Homeroom teachers’ perspectives on goal achievement in Japan’s foreign language activity classes

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Abstract

This paper offers data from a 2013 nationwide survey (n=1802) on the status of primary school based foreign language activity (FLA) classes in Japan, focusing on the influence of teacher backgrounds, beliefs, and situational variables on overall FLA goal achievement. While an observed decrease in the percentage of classes that homeroom teachers (HRTs) conduct alone may be considered an improvement, it may also lead to a dependency on ALTs and other assistants. Time for class planning remains inadequate for one-third of respondents, and only one-quarter of team-taught classes are being led by HRTs. However, over 80% of teachers indicate that FLA is important to their pupils and express a desire to learn English. These and other variables are measured against HRT perceptions of goal achievement. Results show the highest correlations with class achievement are pupil enthusiasm, HRT views on the importance of FLA, and the HRT’s own English abilities. Primary teachers with English teaching licences (9.6%) indicate a slightly higher perception of goal achievement than those without.

1. Introduction

After several decades of rigorous debates, experiments in selected schools and regions, and extensive proposal revisions, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) mandated 35 class hours per year of “Foreign Language Activities” (FLA) for 5th and 6th grade pupils (aged 10-12) at public primary schools beginning in April 2011. Prior to this, most children had begun English studies from first year of junior high (at age 12-13). While over 97% of these schools had already introduced FLA well ahead of schedule (MEXT, 2008, p.3), and while schools had been able to offer FLA from the year 2000 in periods of “integrated general study” (sougouteki na gakushuu no jikan) for pupils from grade 3 onward, the shift to make foreign language activities compulsory left many teachers uncomfortable. Just one year before
the compulsory classes were to be introduced, for example, fewer than 32% of largely untrained homeroom teachers felt they had confidence in their ability to conduct FLA classes (Benesse, 2010, p. 50).

Help for homeroom teachers (HRTs) usually involves the hiring of native-speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) or, more recently, of chiefly Japanese nationals as English Activity Assistants/Associates (EAAs) through various means: local school board contracts, the JET Programme, or private contracting companies. These assistants use their knowledge of English in classroom language activities, and teach on a scale of independence that spans from peripheral participation, to team-teaching, to leading classes alone despite ministry stipulations that HRTs, or fulltime teachers in charge of FLA, plan and conduct classes (MEXT, 2008, p. 6).

Key problems identified in junior high and primary school-based research in team-teaching (TT) in particular include a lack of preparation time, few ALTs with Japanese skills, few HRTs with English skills, insufficient training for HRTs (Gaynor, B., Copland, F., Takizawa, J. & Yukawa, E., 2011), and role confusion (Mahoney, 2004). Further, academics and former JET Programme ALTs themselves have voiced concerns over inadequate preparations for TT in books critiquing the hiring process (e.g., Crump, 2008; McConnell, 2000). A recent ALT alumni study revealed that 56.2% of 452 participants did not feel adequately prepared for TT and lesson planning (Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching, 2008, p. 2). Over three-quarters of respondents had had no formal training in teaching (ibid., p.2). Effective team-teaching would seem an especially elusive goal indeed if we add to this the facts that 1) ALTs generally work on annual contracts; 2) HRTs at all levels of public schools are themselves subject to annual shifts in grades taught, and even to school transfers every five to eight years; 3) over 90% of HRTs do not have English teaching licences (Mahoney & Inoi, 2014); and 4) of 387 primary ALT respondents surveyed in 2013 (Mahoney & Inoi, 2014), 41.8% did not major in education, language, or culture, nor did they hold certificates in language teaching.

New data to be covered in this paper\(^1\) were collected in a 2013 JSPS-sponsored nationwide survey\(^2\) which, in its entirety, consisted of four, 3-4 page questionnaires: one for Japanese teachers at both primary and junior high schools, and one for their assistants at both levels. A full report on data obtained from all four groups of teachers (N= 2873) can be obtained free at: http://www.ipc.fukushima-u.ac.jp/~a085/.

