

An Outline of Instruments to Measure Competence of Japanese English Teachers at the Elementary School Level

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Abstract While English activities have become more prevalent at Japanese elementary schools, the level of education in terms of teachers' English abilities and their teaching skills has continued to be rather low. Therefore, in order to more effectively promote a higher quality of English education nationwide, a clear description of the standards that elementary English teachers should meet is in great need. Based on numerous previous studies, this study will offer suggestions about the following three aspects of elementary school English teacher competence: (a) English language abilities, (b) teaching skills and knowledge related to teaching methodology, and (c) teacher attitude. In addition, based on English language proficiency tests which have been administered in Japan or other countries, the author of this paper will introduce an outline of measuring instruments she plans to create that will evaluate the competence of English teachers in Japanese elementary schools. These instruments will focus on oral English ability and teaching skills. She plans to measure these two aspects of competence through two measuring instruments: a listening test and an individual interview in English.

Keywords: competence of elementary school English teachers, measuring instruments

日本人小学校英語指導者の資質測定方法案

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要旨 小学校での英語活動が普及している一方で、主な指導者である担任教員の英語力不足、指導力不足が問題となっている。このような現状から、小学校英語指導者に求められる英語力、指導力などの資質構成要因を明確にし、求められる資質を持った指導者を養成することが小学校英語活動の改善にとって重要である。この論文では、小学校英語指導者に求められる資質基準を、英語力、指導力および関連知識、適性の3つに分けて提案し、その中でも英語力と指導力に焦点を当てた2種類の資質測定方法案として、リスニングテストとインタビューテストの内容を提示する。

キーワード: 小学校英語教員の資質、資質測定方法

Purpose of Research

In 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) put into effect a mandate for all public elementary schools to conduct a new curriculum of classes entitled, comprehensive studies. Under this title, the ministry also gave permission to the schools to decide how these classes would be carried out. English activities were one of the possible options to be taught under this curriculum (MEXT, 1998). From this mandate, according to a 2005 official report released by the ministry, more than 90% of public elementary schools actually chose to offer some kind of English class at all grade levels under this comprehensive studies curriculum (MEXT, 2006). Considering this trend toward English education, in February, 2008, the ministry introduced a new course of study, which included information about all classes offered in Japanese elementary schools. This course of study will be put into effect at the elementary school level in April, 2011. Within this new course of study, all fifth and sixth graders will be required to have a foreign language class, i. e., English class, once a week. There are three basic objectives to the new course of study: (a) to foster understanding of languages and cultures, (b) to produce active participation in communication, and (c) to develop basic communication skills (MEXT, 2008). The first two objectives were part of the original mandate in 2002, making the third objective the only addition to the mandate.

While English activities have become more prevalent and will be required at elementary schools, the issue over quality of teaching has repeatedly been one of the obstacles elementary schools have faced. In other words, more than 90% of English classes are currently taught by homeroom teachers (MEXT, 2006) who are not necessarily trained English teachers; therefore, the level of English teachers in terms of their English ability and teaching skills has been at the center of discussion among in-service teachers and researchers (e. g., Butler, 2005; Higuchi, Kanamori, & Kunikata (Eds.), 2005).

The importance of this issue over the quality of English teaching at Japanese elementary schools has motivated the author of this paper to conduct a 4-step study in an attempt to improve elementary English teacher competence. And the four steps are: (a) clarifying standards of competencies of Japanese elementary English teachers through organizing previous research results, (b) organizing information about examinations on these competencies of English teachers developed in Japan or other countries, (c) developing and implementing pilot examinations that evaluate

competencies that Japanese elementary English teachers should acquire, and (d) eventually, revising the examinations based on an analysis of the results and feedback from pilot test-takers. Matsunaga (2008), as a first step in the 4-step study, investigated levels of competencies Japanese elementary school English teachers need to obtain, through examining the current situation of English education at Japanese public elementary schools, and organizing previous research results. This paper, as a second step in the 4-step study, attempts to examine tests developed in Japan or other countries that measure competencies of foreign language teachers. Furthermore, as part of a third step in the study, this paper will introduce an outline of measuring instruments the author plans to create that will evaluate the competencies of English teachers in Japanese elementary schools.

