原著論文

Linking English Education at Junior High School and Elementary School: A Perspective from Metacognitive Experiences

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Abstract：In this paper, we discuss the importance of junior high school teachers having a deep awareness of the content of textbooks used in English classes at elementary school from the perspective of metacognitive experiences. A total of 14 textbooks approved for use at elementary school English classes and 18 textbooks approved for use in junior high school English classes were analyzed to find overlaps of grammatical structures and language functions. We argue that if English teachers at junior high schools make use of the materials provided in textbooks for elementary school English classes, it will trigger the metacognitive experiences of students, thus raising their confidence to actively participate in their English classes.

Keywords：English education, Metacognition, Metacognitive experiences, Adolescents, TESOL

Since the introduction of foreign language activities, and later English Education, into the Japanese elementary school curriculum, there have been numerous discussions regarding ideal ways to teach English to young learners in Japan. Debates have continued surrounding, for example, whether writing skills should be taught or not. Some researchers have suggested simply bringing the content previously taught at junior high school to the elementary school classroom, whereas others have opposed the idea of teaching English to elementary school students altogether. Whether one agrees with teaching English at elementary school or not, the reality is that English is currently being taught at all public elementary schools in Japan. Therefore, it is necessary to consider ways to assist educators who have been given the task of teaching English so that they may coach their students to communicate in English with confidence.

In our opinion, although the way English classes are conducted at elementary school is, of course, essential, English teachers at junior high school hold the key if English education at elementary school is to be successful. We believe that if junior high school teachers are able to ignite the linguistic self-confidence of their students through calling upon their metacognitive experiences and creating feelings in the classroom of, "We can already do this," it will go a long way to achieving the communicative goals set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology-Japan (MEXT) when discussions surrounding the implementation of English education to elementary schools were initiated.

In this paper, we discuss the current state of English education in Japan and how the mechanism of metacognitive experiences could be utilized by junior high school teachers in their classes to strengthen the self-confidence of their students. Furthermore, we give some examples of grammatical forms and language functions seen in junior high school and elementary school English textbooks. Finally, we provide a suggestion of a classroom teaching method that junior high school teachers could implement to increase the efficiency of their class time. We believe the recommendations within this paper will be beneficial for both junior high school English teachers and elementary school teachers as they look for ways to

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increase the confidence of their students to communicate in English.

English Education in Japan

Until 2011, English education at elementary schools in Japan was limited to either sporadic one-off visits by assistant language teachers from abroad who were living locally or private schools that offered English classes as part of their curricula. After years of discussions and debates among educators and researchers, MEXT decreed that all public elementary schools include 35 hours of foreign language activities per year in grades five and six of elementary school from April 2011. One of the goals of introducing foreign language activities[1] at the elementary school level was to help students prepare for English classes at junior high school.

From April 2018, the elementary school curriculum was amended, with students in grades three and four also partaking in foreign language activities once per week. Further changes were made for the academic year starting in April 2020, with students in grades five and six being required to study English as a subject twice a week. The change from English being studied as an activity to a subject meant teachers were required to evaluate the students on their performances instead of simply reporting to parents about what had been done in class, as had been the case in foreign language activity classes.

Changes to the elementary school curriculum to include foreign language activities and English education brought with it a plethora of research papers suggesting the most effective ways of teaching English to younger learners (e.g., Yoshida, 2015) as well as arguments that English education at the elementary school level in Japan was not only unnecessary but in fact harmful for teachers' and children's attitudes towards the English language (e.g., Fennelly and Luxton, 2011). Very few studies, however, have considered elementary school English education from the perspective of education at the junior high school level. In this paper, we intend to help fill that gap by considering how junior high school teachers,

in fact, play a significant role in the success of English education at elementary schools in Japan. We shall be especially focusing on how junior high school teachers can trigger students' use of metacognition from the angle of metacognitive experiences.

Metacognition

In a simplified definition, metacognition is "thinking about thinking" (Livingston, 2003, p. 2). When students continuously monitor and attempt to control their cognition, the degree of thinking goes to the metacognitive level (see Flavell, 1976; Itagaki et al., 1996; Nelson, 1996, 1999). The mental processes humans partake in during behaviors such as thinking, remembering, planning, and imagining (i.e., cognition) are part of a higher level of brain activity. At the cognitive level, students perform tasks, such as, for example, solving problems during regular tests at school. Metacognition can be broken down into two main functions—monitoring and controlling—which are assumed to be activated while students attempt to, in the case of language learning, for example, study vocabulary and solve grammar items in tests. Although there are numerous facets of metacognition, the metacognitive level consists of two primary manifestations, namely metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive skills.