This paper will present and discuss HRT profile data (n=1802) on FLA teaching experience, team-teaching ratios, English licence rates, and English levels. It will cover findings regarding teachers’ interest in English, their perceptions of the importance of FLA and pupil enthusiasm, the frequency of meetings with assistants, the planning and teaching of TT classes, and overall FLA goal achievement. In order to help set priorities to improve both teacher training and these classes themselves, the main research question to be explored will be “Which HRT background and class-related variables seem most related to FLA goal achievement?”
2. Method

The survey was designed in part to complement reports conducted before and since the introduction of FLA by MEXT (2009, 2011a, 2011b) and Benesse (2010), as well as to update a nationwide JET Programme survey on team-teaching in junior and senior high schools undertaken by the authors (Inoi, Yoshida, Mahoney, and Itagaki, 2001). The project proposal to MEXT stressed an inquiry into the frequency and nature of links between primary and junior high schools, and questions were formulated based on the above, with ideas adapted from Matsukawa and Ohshita (2007) and in personal correspondence with experts in primary English education in Japan, Korea, Italy, the UK, and the USA. Work began on pilot questionnaire design after reviewing relevant literature and further investigation into not only Japanese but also Korean trends in primary English education, with class observations in both countries.

This paper does not evaluate pupils’ English abilities, mainly because the development of English skills is not considered the primary goal of FLA (MEXT, 2008, p. 8). Of course, the authors agree with calls for an objective, empirical evaluation of primary pupils’ English abilities (e.g., Butler, 2010; Tsukuda, 2007; Yukawa, Koyama, & Yamaoka, 2012,) and believe that such findings are crucial in deciding how to improve foreign language education. As yet, however, the number of public schools in Japan from which researchers have collected concrete, reliable data remains low, and most HRTs lack training in how to evaluate pupils’ foreign language performance. Thus, this survey strives to assess a large number of homeroom teachers’ overall perception of progress in their classes via consideration of current MEXT objectives (MEXT, 2008), abstract though they may be.

2.1 Survey participants and procedure

To begin, the researchers interviewed five primary HRTs, ten primary and junior high ALTs, two EAAs, and two junior high English teachers for a total of eleven hours about pilot survey question topics, wording and related issues. To ensure bottom-up feedback and to gain actual experience of post-2011 FLA classes, the primary author also volunteer-taught at a local school in Fukushima for over 80 hours as an ALT. Pilot questionnaires of four types were distributed to 81 teachers from all four teacher categories in Fukushima and Niigata prefectures. Revisions of questions and final versions of the questionnaires were produced with the aid of comments from the pilot, and through further teacher consultations at teacher licence renewal sessions.

In January, 2013, questionnaire packages containing introductory letters, two copies of questionnaires for grade 5&6 HRTs and one for the ALT/EAA, were sent to 2000 primary schools throughout Japan. To ensure privacy, and to allow visiting assistants to reply at their own convenience, the package contained separate ALT and HRT return envelopes. Since Japan’s prefectures vary greatly in population, the researchers predetermined five schools (of small,
medium, and large sizes) from each prefecture (i.e., 47×5= 235 schools) to be included. Since there are 357 pages of primary schools listed in the Zenkoku Gakkou Souran 2012 (Kyoiku Solution, 2011), and we needed 2000, we then divided the remaining 1765 schools required by 357, leaving our assistants to select five other schools from each page in the list. Although we cannot prove that each of these choices was random, this method secured representation for each prefecture and, at the same time, allowed the more populated prefectures greater representation.

The questionnaires consisted of four pages of both multiple choice and open-ended questions, and were written in Japanese (HRT version) and English (ALT version). Responses were accepted over a three-month timeframe. The HRT version, the focus of this paper, consisted of 28 questions in total, seven of which were open-ended. The response rate was 45.1%.

2.2 Selection of variables to be surveyed

Variables in the HRT survey believed to be related to goal achievement were selected based on findings in TT research at junior and senior high (Inoi et al., 2001), by more recent studies and presentations on primary FLA problems (Benesse, 2010; Gaynor et al., 2011; Ohshita, 2007; Yamaguchi & Tatsumi, 2010), through personal correspondence with scholars, in reviewing government documents, and by qualitative, exploratory data gathered from interviewees.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of the homeroom teacher respondents