Standards for English Teachers in Japanese Elementary Schools

Expected Standards of Teacher Competence

Based on numerous previous studies that were reviewed in Matsunaga (2008), the author of this paper suggests that, ideally, elementary school English teachers should have the following competencies: (a) a relatively high level of English language ability, (b) appropriate teaching skills and knowledge related to the methodology of teaching English, and (c) a teacher attitude that is suitable for teaching at the elementary level.

Regarding English language ability, a number of researchers (e. g., JACET SIG on English Education, 2005; Ito and Kanatani (Eds.), 1984; Teacher Education Research Group, 2001) have attempted to identify the English language abilities that English teachers should have to be successful (see Matsunaga, 2008, for more detail). However, none of them offered clear reasons to support the specific abilities they suggested in their research. On the other hand, it may be impossible to clearly state what specific levels of English ability teachers should acquire since effective teaching includes not only English abilities but also other aspects such as teaching skills, knowledge related to teaching English, and teacher attitude. Considering the limitations for clearly stating specific English language abilities, the author of this paper still suggests that, based on the above and other previous studies (e. g., Butler, 2005; Day, 1993; Higuchi, Kanamori, & Kunikata, 2005; Iino & Shimizu, 1985), Japanese elementary school English teachers should have a level of English abilities with which they can comfortably use junior high school level English in class. This includes a basic command of

English in the four skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition to this basic command of English, English teachers should learn English expressions that are commonly used in teaching situations such as “Work with your partner.” and have a level of oral fluency that enables them to communicate or team-teach with Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), who are usually native speakers of English.

It is obvious that having a good command of English alone cannot make a good English teacher. In addition to sufficient English skills, teachers must have teaching skills and knowledge to support their teaching. Based on the results of numerous studies (e. g., ACTFL, 1988; Day, 1993; JACET SIG on English Education, 2005; Teacher Education Research Group, 2001, see Matsunaga, 2008, for more detail), it can be concluded that teaching skills based on proper understanding of pedagogic knowledge such as teaching philosophy, learner-teacher relationships, curriculum and material development are important. In addition, the teaching of the four English skills, classroom management, and EFL knowledge are other crucial aspects in teaching criteria. Moreover, considering the fact that the current course of study states that English activities can be implemented as part of international understanding (MEXT, 1998), teachers have to be familiar with international communication or international situations as a basis for their teaching. Having knowledge that supports teaching skills such as knowledge on the English language (e. g., syntax, semantics, phonology), and knowledge related to teaching English (e. g., linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics) is also important on a long-term basis.

A number of researchers (e. g., Butler, 2005; Higuchi & Yukihiro (Eds.), 2001; JACET SIG on English Education., 2005; Kanatani (Ed.), 1995; Research Group Three, 2003) have indicated proper teacher attitude as one of the qualifications that successful English teachers should have (see Matsunaga, 2008, for more detail). However, most of these studies lack reasons to support why they included some teacher personality traits in their results and omitted others. In other words, most traits seem to have been chosen rather subjectively by each researcher. At the same time, it is easy to speculate that pointing out exact teacher personality traits that successful teachers have is difficult since other aspects such as language skills or teaching skills also contribute to making a successful teacher. Considering these limitations, however, it is still true that few would disagree that teacher attitude, which includes general personality traits for elementary school teachers (e. g., flexible, positive, fair, curious, supportive, active, creative), and specific personality traits for English teachers (e. g.,

positive about learning English, open to different cultures, willing to communicate with people from different countries), is thought to play an important role in effective teaching.

Standards in This Study

Among the above three aspects of competencies Japanese elementary school English teachers should acquire, English language ability and teaching skills will be focused on in this study since the author considers these two aspects as basic competencies for a successful Japanese English teacher at the elementary school level. In addition, English language ability in this study will focus on oral skills, i. e., listening and speaking skills, due to the fact that the current and future courses of study suggest that most English activities at the elementary school level be either listening or speaking-related (MEXT, 1998, 2008), and teachers have to prepare or conduct these activities orally in English.

