

Exploring the Treatment of L1 Use in Japanese National Curriculum Guidelines of English Subjects: Through a Comparison of Curriculums in Other Countries

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要 旨

近年、外国語教育や第二言語習得研究において、教室内外での母語（L1）使用が認められてきている。本研究では、日本の学校外国語教育の学習指導要領解説において、L1（日本語）がどのように扱われているかを4つの観点（指導言語・言語への気づき・訳の使用・言語教育の全体目標）から調査する。さらに、他国（イスラエル・香港・イングランド）の言語教育課程を同じ観点から分析し、日本の学習指導要領の改善点を探る。4つの観点で各国の当該資料を比較した結果、以下2つの提案がなされた：1）言語教育の全体目標に媒介能力（mediation skill）の育成を加えたセクションを設けること、および2）学校外国語教育として1つの学習指導要領にまとめること。これらの提案により、L1や訳使用の目的と育てるべきコミュニケーション能力の明確化、および小中高接続の強化が期待される。

Keywords: National Curriculum, L1 Use, Translation

1 Introduction

In recent years, first language (L1) use in foreign language (L2) classrooms has been recognized. Research has shown the positive use of L1 for L2 learning: From the sociocultural perspective, L1 is a scaffolding tool for students to carry out their tasks in groups (Bao & Du, 2015; Swain & Lapkin 2000), and students use L1 in their private speech to get their tasks done (Antón & DeCamilla, 1999). Further, from the psycholinguistic perspective, it is revealed that students with lower L2 levels use L1 to facilitate their cognitive processing when they read L2 texts (Kern, 1994). Hall and Cook (2013) show the use of L1 by teachers around the world for different purposes in language classrooms. Considering L1 as “the most important ally a foreign language can have” (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 30), Butzkamm proposes a theory that supports the L1 use in classrooms, claiming ten statements about the effective L2 teaching and learning through the L1 use. The gradual increase of interest in the use of students’ L1s in the field of the Second

Language Acquisition (SLA) research (Hall & Cook, 2012) also supports the recognition of the L1 use in language classrooms. Moreover, the revitalization of translation has been claimed (Cook, 2010), and some research uncovers students' positive use of translation (Fernández Guerra, 2014; Masuda, 2017; Veiga, 2013).

The recognition of the L1 use and translation are also seen when the goals of language learning are considered. Widdowson (2003) asserts that, when L2 is taught as a foreign language in school, the goal should be bilingualism because students have already known at least one language, L1, and the teacher's job is to get L2 and L1 into contact. Cook (2013) advocates a new perspective of multicompetence, which "involves the whole mind of the speaker, not simply their first language (L1) or their second" (Cook, 2013, p. 45), and claims that the goal of language learning should be becoming the L2 user, not the monolingual native speaker of L2 since the L2 user not only has different characteristics from the monolingual but also uses codeswitching in natural settings. Thus, Cook (2016) considers it as a skill that should be developed in the classroom as well. *The Common European of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* (Council of Europe, 2017) puts an emphasis on its educational philosophy of plurilingualism, meaning "the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner" (p. 28), where switching from one language to another and mediating "between individuals with no common language" (ibid.) are considered as part of one's plurilingual competence. Hence, mediation is included in one of the language activities that L2 learners/users perform in classrooms as well as in real-life situations along with reception, production, and interaction. Multicompetence (Cook, 2013) and plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2017) look at language teaching and learning holistically in that developing one's overall linguistic knowledge including his or her L1 through language learning is emphasized.

In the Japanese context, the statement that English should be taught in English in principle first introduced in the curriculum guideline (*Gakushu shido yoryo*) (hereinafter referred to as the guideline) for high schools (MEXT, 2009a) has generated controversial discussions regarding teachers' language choice in their classrooms based on language acquisition theories and the current trends of language teaching and learning. In terms of the language acquisition theories, Sato (2014) emphasizes maximizing L2 use for sufficient L2 input and students' positive motivation, being concerned about the traditional translation-centered teaching approach that many teachers have taken. On the other hand, to enhance L2 learning, Erikawa and Kubota (2014) claim the necessity of using codeswitching positively and of viewing language teaching and learning more holistically, explaining the current trend of plurilingualism in foreign language teaching and learning. Similarly, Torikai (2017) criticizes that the new commentaries on the curriculum guidelines (*Gakushu shido*

