NEEDS ANALYSIS:
DEVELOPING A TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOMEROOM TEACHERS IN JAPAN

YOKO KUSUMOTO

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

ABSTRACT

In response to growing needs for appropriate English communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, many countries, including East Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, have introduced a number of extensive changes in their English language policies (Butler & Iino, 2004; Butler, 2004, 2007; Carless, 2002, 2003, 2006; Igawa, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Su, 2006). In Japan, the lowering of the age of compulsory English instruction has been a major change and a huge concern. The overall findings of existing studies indicate that adequate and appropriate teacher training is key to any success in language education. Responding to the recent drastic change in English education at the elementary school level in Japan, the homeroom teachers' needs should therefore be investigated. The purpose of this study was to conduct a needs analysis for Japanese elementary school homeroom teachers aimed at developing a teacher training program. A questionnaire survey was adopted as the method of the needs analysis, and prior to collecting data, the literature was reviewed. In total, 256 homeroom teachers from 31 public elementary schools in Miyazaki participated in this study. The findings of this study provided valuable implications for curriculum developers and teachers in developing teacher training programs in Japan.

INTRODUCTION

English Education in Elementary Schools

In response to growing needs for appropriate English communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, many countries, including East Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan, have introduced a number of extensive changes in their English language policies (Butler & Iino, 2004; Butler, 2004, 2007; Carless, 2002, 2003, 2006; Igawa, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Su, 2006). In particular, the lowering of the age of compulsory English instruction has been a major change in English language policies in many Asian countries (Butler, 2004;

Nunan, 2003). In fact, belated in comparison to other Asian countries, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan officially announced in March 2008 the decision to lower the age at which English is taught as a compulsory subject. Implementing new language policies in Japan has always resulted from top-down decisions without explicit directions from the government (Butler, 2007). Consequently, it seems that the opinions of the teachers and the schools that are directly influenced by the new policy were not considered. In addition, the lack of adequate and appropriate training is a major problem in Japan as well as in other Asian countries (Nunan, 2003); however, hardly any studies on Japanese elementary school teachers have been conducted. The population of Japanese elementary school teachers in those few studies is mostly from private schools or from urban cities such as Tokyo (Butler, 2004). At private schools, the curriculum is already well established, various materials are available, and teachers are trained to teach English. At public schools in urban cities such as Tokyo, the central government's support and resources are more easily accessible, and there are more pilot schools[1] and hub schools[2] chosen by MEXT in the Kanto (greater Tokyo metropolitan area) area. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate what public elementary school homeroom teachers, who often have not received adequate training in teaching English, need in order to teach English at non-pilot schools and non-hub schools at which the government's support and accessible resources are limited.

What Is Needs Analysis?

Conducting a needs analysis is an important first step in the development of a curriculum that is being developed from scratch for a completely new program (Brown, 1995). According to Brown (1995), the definition of a needs analysis is "the systematic collection and analysis of all

---

[1] Pilot schools are encouraged to develop their own English language course, which is different from English activity under the "international understanding" of the "period of Integrated Study" and required to have annual open classes to demonstrate and share their curriculum development.

[2] Typically one school per 40 elementary schools throughout Japan is selected as a hub school (or model school) by MEXT. At these schools, English activity is conducted during the "period of Integrated Study", and they receive financial support to supply materials from government. These hub schools have ATLs in every lesson, and this year (the 2008 fiscal year), they are using trial versions of "English Notebook", and report to MEXT their usage and suggestions for revision.

subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation" (p. 36). The outcome of a needs analysis should be a list of goals and objectives for the parties involved, which should "serve as the basis for developing tests, materials, teaching activities, and evaluation strategies, as well as for reevaluating the precision accuracy of the original needs assessment" (Brown, 1995, p. 35). Some studies have confirmed that a needs analysis can best be implemented in curriculum development (Bosher & Smalkowski, 2002; Chaudron, Doughty, Kim, Kong, Lee, J., Lee, Y., Long, Rivers, & Urano, 2005).

Bosher and Smalkowski (2002) conducted a needs analysis and developed a course called "Speaking and Listening in a Health-Care Setting" to assist struggling English as a Second Language (ESL) students attempting to enter health-care programs at a private college in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The lack of academic success for ESL students enrolled in the nursing program at the College of St. Catherine lead to an in-depth needs analysis pinpointing that a communication course needed to be designed to help these students. In their study, the needs analysis consisted of interviews with a director and faculty in the nursing program and students in first year courses; questionnaires asking students about the difficulties they were experiencing in the health-care program; and observations of ESL students at different stages of program in lab and clinical settings. Based on the findings of the needs analysis, the researchers concluded that different forms of communication were the greatest concern (e.g., understanding clients, understanding instructors' directions, communicating clearly and effectively, and listening carefully to client information). As a result, the course "Speaking and Listening in a Health-Care Setting" was designed. The course materials and methods were selected based on the findings of the needs analysis. The course had evolved over three years since a pilot course was offered in Spring 1998 in response to an assessment of the effectiveness of the course. Bosher and Smalkowski (2002) reported that the course has been very successful in helping students learn how to communicate effectively in health-care settings.

Similarly, Chaudron et al. (2005) conducted a task-based needs analysis for Korean as a foreign language program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM). The researchers focused on target needs to develop prototype task-based instruction rather than developing an

entire curriculum. According to unstructured interviews with instructional staff and with a random sample of students and to a student questionnaire created based on those interviews, more than 90% of students studying Korean at UHM had already been and/or planned to travel to Korea for various reasons such as academic, occupational, religious, and social purposes. One of the most prominent reasons for learning Korean was better communication when they go to Korea on vacation. Therefore, two target tasks were identified: "following street directions" and "shopping for clothing" based on the needs analysis (p. 233). The researchers further investigated the target tasks by collecting and analyzing target discourse samples gathered in Waikiki, Hawaii, and Seoul, Korea. As a result, Korean Task-Based Language Teaching modules were designed and developed. In their article, Chaudron et al. also described how needs analysis data can be used in task-based materials development as stage one of their project which covers all six components in the design, implementation, and evaluation of a program: needs analysis; syllabus design; materials development; methodology and pedagogy; testing; and evaluation.

Needs Analysis for Various Language Programs

Since needs analysis serves as an important initial step in curriculum design for further development of teaching materials, learning activities, tests, program evaluation strategies, and so forth, there is an impressive amount of research on needs analysis in the language teaching field. Recently, a considerable degree of emphasis has been placed on needs analysis for English for Academic Purposes, English for Business Purposes, and English for Specific Purposes (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002; Brown et al., 2007; Cowling, 2007; Edwards, 2000; Jasso-Aguilar, 2005).

Cowling (2007) conducted a needs analysis and designed a syllabus for an intensive English language course for the Japanese industrial firm, Mitsubishi Heavy Industry (MHI) in Japan. The company has many plant building and maintenance contracts overseas. Therefore, English was important for engineers who needed to converse with foreign clients and suppliers. The target group of learners was first to third year employees who would be assigned to the field or department in their fourth year. The course was run for three days, three times a year for a period of three years. Thus, all new employees would complete a total of nine three-day intensive

courses in their first three years at MHI. A broad objective for the communicative business English course and required topics such as meetings, business telephone skills, and business presentations were set by MHI. Information gathering methods included interviews with staff from the training section of MHI, interviews with language teachers, interviews with target learners (MHI employees), and a structured open-ended questionnaire for students to complete with their senior employees. Based on the results of the needs analysis, Cowling designed two syllabi: the notional-functional syllabus and the content or task-based syllabus. The notional-functional syllabus was employed for the first half of course allowing more structured lessons which is the approach familiar to the learners. Then the content or task-based syllabus was employed for the second half of the course providing learners with the opportunity to practice their English in real situations. Cowling concluded that the needs analysis fulfilled the conditions set by MHI and provided English training for the learners that would be useful for their business workings.

In an unpublished study by a group of students at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa (UHM), researchers described the process of developing an eight-week intensive English course from scratch for first-year students from the Faculty of Management Science at the University of Ubon Rajathanee in Thailand in preparation for English medium instruction (Brown, Choi, de los Rios, Ise, Kang, Kim, Ng, & Toku, 2007). They conducted a needs analysis to identify what faculty members thought their students needed to learn, what skills students thought they needed to improve, and what administrative staff thought the program should achieve using various methods of information gathering. Based on the findings of the needs analysis, they developed reading, writing, and speaking and listening courses with the following objectives: comprehend academic reading materials, write essays, understand academic lectures, participate orally in academic activities, and conduct academic presentations. During the summer of 2007, the intensive English courses were implemented, and the courses were modified by another group of UHM students in the summer of 2008 based on further program evaluation and needs analysis conducted after the first year. That year, classes were offered not only to first year students but also to second year students and beyond. The intensive English courses have been successful, and will be offered again next summer.

Moreover, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) literature has widely discussed the value and importance of a needs analysis in language program and curriculum development for foreign language programs, such as Korean as a Foreign Language and Japanese as a Foreign Language, in addition to English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (e.g., Chaudron et al., 2005; Iwai, Kondo, Lim, Ray, Shimizu, & Brown, 1999). However, needs analysis studies on teacher training have rarely been reported in the literature. Yang (forthcoming) studied student-teachers' needs for the teacher induction practices in a U.S. university English language program. She reported the findings of the needs analysis to the administrators of the English language program, and the administrators implemented a number of teacher induction program changes for its improvement based on the findings. She argued that it is important to identify teachers' needs in order for the teacher induction program to help teachers to get ready for their teaching tasks. As the studies reviewed in this section suggested, needs analysis is an important first step for developing and improving language programs, and such a step should be taken to investigate teachers' needs for English education at elementary school level in Japan.