Metacognitive knowledge holds a monitoring role within cognition. Itagaki and his colleagues (1996) explain that the function of metacognitive knowledge refers to 1) the knowledge of one's own ability and cognition (e.g., How good am I at reading and writing?; Am I better at listening than at speaking?; I understand that human attention is limited.; I realize that my short-term memory is limited.); 2) the knowledge of and perception of language aptitude (i.e., the growth mindset and the fixed mindset); and 3) and feeling that one is born smart but something has gone wrong, what some researchers call theory of mind or naive/folk psychology (Goldman, 2012).

On the other hand, metacognitive skills, which play a controlling role within cognition, describe the skills

and plans used to regulate one's cognition (Efklides, 2006). The manifestations of metacognitive skills include reflections on the effectiveness of strategies used to complete tasks, allocation of time and effort in learning, and planning a schedule, for example, to successfully complete a school assignment or research project.

Efklides (2006) argues that the concept of metacognitive experiences––a further aspect of metacognition—has not received enough attention in research related to education despite the hints such research may provide educators to help their students monitor the learning process "from the moment the person comes across a learning task to its end" (Efklides, 2006, p. 3). In this paper, we discuss how encouraging language students, in particular junior high school students in Japan, to call upon their metacognitive experiences may be beneficial in increasing a feeling of familiarity with the language and consequently the confidence with which the students approach their studies.

Metacognitive Experiences

Metacognitive experiences act as a manifestation of the monitoring facet of metacognition, including the feeling humans may experience during a task when they feel that something is challenging or that something is familiar (Efklides, 2006; Flavell, 1976; Flavell et al., 2001). Efklides and her colleagues (1996) suggested the existence of negative relationships between feelings of familiarity and feelings of difficulty. Because a sense of difficulty acts as an obstacle in one's thought processes (Frijda, 1986), it slows down the fluency with which one is able to access knowledge during online activity. Thus, in order to successfully complete tasks in the classroom, for instance, it is necessary to consider ways to increase the feelings of confidence students have in taking on that task as well as the feeling of satisfaction at the completion of the task. Efklides (2002) advocates that confidence often emerges from not only being able to answer questions accurately but also depends on the type of task, the difficulty of the task, and one's background

knowledge related to the task. Therefore, "metacognitive experiences conveying information about task difficulty, such as feeling of difficulty, or state of one's knowledge such as feeling of knowing, should be related to feeling of confidence" (Efklides, 2002, p. 23).

Although there have been numerous investigations considering metacognition in second language learning (e.g., Chambres et al., 2002; Milliner and Dimoski, 2021), to our knowledge, there have been few studies focusing on metacognitive experiences. One exception is Leis, Itagaki, and Yanagida (2020), who argued that metacognitive experiences play a vital role when learning English as a foreign language; they can help learners to gain more confidence about getting better scores in future similar tests as students can understand why and how they made mistakes or chose wrong answers by reflecting on their responses and feedback from previous tests.

This Study

Methodology

In order to discover clear links between elementary school English textbooks and those used at junior high school, we analyzed 14 elementary school English textbooks and 18 junior high school English textbooks approved by MEXT to be used in public schools within Japan[2].

The study was conducted by searching for common grammatical forms and language functions studied at junior high school, especially the first year of junior high school, and searching for where and how those forms and functions are presented in elementary school English textbooks. We chose two grammar items (i.e., the be verb and past tense) and two language functions (i.e., giving directions and ordering food / shopping). The grammar items were chosen as they are introduced in the first year of junior high school. The language functions were deemed to be commonly used in authentic communication, thus essential for students to learn and use with confidence.

Next, we discussed ways junior high school teachers could use the materials from elementary school

textbooks in their junior high school lessons as a way to illustrate to their students that they already had the basic knowledge of the forms and functions being studied in

the lesson. Descriptions of the textbooks approved for use at elementary school and junior high school analyzed in this study can be found in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1
Elementary School English Textbooks Analyzed in this Study

Textbook	Grade	Pages	Chapters
Blue Sky Elementary 5	5	136	13
Blue Sky Elementary 6	6	136	13
Crown Jr. 5	5	128	15
Crown Jr. 6	6	128	14
Here We Go! 5	5	136	13
Here We Go! 6	6	140	13
Junior Sunshine 5	5	120	11
Junior Sunshine 6	6	128	13
Junior Total English 1	5	158	11
Junior Total English 2	6	154	11
New Horizon Elementary English Course 5	5	96	14
New Horizon Elementary English Course 6	6	96	14
One World Smiles 5	5	118	14
One World Smiles 6	6	112	13