yoryo kaisetsu) (hereinafter referred to as the commentary) (MEXT, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) introduce the five skills of listening, reading, writing, spoken interaction, and spoken production from CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) without taking into consideration its educational philosophy where plurilingualism and people's L1s are valued. Muranoi (2006), who considers the goal of Japanese foreign language education from the field of the SLA research, claims that it is vital to learn English as an auxiliary language. He states that the goal of the foreign language learning is to learn English with Japanese accents, not to speak or write as native speakers of English, which opinion is also stated by Cook (2013, 2016) and Widdowson (2003).

Considering the recognition of the L1 use around the world and its different views in the Japanese context, the current study examines five research questions (RQs) summarized below. Because there is no research having investigated the Japanese guidelines or commentaries for elementary, junior high, and senior high schools with regard to the L1 use in detail despite the above controversies, RQ1 to RQ3 investigate the treatment of the L1 use in the three areas of instructional language principle (RQ1), language awareness (RQ2), and use of translation (RQ3) where the commentaries refer to the L1 use. Furthermore, RQ4 explores the overall aims of language learning stated in the commentaries because Erikawa and Kubota (2014) and Torikai (2017) both criticize the guidelines or commentaries, claiming they should include the holistic view of language learning and plurilingualism where the L1 use or the mediation skill is considered as one's linguistic repertoire (Council of Europe, 2001, 2017). In order to identify areas of improvement in the guidelines as in RQ5, they are compared with the curriculums of other countries (Israel, Hong Kong, and England) in terms of how L1 is treated in the three areas and whether the current trend of language learning is reflected in the overall aims of those curriculums.

Research Questions (RQs) for the current study:

1. How does each national curriculum set its instructional language principle?
2. Does each national curriculum recommend using L1 to promote students' language awareness?
3. How is the use of translation treated in each curriculum?
4. Is the current trend of language learning reflected in the overall aims of each curriculum?
5. What are areas of improvement in the Japanese guidelines?

2 Overview of the National Curriculums

In order to respond to RQ1 through RQ4, the national curriculums of Japan, Israel, Hong Kong, and

England have been overviewed. Some other governmental materials are also investigated for more detailed explanations regarding how L1 is treated. The reason for the choice of Israel is that Cook (2016) introduces the 2002 version of the Israeli national curriculum in a positive tone because it aims for developing L2 users who can use more than two languages at the functional level for real-life purposes (ibid.), not for developing native speakers of L2. Despite the Hong Kong's colonized history by the British, Chinese is widely spoken in daily life there, and English is learned in school as a priority to foster biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Chinese, English, and Putonghua) human resources for Hong Kong's economic growth (Education Bureau, 2011). Moreover, Hong Kong has a reputation of putting an emphasis on English education in school (Jang, 2014). It is believed that exploring details of its curriculum therefore provides an opportunity to see the front-line English language education as a school subject. The curriculum for languages in England was chosen because providing accurate translation both from L2 and to L2 is included as one of the teaching contents. It is hoped to see how English is treated in the foreign languages (French, German, Spanish, etc.) education in a country where English, acknowledged as an international language or as a lingua franca, is the first language for the majority of the people there. Since both Hong Kong and England have established and enforced their own national-level curriculums, they are treated as "countries" in this article.

2.1 Japan

The current commentaries issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) for elementary schools in the primary education, and junior high schools and senior high schools in the secondary education of the Foreign Language and Foreign Language Activity sections are overviewed in terms of the treatment of the Japanese language (L1). The commentaries, the details of each guideline, have been chosen to see the more concrete explanation about the L1 use. There are two types of commentaries for elementary schools: Foreign Language as a school subject for the 5th and 6th grades, which is the same in the secondary education, and Foreign Language Activity – one of the special activities not counted as a school subject – for the 3rd and 4th grades. Throughout all the commentaries, it is recommended that English (L2), not other languages, be taught as a foreign language with the consideration of the fact that the language is widely spoken in the international society and for a coherent language education in the compulsory education.