Expected standards of teacher competence are necessary on a long-term basis for successful English teachers at Japanese elementary schools. However, reaching these standards will take concrete government policies regarding elementary school English education and proper training courses for prospective and in-service teachers, both of which are currently unavailable. Considering this reality, standards of competencies in this study will be set to mostly reflect the minimum levels required to conduct effective English classes at Japanese elementary schools. The standards of competencies in the study will be explained in detail in the following section, an outline of instruments to measure Japanese teachers' competence.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEF), by Council of Europe

The CEF was created by applied linguists and teaching specialists from the member states of the Council of Europe in order to provide a common basis for language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc., and also to facilitate vocational mobility across European countries. The CEF describes proficiency of a second or foreign language in the four skills, i. e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It consists of six levels, divided into three bands: (a) A1 and A2 as basic user, (b) B1 and B2 as independent user, and (c) C1 and C2 as proficient user (Council of Europe, 2001).

The CEF is used worldwide by learners, teachers, curriculum designers, or testing institutions such as Educational Testing Service (ETS) (2004) and Harcourt Assessment (2007) since the CEF can be useful to create learning objectives for learners, teaching standards for teachers, courses or materials for curriculum designers, or assessment criteria for testing institutions. Considering the fact that the CEF is recognized as a reliable standard in the world, standards for English proficiency in this study will also reflect the CEF standards. And this will make it easy to see where test-takers, in-service English teachers at Japanese elementary schools, stand in terms of their English ability in relation to universal standards. In this study, A1, A2 (divided by lower A2 and upper A2 in some skill areas), and B1 will be used as four levels, and the upper A2 will be set as a minimum or satisfactory level for Japanese English teachers at elementary schools. The upper A2 is considered as a satisfactory level in the study since it reflects the minimum level required to conduct effective English classes at Japanese elementary schools. Due to limitations of space, only A2 and B1 descriptions of the CEF global scales are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Common reference levels (A2 and B1): global scale, (Council of Europe, 2001)*

Bands	Levels	Descriptions
Independent user	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic user	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently use expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e. g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Note. The CEF consists of six levels within three bands, A1 and A2 (Basic user); B1 and B2 (Independent user); and C1 and C2 (Proficient user).

Language Proficiency Tests Administered in Japan and Other Countries

In this section, language proficiency tests, administered in Japan or other countries, and selected as reference for this study, will be briefly explained. In the process of selecting these tests, a number of tests were examined first, but only the ones with adequate levels of listening or speaking portions, which could be applied to tests the author plans to create, were chosen for further examination. Since the study focuses on oral skills, only the oral skills aspects of the selected tests will be described here.

Listening Portions of the Selected Tests

Versant for English, Harcourt Assessment

The Versant for English evaluates proficiency in oral skills of people over 15 years of age whose native language is not English, and the test is intended to evaluate the ability to understand spoken English and to express themselves clearly and appropriately in English. The test is administered over the telephone or on a computer for about 12 to 13 minutes, and is scored automatically. The test includes five sections: (a) reading in which test-takers have to read eight printed, numbered sentences in the order requested, (b) repeating in which test takers are asked to repeat 16 spoken phrases or sentences, (c) answering short answer questions in which test-takers have to listen to 24 spoken questions and answer each of the questions with a single word or short phrase, (d) building sentences in which test-takers are orally presented with 10 sets of three short phrases and they are asked to rearrange the phrases into a correct sentence, and (e) answering open questions in which test-takers have to give their opinions about three familiar topics such as family life.

Each section tests different aspects of the four elements of oral skills: fluency, pronunciation, sentence mastery, and vocabulary. The reading section tests fluency and pronunciation; the repeating section tests fluency, pronunciation, and sentence mastery; the short answer section tests vocabulary; and the sentence building section tests fluency, pronunciation, and sentence mastery. The Versant for English measures the test-takers' automaticity in language processing that is required in order to effectively communicate with native speakers of English. In other words, automaticity in language processing means the ability to access and retrieve lexical items, to build phrases or clause structures, and to articulate responses without conscious attention to the language system.