Background of English Activities at the Elementary School Level in Japan

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan revised and implemented the Ministry's new Courses of Study, the national curriculum guidelines, in 2002. The new Course of Study allows elementary schools to introduce English from the 3rd grade and beyond during the "period of Integrated Study" (*sougouteki na gakushu no jikan*). This study period was originally aimed at providing greater autonomy and flexibility to schools and teachers in designing their own curriculum. This is comprised of four main pillars: information processing, environment studies, health and welfare, and international understanding (*kokusai rikai*). These areas of study are scheduled during the "period of Integrated Study," an average of three hours a week. MEXT suggests that foreign language, for all intents and purposes English, can be included as a part of international understanding. However, they do not stipulate that schools must teach English. Therefore, the decision of whether or not to introduce English in their classrooms and what to teach depends on the local governments' and individual school's choice (Butler, 2004). There are no official guidelines for the elementary school English

curriculum, which means that each school or homeroom teacher decides what to teach (Watanabe, 2006). Thus, English activities, such as songs and games, have been conducted as a part of "international understanding" education in the "period of Integrated Study." Additionally, many schools throughout Japan have started English activities as early as the 1st grade.

Currently, compulsory English education starts in the first year of junior high school. In March 2008, the Central Education Council, an advisory body of the Japanese government, officially announced that they decided to lower the age at which English is taught as a compulsory subject. Under this revision of Course of Study, English will be implemented as a compulsory subject for 5th graders and 6th graders by the 2011 fiscal year, but desirably starting in the 2009 fiscal year. At elementary schools in Japan, the purpose is not to "teach" English in elementary schools, but to provide "fun" time in English and promote familiarity with communicating with people from foreign countries. Therefore, there will be no textbooks even though English will become a compulsory subject. There will be a supplemental "English notebook" to help teachers conducting lessons; however, they are not required to utilize it. MEXT recommends having a foreign assistant language teacher (ALT) for team-teaching for all lessons. Furthermore, no grading or evaluation will be conducted in the English classes. According to MEXT, English at elementary school level should be "experiential learning activities that are suitable for elementary school students" (MEXT 2007). Thus, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are highly promoted in elementary school level despite the research findings suggesting that many English teachers experience difficulties with CLT and TBLT (Carless, 2002, 2003; Duff, 2001; Ellis, 1996; Ito, 2002; Hu, 2002; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Lamie, 2001; Morita, 2004; Pon et al., 2003; Samimy & Kobayashi, 2004; Singh & Doherty, 2004; Wada, 2002).

Purpose

The overall findings of existing studies indicate that adequate and appropriate teacher training is key to success in language education. However, very little research is found regarding teacher training; even less is found in the context of English education in Japan. Responding to the drastic change in English education at the elementary school level, the homeroom teachers' needs should therefore be investigated.

The primary purpose of this exploratory study was to identify what elementary school homeroom teachers, who are not trained to teach English, need to learn in order to be able to teach English to young learners. This study also aimed to examine the homeroom teachers' attitude toward the early English education policy and their own English proficiency. To these ends, a survey questionnaire was administered. Through examining the data that was collected both quantitatively and qualitatively, the following research questions (RQs) were addressed in this study:

RQ1. What are teachers' attitudes toward the early English education policy?

RQ2. What self-reported knowledge regarding elementary English education do teachers possess?

RQ3. What problems or challenges do teachers face as they teach English in elementary schools?

RQ4. What skills and needs do teachers want to address in order to conduct English activities?

RQ5. What additional training do teachers want?

METHODS

Participants

A questionnaire was written in Japanese and distributed randomly to 34 public elementary schools throughout Miyazaki prefecture, in the southern portion of Japan, where the researcher is from. The target respondents were homeroom teachers who have conducted English lessons during the "period of Integrated Study" at public elementary schools. The participants' profiles are summarized in Table 1. Out of 600 copies distributed to 34 elementary schools, 263 responses were returned from 31 elementary schools, and 256 responses were chosen as valid data. After excluding all the responses that were missing more than five Likert-scale answer items, a valid response rate of 42.7% remained. All the participants were public elementary school homeroom teachers ranging in age from their 20s to 50s, and the majority were female (63.7%). Over half of all respondents (62.5%) who were in their 40s and 50s had studied English in college more than 20 years ago.

Table 1

Profiles of Respondents

Category	Details
Total respondents	263
Valid respondents	256
Copies distributed	600
Total response rate	43.8%
Valid response rate	42.7%
Gender	Male-35.9%, Female-63.7%, unanswered-0.4%
Age	20s-9.8%, 30s-27.3%, 40s-48.4%, 50s-14.1%, unanswered-0.4%
Teaching experience*	1-24.6%, 2-30.1%, 3-38.7%, 4-3.5%, 5-3.1%

*Teaching experience: 1. 1-10 years, 2. 11-20 years, 3. 21-30 years, 4. Over 31 years, 5. unanswered

Materials

The main data collection instrument for this paper was a questionnaire written in Japanese (see Appendix for the English language version). The questionnaire was developed by the researcher for a pilot study for the SLS 630 (Second Language Program Development) course in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa in the Spring semester of 2008. The questions were chosen based on brainstorming and discussion with a Japanese classmate also enrolled in the Second Language Program Development class. Feedback on the preliminary draft questionnaire was obtained from a colleague, who has taught English at elementary school in Japan for more than 10 years, and the comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the spring questionnaire. The questionnaire data were collected from schools throughout Japan. Based on this small scale pilot study and comments and suggestions from another colleague, some of the question items were reworded, eliminated, and added for the final version of the questionnaire used in this study.

The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A was designed to capture the participants' background information including teaching experiences, the grades at which they had taught English, their perception of their own English proficiency level, whether they were studying English in order to improve their English proficiency, and whether they have had teacher training regarding teaching English to elementary school students. Section B was

designed to capture the teachers' attitudes towards English education at the elementary school level, their perception of the English abilities they think are necessary in order to teach English, and need for English teaching practice. I designed the questionnaire questions keeping Rossett's (1982, cited in Brown, 1995) five types of questions in mind:

Attitude (see Appendix, Questions B3, B4, B6, B13):

What are the teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards English activities?

Abilities (see Appendix, Question A9, B1, B8, B9):

How proficient are the teachers in English? What self-reported knowledge regarding elementary English education do they possess?

Priorities (see Appendix, Question B2, B5, B7):

What skills and needs do they want to possess in order to conduct English language activities?

Problems (see Appendix, Question B10, B11):

What are the teachers' needs, including in terms of their English language proficiency?

Solutions (see Appendix, Question B12):

What additional training do teachers want?

Teachers were asked to indicate their opinion on a 4-point Likert scale (1=disagree, 4=agree) for 39 items and to circle items from the given choices for two questions. There were also six open-ended questions. Teachers were not asked to provide their names or the names of their schools. However, if they agreed to participate in further studies, they were asked to provide their e-mail addresses.

Procedures

The final questionnaires were distributed to 34 public elementary schools in four cities and four towns in the Miyazaki prefecture of Japan during the summer of 2008. In May 2008, the researcher made phone calls to random elementary schools and made appointments to meet principals or vice-principals and to explain the purpose of the study. Some elementary schools told the researcher to mail the questionnaires to them instead of visiting due to the distance and location of schools. As the result, questionnaires were mailed to seven elementary schools and brought to 27 elementary schools by the researcher. Then vice-principals or head teachers

administered questionnaires in June and July of 2008. Two weeks after the first visit, the researcher revisited the schools to receive the responses.

RESULTS

All of the answers on the questionnaire were coded for quantitative and qualitative analysis. As for any quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used. As for any qualitative data analysis, the open-ended questions were translated and coded into general categories. In this section, the results are presented in the following order: first, a document analysis of the Course of Study is presented to extract the government's perspectives on what knowledge and skills homeroom teachers need in order to teach English at the elementary school level. Syllabi and lesson plans which pilot schools posted on their school websites were also analyzed. Second, the Likert-scale survey results (descriptive statistics) are presented in tables. Third, the responses to open-ended questions are also presented in tables and analyzed qualitatively.

Document Analysis

The course of study for foreign language. On March 28, 2008, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced the release of the New Course of Study. Under this revision of the Course of Study, English becomes compulsory for Grades 5 and 6 by 2011. According to MEXT, the goals of foreign language activities are "to promote greater understanding of languages and culture experientially, to aim at cultivating positive attitudes toward communication, and to develop the foundation of communication skills through experiencing the sounds of a foreign language (i.e., English) and basic expressions" (MEXT, 2008). For the contents of English activities, the new Course of Study states that instruction should mainly focus on the following items:

1. a. Experiencing the enjoyment of communication in English;
    b. Listening and speaking English actively;
    c. Knowing the importance of communication through languages.
2. a. Knowing the difference between the Japanese language and foreign languages and to

       realize the interesting aspects and richness of the language along with familiarization with English sounds and rhythm;

  b. Knowing the differences in customs and life styles between Japan and foreign countries and to know that there are the various points of view;

  c. Deepening understanding of cultures through experience with foreign people.

Some examples of language use situations given in the Course of Study are as follows: greetings, self-introductions, shopping, eating, giving directions, home life, learning and activities at school, giving opinions, expressing feelings, reporting facts, etc. (MEXT, 2008).

As can be seen, the goals, objectives, and contents as given are vague and unclear.

Syllabi and lesson plans. I also examined some curricula that pilot schools posted on their websites. The number of hours of English instruction and the curriculum depend completely on the preferences of each school and the local government. Most of the syllabi are topic-based, and greetings, self-introductions, weather, colors, numbers, body parts, fruits, animals, and sports are popular topics.