The principle of the instructional language was added for the first time in the commentary for senior high schools (MEXT, 2009b) and has resulted in the introduction of the same principle into the commentary for junior high schools, which is going to be enforced in April 2021 (MEXT, 2017a). Teachers are encouraged to

teach L2 lessons in L2 in principle for the purposes of providing students with sufficient L2 input opportunities and authentic communication scenes. In this principle, students' shared language, Japanese (L1), should be used as an auxiliary language to facilitate students' understanding of the L2 grammar (MEXT, 2009b) or when necessary (MEXT, 2017a). For senior high schools, teachers are expected to use L2 when explaining teaching contents, when giving directions and examples of activities, and when encouraging and evaluating students' performances through strategies such as paraphrasing and using simple L2 words (MEXT, 2009b). For junior high schools, teachers need to be role models as L2 learners and are encouraged to use comprehensible L2 for explanations, questions, and presentations of tasks (MEXT, 2017a). On the other hand, no such principle has been added in both of the commentaries for elementary schools, nor is there the statement of using Japanese as an auxiliary language. It is worth noting that some examples of questions to students by teachers are described in Japanese in the commentary of the Foreign Language for elementary schools (MEXT, 2017b, p. 47), which means the L1 use is not treated negatively. However, in the Foreign Language Activity, understanding through experiences is more emphasized because it is said that young children of the 3rd and 4th grades should learn L2 naturally by listening to what others say (MEXT, 2017c, p. 26). This explanation infers that teachers should use as much L2 as possible for providing students with ample opportunities to listen to L2. All of the commentaries seem to convey the direct or indirect message that the L2 use should be maximized in classrooms and that L1 can be used supplementarily, without clarifying the purposes or roles of L1.

All the commentaries talk about promoting students' language awareness by comparing the two languages. When the commentary for senior high schools was issued about a decade ago (MEXT, 2009b), language awareness was not so emphasized as the recently issued commentaries (MEXT, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). In contrast to only one sentence about the difference in phonology between L1 and L2 in the commentary for senior high schools (MEXT, 2009b), the junior high school commentary and the elementary school commentaries put an emphasis on the differences in both phonology and syntax, more on the latter for the junior high school commentary and more on the former for the elementary school commentaries (MEXT, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). This infers that students' cognitive use of L1 facilitates L2 learning.

Only the senior and junior high school commentaries refer to translation from L2 by teachers and translation activities done by students (MEXT, 2009b, 2017a). No reference about translation is made in the elementary school commentaries (MEXT, 2017b, 2017c). In the secondary education, since Japanese can be used supplementarily, teachers are expected not to focus too much on translation in order for them to provide

students with sufficient L2 input and authentic communication scenes in L2 based on the principle about the instructional language.

Lastly, though there is no section specifically written for overall aims looking ahead to future communication needs, the expected human resources developed through learning L2 are described in different parts of the commentaries. The senior high school commentary expects to develop the human resources with wider views, international awareness, and the spirit of international collaboration. Through L2 learning, students are expected to deepen the understanding of not only the foreign language and cultures being studied but also Japanese language and culture (MEXT, 2009b, p. 7). The same statement is given in the junior high school commentary and elementary school commentary for the 5th and 6th grades. In addition, they say that it is important to develop the human resources who think from various angles and to obtain the spirit of accepting and considering others and of peace and international contributions (MEXT, 2017a, p. 15, 2017b, p. 74). Interestingly, even though almost the same statement is given in the elementary school commentary for the 3rd and 4th grades about the expected human resources (MEXT, 2017c, p. 49), young students of these grades are also expected to deeply understand the Japanese language and culture through the Foreign Language Activity so that they can deliver the characteristics and beauty of the language and culture. The auxiliary L1 use by teachers in classrooms is mentioned in order for students to effectively learn L2, but leveraging the two languages (L1 and L2) in future authentic communication is not included in the statements about the expected human resources throughout all the commentaries.