The test score report includes an overall score based on the four diagnostic subscales, i. e., sentence mastery, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. The overall score of the test outlines the ability to understand spoken English and speak it intelligibly at a native-like conversational pace on everyday topics. It is based on a weighted combination of the four diagnostic scores, and is reported in the range of 20 to 80. As for the subscales, sentence mastery reflects the ability to understand, retrieve, and produce English phrases and clauses in complete sentences. Vocabulary reflects the ability to understand common everyday words spoken in a sentence context and to produce such words. Fluency is measured based on rhythm, phrasing, and

timing in constructing, reading and repeating sentences. Pronunciation reflects the ability to produce consonants, vowels, and stress in a native-like manner in a sentence context. In other words, among these four subscales, sentence mastery and vocabulary test the content of what a test-taker says; on the other hand, fluency and pronunciation test the manner of response production. To further standardize their results, Harcourt Assessment (2007) has used the CEF descriptors (Council of Europe, 2001) and offered the test-taker his/her overall score expressed through a corresponding CEF level. The CEF standards, which are more internationally-recognized, are used to express the overall score in more universal terms.

Speaking Portions of the Selected Tests

The language proficiency test for Italian teachers, the LTRC at the University of Melbourne, the NLLIA

The Language Testing Research Center (LTRC) at the University of Melbourne, the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) developed the language proficiency tests for Languages Other Than English (LOTE) teachers in order to make occupational language requirements of foreign language teachers, and to certify LOTE teachers who are sufficiently proficient in the target language to perform their teaching duties effectively (Elder, 1994).

In the test development, the LTRC referred to a modified version of Ellis' (1984) inventory of teacher tasks. The inventory included three major categories of teacher tasks: (a) interactions involving pedagogic goals which included medium-oriented interactions such as modeling the target language and providing information about the target language, message-oriented interactions such as explaining processes, and activity-oriented interactions such as giving instructions for a game; (b) interactions involving framework goals such as giving directions about routine classroom business and disciplining students; (c) extra-classroom use of target language which included preparing the lesson such as selecting suitable texts and using dictionaries or encyclopedias, interacting with members of the school community such as talking to individual students about their progress or difficulties, and professional development such as reading professional journals.

The pilot tests regarding all four skills were developed based on the above inventory, but only the speaking test was introduced in Elder, 1994. The pilot speaking test for Italian teachers includes seven phases and the total duration of the test is 30

minutes. Phase one is a 2 to 3-minute warm up in which test-takers engage in a brief conversation with an interviewer. Phase two is a 4-minute reading aloud task in which test-takers read a short children's story aloud as if to a group of children, and explain in Italian the meaning of selected words from the passage. Phase three is a 4-minute story retelling task in which test-takers retell the same story, using a set of picture prompts. Phase four is a 3-minute instructions task in which test-takers explain how to undertake a simple construction activity. Phase five is a 3-minute instructions task and modeling of a role play in which test-takers explain details of a role play situation to an interviewer as if he/she were a student and then act out the role play together. Phase six is a 3-minute presentation on an aspect of Italian culture in which test-takers make a presentation regarding some brief Italian notes provided by an interviewer. Phase seven is a 4-minute explanation of learner error in which test-takers explain as if to a second language learner the nature of his/her mistakes, using an authentic piece of student writing in Italian.

To report test-takers' proficiency levels of the four language skills, four different levels are designated for score reporting: (a) level 4, advanced professional competence, achieved by a small number of test-takers whose performance is native-like; (b) level 3, professional competence, achieved by considerable numbers and this level should be the prerequisite for employment; (c) level 2, minimum professional competence, and test-takers at this level should be placed in programs where they have support from other colleagues and they have opportunities for language upgrading; and (d) level 1, limited professional competence, considered to lack the requisite language skills (Elder, 1994).