First, while HRTs’ lack of confidence in teaching FLA has been identified as a problem (Butler, 2004) and remains a major concern worldwide (Gaynor et al., 2011), a number of teachers surveyed were not without significant qualifications and experience in English teaching and learning. In fact, 9.6% of HRTs who answered question 7 regarding English licences (see the original questionnaire in the Appendix) are actually qualified to teach English at the junior or senior high level (cf. 9.4% in Benesse, 2010b, p. 108). Additionally, 10% of respondents (including those both with and without such licences) have either passed at least level two in Japan’s Eiken Test in Practical English Proficiency, or have obtained a score of 600 or higher on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), as revealed in question 9 on English proficiency tests. Teachers’ self-rated abilities are summarised in Table 1. Respondents reported in the second part of question 5 a mean number of 4.6 years (SD= 3.6) of FLA teaching experience, including years teaching English in “integrated general study” classes.
Table 1. *HRT English level* (Q11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rather high</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n= 1774*

While some research suggests that experienced primary school teachers of novice ability in a foreign language may still offer effective classes, provided they are good teachers (e.g., Koster, 1986), it can be argued that even a perception of one’s inadequacy could detract from confidence and performance. Regardless of whether a native-speaking assistant in the classroom exacerbates this problem (Butler, 2004, p. 268) or simply brings relief, and despite an apparent trend towards HRTs leading more and more TT classes (Benesse, 2010), our data seem to echo previous studies showing that Japan’s HRTs would rather conduct foreign language activities with ALTs/EAAAs than alone (e.g., Matsukawa & Ohshita, 2007; Yamamoto & Owada, 2001): of the 1563 comments received on FLA support in question 17, the word “ALT” appeared 839 times, far more frequently than the second and third most popular “EAA” (62) and “Textbooks” (57).

The profile data in Table 2 shows that the ratio of team-taught classes nationwide vary greatly, with the standard deviation for teaching FLA alone at over 29(%). According to the data mean for Table 2, HRTs taught just over a quarter of their classes alone in 2012-13, with assistance the rest of the time from an ALT, an EAA, an “other” person, or a combination thereof. This suggests an increase in assistant-aided classes of over 7% since findings in a MEXT report (MEXT, 2011b, p. 3), which stated that the total number of assistants’ working hours accounted for 67% of FLA class time in the year 2010.

Table 2. *Percentage of classes taught by HRTs alone* (Q6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0% of the time (never teach alone)</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 20% of the time</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 40%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 60%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 to 80%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 to 99%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% (always teach alone)</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n= 1324; M= 25.4; mdn= 10; mode= 0; SD= 29.1*
Regardless of how often they find themselves teaching FLA alone, homeroom teacher motivation plays a crucial role in primary foreign language team-teaching, and was the second most important “FLA support” factor of twelve identified by ALTs \( (n=387) \) in primary ALT data from this study project (Mahoney & Inoi, 2013). Two multiple-choice questions in our HRT survey, numbers 10 and 22 in the Appendix, were linked to HRT motivation and attitude towards foreign language learning and FLA. The first inquired whether teachers, if they had the time, would like to learn more English themselves (Table 3). While nearly one-fifth of teachers responded negatively, the rest responded that they would like to do so.

Table 3. *HRT desire to learn English* (Q10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n= 1795.*

The second motivation-linked question asked whether teachers felt FLA was important for pupils, and 84% of teachers indicated that it is, with nearly 21% of these indicating that FLA is *very* important.

Table 4. *HRTs on the importance of FLA* (Q22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly important</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n= 1780.*

Overall, it appears that about four-fifths of respondents exhibited positive feelings not only about the necessity for these classes, but also about learning English themselves, a welcoming disposition. If teachers’ attitudes towards foreign languages are indeed reflected in their pupils, the positive trend observed here may be expected to last well into secondary studies (Larson-Hall, 2008), even assuming a minimal input situation like that found often in Japan and the UK. In this study, just 8.8% of HRTs feel pupils are “not very enthusiastic” or “not enthusiastic” (Table 5), a marked improvement over a 25.5% of pupils reported in a similar study (Benesse, 2010b, p.103).
Table 5. *HRT perception of pupil enthusiasm for FLA* (Q23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very enthusiastic</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather enthusiastic</td>
<td>1229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very enthusiastic</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enthusiastic</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n=1778.*

In a number of interviews for this project, the authors noticed a pattern: the fact that FLA is not a core subject sometimes prevents it from being taken as seriously as other subjects by pupils, teachers, or by society in general. As a result, adequate support in terms of funding, training, securing, and even defining “capable teachers” has been insufficient so far. However, if FLA were suddenly to become a core subject, many schools nationwide would be under-prepared, particularly in matters of evaluation. Paradoxically, one reason these classes were not introduced as a core subject was because the MEXT had realised it first would have had to overhaul the entire primary curriculum and, more importantly, would have had to ensure a supply of capable teachers in advance (former MEXT Minister Takeo Kawamura, quoted in J-Shine, 2004, p.17).