At Ijiraminami pilot Elementary School in the central Japanese prefecture of Gifu, 35 to 38 hours per year of English activities were conducted for all grade levels in the 2007-2008 academic year, with different syllabi for each grade level. Although some topics overlap across the grade levels, the target language is different (retrieved from http://www.ip.mirai.ne.jp/~ijira-minamisyo/). Similarly, Kurita Elementary School in Hiroshima prefecture had an average of 35 hours per year for all grade levels in the 2007-2008 academic year. This school also uses a topic-based syllabus. While topics are the same for each grade level (Grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6), each grade level has different target language and activities (retrieved from http://www.city.shobara.hiroshima.jp/shinshi/kakubunopage/kyouikuiinkai/kyouikusidou/english /eigokatudo_gakunen.asp). A major critical finding from the document analysis is that it seems that there are no consistent objectives or outcomes for the English activities. Although each pilot school seemed to have internal consistency and sequence in their syllabus across the grades within the school, the difficulty of the target language varies from school to school. For example, the target language for Grade 3 at one school is the simple question "What fruit do you like? – I like ~." while other school's target language for the same Grade 3 is the comparative "Which fruit do you like better? – I like *X* better." Thus, the document analysis confirmed that what to

teach and how much depends on each school and local government. It is difficult to identify what homeroom teachers are expected to do.

Survey Data

Tables 2 to 11 summarize the descriptive statistics and open-ended responses. The tables show the statistics for each question: number of responses (*N*), mean (*M*), standard deviation (*SD*), and percentages for who selected *disagree*, *slightly disagree*, *slightly agree*, and *agree*. The total number of responses gives an idea of how many teachers left each question blank. The means are simply the mathematical average of the responses with 1 point assigned for *disagree*, 2 for *slightly disagree*, 3 for *slightly agree*, and 4 for *agree*. Generally, the means signify that any questions to which teachers responded with *disagree* (1 point) would have very low means, and any questions to which they responded with *agree* (4 points) would have high means, with simple *slightly disagree* (2 points) and *slightly agree* (3 points) responses falling in between. The percentages selected for each of the possible responses (*disagree*, *slightly disagree*, *slightly agree*, and *agree*) provides a more precise idea of how the distribution of responses fell for each question.

Attitudes. Table 2 below shows teachers' attitudes toward English activities. Although the results show that many teachers enjoy teaching English and learning with their students (44.5% and 69.1% respectively), there are many teachers who feel pressure. 55.1% chose *Disagree* and *Slightly Disagree* on item 3a: *I like English and I enjoy teaching English to my students*. 78.9% feel that conducting English activities is a bigger burden, and 61.0% think it is stressful. While 69.1% responded that it is pleasure to learn new things with their students, 30.1% think that English is not needed at the elementary school level. Figure 1 shows the number of years of experience for teaching English activities. The New Course of Study was implemented in 2002, and it has been six years since English activities during the "period of Integrated Study" was officially started. As can be seen in Figure 1, many teachers have been conducting English activities since 2002 and even before 2002 although the amount of class time per year varies from school to school. While only 13.3% of teachers answered that they dislike English through their experience of teaching English, 60.2% still feel resistance to English. Moreover, many teachers reported that they have not improved their pronunciation and listening abilities and

communication skills with foreigners even though they said it is pleasure to learn new things with their students. Thus, the results reveal that the teachers' attitude toward the English activities is not so positive.

Table 2

Teachers' Attitudes Towards English Activities

|	N	M	SD	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree
Frankly speaking, I feel the following about teaching English at the elementary school level:							
I like English and I enjoy teaching English to my students	255	2.40	0.81	12.9	42.2	36.7	7.8
It is pleasure that I can learn new things with my students	254	2.78	0.71	4.3	25.8	57.0	12.1
I have a bigger burden in preparation due to the additional subject	255	3.11	0.80	3.1	17.6	44.1	34.8
I am struggling to teach English because it is not my specialty	255	2.85	0.93	6.6	32.0	30.9	30.1
I feel that English is not needed in elementary school level	253	2.22	0.93	21.5	47.3	16.8	13.3
Through my experience of teaching English,							
My feelings of resistance to English have decreased	253	2.31	0.76	12.9	47.3	33.6	5.1
I improved my pronunciation and listening ability	253	2.03	0.67	19.1	59.4	18.4	2.0
I became interested in foreign countries	253	2.49	0.77	10.2	37.1	44.5	7.0
I gained communication skills with foreigners	253	2.17	0.74	17.2	50.4	28.1	3.1
I dislike English now	250	1.84	0.75	33.2	51.2	9.0	4.3
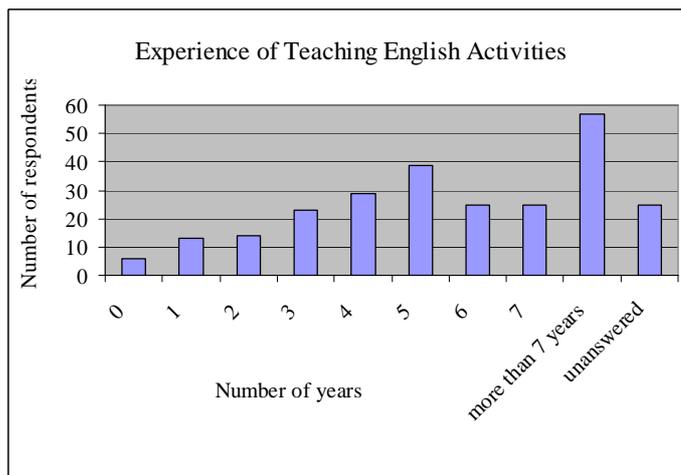
Figure 1: Experience Teaching English Activities

Table 3 below shows the perception of what level of English proficiency is needed for elementary school teachers to teach English. The data shows interesting results because they are somewhat contradicting. For example, the responses to item 6c in the table show that 68.8% of teachers believe that they do not need to have native-like pronunciation. However, 50% of teachers chose *disagree* and *slightly disagree* to item 6d: *if I can communicate with foreigners, Japanese accent is not a problem*, which implies they believe that a Japanese accent is a problem. Therefore, the responses indicate that native-like pronunciation is not necessary, but a Japanese accent is perceived as problematic. Question items 6a, 6b and 6e indicate that many teachers think English proficiency such as being able to communicate with foreigners in English is necessary to teach English (74.3% on *slightly agree* and *agree*) and yet still think that knowing simple classroom English expression is enough (63.3% on *slightly agree* and *agree*). 82.0% of teachers chose *disagree* and *slightly disagree* to item 6e: *English proficiency is not so important*, which implies that they believe that it is important. The discrepancy seems to suggest that teachers are not clear how proficient they need to be in order to teach English.

Table 3

Teachers' Perception in English Ability

6	**I believe that I need these proficiency skills to teach English:**	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree
a	Language proficiency to be able to speak with foreigners in daily life	256	3.02	0.82	3.5	22.3	43.0	31.3
b	Knowledge of simple classroom English expression is enough	255	2.76	0.76	3.9	32.4	47.3	16.0
c	Native-like pronunciation	256	2.18	0.77	17.6	51.2	26.6	4.7
d	If I can communicate with foreigners, the Japanese accent is not a problem	255	2.53	0.81	9.0	41.0	37.9	11.7
e	English proficiency is not so important	253	1.83	0.78	36.7	45.3	13.3	3.5

Abilities. When the teachers were asked to identify how they perceive their English language proficiency, only 14 (5.5%) out of 256 teachers reported that they think they have sufficient ability to teach English at the elementary school level as can be seen in Table 4. 77 teachers (30.1%) answered that they do not think their English ability is sufficient but responded that they have no problems conducting lessons. 123 (48.0%) indicated they are not confident enough with their English, and they are anxious about teaching English. 40 (15.6%) have no confidence in their English ability at all and feel pressure to teach English. Two respondents did not answer and left the question blank. Thus the questionnaire responses revealed that more than half (63.6%) of homeroom teachers are not confident with their English, and they would rather not teach English. In an open-ended question, many teachers commented "*English experts, not homeroom teachers, should teach English.*" I believe that this is a very natural and honest feeling because homeroom teachers are not trained to teach English. As a result, the majority of teachers play English games and sing English songs as main activities (96.9% and 88.3%, respectively), which do not require much English speaking as opposed to reading English picture books, for their lessons as presented in Table 5. Reading English picture books and *kamishibai* (picture-story show) is the lowest in rank of conducted activity but the highest in rank that teachers want to try in their class.

Table 4

Teachers' Perception of their English Proficiency

	What do you think about your English ability?	*N*	%
1	I have sufficient ability to teach at the elementary school level	14	5.5%
2	I do not think it's sufficient enough, but I have no problem conducting lessons	77	30.1%
3	I am not confident enough with my English, and I am anxious about teaching English	123	48.0%
4	I am not confident at all, and I feel pressure to teach English	40	15.6%
	Total	254	99.2%

Table 5

Teachers' Preference of English Activities

Activities	Rank	Have done %	Rank	Want to try %
Playing English games	1	96.9	8	14.1
Singing English songs	2	88.3	8	14.1
Playing with words (i.e., tongue twister) and chants	3	63.3	6	22.3
Memorizing and performing simple conversations and skits	4	55.9	7	17.6
Role-playing (i.e., salesperson and customer)	5	44.1	3	34.8
Introducing other countries' holidays and festivals (i.e., Halloween, Christmas, etc.)	6	25.4	4	33.2
Introducing various languages (i.e., greetings, sayings, etc.)	7	25.0	5	29.3
Introducing various foreign foods (i.e., showing pictures, tasting, etc.)	8	18.4	2	36.7
Reading English picture books and *kamishibai* (picture-story show)	9	8.6	1	41.4

Priorities. The elementary school homeroom teachers' prioritizations of which English skills are necessary to teach English were obtained in question 5. As indicated in Table 6, many teachers want to improve their speaking, listening, and communication skills for more natural communication with ALTs as shown by the high mean (*M*) of 3.55. English pronunciation is another skill which many teachers want to improve. The results indicate that most teachers agreed that they want to improve their oral proficiency, resulting in a narrow standard deviation (*SD*=0.63-0.66). On the other hand, the means (*M*) related to reading and writing skills are relatively low, 2.78 and 2.56, repectively. This result appears to be consistent with teachers' desired levels of proficiency in Butler's study (2004) which reported elementary school teachers' self-assesed and desired levels of English proficiency. Teachers deemphasize written language instruction. The results suggest that the teachers are aware that the focus of English activities at elementary school level is communicative competence.