2.2 Israel

In Israel, *Revised English Curriculum* was issued in November 2013 by Israeli Ministry Education for all grades – primary schools (1st-6th Grade), middle schools (7th-9th Grade), and high schools (10th-12th Grade) in the compulsory education (Ministry of Education, 2013). Since all the grades fit together as one curriculum, their language learning and achievement objectives are coherent and consecutive across all the levels – Pre-foundation Level (1st-3rd Grade), Foundation Level (4th-6th Grade), Intermediate Level (7th-9th Grade), and Proficiency Level (10th-12th Grade). It is worth noting that, in contrast to the Japanese curriculum commentaries where English is learned as a foreign language, in the Israeli curriculum, English (L2) is learned as an international language, meaning that “one that has no particular national owner” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 5). For the majority of Israeli students, Hebrew or Arabic is their L1: The word “mother tongue” or “home language” is used in the curriculum.

As the instructional language principle, teachers are expected to maximize their L2 use to give learners input opportunities for L2 vocabulary and other L2 features as well as the L2-rich environment. L1 seems to be treated to facilitate students' language learning from the cognitive perspective as the curriculum stipulates that teachers can "use L1 occasionally and judiciously, where it can enhance learning of English" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8). As probably the same perspective, since young learners at the Pre-foundation Level are required to "have developed literacy skills in the L1" (ibid., p. 11), it is assumed that their cognitive development of L1 is a prerequisite for successful L2 learning.

Promoting students' language awareness is explained in the Domain of Appreciation of Language, Literature and Culture – one of the four domains that show areas of ability and knowledge learners are expected to develop throughout all the levels. In this domain, learners' language awareness is emphasized by comparing and contrasting L1 and L2 not just phonologically and syntactically but also morphologically, semantically, and pragmatically. The Israeli English curriculum also recommends the students' L1 use as it states that students "can resort to the L1 occasionally when it helps them understand" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8), indicating that students' language awareness can be promoted not only by comparing L1 and L2 but also by using L1 as a resource while they carry out tasks in groups or alone. Yet, there is no translation activities included in the principles of teaching and learning or in the domains.

Moreover, the curriculum not only guides teachers in effective language teaching but also shows how to equip students with world knowledge, appropriate values, and multiple intelligences, which are required when students command English as an international language in professional, business, or academic careers as well as in their private lives. The words, such as "native speakers of English" or "near-native speakers of English," do not appear in the curriculum. Rather, as an overall aim, students are encouraged to "interact effectively in English in different social contexts with people from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 16). This statement expresses the meaning of the international language well – English for everyone across borders.

2.3 Hong Kong

Like the Israeli English curriculum, Hong Kong's *English Language Education: Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide* includes contents from the primary education (1st-6th Grade) to the secondary education which is separated into the junior secondary (1st-3rd Grade) and the senior secondary (4th-6th Grade) (CDC, 2017). This means that all the sectors share overall aims of the English language education and principles

related to language learning and teaching. It should be noted that this study refers to a draft form of the curriculum guide that was available at the time of writing. English Language Education is designated as part of Key Learning Area besides Chinese Language Education, Mathematics Education, and Arts Education. All the students from Primary 1 through Secondary 6 are required to take it and are supposed to not only learn subject-specific contents but also develop generic skills, comprised of Basic Skills, Thinking Skills, and Personal & Social Skills, and seven priority values and attitudes through the Key Learning Area (See CDC, 2017, p. 2 for details). English Language Education is divided into English Language as a mandatory subject across all the grades and English Literature as an elective for the senior secondary students to take for their further application of the language into the literature and for their language awareness. It is interesting that, in the Israeli curriculum, literature learning is one of the domains, and students of all the levels are expected to promote their language awareness by comparing English and their home languages, but, in the Hong Kong's curriculum guide, literature learning is treated as an elective course and students are encouraged to promote their language awareness by learning the English literature, not by comparing English and Chinese or Putonghua. Nor is there reference to any other languages for language teachers to use for instructional purposes, since teachers in the secondary education are expected to carry out the English-medium instruction (EMI) in English Language Education, and those in the primary education are recommended to implement the EMI as well. In addition, neither the use of translation by teachers nor translation activities by students appear in the guide. This seems to indicate that L1 is not a tool for language learning and that the total exclusion of L1 is recommended at the policy-making level. This aligns with the overall aims that focus on students' academic, personal, intellectual developments through the English medium and that try to equip them with linguistic skills for the knowledge-based society in the English medium. For this reason, the EMI in non-language subjects and extra-curricular activities are promoted, and language teachers are encouraged to communicate with students in English outside the classroom to provide them with the language-rich environment in the entire school.