Listening and Speaking Portions of the Selected Tests

The EIKEN grade 3, the STEP

The Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) is Japan's largest testing body and is a nonprofit foundation with the objective of advancing English learning in Japan by providing objective measures of proficiency. The EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency has seven levels: grade 5, grade 4, grade 3, grade pre-2, grade 2, grade pre-1, and grade 1 (grade 1 being the highest). In general, grade 3 reflects a junior high school level of English proficiency, grades pre-2 and 2 reflect a high school level, and grades pre-1 and 1 reflect a college or university level in Japan. The EIKEN is administered in two stages. The first stage is a paper-based test in a multiple-choice

style, and consists of four main areas: vocabulary, reading, listening, and writing. The second stage is an interview-style speaking component, designed to discriminate between examinees with interactive speaking skills and those who perform well only on multiple-choice tests. The speaking component is required for all examinees who pass the first stage of grades 3, pre-2, 2, pre-1, and 1.

In this study, the listening and speaking portions of grade 3 will be examined since the level of grade 3, junior high school level, matches the prescribed level of Japanese English teachers at the elementary schools of the study. A successful candidate of the grade 3 test should be able to understand and use English in immediate or everyday situations.

Regarding the listening portion of the test, it lasts 25 minutes, and consists of three sections: (a) choosing the correct response after listening to a short conversation shown in an illustration, (b) choosing the correct answer to a question after listening to a short conversation, and (c) choosing the correct answer to a question after listening to a 35 to 40-word story. Moreover, each section has 10 questions, and the first section is repeated once with no choices written in the test booklet, while the second and third sections are repeated twice with choices written in the test booklet (Obunsha, 2007).

As for the speaking portion, an individual interview with an interviewer is conducted for about 5 minutes, and consists of two sections: (a) reading a 35-word story aloud, with a preparation time of 20 seconds; and then answering three questions about the story; and (b) responding to two questions and offering reasons to support his/her answers to those questions.

The EPTI, the SEAMEO-RELC, the LTRC at the University of Melbourne, the NLLIA, and IKIP

The South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization and Regional Language Center (SEAMEO-RELC), Singapore; The LTRC at the University of Melbourne, and the NLLIA, Australia; and Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (IKIP), Semarang and Malang, Indonesia jointly developed the English Proficiency Test for Indonesia (EPTI) for the purpose of creating an English proficiency test that was relevant to high school pre-service and in-service teachers of English, relevant to the Indonesian context, practical to administer, and inexpensive.

The test recognizes the Indonesian variety of English as a valid model and is

intended to assess how good a test-taker is as a local user rather than a native speaker. In addition, the test is intended to be a specific purpose test in two senses: specific to both the Indonesian context and the teaching of English. Therefore, the test content is selected in order to ensure both cultural familiarity and professional relevance for Indonesian teachers. For instance, the reading texts are adapted from Indonesian English language materials as well as from journals or other publications for English language teachers. In defining the types of situations, texts, and topics teachers will be expected to be able to deal with in the classroom, the following three areas of English use are identified: (a) gathering and preparing teaching materials, (b) communicating in English in the classroom with students, and (c) participating in professional training and development activities. Another important feature of the test is that it relies entirely on trained IKIP lecturers, i.e., non-native speakers of English, as raters.

All sections of the test are designed to sample from two domains of language use for teachers: classroom-related activities and professional development activities. There are two major parts in the test: an integrated reading and writing test, and an integrated listening and speaking test. The integrated listening and speaking part is a 1-hour test. Listening text types include brief informal conversations, short monologues, and extended discussions on topics appropriate for use in the classroom such as social themes or personal experiences, or topics related to professional development such as issues related to language teaching. In the listening section, test-takers are assessed on their listening skills such as locating and recalling specific or key information, and summarizing main points. In the speaking section, test-takers are required to tell a story and to give instructions for a classroom activity. In the final part of the integrated listening and speaking test, test-takers are asked to respond orally to a discussion on language teaching. In addition, a variety of spoken models of English, both native speakers, i.e., American, Australian, and British, and non-native speakers, i.e., Indonesian people, are employed in the test.

In the speaking test, test-takers' ability in telling a story is assessed based on the following four categories: (a) overall quality, completeness, and cohesion of the story; (b) level of vocabulary; (c) grammatical accuracy; and (d) pronunciation. Test-takers' ability in giving instructions is assessed based on the following three categories: (a) overall task fulfillment and completeness of instructions; (b) ability to recognize the level of the participants, and use of appropriate instructive language;

and (c) fluency. Test-takers' ability in orally answering questions to a discussion is assessed based on content and accuracy (SEAMEO-RELC, NLLIA LTRC, & IKIP, 1997).