Table 6

Teachers' Priority in English Ability

5	To teach English, I would like to improve the following skills	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree
a	Pronunciation	254	3.34	0.74	2.0	10.5	38.3	48.4
b	Speaking skills	256	3.55	0.65	1.6	3.9	32.0	62.5
c	Listening skills	256	3.55	0.66	1.2	5.9	30.1	62.9
d	Reading skills	251	2.78	0.78	3.5	33.6	42.2	18.8
e	Writing skills	251	2.56	0.76	5.1	44.5	36.7	11.7
f	Communication skills for more natural communication with the ALT	252	3.55	0.63	1.6	2.7	34.4	59.8

Question 7 in Table 7 was designed to itemize the teachers' needs for English teaching practices in addition to needs for improving their English language abilities. As can be seen, many teachers want to know games, songs, and useful lesson plans, with high means of 3.52, 3.41, and 3.52, respectively. It seems that teachers want to know practical teaching activities and lesson plans that they can adopt in their classrooms. This can be interpreted to mean that many teachers are spending a lot of time and are struggling with planning and preparing for their classes, therefore, they want to know lessons that do not require a lot of preparation time. This corresponds with what teachers said in the open-ended question. As presented in Table 8, the most frequently noted challenge is to ensure *preparation time*, including meeting with an ALT. The second most frequently noted difficulty is *material*. Some teachers said there is not enough material available, and some said they do not know how to use the material even if it is available. Thus, many teachers chose *agree* and *slightly agree* on items about how to use and how to choose materials (item 7o and 7p and 75.4% and 77.4%, respectively). However, they gave lower priority to knowing how to develop their materials with the relatively low mean under 2.48.

The results also indicate that teachers are most concerned about young learners' development. 94.5% of teachers chose *agree* and *slightly agree* on item 7e: *English activities suitable for the developmental stages of children*, and 92.2% chose *agree* and *slightly agree* on item 5m: *English language pedagogy that suits young learners.* They also gave a higher priority to learning about how to develop lesson plans and curriculum on items 7g, 7h, and 7i with relatively high means and narrow standard deviation (*M*= 3.23, *SD*=0.71; *M*=3.18, *SD*=0.69; and *M*=3.15, *SD*= 0.72,

respectively). This suggests that teachers are concerned about their current teaching practices, related to how most schools and teachers adopt and use lesson plans released by the pilot schools. They feel they should stop simply using other schools' curriculum and need to start adapting or developing curriculum to suit their own students' needs and abilities. I think this is a very positive attitude. Teachers' voices are not taken into account in decisions related to language policy, and teachers cannot easily do anything about the government's decision. Thus, it is necessary for the teachers to have a positive attitude toward the changes in order for the new policy to be successfully implemented.

On the other hand, teachers gave a lower priority to learning about teaching theories with a low mean of 2.33 on item 7j: *introduction to second language acquisition theory*. In addition, perhaps surprisingly, some teachers did not agree that knowing the cultures of other countries is important, and the mean of item 7l: *methodology of cross-cultural understanding* is only 2.69. English activities are included in the international understanding pillar of the "period of Integrated Study" with the aim of promoting intercultural awareness. I believe that cross-cultural understanding is an important aspect of international understanding. Even though the mean of item 7d: *culture of foreign countries* is relatively high (*M*=3.51, *SD*=0.63) and teachers think knowing the cultures of other countries is important, if they do not know how to teach cross-cultural understanding, it will not meet the goals of the English activities. It may imply that the teachers' understanding of the purposes of English education at the elementary school level varies individually. It cannot be generalized with this small sample, but it corresponds with what teachers said in the open-ended questions and when interview during the Spring 2008 study.

Table 7

Teacher Priority in Teaching Practice

7	To teach English more effectively, I would like to know/learn the following better:	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree
a	Useful games	256	3.52	0.62	1.2	3.5	37.1	58.2
b	Easy English songs	255	3.41	0.67	1.2	6.6	42.2	49.6
c	Useful lesson plans	256	3.52	0.65	1.2	5.1	34.4	59.4
d	Culture of foreign countries	254	3.03	0.63	0.8	16.0	62.1	20.3
e	English activities suitable for the developmental stages of children	255	3.51	0.63	1.2	3.9	37.5	57.0
f	Websites for useful teaching materials	254	3.17	0.81	2.7	18.0	38.3	40.2
g	How to make an one-hour lesson plan	255	3.23	0.71	2.0	10.2	50.4	37.1
h	How to link units and lessons across classes	254	3.18	0.69	2.3	9.8	55.1	32.0
i	How to develop a one-year curriculum	255	3.15	0.72	2.3	12.5	53.1	31.6
j	Introduction to second language acquisition theory	254	2.33	0.79	13.3	46.9	32.4	6.6
k	Various English language pedagogy	254	2.90	0.80	4.3	24.2	47.7	23.0
l	Methodology of cross-cultural understanding	256	2.69	0.72	3.1	37.1	47.7	12.1
m	English language pedagogy that suits young learners	256	3.39	0.64	0.4	7.4	45.3	46.9
n	How to conduct team teaching with the ALT effectively	255	3.24	0.67	1.2	9.8	52.3	36.3
o	Useful teaching materials & tools (i.e., picture books & videos) and how to use them	255	2.98	0.73	1.6	22.7	51.2	24.2
p	How to choose materials	255	2.98	0.71	2.0	20.3	55.1	22.3
q	How to develop materials	255	2.48	0.78	9.0	43.0	38.7	9.0
r	The meaning and the purpose of English education at elementary schools	248	2.61	0.79	7.4	34.8	42.6	12.1

Problems. Table 8 summarizes the teachers' difficulties in preparing English activities and Table 9 summarizes the difficulties in conducting lessons. The most frequently reported difficulties in preparing were related to material and time issues. Since there is no textbook and no clear guideline for the English activity, homeroom teachers need to make the decision about what to teach. Teachers need to find and utilize teaching materials to aid their lessons. However, many teachers reported that unlike pilot schools and hub schools where they receive budgeting for English activity from government, there are not enough materials. Homeroom teachers have to make their materials such as picture cards and posters at their expense. One teacher wrote:

We have an "English Room" at the school where I previously worked. So, when we have an English activity, we go to that room. And in the room, there is a big world map, pictures, signs, and flags of other countries on the wall. There is also a magnet board map to teach directions, plastic fruits and vegetables for grocery shopping role playing, and CDs of useful English songs. But here, at my new school, there are only two sets of picture cards and one music box (chants CD). I have to share them with 15 other teachers, but sometimes I can't use them because we have an English class during the same period. I don't know what I can teach without the visual aids and tools.

Another teacher wrote:

English is not the only subject I am teaching. I have to prepare for other classes too. But since there is no textbook and not enough materials, I have to spend enormous amounts of time to make lesson plans and create picture cards, game sheets, etc. I want to go to English conversation school to learn English, but I have no time for that, no time for preparation for other subjects, and no time to talk to my students.

Without knowing what and how much to teach clearly and without adequate teaching materials, homeroom teachers are facing various difficulties in the classrooms. To my surprise, many teachers were concerned about their pronunciation, and some of them think that they need to conduct lessons in English only. It may be no exaggeration to say that none of the English teachers at junior and senior high schools are able to conduct English-only lessons. Thus it is almost impossible for elementary homeroom teachers to conduct English only lessons. It seems that there is misunderstanding or misinterpretation of what MEXT says about "communicative language teaching." Many teachers think that it means "English only" or lots of native-like oral input and one wrote, "*I feel sorry for my students that I can't provide them with proper input, because of my poor English proficiency and pronunciation.*"

Table 8

Concerns and Challenges in Lesson Preparation

Concerns and Challenges	Frequency
Lack of materials	36
Lack of time	32
Material preparation	21
Lack of time for meeting/briefing with an ALT	15
No idea of lesson plans	8
Systemization of materials	5
How to make one-hour lesson plan	4
How to select effective games and activities	4
Lack of class time resulting in lack of memory retention	3
Leaving everything to an ALT (cannot conduct lessons if transferred to a school where the ALT does not work)	3
Out-of-pocket cost for materials	3
How to communicate with an ALT for briefing	2
Need for useful guidelines and manuals	1
Lack of teacher training opportunities	1
Need for organized support to reduce homeroom teachers' overload	1
Need for an English expert for the homeroom teachers to consult	1
Total	140

Table 9

Concerns and Challenges in Conducting Lessons

Concerns and Challenges	Frequency
Pronunciation	31
English proficiency	23
Ways to conduct team teaching with an ALT	9
No connections across lessons and units	9
Time management	8
Ways to communicate with an ALT for planning lessons and briefing	6
Humdrum lessons, lessons in a rut	6
Lack of clear objectives and goals	6
Preparation	4
Too much to expect from homeroom teachers. Should use English experts	4
English only lessons	3
Lack of class time resulting in lack of memory retention	3
Out-of-pocket cost for materials	2
Content of lessons may not suit the students' ability and interest	2
Leaving everything to an ALT. I cannot teach by myself.	2
Lessons are fun but meaningless.	1
Some students have difficulties in Japanese. They barely understand and participate in the activities.	1
It is difficult to make students feel the relevance of speaking English.	1
Perspective from 2011 (when English becomes mandatory)	1
Balance between English and Japanese	1
Class size (too many students)	1
Difference in students' abilities	1
Confusing to know how and when to use the available materials.	1
I do not motivate students because of my lack of confidence	1
Total	127

Solutions. When teachers were asked to identify whether they received teacher training regarding English education at elementary school level, 206 teachers (80.5%) reported that they received some sort of teacher training organized at the school, city, and prefectural levels. 48 (18.8%) reported that they never received teacher training, and two participants left the question blank. Most of the in-service teacher training identified in the questionnaire were held at individual school level, and once a year for a couple of hours during the longer summer or winter break. Table 10 summarizes the contents of teacher training that participants identified. The content most frequently taught at in-service teacher training included classroom English and English activities followed by class observation at open-school of pilot schools. It seems that the purposes and value of English activities are not treated as important matters in the teacher training session, while some teachers seek for clear explanation and guidelines for English activities. This suggests that from the teacher training, teachers learn something practical that they can use in their classroom right away in their teaching.