### 3.2 The planning and teaching of team-taught classes

Even with increasing assistance and positive HRT attitudes, many teachers face time constraints that prohibit them from adequately preparing for TT classes. In studies of junior high English teacher and ALT concerns, Mahoney, Inoi, and Yoshida (2003) found that a lack of time for lesson planning was the most frequently mentioned and most serious problem reported by both teachers and assistants. Similarly, in today’s primary schools where the same issue ranks first or second amongst concerns with FLA (Benesse, 2010b, p.104; Eiken, 2013, p. 28), finding time for meetings has become a problem, one that may even be more complex. In the first place, assistants generally visit a larger number of primaries at lower frequencies than junior highs. Moreover, as an interviewed primary EAA (also licenced to teach junior high English) notes, even at regularly scheduled meetings, assistants cannot always meet with the HRT they will be teaching with: sometimes only the “FLA-tanto” or teacher representative for these classes can be consulted (Y. Takeda, personal communication, 30 October, 2012).

Question 18 (in Table 6) asked HRTs how regularly they are able to meet with assistants before TT classes to discuss class content. The results indicate that most teachers do discuss lessons most of the time, but that about one-third of teachers meet only from time to time, or less. Further, if HRTs consider not meeting with an assistant before class a “socially undesirable” response, such instances of non-communication may even be underreported (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004). Although open-ended responses in Question 28 of this survey regarding
improvements to FLA have yet to be completely analysed, the words “ALT” and “time” (jikan) were the two most often mentioned words in HRT comments.

Table 6. Meetings before TT classes with ALT/EAAs (Q18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, always</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, generally</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not often</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *n* = 1763.

Delving deeper into team-taught situations, we also asked HRTs who the 1) main lesson-planner and 2) main teacher of TT classes is. Diverging from Benesse (2010a), we decided to offer teachers the option of answering “both” in each question. Results showed that just over one-quarter (26.6%) of respondents said they themselves lead TT classes, and over half (50.8%) indicated that the lead-teacher role was shared. While considerably more HRTs (39.6%) take the lead in TT class planning, over half (56%) of respondents lead neither the teaching nor the planning of team-taught classes, a fact that implies a persistent and heavy reliance on their assistants (Benesse, 2010; Inoi & Mahoney, 2013).

A strong minority (20.1%) of respondents, however, indicated that they take the lead in both teaching and planning team-taught classes, with the remaining 23.9% saying they lead in only one or the other task. This marks an improvement compared with findings from Ohshita (2007), who found only 11.4% of HRTs leading predominantly TT instruction in 2006 (p.55). Add to this the fact that over another fifth (22.2%) of HRTs in the present survey said they and their assistants both lead classes, sharing the lead, and it seems that a gradual shift is underway.

### 3.3 Correlations of results to achievement of FLA goals:

This section discusses apparent links between homeroom teachers’ perceptions of FLA goal achievement and the variety of teaching conditions reported upon above. According to Benesse (2010b, p. 108), over 80% of teachers were familiar with FLA goals four years ago, and we assume that that ratio has climbed to almost 100% since formal FLA introduction. In fact, several teachers even quoted parts of the following official goals verbatim in responses to open-ended questions. The MEXT goals (translated by authors) are: “through a foreign language, to foster a positive attitude and willingness to communicate enthusiastically, to deepen experiential understanding of languages and cultures, and to lay the foundations for communicative abilities while becoming familiar with sounds and basic phrases,” (MEXT, 2008, p.7).
After several interviews and discussions we realised that some teachers may be reluctant to judge the value of a government-mandated class directly. We thus decided to ask HRTs (in question 16) to assess their own classes in light of the current goals of FLA, i.e., “To what degree do you feel the goals of FLA have been achieved this academic year?” The responses to this question (in Table 7) will serve as a base of the inquiry against which aspects of FLA classes will be correlated.