Table 2
Junior High School English Textbooks Analyzed in this Study

Textbook	Grade	Pages	Chapters
Columbus 21 English Course 1	1	168	16
Columbus 21 English Course 2	2	160	15
Columbus 21 English Course 3	3	152	14
New Crown English Series 1	1	160	9
New Crown English Series 2	2	160	13
New Crown English Series 3	3	160	13
New Horizon English Course 1	1	152	16
New Horizon English Course 2	2	152	21
New Horizon English Course 3	3	152	19
One World English Course 1	1	144	14
One World English Course 2	2	144	13
One World English Course 3	3	144	10
Sunshine English Course 1	1	152	15
Sunshine English Course 2	2	152	15

Results and Discussion

Covering every grammatical form and language function used in junior high school textbooks is beyond the scope of this short paper. Instead, the objective of this study was to provide some examples of forms and functions

that illustrate the way junior high school teachers could link their textbooks with what students had learned previously. We hope that this will encourage junior high school teachers to consider calling upon the textbooks used in elementary school in their classes. It should be noted that rather than reporting on every instance in

which the grammatical forms and language functions appeared in the textbooks, we focused on examples of such occasions.

Grammatical Forms

The be verb

The be verb is most often the first grammatical form taught in foreign language textbooks. It is usually presented in the form of self-introduction, with *I am* often appearing first (e.g., I am Tanaka Kumi.; I am Paul. [New Crown English Series 1, p. 21]), *You are* and the interrogative *Are you* introduced next (e.g., You are Ken.; Are you from Australia? [New Crown English Series 1, p. 23]), and *is* being taught last (e.g., This is a fox.; Is that a hawk? [New Crown English Series 1, p. 93]). Table 3 displays examples of the instances of the be verb being presented in English textbooks used at elementary school and junior high school.

The be verb appears in the early chapters of all junior high school textbooks, therefore present clear opportunities for teachers to trigger their students' metacognitive experiences with their language learning. For example, as an activity to use in a class focusing on the be verb at junior high school, rather than immediately using characters in the junior high school textbooks (e.g., Ellen Baker and Ando Saki in New Horizon English Course 1, pp. 22, 23) teachers may consider using characters appearing in elementary school textbooks (e.g., Emily in New Horizon Elementary English Course 6, p. 10) or self-introduction cards written by students in elementary school (e.g., Let's Read and Write in New Horizon Elementary English Course 6, p. 86) that show the students clearly that they are using English that they have already learned, rather than coming across something for the first time.

Table 3

Instances of the Be Verb in Elementary School and Junior High School Textbooks

School	Textbook	Place
Elementary School	Junior Sunshine 5	Lesson 1
	Junior Total English 2	Lesson 1
	New Horizon Elementary English Course 6	Chapter 1
Junior High School	Columbus 21 English Course 1	Lesson 2
	New Horizon English Course 1	Chapter 1
	Total English 1	Lesson 3

Past tense

Although the present tense is said to be the most common verb tense used in English, with a frequency of almost 70% in speech and just under 90% in communication related to technical terminologies, when it comes to fiction and telling stories about our own experiences (e.g., what we did that day), the past tense is more common, making up almost three-fifths of our sentence patterns (Ginsenglish, n.d.; Krámský, 1969; Weinreich, 1964/1982). With past tense being so frequently used when students share their past experiences with others, it is essential for the students to feel confident in using this grammatical form in authentic

communication. Table 4 displays examples of the past tense being introduced in elementary and junior high school textbooks.

It should be noted that in textbooks used at elementary school, the past tense, like the be verb, is introduced implicitly without explicit explanations of the grammar. For example, in Here We Go! 6, students discuss their best memories from school, such as the sports day and school trip. Some past tense verbs are introduced (e.g., ate, enjoyed, went). However, like other grammatical structures appearing in elementary school English textbooks, no explanations of past tense verb morphology are given. One exception, however, is seen in New

Horizon Elementary English Course 6, in which one page (i.e., p. 96), titled *Chuugakkou ni susumu anata he* [As you prepare for junior high school], provides simplified explanations of the syntax of be verb and present tense verb sentences as well as their negative and interrogative forms.

Table 4
Instances of Past Tense in Elementary School and Junior High School Textbooks

School	Textbook	Place
Elementary School	Blue Sky Elementary 6	Unit 4
	Crown Jr.6	Lesson 3
	Here We Go! 6	Unit 7
Junior High School	New Crown English Series 1	Lesson 9
	One World English Course 1	Lesson 9
	Sunshine English Course 1	Chapter 10

Language Functions

Giving directions

With improvements in mobile technology, global positioning systems (GPS), and online mapping programs, the authenticity of conversations focused on asking for and giving directions around town may be seen as questionable in the near future. Nevertheless, such lessons do indeed provide opportunities for learning and practicing prepositions of place and for the practice of similar conversations where the GPS applications do not reach (e.g., within shopping malls and in supermarkets). Table 5 illustrates examples of where conversations focused on the function of asking for and giving directions in elementary school and junior high school textbooks.