An Outline of Instruments to Measure Japanese Teachers' Competence

Based on the standards of competencies and the investigation of other language proficiency tests leading up to this study, an outline of instruments to measure Japanese elementary school English teachers' competence will be introduced in this section. Through the process of creating the outline, the author of this paper referred to a number of descriptions about performance tests (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brown, 2005; Brown & Hudson, 2002; Hughes, 2003; McNamara, 1996). Among those descriptions, a design of a performance test suggested by McNamara (1996) was mainly employed.

Test Rationale

Using two measuring instruments, a listening test and an individual interview in English, current levels of English language ability and teaching skills of in-service Japanese English teachers at the elementary school level will be examined. Participants, in-service teachers, are expected to vary in their background of relevant knowledge or experience; such as years of teaching English, experience abroad, or experience of attending teacher training sessions. Through the measuring instruments, the participants will be able to recognize their current level of English and teaching skills, and use the results for further improvements. The results will be beneficial not only for the participants, but also for researchers, teacher trainers, and/or government officials who are in charge of elementary school English education because the results can be used as sources to gain an understanding of the current level of in-service teachers, to develop plans to improve the situation, and/ or to organize appropriate training sessions.

Content Selection

A job analysis of elementary school English teachers will be conducted, using the LTRC's inventory of teacher tasks described in the previous section (Elder, 1994), and then, a list of possible test or interview items will be created based on the analysis and other test information collected in the study. Then, the list will be examined by two groups in order to confirm content and construct validity: (a) two university

teachers who do research on elementary school English education, and also have teaching experience at the elementary school level, and (b) two in-service elementary school English teachers. Through this process, the items will be refined to reflect what is expected of elementary school English teachers. Additionally, a few visits to elementary school English classes are planned in order to observe what is actually happening in reality.

Development of Specifications

Test content and format

In order to measure participants' oral proficiency and teaching skills, a listening test and an interview in English will be conducted. The listening test will consist of questions adapted from a listening section of the EIKEN test grade 3, which was described in the previous section, and will be given to all participants in the same room. The interview will consist of two parts: (a) the first part will test oral skills, especially speaking skills, and (b) the second part will test teaching skills. The interview will be given individually by an interviewer for about 10 minutes. The first part will include items such as warm up, reading a paragraph-long story aloud and answering questions about the story, and responding to questions about everyday situations. This first part is meant to test content and manner of oral English. In other words, this part will examine accuracy of sentence mastery and vocabulary, and control of fluency and pronunciation of oral production (Harcourt Assessment, 2007). The second part will include items such as acting out a dialogue with an interviewer, or giving instructions of activities. This part will examine overall task fulfillment and completeness, recognition of student level, use of instructive language, and fluency (SEAMEO-RELC, NLLIA LTRC, & IKIP, 1997).

Scoring standards and assessment criteria (rating scales)

The CEF (2001), Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) (Smith, 2002), and the SEAMEO-RELC, NLLIA LTRC, & IKIPS criteria (1997) will be used in setting scoring standards and assessment criteria in this study, with the addition of necessary standards or criteria by the author. The CEF is suitable as a universal standard since it has been used worldwide. The CLB is a Canadian standard used for describing, measuring and recognizing the second language proficiency of adult immigrants or prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada, and it provides a descriptive

scale of communicative proficiency in English as a second language, covering four skill areas (Center for CLB, retrieved in 2007). Since the CLB gives concrete descriptions of standards or criteria that match the CEF scales of overall proficiency, it will be used in the study. The SEAMEO-RELC, NLLIA LTRC, & IKIPS criteria will be used for teaching skills in the study.