Table 7. HRT self-rated levels of FLA goal achievement (Q16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n=1754. “1”= Low, “10”= High. M= 6.5; mdn= 7; Mode= 7; SD= 1.5

Spearman’s rho (ρ) is often used to examine correlations in non-parametric data (Field, 2005) such as that gathered in most parts of this survey. However, several recodings of responses were required to perform these calculations. First, questions 10, 11, 18, 22 and 23 needed to be recoded into ascending order (see Appendix). Second, in order to correlate specific responses to questions 7, 19, and 20 (e.g., to focus on HRTs with English licences only, or on HRTs who lead TT classes) with goal achievement, all non-specified options were recoded with a value of “0.”

Table 8 indicates that, while most statistical correlations were significant, they ranged from weak to moderate, with effect sizes of even the top variables being “small” or less (Field, 2005, p. 32). The only variable that was not significantly correlated to ratings of goal achievement was that of HRTs planning classes. The two negative results for ranks 5 and 10 indicate that as 1) the ratio of classes taught alone and 2) the number of pupils increases, levels of achievement tend to drop.

Regarding the top ranking, perceived pupil enthusiasm amongst HRTs teaching grade 6 was a little less than that of those teaching grade 5, with the mean values for each at 1.9 and 1.8 respectively in the original scales (see Appendix, Q23). In any case, the data suggest a link between pupil enthusiasm and goal achievement. This raises the question of whether enthusiastic pupils contribute to success in classes or whether goal-attaining classes result in enthusiastic students. As for the second-ranked variable in Table 8, establishing the importance of
Table 8. Ranking of correlations between FLA goal achievement and situational variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Spearman’s rho (ρ)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Sig. (1-tailed)</th>
<th>Effect size (ρ²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil enthusiasm (Q23)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of FLA (Q22)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRT English level (Q11)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings for TT classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Q18)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of FLA classes taught</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alone Q6(1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>1304</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRT desire to learn English (Q10)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of FLA experience (Q5)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>1681</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English licence (Q7)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.07**</td>
<td>1769</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRT leading TT class (Q19)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>1736</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils (Q3b)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-.05*</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRT planning TT class (Q20)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * Significant at the p<.05 level. Significant at the p<.01 level (2-tailed). In Q19, regarding who leads TT classes, the test statistic rises to .07** if we include the option “both.”

FLA in the eyes of homeroom teachers, it seems that a combination of time, funding, teacher training and the eventual promotion of FLA to core subject status will be crucial regardless of who should teach it. This issue relates to the fourth-ranked variable of meeting with assistants. If assistants are to be employed, HRTs must be allotted time to prepare classes together with them (as the fourth ranked variable suggest), and all companies through which assistants are employed need to allow for the team-planning and teaching of classes.

As regards HRTs’ English levels, local training programs are on the rise, but more uniform, high quality, and long-term support will be needed if HRTs are to be asked to assume more responsibility for planning, teaching, and evaluation in particular. Comprehensive training options already available outside schools include the “J-Shine” primary English teacher training course, recognised by MEXT and established as an NPO in 2003. It has thus far trained nearly 40,000 people; yet only 8 of the 1802 HRTs in this study have found the time and funds required to complete the course. Although securing still greater numbers of quality native and non-native speaking assistants has become increasingly difficult since the introduction of FLA, greater HRT independence and confidence would seem best in the long term if HRTs are to continue teaching these classes. Such realisations have manifested themselves in Korea (Lee, 2009, p.100), which
began core-subject English classes at primary schools in 1997 and now employs few native speakers in its public schools (Butler, 2005, p.35). If Japan decides to head in the same direction, the MEXT would need to implement a national in-service teacher training for all HRTs.

Perhaps surprisingly, a licence to teach English at either the junior or high school level did not produce as strong a link to FLA goal-achievement as may be expected. Although teachers with licences exhibited a mean goal rating of 7.0 (and HRTs without licences, a 6.0), it may be that the former group evaluate their classes more severely, or are frustrated with the low bar set for FLA goals and are personally aiming for more.