Table 10

Content of Previous Teacher Training

Content or Topic	Frequency
Classroom English	54
English activities (games, songs, and chants)	48
Class observation at pilot schools	15
English conversation	10
Lesson plans	9
Trial lesson	9
Lecture	9
Training held by MEXT	2
Pronunciation	1
Socializing with ALTs	1
Total	158

From 158 responses, only ten topics were mentioned for previous in-service teacher training. On the other hand, more various topics were identified for future teacher training that teachers

were interested in. These 19 additional topics were mentioned from 185 responses and are presented in Table 11. Although the most frequently mentioned topic was "game," a total of 47 answers were related to teachers' English proficiency including pronunciation. Pronunciation and English proficiency were identified as the difficulties in conducting lessons and these results are listed in Table 9. The responses to teachers' difficulties and their desire in the content for future teacher training thus correspond with each other.

Table 11

Desired Content for Future Teacher Training

Content or Topic	Frequency
Games	29
How to make one-hour lesson plans	28
Teaching methods	23
Language proficiency at the conversational level	21
Classroom English & teacher talk	14
Language proficiency in terms of the pronunciation	12
Developing an one-year curriculum	12
Motivating students	10
What and how much to teach	6
Sample lesson plans that can be conducted by a homeroom teacher alone	6
Activity ideas (songs, chants, role plays, etc.)	6
International understanding, cross-cultural understanding	4
Best ways to conduct team teaching with an ALT	3
Purpose of English at Elementary level	3
Ways to create teaching materials	2
Connecting elementary school and junior/senior high school English lessons	2
Self-esteem/self-confidence	2
Everything about English education	1
Ways to social with foreigners	1
Total	185

Principal Components Analysis

Principal components analysis was employed to detect patterns in the questionnaire responses. The number of components was determined by examining the scree plot in Figure 2. By looking for the natural bend or breaking point in the graph where the curve flattens out, it can be said that there were four or five components involved in this survey instrument. Hence, I ran the principal components analysis twice setting the number of components extracted at four and then at five. Then I compared the item loading tables looking for the clearer structure pattern with item loadings above 0.30 and no or few item cross-loadings as Costello and Osborne (2005) suggested. As a result, it appears likely that four components underlay this survey instrument.
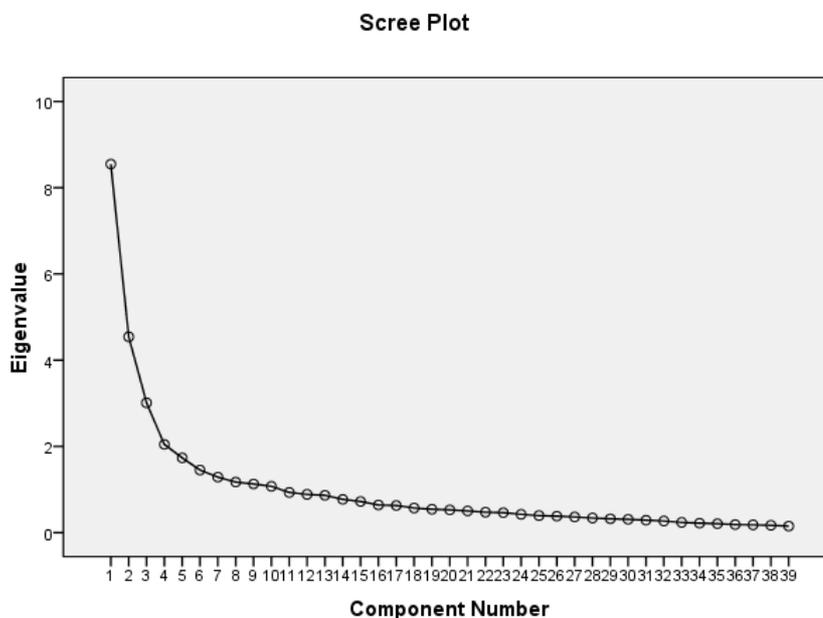
Figure 2: Scree Plot for the Pricipal Components Analysis

Table 12 presents the results of principal components analysis after Varimax rotation (with Kaiser normalization). The cut-point for component loading was set at 0.30, and items with loadings of 0.30 and higher are indicated with asterisk and the highest loading for each variable is indicated in boldface type in Table 12. Labels for the four components were determined by looking for common characteristics among the items, which had high loadings on each component. Table 13 shows the results sorted by the loadings on each component, and the

common characteristics of the items that loaded more than 0.30 on the component are summarized. The four components listed in Table 13 accounted for 46.5% of the total variance of the response patterns.

According to the principal components analysis results shown in Table 12, questions regarding how they feel about English activities and how it influenced them (3a to 4e) loaded most heavily on component 3. Other questions showed somewhat complex patterns. Some items showed loadings over 0.30 on two components indicating that they were also related to other subsections. For example, the loadings of the item 7d, 7f, 7m, and 7n are very close on components 1 and 2. The loading of item 7g is exactly the same on components 1 and 2.

Table 13 shows the results sorted by the loadings on each component. The items 7a, 7c, 7b, 5c, 5f, 7e, 5a, 7m, 7n, and 6e are all loaded above 0.30 on component 1. These items are about the practical knowledge and skill that teachers need, therefore, it would be reasonable to label component 1 as the "practical needs" component. Similarly, based on the loadings of 0.42 to 0.68 for items 7l, 7j, 7i, 7k, 7q, 7h, 7p, 7r, 7g, 7o, 7d, and 7f on component 2, it could be labeled as the "pedagogical needs" component. Based on the loadings of 0.43 to 0.74 for items 3 and 4 on component 3, it could reasonably be labeled as "attitude toward English activity." Based on the loadings of 0.45 to 0.73 for items 5e, 5d, 6c, and 6a on component 4, it could be labeled something like "unnecessary English proficiency for homeroom teachers but favorable skills."

Two items, 6b and 6d at the bottom of Table 13, do not load above 0.30 with any of the other items in this four-component solution. The commonalities of 0.11 and 0.07 for these questions indicate that this four-component solution does not explain much for the variance in these two questions. They can be dropped from any further versions of the questionnaire. The patterns found in this principal components analysis are further supported by the fact that each subset of items produced high reliability as discussed in the next paragraph.

Table 12

Four Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Item	Statement	Component				
		1	2	3	4	h^2
3a	I like English and I enjoy teaching English to my students	-0.13	0.12	**0.74***	-0.16	0.60
3b	It is pleasure that I can learn new things with my students	0.08	0.26	**0.62***	-0.10	0.47
3c	I have a bigger burden in preparation due to the additional subject	-0.20	0.07	**0.43***	-0.09	0.24
3d	I am struggling to teach English because it is not my specialty	-0.15	0.03	**0.62***	-0.24	0.47
3e	I feel that English is not needed in elementary school level	0.16	0.09	**0.60***	0.01	0.39
4a	My feelings of resistance to English have decreased	0.07	-0.05	**0.74***	0.10	0.57
4b	I improved my pronunciation and listening ability	-0.03	0.02	**0.74***	0.19	0.58
4c	I became interested in foreign countries	0.15	0.03	**0.65***	0.18	0.47
4d	I gained communication skills with foreigners	0.07	0.00	**0.70***	0.18	0.52
4e	I dislike English now	0.20	-0.05	**0.59***	-0.16	0.41
5a	Pronunciation	**0.61***	0.00	0.18	0.40*	0.57
5b	Speaking skills	**0.71***	0.03	0.25	0.31*	0.67
5c	Listening skills	**0.72***	0.05	0.20	0.25	0.62
5d	Reading skills	0.27	0.07	0.05	**0.72***	0.61
5e	Writing skills	0.14	0.13	0.09	**0.73***	0.57
5f	Communication skills for more natural communication with the ALT	**0.72***	0.08	0.11	0.15	0.55
6a	Language proficiency to be able to speak with foreigners in daily life	0.28	0.21	-0.06	**0.45***	0.33
6b	Knowledge of simple classroom English expression is enough	0.23	-0.02	0.10	-0.22	0.11
6c	Native-like pronunciation	-0.08	0.23	-0.10	**0.47***	0.29
6d	If I can communicate with foreigners, the Japanese accent is not a problem	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.26	0.07
6e	English proficiency is not so important	**0.38***	0.09	0.06	0.17	0.19
7a	Useful games	**0.78***	0.13	-0.07	-0.14	0.65
7b	Easy English songs	**0.75***	0.18	-0.09	-0.16	0.63
7c	Useful lesson plans	**0.75***	0.26	-0.11	-0.09	0.65
7d	Culture of foreign countries	0.33*	**0.44***	0.00	-0.03	0.30
7e	English activities suitable for the developmental stages of children	**0.69***	0.36*	-0.10	-0.01	0.61
7f	Websites for useful teaching materials	0.37*	**0.42***	0.09	0.03	0.33
7g	How to make an one-hour lesson plan	**0.52***	**0.52***	-0.09	0.05	0.55
7h	How to link units and lessons across classes	0.35*	**0.63***	-0.08	0.00	0.52
7i	How to develop a one-year curriculum	0.28	**0.66***	-0.02	0.03	0.52
7j	Introduction to second language acquisition theory	-0.18	**0.68***	0.17	0.07	0.52
7k	Various English language pedagogy	0.11	**0.65***	0.07	0.11	0.45
7l	Methodology of cross-cultural understanding	0.05	**0.68***	0.24	0.01	0.52
7m	English language pedagogy that suits young learners	**0.47***	0.46*	-0.06	0.01	0.44
7n	How to conduct team teaching with the ALT effectively	**0.47***	0.46*	-0.04	0.16	0.45
7o	Useful teaching materials & tools (i.e., picture books & videos) and how to use them	0.22	**0.49***	-0.07	0.14	0.32
7p	How to choose materials	0.25	**0.62***	-0.03	0.17	0.47
7q	How to develop materials	-0.11	**0.65***	0.22	0.17	0.51
7r	The meaning and the purpose of English education at elementary schools	0.03	**0.62***	0.12	0.05	0.40
	Proportion of Variance	15.62	12.55	7.72	5.25	46.53

*=Loading over 0.30; **bold**= highest loading for each varible.