It is important to note that all the subjects in the Key Learning Area are aligned with Seven Learning Goals. One of the Goals of the primary education is to “actively communicate with others in English and Chinese (including Putonghua)” (CDC, 2017, p. A4), and one of the Goals of the secondary education is to “become proficient in biliterate and trilingual communication for better study and life” (CDC, 2017, p. A3). In fact, as explained above, Chinese Language Education is part of the Key Learning Area. English Language Education and Chinese Language Education are given the same percentage, i.e. 17-21% in the primary and

junior secondary education and 12.5-15% in the senior secondary education, of the total lesson time in school. The curriculum guide seems to send a message that English and Chinese should be learned separately in each class without translation or codeswitching between L1 and L2.

2.4 England

The compulsory education in England starts from the age of 5 through 16. The primary education is divided into two stages, Key Stage (KS) 1 (age of 5-7) and KS2 (age of 7-11), and the secondary education into two stages, KS3 (age of 11-14) and KS4 (age of 14-16). KS5 (age of 16-18) is called 6th Form, part of the secondary education that offers preparatory courses for universities. Language learning begins from KS2 through KS3 as compulsory subjects of Foreign Language (FL) and Modern Foreign Language (MFL) respectively. Students in KS2 and KS3 can learn foreign languages such as French, German, and Spanish, and those in KS2 can also learn ancient languages, such as Latin and Greek. MFL is an elective subject in KS4 for those who select it as one of the subjects to gain General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), which is a high school diploma. Students in KS5 can continuously take the language education, called Modern Language (ML), and choose ML for a subject to obtain General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE Advanced Level), which becomes a school leaving qualification to students completing secondary or pre-university education by passing A-level examinations. In the England national curriculum (Department for Education, 2014), the purpose of study and aims of FL and MFL cover KS2 through KS4, but the detailed teaching contents are included only for KS2 and KS3. For the teaching contents of MFL in KS4 and ML in KS5, the GCSE syllabus (Department for Education, 2015a) and the GCE Advanced Level syllabus (Department for Education, 2015b) are examined for this study to clarify the treatment of L1 (English) in the secondary education.

The instructional language in all the subjects is English as described in the Language and Literacy section of the curriculum (Department for Education, 2014, p. 11), although there is no clear principle on the instructional language stated in the Languages section. In KS2, students are encouraged to understand basic grammar of the language being studied to see the differences and similarities between L1 and L2. The KS2 students seem to be expected to promote their language awareness by using their L1. However, there are no such statements in the KS3 section and in both of the examination syllabuses.

As for translation, those in KS4 and KS5 need to be able to do the translation from L2 and into L2 in their courses as written in the examination syllabuses (Department for Education, 2015a, 2015b). Also, in order for

the students in KS3 to increase accuracy in L2 speech and writing, the curriculum requires them to “provide an accurate English translation of short, suitable material” (Department for Education, 2014, p. 255) and to “translate short written text accurately into the foreign language” (ibid., p. 256). In addition, because students in KS2 studying ancient languages are encouraged to have discussion in L1 about the L2 texts that they have read, students of this stage are also required to be able to translate for not only their increased accuracy but also clear understanding of the texts written in the ancient languages. This is because the focus of studying the ancient languages is on reading comprehension, not on practical communication dealing with familiar and routine matters as the focus of studying modern foreign languages (e.g. French, German, and Spanish).

The overall aim of FL and MFL described in the national curriculum seems to be threefold: To develop intercultural competence by understanding different cultures and new ways of thinking, to foster practical communication skills in speech and writing, and to prepare students to study and work in other countries. On the other hand, in the GCSE syllabus which contains the contents that students should have learned in KS3 and KS4, the practical communication are limited to that with native speakers, and the third aim in the curriculum is not included (Department for Education, 2015a). In the GCE Advanced Level syllabus, the study of ML is placed as an interdisciplinary subject that not only develops intercultural competence but also provides students with cognitive and academic advantages. Students are also expected to foster generic skills such as critical thinking and autonomy (Department for Education, 2015b). The curriculum and examination syllabuses appear to tell that translation or the L1 use is only a tool for increased accuracy and for clear understanding of L2, not an activity that students will engage in during L2 communication inside and outside the classroom.