In addition to the CEF global scale, mentioned previously, listening skills, speaking skills, and teaching skills will be separately assessed using different criteria. First, the listening skills will be assessed based on a numerical score of correct responses to the total test items. Four levels will be employed for the listening score: (a) level one, less than 50% of the total score, (b) level two, 50% to 59%, (c) level three, 60% to 69%, and (d) level 4, more than 70%, with level three being set as a satisfactory level. Moreover, these four levels will reflect the CEF scale of overall listening comprehension. Second, speaking skills will be assessed based on the CEF scale of overall production and spoken interaction for overall effectiveness, and the CEF and CLB qualitative aspects of spoken language use; such as range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, coherence, and pronunciation for analytic assessment. Then, overall effectiveness and qualitative aspects of the spoken language use of each task will be added and the average score will be calculated as a speaking score. Four levels will be employed for the speaking score: (a) level 1, less than 60%, (b) level 2, 60% to 69%, (c) level 3, 70% to 79%, and (d) level 4, more than 80%, with level three being set as a satisfactory level. Finally, teaching skills will be assessed based on the following four qualitative aspects of teaching skills (SEAMEO-RELC, NLLIA LTRC, & IKIPS): (a) overall task fulfillment, (b) recognition of student level, (c) instructional language, and (d) fluency. Then, these three aspects of each task will be added and the average score will be calculated as a teaching skills score. Four levels will be employed for the teaching skills score: (a) level 1, less than 60%, (b) level 2, 60% to 69%, (c) level 3, 70% to 79%, and (d) level 4, more than 80%, with level three being set as a satisfactory level. The teaching skills score does not reflect the CEF or CLB since they do not have teaching skills criteria.

Trials of Pilot Versions

Approximately 20 homeroom teachers, who are currently teaching English at Japanese elementary schools, are scheduled to take the pilot versions in fall, 2008. Participants will be collected through research associations the author belongs to, and the pilot versions will be administered by two interviewers and raters after confer-

ences or study sessions.

Selection and Training of Raters

The two interviewers and raters will be selected for the administering of the pilot version interview. They will be Japanese university English teachers who have a high level of oral proficiency in English. They will serve both as an interviewer and a rater, and take training sessions beforehand on the rationale and specifications of the instruments, focusing especially on the rating scales for the interview. Moreover, they will have a chance to actually rate sample interviews for practice. In the actual administering of the interviews, each interview will be conducted by both an interviewer and a rater, and will be audio-recorded. After the initial interview, the original interviewer and rater will review the audio-recording and re-rate it together. If they disagree on their rating, they will discuss it until they agree on the same rating. Furthermore, inter-rater and intra-rater reliabilities will be calculated.

Data Analysis of Pilot Versions

The pilot results of both the listening test and interview will be separately analyzed using the Rasch model. The Rasch model is one type of effective data analysis model since it looks at test items in terms of a candidate's ability, item difficulty, and/or rater differences, and this will form the basis for item revision or for judgments about the suitability of the test items for the candidates (Bachman, 2004; McNamara, 1996). Based on the analysis of the pilot versions, revision of test items and specifications will be carried out for an operational use of the instruments.

Conclusion

While English activities have become more prevalent and will be required at Japanese elementary schools in April 2011, the issue over quality of teaching has repeatedly been one of the obstacles elementary schools have faced. Therefore, in order to more effectively promote a higher quality of English education nationwide, a clear description of the standards that elementary school English teachers should meet is in great need. Based on numerous previous studies, the author offered minimum standards for the following three aspects of elementary school English teacher competence: (a) English language abilities, (b) teaching skills and knowledge related to teaching methodology, and (c) teacher attitude. In addition, based on the English

language proficiency tests and teaching skills tests for English teachers, which have been administered in Japan or other countries, the author introduced an outline of measuring instruments she plans to create that will evaluate the competence of English teachers in Japanese elementary schools. These instruments will focus on oral English ability and teaching skills. She plans to measure these two aspects of competence through two measuring instruments: a listening test and an individual interview in English. The questions on the listening test will be taken from a listening portion of the EIKEN grade 3. In the interview, each interviewee will be evaluated on his/her oral language proficiency and teaching skills by performing language proficiency-related activities such as engaging in an everyday conversation or reading a story aloud, and teaching-related activities such as giving instructions or acting out a dialogue. In the future, the author intends to develop a complete version of the instruments based on the outline and administer them as pilot versions with in-service elementary school English teachers. She hopes that her study and measuring instruments will contribute to teacher development and further improvements in elementary school English education in Japan.

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