Table 13

Four Component Analysis (after Varimax Rotation) Sorted by Component

Item	Statement	1 Practical needs	2 Pedagogical needs	3 Attitude toward English activity	4 Favorable skills	h^2
7a	Useful games	**0.78**	0.13	-0.07	-0.14	0.65
7c	Useful lesson plans	**0.75**	0.26	-0.11	-0.09	0.65
7b	Easy English songs	**0.75**	0.18	-0.09	-0.16	0.63
5c	Listening skills	**0.72**	0.05	0.20	0.25	0.62
5f	Communication skills for more natural communication with the ALT	**0.72**	0.08	0.11	0.15	0.55
5b	Speaking skills	**0.71**	0.03	0.25	0.31	0.67
7e	English activities suitable for the developmental stages of children	**0.69**	0.36	-0.10	-0.01	0.61
5a	Pronunciation	**0.61**	0.00	0.18	0.40	0.57
7m	English language pedagogy that suits young learners	**0.47**	0.46	-0.06	0.01	0.44
7n	How to conduct team teaching with the ALT effectively	**0.47**	0.46	-0.04	0.16	0.45
6e	English proficiency is not so important	**0.38**	0.09	0.06	0.17	0.19
7l	Methodology of cross-cultural understanding	0.05	**0.68**	0.24	0.01	0.52
7j	Introduction to second language acquisition theory	-0.18	**0.68**	0.17	0.07	0.52
7i	How to develop a one-year curriculum	0.28	**0.66**	-0.02	0.03	0.52
7k	Various English language pedagogy	0.11	**0.65**	0.07	0.11	0.45
7q	How to develop materials	-0.11	**0.65**	0.22	0.17	0.51
7h	How to link units and lessons across classes	0.35	**0.63**	-0.08	0.00	0.52
7p	How to choose materials	0.25	**0.62**	-0.03	0.17	0.47
7r	The meaning and the purpose of English education at elementary schools	0.03	**0.62**	0.12	0.05	0.40
7g	How to make an one-hour lesson plan	0.52	**0.52**	-0.09	0.05	0.55
7o	Useful teaching materials & tools (i.e., picture books & videos) and how to use them	0.22	**0.49**	-0.07	0.14	0.32
7d	Culture of foreign countries	0.33	**0.44**	0.00	-0.03	0.30
7f	Websites for useful teaching materials	0.37	**0.42**	0.09	0.03	0.33
4a	My feelings of resistance to English have decreased	0.07	-0.05	**0.74**	0.10	0.57
3a	I like English and I enjoy teaching English to my students	-0.13	0.12	**0.74**	-0.16	0.60
4b	I improved my pronunciation and listening ability	-0.03	0.02	**0.74**	0.19	0.58
4d	I gained communication skills with foreigners	0.07	0.00	**0.70**	0.18	0.52
4c	I became interested in foreign countries	0.15	0.03	**0.65**	0.18	0.47
3d	I am struggling to teach English because it is not my specialty	-0.15	0.03	**0.62**	-0.24	0.47
3b	It is pleasure that I can learn new things with my students	0.08	0.26	**0.62**	-0.10	0.47
3e	I feel that English is not needed in elementary school level	0.16	0.09	**0.60**	0.01	0.39
4e	I dislike English now	0.20	-0.05	**0.59**	-0.16	0.41
3c	I have a bigger burden in preparation due to the additional subject	-0.20	0.07	**0.43**	-0.09	0.24
5e	Writing skills	0.14	0.13	0.09	**0.73**	0.57
5d	Reading skills	0.27	0.07	0.05	**0.72**	0.61
6c	Native-like pronunciation	-0.08	0.23	-0.10	**0.47**	0.29
6a	Language proficiency to be able to speak with foreigners in daily life	0.28	0.21	-0.06	**0.45**	0.33
6b	Knowledge of simple classroom English expression is enough	0.23	-0.02	0.10	-0.22	0.11
6d	If I can communicate with foreigners, the Japanese accent is not a problem	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.26	0.07
	Proportion of Variance	15.62	12.56	7.72	5.25	46.53

Reliability

To examine the consistency of the answers to the questions, the Cronbach alpha internal-consistency estimate was employed. Cronbach alpha (α) for the whole questionnaire was 0.87. In other words, these questions are about 87% reliable and about 13% unreliable. Since high reliability for the whole survey could indicate the subsections in the questionnaire were not as different as they were designed to be (Brown, 2001), Cronbach alpha (α) was calculated for each of the four subsections as well. Cronbach alpha (α) for those questions that loaded most heavily on component 1 was 0.86, for component 2 was 0.90, for component 3 was 0.81, and for component 4 was 0.74. These results indicate that this questionnaire was generally quite reliable.

DISCUSSION

Gaps were found between MEXT aims and the reality of English activities at elementary schools. The goals and objectives of English education at the elementary school level, as well as the frequencies and types of English classes offered, vary surprisingly from school to school. This variation has a great impact on teachers' attitudes and anxieties toward, and readiness for the implementation of the new Course of Study by 2011. One teacher wrote:

The focus of the "period of Integrated Study" of my previous school was health and welfare, not international understanding. So, I have never done this type of English activity, and I am lost and confused. I don't know what to do.

RQ1. What are teachers' attitudes toward the early English education policy?

As the questionnaire results show in Table 2, 78.9% of elementary school homeroom teachers feel that conducting an English activity is a big burden, and nearly one-third of the participants think that English is not needed at the elementary school level. The comments on the open-ended questions illustrated the reasons. For example, many teachers were concerned about students' proficiency and ability in Japanese language and the negative influence of second language learning on students' first language development such as "*Japanese is more important than English*" and "*Students need to develop Japanese first.*" Many teachers believe English can be learned after the students fully develop their Japanese proficiency. Some teachers also believe that there are more important issues to be taught such as moral education and the importance of

life because of the increasing number of children committing suicide after being bullied. According to the results of the questionnaire, most teachers have a somewhat negative attitude toward English as a mandatory subject. Even though very few in number, there are still some teachers who strongly believe in the necessity of early English education.

RQ2. What self-reported knowledge regarding elementary English education do teachers possess?

Teachers know English games and songs that they can utilize in the class as shown in Table 5. One teacher commented that he always starts and ends class with singing songs and usually playing two or three games in one lesson. On the other hand, another teacher said:

We had an instructor from the city board of education for our in-house teacher training session, and we learned how to use chants with the topic of fruit. I used the chants for my Grade 2 students, but other teachers did the same lesson with upper graders, too. So, everyone was doing the same lessons after the training because that was what we learned at the training. It'd be useful if we learned activities for different grade levels or how to make it more challenging to upper graders' level (personal communication, March 25, 2008).

Therefore, it seems that teachers do not have English pedagogical knowledge such as the teaching methods suitable for young learners at different stages.

RQ3. What problems or challenges do teachers face as they teach English in elementary schools?

In an interview I conducted in the spring of 2008, one teacher said: *I don't know what and how much to teach. The objective is supposed to be "be familiar with foreign languages," but it is too ambiguous. We play games and sing songs as an "international understanding" curriculum, but is playing English games really "international understanding?" It seems like the period is just "play time" with no clear objectives and goals. The course of study doesn't give a definition of "international understanding" either* (personal communication, April 1, 2008).

It seems that this comment corresponds with the findings of the current study. The most critical problem is lack of tangible guidelines by MEXT. Since most teachers do not have a clear idea of the leaning objectives and goals, they struggle to decide what to teach and how much to

teach it. These problems lead to another challenge that most teachers identified in Table 8: a lack of time and materials. They have to spend tremendous amounts of time on making lesson plans and preparing materials, which creates a heavier work load.

RQ4. What skills and needs do teachers want to address in order to conduct English activities?

Over 60% of the homeroom teachers are not confident in their English proficiency as shown in Table 4. They also feel that a higher level of proficiency is necessary to communicate with ALTs as shown in Table 6. Many teachers want to improve their English proficiency in order to effectively conduct team teaching lessons with ALTs or to conduct lessons by themselves. Teachers gave a higher priority to learning about how to develop lesson plans and curriculum as can be seen in Table 7. Therefore, it can be said that teachers also want to gain both practical and pedagogical knowledge about language teaching.

RQ5. What additional training do teachers want?

In addition to English language lessons to improve their own English proficiency, as can be seen in Table 11, many teachers said they want to learn how to make a one-hour lesson plan using effective activities which suit students' abilities and interests and want to learn how to carry out the lessons with confidence given their current English proficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

Implications

The results of this study suggest that the top-down decision by MEXT to implement compulsory English education at the elementary school level in Japan has not been very impressive thus far. From the survey questionnaire, I can see that many elementary school homeroom teachers lack confidence in conducting English lessons, and not all teachers have positive attitudes toward the early introduction of English instruction. Whether or not English activities during the "period of Integrated Study" seem unproductive, the decision was made that English will be taught as a compulsory subject for grades 5 and 6. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to have a positive attitude toward the changes in order for the policy to be successfully

implemented. If MEXT and local governments express better understanding of homeroom teachers' difficulties and provide more necessary support from financial support to teacher training opportunities, positive attitudes among teachers may follow.