3 Comparison of the National Curriculums

With all the national curriculums and examination syllabuses considered, it is clear that each country takes a different position in terms of the treatment of L1. As for RQ1 about the instructional language principle, three patterns were found out. The first pattern is the maximal use of L2 and the limited use of L1. Japan and Israel are in this pattern because both of the commentaries and curriculum claim teachers’ auxiliary (MEXT, 2009b, 2017a) and occasional and judicious (Ministry of Education, 2013) use of L1 to alleviate students’ cognitive loads. As the second pattern, no specification about the instructional language is made in the Languages section of the England national curriculum, even though it says English is the medium of instruction across all the subjects at the beginning of the curriculum. The instructional language is written

more roughly, compared to the commentaries and curriculums in the rest of the countries. The stipulation of the instructional language principle may depend on each school since schools are supposed to develop a curriculum based on the national one (Department for Education, 2014). The use of L1 seen in these two patterns seems to be limited to students' clear understanding of L2; no further purposes of the teachers' L1 use are described. Hong Kong's EMI with the total exclusion of other languages is the third pattern.

For RQ2, except for the Hong Kong's curriculum guide, the rest requires teachers to teach the differences between L1 and L2 to promote students' language awareness. Here, L1 is treated as both linguistic and cognitive resources to enhance L2 learning so that students can connect old information (L1) with new information (L2) when learning L2 (Butzkamm, 2003). It appears that Hong Kong's ideal learning model that English should be learned through the English medium leads to no statement about promoting students' language awareness by comparing L1 and L2, but to the statement that learning the English literature enhances their language awareness. As the Israeli English curriculum states the students' use of L1 (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8), promoting their language awareness is also expected through their cognitive and sociocultural use of L1 during tasks.

For RQ3, Hong Kong and Israel do not refer to the use of translation, but Japan and England do. England puts more emphasis on students' increased accuracy of L2 through translation and includes it in the teaching contents of KS3 and both of the examination syllabuses. Unlike CEFR (Council of Europe, 2017), no connection between such translation activities and translation for real-life purposes is mentioned. On the other hand, in the Japanese commentaries, teachers are expected to translate from L2 only when necessary and to have students translate into L2 as writing activities where they can use words and expressions they have already learned. In contrast to the England curriculum and examination syllabuses, any cognitive or social purposes of translation from L2 and into L2 are not stipulated. Hong Kong aims for developing those who are biliterate or trilingual, and Israel requires students to be L2 users, but translation is not a required activity in language classrooms. None of the curriculums and syllabuses refer to the direct relationship between translation activities in language classrooms and translation required in authentic communication outside the classroom.

The overall aims of the language education in RQ4 are also unique to each curriculum. Israel clearly shows how English should be treated in the national curriculum: English is an international language. Thus, English should be learned to equip students to use it in different situations for different purposes in society. Israel aims for developing L2 users, not native-like speakers or native speakers of English. However, being

able to translate or interpret for future communication needs, which is a characteristic of L2 users (Cook, 2016), is not included in the curriculum. This infers that just because Israel tries to develop L2 users as Cook (2016) mentions, it does not mean that the country aims for L2 users who have multicompetence and who codeswitch in natural settings. Hong Kong also sees English as an international language, but English, for them, is more for business and provides economic advantages. As one of its overall aims, fostering those who are biliterate and trilingual is important, but the aim does not seem to include the plurilingual view of language learning and use because students are encouraged to develop their English through the EMI without using the other languages they know. It can be said that Hong Kong aims for L2 users who use English and Chinese or Putonghua separately, not for L2 users who Cook (2016) claims. In England, in its overall aims, French, German, and Spanish are thought to be their foreign languages that have academic, economic, and humanistic advantages. The language education is compulsory only in KS2 and KS3 and becomes elective for further study, which indicates that a foreign language is one of the skills that provide an interdisciplinary advantage to a person. L1 is only a tool for clear understanding of L2 and for increasing L2 accuracy in classrooms; no further explanation about the L1 use with the focus on the current view of language learning and use appear in the overall aims. Also, in Japan, as its commentaries state, English is a foreign language. Although they write that English is an international language and that learning the language is needed in the globalizing society, they do not mention that English should be learned as an international language. They say that the L2 learning leads students to deepening their knowledge of Japanese language and culture, but, unlike Erikawa and Kubota (2014) and Torikai (2017), they do not claim the importance of fostering those who leverage both of the languages as L2 users and of developing the plurilingual competence.

