" (p. 114).

Currently, in order to become an English teacher, upon graduation from university, the completion of related coursework and participation in a two to four week practicum, teachers apply to their local school board for a teaching certificate (Major & Yamashiro, 2004). In addition, in-service training opportunities may consist of one-month domestic training programs, and one-year study programs sponsored by MEXT (Wada, 2002). However, Lamie (1998) pointed out in a study of 100 JTEs that 77 % of them did not receive training in communicative methodology, but tended to teach as their teachers taught them, which suggests that the training sessions would have to address this gap in knowledge in some way. Furthermore, in her dissertation on 66 Japanese EFL in-service teachers who participated in a U.S. program sponsored by MEXT, Kurihara (2007) found that the teachers benefitted from exposure to communicative methodologies, but were challenged in appropriating the skills that they learned due to their own individual experiences and the teaching settings in which they were situated. Cook (2010) also found strong contextual influences in her study of the effect of overseas in-service training on teaching

practices; she stated that the three teachers in her study were unable to negotiate the implementation of communicative approaches in their contexts. The aforementioned studies have documented the struggles that teachers have when they attempt to implement policies in their schools from the knowledge that they have acquired abroad. They were essentially unable to translate their newly acquired knowledge into practice when they returned to their contexts. These examples show how closely linked individual cognition and situation are in the implementation of policy. They also show that a more localized form of teacher education may be required to develop teachers' necessary expertise to deal with the local challenges in policy implementation raised in this chapter. Native English-speaking teachers will also need to obtain the type of in-service teacher education that will maximize the likelihood for successful integration into their institutions. Breckenridge and Erling (2011) argue that native English speakers as well need legitimate opportunities at their schools to develop professionally, so that they can be seen for their teaching qualifications and not just essentialised notions of "foreignness".

It is through their beliefs and education, and opportunities for professional development that teachers negotiate LEP. Nagamine (2008) raises a critical point when he documented how the teaching and learning beliefs of pre-service JTEs in a teacher education program could be transformed through a teacher education program. One observation that he made was that teacher educators need to give pre-service student-teachers guidance in their professional identity formation. This guidance may occur by helping student-teachers negotiate the gaps between hegemonic professional discourses in TESOL (eg. traditional native-speakerism) that purport to privilege English-only, communicative approaches, and the contextual realities that militate against their implementation. As it stands, teachers are left to their own devices when LEP is presented to them in an abstract manner without recognition of the complex nature of implementation (Liddicoat, 2014). EFL professional development efforts in Japan must determine a systematic and reliable way to support teachers facing implementation challenges, especially as expectations rise for English education in the future.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we perceive that English LEP in Japan is at a crossroads because though governmental initiatives for change continue unabated, as noted with the more recent MEXT *English Education Reform Plan Corresponding to Globalization* (2014), the fundamental question of how teachers will be systematically prepared to respond positively to such changes remains to be answered. Surely the policy changes have the potential to effect English education positively, but not if, as Liddicoat (2014) argues, "limited attention may be given to preparing the ground for policy developments and teachers may not be adequately prepared to implement change through professional learning" (p. 127). We come to this conclusion having discussed all levels of education, in particular the senior high school context, and

related change at these levels to areas such as curriculum organization, professional culture, teaching materials, teacher beliefs and teacher education.

It has already been established that teachers perceive gaps between English LEP and practice in Japan; therefore this area of research is now over-saturated. We propose areas of future research that may aid in a more comprehensive understanding of policy implementation. More research is needed to look more closely at the level of resources and context. For example research should be done on how actors such as textbook publishers interpret policy objectives, since often slippage can be found between policy intentions and textbook representations of policy goals (Adamson & Davison, 2003). Also needed is a further examination of the institutional context and ways that institutional politics enhance or hamper reform initiatives. Research at private lower and upper secondary institutions, which have more autonomy in implementing MEXT curriculum would be particularly useful to determine to what extent their autonomy at the level of departmental organization actually facilitates or precludes their agency in policy implementation. It has been pointed out that the SELHi program has had positive effects (Noguchi, 2015), so more focused research on best practices in similar institutions would be useful. Thirdly, by more closely analyzing the organization of pre-service teacher education curricula in undergraduate institutions as well as in-service initiatives, perhaps we can better understand what sorts of approaches to teacher preparation will better prepare teachers to negotiate the gaps between macro-level policies and micro-level practice. Finally, another area that is under-researched is micro implementation of macro policies at the university level, especially as classes where English is intended to be the medium of instruction in content-based courses. Stroupe's (2014) study on language use in university classrooms is a start in the right direction, especially as English-medium education increases at the tertiary level. Studies on classroom language practices in pre-tertiary education will also be of help to determine what sorts of approaches best suit the Japanese context.

This review of the literature has attempted to provide an overview of the current climate in LEP in Japan. It has been established in this chapter that viewing policy efforts in Japan from a micro language planning perspective is useful, especially when contrasting it with the macro. EFL teachers in Japan are often caught between conflicting messages the divergent realities faced in classrooms, whether in elementary, secondary or tertiary institutions. We have examined the situation from the standpoint of how teachers attempt to make sense of policy messages that are not reconciled with classroom and institutional practices. The literature has also shown that that individual teacher agency is often constrained or enabled by the situation, which is evident from the studies conducted on policy implementation in Japan. As professors and teacher trainers with extensive language teaching experience in Japan, we await further developments that will hopefully lead to more improvements in not only the quality of English language teaching and learning, but also the job security, fulfillment and professional well-being of all language educators.

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