Most of teachers at least have positive attitudes toward gaining pedagogical knowledge as well as improving their English language abilities. However, the questionnaire results and the interview data from an unpublished spring 2008 study revealed that teachers are not provided adequate teacher training. From the interviews, I could also tell that elementary school teachers are struggling with the lack of tangible objectives and guidelines for what they are expected to do. If Japan wants to be successful in elementary school English education, steps should be taken to ensure that teachers are ready for the innovation and are adequately informed and trained. The overall findings of this study suggest that the professional development needs can be approached from two perspectives: (a) the target language needs (i.e., to improve and maintain teacher English proficiency) and (b) the pedagogical needs (i.e., to gain knowledge and skills for language teaching).

With regard to the target language needs, under current educational policies emphasizing oral communicative instruction, improving teachers' proficiencies appears to be especially urgent. Nevertheless, this might be too much to ask of elementary school homeroom teachers. It seems very difficult for them to learn new things while engaging in their daily routine of classroom teaching. Butler (2004) suggests the need for specific guidelines that indicate the degree of English proficiency necessary to teach at the elementary school level in Japan. Such guidelines will help curriculum designers of teacher training to develop appropriate learning objectives for target language needs. Furthermore, as Nunan (2003) has suggested, for elementary school teachers in EFL contexts such as Japan, native or native-like proficiency is not necessary. I strongly believe that concepts such as World Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) should be introduced to all teachers and prospective teachers at elementary schools. I believe that raising their awareness of such concepts will help reduce teachers' anxiety about their English proficiency. In addition to introducing the concepts, the same effect can be achieved by hiring non-native English speaking teachers as ALTs as excellent role models of WE/ELF users. Welcoming various varieties of English in the English classroom may be the first step towards achieving successful international communication.

As for the pedagogical needs, with the introduction of English at the elementary school level, teachers need special training in the needs of younger learners. Curricula, teaching methods, and materials should meet the needs of the learners of different ages and at different stages. Therefore, teacher education programs should deal with language teaching methodology appropriate to a range of learner ages and stages. I believe that it is essential for teachers to know how to localize the existing curriculum to make it fit in their particular contexts. When taking into account that one of the major reasons for unsuccessful innovation is deeply related to a lack of teacher knowledge and confidence, much consideration should be given to overcoming potential obstacles that teachers may encounter in the classroom.

Lastly, MEXT needs to develop clear learning objectives and detailed guidelines for what should be taught, including why and how, and also needs to make these guidelines available to all teachers and schools. Overall, MEXT has been very general in its guidelines about what should be done in English activities and their rationale for them. There is no textbook, and there will be no textbook, but MEXT is currently working on developing an "English notebook" as a supplement. This "English notebook" however is not required. So, there will be no teachers' guide for how to utilize the notebook. Without explicit direction, the homeroom teachers' struggles will not be addressed.

Despite the relatively small scale and scope of this study, its implications apply to other contexts of public elementary homeroom teachers. This study illustrates the complex and undeveloped context of teacher training in Japan. I expected that teachers urgently hope to improve their English proficiency due to the emphasis on communicative instruction at elementary school level English education. In addition to improving communicative English skills such as speaking and listening, it appears that the teachers' immediate need is to acquire practical knowledge which is directly connected with their daily teaching practices such as effective methodology and curriculum development. In my opinion, it is premature to make English a compulsory subject at the elementary school level or even to introduce English activities as a result of knowing the difficulties that homeroom teachers are facing. The teachers face the prospect of starting one hour per week of compulsory English class from April 2009. I have no doubt that the teachers who participated in this study will need much support to make an

effective and organized curriculum that actually leads to English learning and to other goals for intercultural understanding.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

It is important to note that triangulation in this study was somewhat limited. Although document analysis was employed and data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, it would have been interesting to have class observations and interviews or meetings with instructors of teacher training. It is also important to recognize that the samples and the timing of the study of homeroom teachers' needs were somewhat controversial. Nevertheless, these issues have raised several important questions which merit further research.

In some schools, ALTs come to every class. The needs of homeroom teachers working in such schools may differ from the needs of homeroom teachers who rarely work with an ALT. In the former group of teachers, they may want to know how to conduct lessons by themselves in preparation of transferring to other schools, due to the periodic and mandatory school transfer for public school teachers when ALTs are not available for every class. On the other hand, the latter group of teachers may want to learn how to effectively conduct team-teaching with ALTs. Thus the homeroom teachers' needs may be different depending on the schools' situation.

In terms of timing, the condition for English Activities will change greatly in a couple of years. Many homeroom teachers in this study said that they have difficulties deciding what and how much to teach. They may heavily depend on using the "English Notebook" which will be distributed to all schools as a supplement for Grades 5 and 6 when English will become a mandatory subject officially in 2011. Using the "English Notebook" may reduce teachers' preparation time for planning lessons. Some may use the "English Notebook" as a textbook. Then the needs of homeroom teachers identified in this study will likely change once they start using the "English Notebook." One anticipated need will be how to use the "English Notebook" and how to link lessons for Grade 4 and below because the English Activity is still a part of the "period of Integrated Study." Therefore, it would be worthwhile to conduct needs analysis targeting teachers at hub schools where teachers are encouraged to use the preproduction "English Notebook" prior to the nationwide distribution. Accordingly, needs analysis should be

conducted repeatedly with different methods and instruments in order to meet teachers' needs at different times.

The design of this study and the questions in the questionnaire are rather exploratory in nature. It attempts to examine elementary school homeroom teachers' needs and wants. Two main conclusions can be drawn from this research. First, homeroom teachers at public elementary schools are not provided enough teacher training opportunities, and adequate training on various topics based on the needs of teachers should be provided. Second, MEXT should organize systematic support with selected pilot schools and hub schools and non-selected ordinary schools in order to fully utilize the assets and study outcomes seen at those schools. Those schools are supposed to take the role of *model* schools and to share information; however, comments from the questionnaire revealed that many teachers at ordinary schools do not even know which schools were chosen as hub schools. According to the comments from the questionnaire, it seems that teachers who transferred from those pilot schools and hub schools have been sharing their experiences with teachers at their current schools. If a more active initiative could be taken by those schools and teachers, they can play an increasing role as a leading school.

The first step for developing a teacher training program for elementary school homeroom teachers was taken by identifying their needs and then classifying them into types of needs. Further studies on teachers' needs should be pursued to meet the various and constantly changing teaching conditions and situations.

ACKNOWLEDMENTS

REFERENCES

Bosher, S., & Smalkoski, K. (2002). From needs analysis to curriculum development: Designing a course in health-care communication for immigrant students in the USA. *English for Specific Purposes, 21*, 59-79.

Brown, J. D. (1995). *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. New York: Heinle & Heinle.

Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Brown, D., Choi, B., de los Rios, A., Ise, M., Kang, R., Kim, Y., Ng, S., & Toku, H. (2007). *Intensive English 2007: Proposed curriculum for the Management Science Department of Ubon Rajathanee University*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, Honolulu HI.

Butler, Y. (2004). What level of English proficiency do elementary school teachers need to attain to teach EFL? Case studies from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. *TESOL Quarterly, 38,* 245-278.

Butler, Y. (2007). Foreign language education at elementary schools in Japan: Searching for solutions amidst growing diversification. *Current Issues in Language Teaching, 8,* 129-147.

Butler, Y., & Iino, M. (2004). Current Japanese reforms in English language education: The 2003 "Action Plan". *Language Policy*, *4,* 25-45.

Carless, D. R. (2002). Implementing task-based learning with young learners. *ELT Journal, 56*, 389-396.

Carless, D. R. (2003). Factors in the implementation of task-based teaching in primary schools. *System, 31,* 485-500.

Carless, D. R. (2006). Collaborative EFL teaching in primary schools. *ELT Journal, 60*, 328-354.

Chaudron, C., Doughty, C., Kim, Y., Kong, D. Lee, J., Lee, Y., Long, M., Rivers, R., & Urano,

K. (2005). A task-based needs analysis of a tertiary Korean as a foreign language program. In M. Long. (Ed.), *Second language needs analysis* (pp. 225-261). Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Costello, A., & Osborne, J. (2005). Best practice in exploratory factor analysis: Four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, & Evaluation, 10*. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from http://pareonline.net/pdf/v10n7.pdf

Cowling, J. D. (2007). Needs analysis: Planning a syllabus for a series of intensive workplace courses at a leading Japanese company. *English for Specific Purposes, 26,* 426-442.

Duff, P. (2001). The discursive co-construction of knowledge, identity, and difference: An ethnography of communication in the high school mainstream. *Applied Linguistics*, *23*, 289-322.

Edwards, N. (2000). Language for business: effective needs assessment, syllabus design and materials preparation in a practical ESP case study. *English for Specific Purposes, 19,* 291-296.

Ellis, G. (1996). How culturally appropriate is the communicative approach? *ELT Journal*, *50*, 213-218.

Hu, G. W. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15*, 93-105.

Igawa, K. (2007). Issues in English language education at Korean elementary schools. *Bulletin of Shitennoji Kyoto University,* 219-236.

Ijiraminami Elementary School. (n.d.). *shougakkou ni okeru eigokatsudo no peji* [page for English activity at elementary school]. Retrieved April 15, 2008, from http://www.ip.mirai.ne.jp/~ijira-minamisyo/

Ito, H. (2002). A new framework of culture teaching for teaching English as a global language. *RELC Journal*, *33*, 36-57.

Iwai, T., Kondo, K., Lim, D., Ray, G., Shimizu, H., & Brown, J. (1999). *Japanese language needs analysis 1998-1999* (NFLRC NetWork #13) [HTML document]. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center. Retrieved from http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/nflrc/NetWorks/NW13/

Jasso-Aguilar, R. (2005). Sources, methods and triangulation in needs analysis: a critical

perspective in a case study of Waikiki hotel maids. In M. Long (Ed.), *Second language needs analysis* (pp. 127-158). Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Izumi, E. (2006). The role of homeroom teachers and teacher training in English language education in elementary schools. *Bulletin of Kyoto University of Education,* 131-147.