Cook (2013) divides the goals of language learning into external goals, which relate to the use of L2 outside the classroom, and internal goals, which concern “the students’ inner life as individuals rather than their social interactions” (Cook, 2013, p. 50). All the investigated curriculums and examination syllabuses aim for achieving internal goals through, for example, developing cross-cultural understanding (MEXT, 2009b, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c), higher order thinking skills (Ministry of Education, 2013), appropriate values and attitudes (CDC, 2017), and intercultural competence (Department for Education, 2014). Furthermore, the curriculums and syllabuses put effort into enhancing students’ L2 levels to achieve their external goals. However, this study found that developing one’s plurilingual competence is not included as an external goal across all the curriculums and syllabuses. In other words, as indicated in RQ1 through RQ3, L1 is considered as, or limited to, a pedagogical tool for clear understanding of L2, promoting students’ language awareness,

and their increased accuracy of L2, so none of the curriculums or syllabuses view L1 as a communication tool needed for developing one's plurilingual competence.

4 Areas of Improvement and Suggestions

For RQ5, two areas of improvement were identified in the Japanese guidelines through comparing the other national curriculums and examination syllabuses. First, there is no section specifically written for defining the expected human resources as an overall aim. Because taking notes of what is heard in English in Japanese and conveying a message received in English in Japanese, which are the examples of mediation activities, are the normal language uses that Japanese people face outside the classroom (Matsuzawa, 2006) and because mediation is said to play an important role in "the normal linguistic functioning of our societies" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 14), developing students' mediation skills with the focus on the expected language uses by Japanese people should be included as an external goal and stipulated at the beginning of each of the guidelines. Matsuzawa (2006) made a similar claim. Further, mediation is a prominent part of one's plurilingual competence, and it is reported that developing the competence has resulted in various cognitive advantages (Council of Europe, 2017). As Erikawa and Kubota (2014) and Torikai (2017) stress the importance of plurilingualism, the more holistic view of language teaching and learning should be developed, so that students can be equipped with the skills necessary in the international society. The first suggestion should help define the framework of communication skills in the guidelines more concretely. Besides, the section will solidify the purposes of using L1 and translation activities in classrooms and, what is more, will help teachers face in the same direction regarding the treatment of the L1 use.

The second area of improvement lies in the difficulty of understanding shared aims across the guidelines because a different guideline is prepared for each educational level. A suggestion that can be made with regard to this issue is to create one single guideline about the primary and secondary foreign language education for the coherent and consecutive language learning as well as for shared aims, like the investigated national curriculums in the other countries. Primary and secondary school teachers would also be easier to read through the specific teaching goals of all the levels. Not only that, combining the current guidelines into one would strengthen the connection among elementary, junior high, and senior high schools as discussed in some of the commentaries (MEXT, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

5 Conclusion

The current article has overviewed the national curriculums and examination syllabuses of four different countries. Also, by comparing them in terms of the treatment of L1 and overall aims of language learning, the article clarified the two areas of improvement in the Japanese curriculum guidelines and made suggestions for a better language education. However, as a limitation of this study, analyzing other governmental or any teaching materials would support the position that each country takes in a clearer way. It is thus hoped that, for future research, not only national curriculums but also other available materials should be investigated to obtain more information about the treatment of L1 and views of language learning. Furthermore, overviewing the curriculums issued in many other countries would lead to a more profound discussion for a better language education at the policy-making level in Japan.

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