The issue of leading team-taught FLA classes (ranked ninth) can be seen as a barometer of HRT confidence and independence gained through training, individual effort, and experience. As the introduction of FLA takes root in schools and in Japanese society, as the numbers of HRTs who specialize in English slowly rise (MEXT, 2011a, p. 18), and as HRT training programs continue to be bolstered at municipal and prefectural levels as recent trends show (Benesse, 2010, p. 56), we can expect homeroom teachers gradually to take at least an equal role in planning and teaching. If, in future surveys, more HRTs were to be found leading team-taught classes, such data would mark a significant shift in psychological, educational, and social approaches towards foreign language teaching and learning.

Finally, although this paper has not mentioned inter-variable correlations (most of which were extremely low), we should mention that two significant ones were observed, the strongest of which was that between the second-ranked HRT perception of the importance of FLA and their own desire to learn English ($\rho = .31^{**}$, $\text{sig.} = .000$), which ranked sixth. Perhaps more important, though, is an apparent connection between the importance HRTs assign to FLA and their pupil enthusiasm ($\rho = .31^{**}$, $\text{sig.} = .000$). It appears that the more important HRTs consider these classes, the more enthusiastic they perceive their pupils to be.

Many HRTs feel they are reaching FLA goals despite rather impoverished circumstances. Surely still more could be done if they were better equipped, motivated, directed, and supported. We hope that the ranking of variables provided through this survey analysis may serve as a guide in assigning priorities for local schools and boards of education as they continue to address FLA problems on the limited budgets at their disposal.

### 4. Conclusion

Japan has decided to strengthen foreign language education from the lower grades up. Issues that should be given priority in such efforts have been outlined in this paper. However, the data reveal that despite a very wide variety of teaching situations and English abilities, HRTs in general perceive their foreign language activity classes as achieving the goals laid out by the MEXT. In other words, few of the factors considered important in research on foreign language education appear to have had great impact on whether current teaching objectives are being met.
It is probable that HRTs, who have only recently been required to conduct (but not evaluate) the new FLA classes, have difficulty assessing progress in terms of achieving goals. Having said this, 25.6% of respondents clearly show frustration with the new classes, believing they have achieved only 50% or less of today’s goals.

The generally modest levels of statistical correlation observed here may, alternatively, indicate that a far larger variety of classroom, teacher, and pupil variables needs to be considered. The scrutiny of one dependant variable in this survey, that of goal achievement, has shed some light on how to foster further development of FLA, although more information is needed to draw concrete conclusions. Future studies may reveal, for example, that several unaccounted for variables also contribute to positive (and negative) educational outcomes.

Other papers planned for this particular series of data will look at HRT open-ended responses on successful and unsuccessful FLA classes, at responses from primary and junior high ALTs, and at 515 junior high school English teachers’ perceptions of incoming student performance since the introduction of FLA. We hope that still more researchers and educators will join in the quest to improve FLA classes, and that this work may serve as a prompt.

Notes

1. The authors introduced parts of this survey in presentations at the 13th National Conference of the Japan Association of English Teaching in Elementary Schools (JES) on 14 July 2013.
2. This project, entitled “An inquiry into establishing continuity between primary school foreign language activities and junior high English classes,” received funding from a 2011-13 Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research (C), administered by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). Sean Mahoney is the principal investigator, and the topic number is 23520743.

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References

Benesse Corporation. (2010a). Dainikai shougakko eigo ni kansuru kihon chosa (kyoin chosa)


MEXT. (2011b). *Heisei 23 nendo koritsu sho/chugakko ni okeru katei no hensei/jissshi jokyo*
**chosa (Pa-to B) no kekka ni tsuite** [Survey of public elementary and junior high school educational course organisation/implementation 2011 (Part B) and its results. Retrieved from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/1315677.htm


**Appendix: 小学校外国語活動に関する全国調査**

1. 年齢： 1) 20代 2) 30代 3) 40代 4) 50代 5) 60代
2. 勤務校所在地 都道府県名 ( ) 都道府県
3. 何年生を担任（担当）していますか。 a ( ) 年生 b ( ) 人
4. 学級の中に、英語塾や英語教室等に通っている児童は何人ですか？( ) 人
5. ア) 現在の勤務校では、外国語活動の年間時間数は何時間ありますか？( ) 時間
   イ) 今年度を含めて、外国語活動担当経験年数（総合的な学習の時間などの経験を含む）は、何年になりますか？( ) 年
6. 今年度の外国語活動の指導形態の割合を教えてください。
   1) 学級担任 1 人による指導 ( ) ％ 2) ALT とのティームティーチング ( ) ％
   3) 外国語活動協力員(EAA)とのティームティーチング ( ) ％
   4) その他（具体的に:） ( ) ％ 合計が 100％になるようにしてください
7. 英語の教員免許はお持ちですか。 1) はい 2) いいえ
8. 出身大学の学部： ( ) 学部
9. 英語検定試験や TOEIC などを受験したり、「小学校英語教育指導者」などの資格をお持ちですか。
   1) はい 2) いいえ 「はい」と答えた方は、合格した級、点数や資格などを記入してください。
10. 先生は時間があれば、もっと英語の学習をしたいですか。
11. 先生はご自分の英語力をどのように評価していますか。
1) かなり高い  2) 中程度  3) 初歩的  4) 全くない