Jeon, I.-J., & Hahn, J.-W. (2006). Exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching: A case study of Korean secondary school classroom practice. *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, *8*, 1-27.

Lamie, J. (2001). *Understanding change:The impact of in-service training on teachers of English in Japan*. Huntington, NY: Nova Science.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). 2003. *The Sougouteki na gakushu no jikan* [period of integrated study]. Retrieved April 11, 2008, from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/sougou/020501.htm

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). 2007. *Shogakko ni okeru eigo-kyoiku ni tsuite* [English education in elementary schools]. Retrieved February 15, 2008, from http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/siryo/015/07100309/005.htm

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). 2008. *Atarashii gakushu shidou youryou* [The course of study for foreign languages]. Retrieved April 11, 2008, from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/syo/gai.htm

Morita, N. (2004). Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *TESOL Quarterly*, *38*, 573-603.

Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Nunan, D. (2003) The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific Region, *TESOL Quarterly, 37*, 589–613.

Pon, G., Goldstein, T., & Schecter, S. R. (2003). Interrupted by silences: The contemporary education of Hong-Kong-born Chinese Canadian. In S. Schecter & R. Bayley (Eds.), *Language socialization in bilingual and multilingual societies* (pp. 114-127). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Roberts, J. (1998). *Language teacher education.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Rossett, A. (1982). A typology for generating needs assessments. *Journal of Instructional Development, 6*(1), 28-33.

Samimy, K., & Kobayashi, C. (2004). Toward the development of intercultural communicative competence: Theoretical and pedagogical implications for Japanese English teachers. *JALT Journal*, *26*, 245-261.

Singh, P., & Doherty, C. (2004). Global cultural flows and pedagogic dilemmas: Teaching in the Global University Contact Zone. *TESOL Quarterly*, *38*, 9-42.

Shobara City Board of Education. (n.d.). *eigokatsudo no peji* [English Activity page]. Retrieved April 15, 2008, http://www.city.shobara.hiroshima.jp/shinshi/kakubunopage/kyouikuiinkai/kyouikusidou/english/eigokatudo_gakunen.asp

Su, Y. C. (2006). EFL teachers' perceptions of English language policy at the elementary level in Taiwan. *Educational Studies*, *32*, 265-283.

Wada, M. (2002). Teacher education for curricular innovation in Japan. In S. J. Savignon. (Ed.), *Interpreting communicative language teaching: Contexts and concerns in teacher education* (pp. 31-40). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Watanabe, T. (2006). English for elementary school children: How to teach what and why. *Bulletin of Toyama University:* NII Electric Library Service.

Yang, W. (forthcoming). Evaluation of teacher induction practices in a U.S. university English language program: Towards useful evaluation. *Language Teaching Research*, *13*(1).

APPENDIX

Questionnaire on English Education at the Elementary School Level

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please circle the appropriate response and/or fill in the blanks below:

1. Sex: Male / Female
2. Age: 20s   30s   40s   50s   60s
3. Education: Associate / Bachelor / Master – College Name (   ) Major (   )
4. How many years have you been teaching: (   ) number of years
5. What grade do you currently teach & how many students: Grade (   ) & number of students (   )
6. Experience of teaching English (including "Period of Integrated Study"):
   At elementary school (   ) number of years, Other (i.e., at junior high school) (   )
7. Grades you have taught English (including "period of Integrated Study"): Grade 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6
8. English proficiency: STEP level (   ), TOEIC score (   ), TOEFL score (   ), N/A
9. Which of the following statements best describe your English ability. Please choose one:
   1) I have sufficient ability to teach at the elementary school level.
   2) I do not think it is sufficient enough, but I have no problem conducting lessons.
   3) I am not confident enough with my English, and I am anxious about teaching English.
   4) I am not confident at all, and I feel pressure to teach English.
10. Are you currently studying English to improve your proficiency? Yes (go to 10.a) / No (go to 10.b)
    10.a If you answered "Yes," how are you studying English? (i.e., English language school, NHK TV course, etc.) _____

    10.b If you answered "No," are you thinking about starting English study? No (go to 11) / Yes (if "Yes," how would you study English? _____

    _____

11. Is your elementary school a pilot school or a hub school? :   Yes (go to 11.a) / No (go to 12)
    11.a If you answered "yes," choose one: Pilot school / Hub school
12. How many hours of English lesson do you conduct per year? _____
13. How often per week or per month does an ALT visit your class? _____
14. Have you received teacher training concerning English education at elementary school?

                                                   Yes (go to 14.a) / No (go to 15)

    14.a If you answered "Yes," what did you learn at the training? (i.e., An ALT was the instructor of the

    teacher training session and we learned classroom English, we learned new English games at the in-house

    teacher training, and etc.) _____

    _____

15. Have you ever traveled to abroad?   Yes (go to 15.a) / No (go to Section B)
    15.a If you answered "Yes," please describe your travels below:

Where (i.e., Korea, Singapore)	How long (i.e., 1 week, 1 month)	Why (i.e., homestay chaperon, vacation)

B. ENGLISH EDUCATION AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1. **Please circle each and every activity that you conduct in your English lessons to help your students learn more effectively. Please describe in the space provided if you use any other activities:**

   1) Playing English games
   2) Singing English songs
   3) Playing with words (i.e., tongue twister) and chants
   4) Memorizing and performing simple conversations and skits
   5) Role-playing (i.e., salesperson and customer)
   6) Reading English picture books and *kamishibai* (picture-story show)
   7) Introducing various languages (i.e., greetings, sayings, etc.)
   8) Introducing other countries' holidays and festivals (i.e., Halloween, Christmas, etc.)
   9) Introducing various foreign foods (i.e., showing pictures, tasting, etc.)
   10) Other: _____

2. **Please circle each and every activity that you have not tried but would like to try in your future lessons. Please describe in the space provided if you use any other activities:**

   a) Playing English games
   b) Singing English songs
   c) Playing with words (i.e., tongue twister) and chants
   d) Memorizing and performing simple conversations and skits
   e) Role-playing (i.e., salesperson and customer)
   f) Reading English picture books and *kamishibai* (picture-story show)
   g) Introducing various languages (i.e., greetings, sayings. etc.)
   h) Introducing other countries' holidays and festivals (i.e., Halloween, Christmas, etc.)
   i) Introducing various foreign foods (i.e., showing pictures, tasting, etc.)
   j) Other: _____

   Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements listed below.
   Please circle the number that best corresponds to the strength of your belief.
   1. Disagree   2. Slightly Disagree   3. Slightly Agree   4. Agree

3. **Frankly speaking, I feel the following about teaching English at the elementary school level:**

   a) I like English, and I enjoy teaching English to my students........................1   2   3   4
   b) It is pleasure that I can learn new things with my students. 1   2   3   4
   c) I have a bigger burden in preparation due to the additional subject. 1   2   3   4
   d) I am struggling to teach English because it is not my specialty. 1   2   3   4
   e) I feel that English is not needed in elementary school level.......................1   2   3   4
   f) Other: _____

4. **Have you changed through experience of teaching English?**

   a) My feelings of resistance to English have decreased. 1   2   3   4
   b) I improved my pronunciation and listening ability......................................1   2   3   4
   c) I became interested in foreign countries..1   2   3   4
   d) I gained communication skills with foreigners..1   2   3   4
   e) I dislike English now...1   2   3   4
   f) Other: _____

5.   To teach English, I would like to improve the following skills:

    a) Pronunciation. 1 2 3 4
    b) Speaking skills.. 1 2 3 4
    c) Listening skills. 1 2 3 4
    d) Reading skills. 1 2 3 4
    e) Writing skills.. 1 2 3 4
    f) Communication skills for more natural communication with the ALT 1 2 3 4

6.   **I believe that I need these proficiency skills to teach English:**

    a) Language proficiency to be able to speak with foreigners in daily life. 1 2 3 4
    b) Knowledge of simple classroom English expression is enough. 1 2 3 4
    c) Native-like pronunciation.. 1 2 3 4
    d) If I can communicate with foreigners, the Japanese accent is not a problem. 1 2 3 4
    e) English proficiency is not so important.. 1 2 3 4

7.   To teach English more effectively, I would like to know/learn the following better:

    a) Useful games.. 1 2 3 4
    b) Easy English songs.. 1 2 3 4
    c) Useful lesson plans... 1 2 3 4
    d) Culture of foreign countries. 1 2 3 4
    e) English activities suitable for the developmental stages of children. 1 2 3 4
    f) Websites for useful teaching materials.. 1 2 3 4
    g) How to make an one-hour lesson plan... 1 2 3 4
    h) How to link units and lessons across classes.. 1 2 3 4
    i) How to develop a one-year curriculum. 1 2 3 4
    j) Introduction to second language acquisition theory. 1 2 3 4
    k) Various English language pedagogy. 1 2 3 4
    l) Methodology of cross-cultural understanding.. 1 2 3 4
    m) English language pedagogy that suits young learners. 1 2 3 4
    n) How to conduct team teaching with the ALT effectively.. 1 2 3 4
    o) Useful teaching materials & tools (i.e., picture books & videos) and how to use them.1 2 3 4
    p) How to choose materials. 1 2 3 4
    q) How to develop materials... 1 2 3 4
    r) The meaning and the purpose of English education at elementary schools.................. 1 2 3 4
    s) Other:

8.   What are some of your strengths when you conduct English lessons?
    (i.e., I know the abilities of each student; I can share my experiences abroad and have my students become
    interested in foreign countries; etc.)

9.   What are some of the lessons that your students liked and that you felt were successful?

10. What are some of your concerns or challenges regarding lesson preparation?

11. What are some of your concerns or challenges about teaching English lessons?

12. What would you like to learn if you have teacher training?

13. Please express any additional comments about your experience with English education in elementary schools.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you are willing to participate in further studies, please provide your e-mail address below.

E-mail address: _____ @ _____