

論文要旨

Teachers' Perceptions of the English Curriculum Guidelines in Japan and Taiwan

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Abstract

Background

Nowadays, the world is like a global village, and English has become a common language and has been used and learned in different countries. Based on the roles of English, there are three kinds of countries: ENL (English as a Native Language) countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia and so forth, ESL (English as a Second Language) countries such as India, Philippines, Singapore and so forth, and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and so forth. In ESL countries, English is used as an institutional language so there are chances to use English outside the classroom. On the other hand, in EFL countries, because English is used and learned as a foreign language, there are few chances to use English outside the classroom. However, because of economic development, it is necessary for EFL countries to communicate with other countries in English when doing business. Thus, English is needed and English education is an important issue among EFL countries.

As EFL countries among Asia, there are similarities and differences between the English education policy in Japan and in Taiwan. Both Japan and Taiwan have made adjustments in the English curriculum guidelines in recent years. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan revised its General Senior High School English Curriculum Guidelines in 2008 and implemented it in 2009. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education, Culture,

Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in Japan revised its New Course of Study, the English curriculum guidelines for senior high schools in 2009 and implemented it in 2013. Since the change of the curriculum guidelines was made for better English education, it is important to follow up whether or not the curriculum is implemented certainly and brings positive effects on English education. Teachers' decisions have influence on their teaching in the classroom so investigating the teachers' perceptions is one of the ways to understand what happens in the classroom.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to clarify the difficulties of the curriculum implementation and to provide the suggestions about curriculum alteration to the governments for making English education better in Japan and Taiwan. Senior high school English teachers' perceptions of the English curriculum guidelines were investigated to see whether the teachers' perceptions are conformed to the curriculum guidelines or not. Based on the results, the differences in the difficulties of implementation between Japan and Taiwan were explained. Advantages and disadvantages of Japan and Taiwan's English education were discussed and the suggestions on English language policy were made.

Literature review

In the literature review section, the similarities and differences in English language teaching and learning between Japan and Taiwan were reviewed from perspectives of

teaching approaches, materials, native-speaking English teachers, and teacher training programs which have influence on teachers' perceptions. In the English curriculum guidelines, both Japan and Taiwan advocate Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and teaching and learning English in English. Integration of the four skills and development of communicative ability are also emphasized by the curriculum guidelines. Can-do lists and Competence Indicators are introduced to make the teaching plan more effective. However, the curriculum guidelines are not well implemented. The grammar-translation method is preferred by the teachers. University entrance examinations and materials such as published textbooks also have influence on English teaching and learning in Japan and Taiwan. As for native-speaking English teachers, Japanese government launched the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program and there are assistant language teachers (ALTs) who help local teachers teach English from elementary schools to senior high schools. On the contrary, Taiwanese government started the program which is called "Foreign English Teachers Project for Taiwan's Public Schools". However, it is only for elementary schools in rural not for the senior high schools. Furthermore, Taiwanese teachers have low-level perceptions of the curriculum guidelines.

Methodology

In order to understand the teachers' perceptions and the difficulties of implementation, there are three research questions listed in this study.

1. What are senior high school English teachers' perceptions of the New Course of Study in Japan?
2. What are senior high school English teachers' perceptions of the General Senior High School English Curriculum Guidelines in Taiwan?
3. What are the difficulties during the curriculum implementation for senior high school English teachers in Japan and Taiwan?

A mixed method was applied to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. There are five sections of the questionnaire: (a) background information (b) perceptions and realization toward the English curriculum guidelines (c) Can-Do lists and Competence Indicators (d) cooperation with the native-speaking English teachers, and (e) the teacher training program (See Appendices A and B). The interviews were conducted based on the responses to the questionnaires. The participants were the teachers who teach English as a subject in public senior high schools in Japan and Taiwan. The participants were 156 public senior high school teachers in Taiwan and 92 in Japan who filled out the questionnaire and interviews were conducted with 12 participants in Taiwan and 5 in Japan.

Results

The results of the questionnaire data showed that there are differences between Japanese and Taiwanese teachers' perceptions on English curriculum guidelines. In terms of

understanding of English curriculum guidelines, almost all of the Japanese teachers know and can describe the content while Taiwanese teachers do not know it clearly. Taiwanese teachers who majored in TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other languages) are confident of teaching in the classroom even if they do not understand the content of the curriculum guidelines. Furthermore, Japanese teachers use more English in class than Taiwanese teachers. However, both of them use the students' native languages when doing the explanation of grammar, vocabulary, and homework. For the comments on the materials, both Japanese and Taiwanese teachers think that the textbooks help them teach in a communicative way and both of them make handouts and worksheets for students. Taiwanese teachers also use audio or visual materials more often than Japanese teachers.

Both Japanese and Taiwanese teachers view the university entrance examination seriously. In terms of Can-Do lists and Competence Indicators, both of Japanese and Taiwanese teachers have positive attitudes toward it. However, Japanese teachers know and use Can-Do lists more frequently than Taiwanese teachers do. As for the cooperation between native-speaking teachers and local teachers, there are many native-speaking English teachers in Japan while there are almost none of them in Taiwan. Therefore, Taiwanese teachers never have team-teaching with them. Japanese teachers also seldom have team-teaching but they sometimes design lesson together with the native-speaking teachers. In terms of teacher

training programs, Taiwanese teachers attend teacher training programs almost once a month while Japanese teachers only attend them about once a year.

Discussion

In the discussion section, three points were discussed. The first one is university entrance examination. The results indicate that it has influence on teachers' perceptions of the English curriculum guidelines and their ways of teaching in the classroom. In order to improve this, both Japan and Taiwan's governments try to make changes on university entrance examination. Second, there should be two kinds of teacher training programs. One is for improving teaching methodology and the other one is for polishing the English proficiency. The third point is about fostering students' autonomy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research investigates the teachers' perceptions on the English curriculum guidelines using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The results indicate that university entrance examination has influence on teachers' perceptions of communicative language teaching in both Japan and Taiwan. In addition to this, teachers of both countries are inclined to teach based on their learning experiences. Although there is gap between the teachers' perceptions and the language policy, the teachers are always doing their best to teach and trying to give the students as much as they can. In order to make English education better, while making alteration in the curriculum guidelines, the government should also

support the teachers from different ways such as considerations for university entrance examination and better teacher training programs.

Suggestions

There are some suggestions to improve English education in Taiwan and Japan. In Taiwan, the teachers do not have full understanding of the curriculum guidelines and there are not enough native-speaking teachers for senior high schools. Therefore, guidance of curriculum guidelines and programs which invite native-speaking teachers could be launched by the government. On the other hand, in Japan, teachers should be supported and encouraged to attend more teacher training programs and to cooperate with the native-speaking teachers effectively. Furthermore, the government should expand the budget for technical equipment of classroom such as computers and projectors in public senior high school in order to create better environment where audio and visual materials could be utilized.