12. 今まで、どのような小中連携をなされましたか。以下の項目に○印をつけてください。（複数回答可）

a) 中学校での英語の授業参観　　（役に立った / 役に立たない）
b) 中学校の先生との外国語活動の指導法・教材等についての話し合い（役に立った / 役に立たない）
c) 中学校の先生との外国語活動のカリキュラムについての話し合い　（役に立った / 役に立たない）
d) 小学校の ALT/EAA との話し合い　　（役に立った / 役に立たない）
e) 中学校の ALT/EAA との話し合い　　（役に立った / 役に立たない）
f) 中学校の先生との外国語活動の目標についての話し合い　（役に立った / 役に立たない）
g) その他　（具体的に）　（役に立った / 役に立たない）

13. 先生は外国語活動指導について中学校の英語教師ともっと連携をはかりたいですか。
1) はい  2) いいえ  3) わからない

14. 質問 13 で「はい」と答えた方は、どのようなことについて連携をはかりたいですか。具体的に書いてください。「いいえ」と答えた方は、その理由を書いてください。

15. 先生は小・中連携した英語のカリキュラムについてどう思いますか。
a) 必要である。
   1) はい  2) いいえ  3) わからない
b) 先生の学区では、そのようなカリキュラムは作成が可能であると思われますか。
   1) はい  2) いいえ  3) わからない

16. 今年度、外国語活動の目標はどの程度達成されたと思いますか。数字に○をつけてください。（低い）1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10（高い）

17. 外国語活動を実施する上で、これまでどのようなこと（または人）が最も役に立ちましたか。

18. 先生はティームティーチングを行う場合、ALT/外国語活動協力員等と授業内容についての事前打ち合わせを行なっていますか。
1) 必ず行なっている  2) おおむね行なっている  3) 時々行なっている  4) あまり行なわない  5) 完全に行なわない

19. ティームティーチング（TT）で外国語活動を指導する場合、どなたが主に指導していま
すか。1) 学級担任  2) 学級担任以外（ALT、英語専科教員、外国語活動協力員、ボランティア）
3) 両方  4) その他（具体的に）：

20. 外国語活動の TT 学習指導案はどなたが主に作成していますか。
1) 学級担任  2) 学級担任以外（ALT、英語専科教員、外国語活動協力員、ボランティア）
3) 両方  4) その他（具体的に）：

21. 小学校での外国語活動が将来、英語の教科として扱われるためには、どのような条件が整えば良いと思いますか。

22. 外国語活動は先生のクラスの児童にとって、大切であると思いますか。
1) とてもそう思う  2) まあまあそう思う  3) あまりそう思わない  4) そう思わない  5) わからない

23. 先生のクラスの児童は、概ね、英語学習に対して積極的ですか。
1) とても積極的である  2) まあまあ積極的である  3) あまり積極的でない  4) 積極的でない

24. 外国語活動の導入によって、児童が担任の先生と接する（コミュニケーションする）際に何か変化はありましたか。
1) はい  2) いいえ  3) わからない

25. 前問 24 で「はい」と答えた方は、どのように変化したのかを具体的に書いてください。

26. 先生が外国語活動を指導されていて、成功した、うまくいったと感じるのは、どのような時ですか。
その理由を含めて、できるだけ具体的に書いてください。

27. 先生が外国語活動を指導されていて、うまくいかなかったと感じるのは、どのような時ですか。
その理由を含めて、できるだけ具体的に書いてください。

28. 先生の学校の外国語活動を改善するために、どのようにすれば良いと思いますか。先生のお考えを書いてください。