Table 5
Giving Directions Language Function in Elementary School and Junior High School Textbooks

School	Textbook	Place
Elementary School	Junior Sunshine 5	Lesson 5
	Junior Total English 1	Lesson 4
	One World Smiles 5	Lesson 8
Junior High School	Columbus 21 English Course 2	Unit 4
	One World English Course 2	p.41
	Sunshine English Course 2	p.68

As was explained in the previous section, using students' elementary school textbooks as part of their English education at junior high school can also be beneficial for triggering their metacognitive experience for language functions. Although junior high school textbooks do provide maps for students to use in their practice, using the maps in elementary school English textbooks may help establish a feeling of "Oh, I've done this before!" Furthermore, by using maps that students had used in their elementary school English classes, teachers may be able to measure how much they are already able to ask for successfully and give directions (for more on this point, see the Pedagogical Implications section below).

An example of a detailed map that teachers could call upon to use in their junior high school classrooms is seen Blue Sky Elementary 5, with a simple map (pp. 78, 79) for basic directions (e.g., in front of, next to, between A and B) and a more detailed map (pp. 80, 81) to practice using more complex directions (e.g., go straight, turn left, on your right).

Ordering at a restaurant and shopping

Despite the influx of online shopping and being able to order food via the Internet that will be delivered to your door, it is still essential for language students to learn the functions used in shopping and ordering food at restaurants. Most textbooks used at elementary school dedicate entire chapters to these functions, but in junior high school textbooks, they are usually concentrated on in one- or two-page sections found between grammar-focused chapters. Table 6 gives examples of lessons that teach the functions of ordering at a restaurant and shopping appear in elementary and junior high school textbooks.

As has been a common theme throughout this paper,

teachers could consider recycling activities and tasks used at the elementary school level in classes at junior high school to trigger the feeling among students of *I've seen this somewhere before*: metacognitive experiences. This is easily seen in the example of ordering food at a restaurant. A restaurant scene and basic menu are depicted in One World Smiles 5 (pp. 82, 83), for example, which could be used as part of an ice-breaking activity at the beginning of a lesson at junior high school. Likewise, in the same textbook (pp. 88, 89), an information gap task is provided that teachers may use in their classes as a starting point for more complex tasks conducted in junior high school.

Table 6

Functions of Ordering and Shopping in Elementary School and Junior High School Textbooks

School	Textbook	Place
Elementary School	Here We Go! 5	Unit 7
	Junior Sunshine 5	Lesson 8
	One World Smiles 5	Lesson 7
Junior High School	Columbus 21 English Course 1	p.139
	Sunshine English Course 2	p.50
	Total English 1	p.107

Pedagogical Implications

Language teachers and researchers often discuss the most effective methods and techniques to use in the classroom. Some support the use of language tasks in the classroom through task-based language teaching (TBLT) (e.g., Candlin and Murphey, 1987; Ellis, 2003, 2009; Long, 1985; Prabhu, 1987), arguing that "language learning will progress most successfully if teaching aims simply to create contexts in which the learner's natural learning capacity can be nurtured rather than making a systematic approach to teach the language bit by bit" (Ellis, 2009, p. 222). Other researchers argue for a more traditional present-practice-produce (PPP) approach, especially in the Asian context, due to the explicit instruction of grammar the PPP provides, which helps students prepare for high-stakes tests such as high school and university entrance exams (Butler, 2005; Sato, 2010).

It may be more efficient, however, for language teachers to consider a combination of the TBLT and PPP methods and implement a structure of focused task, present, practice, unfocused task: TPPT (Leis, 2020; Leis, Bentley, and Erickson, 2020; Leis and Erickson, 2019). The first T (i.e., focused task) of the TPPT structure of the lesson gives students opportunities to use the target grammatical structure or language function before they are aware of the form or function being focused upon in the lesson. This, in turn, will encourage the use of metacognitive experiences among students as well as give teachers an indication of what students can already do accurately and with confidence and in what areas they are having trouble. This creates more efficient use of classroom time because when teachers notice what students can and cannot do with the language, it enables them to focus the presentation and practice stages of

the lesson on students' weak points, allowing for more free communication in the final stage of the lesson, an unfocused task when more authentic language use can be achieved.

The examples of links in elementary school and junior high school English textbooks discussed in this paper illustrate examples of topics for focused tasks that junior high school teachers may call upon at the beginning of their lessons––the first T––both to increase the confidence of their students and grasp what areas they need to concentrate upon when explaining grammar and having students practice through drills, reading aloud, or pair activities. By showing students that they have already learned the functions and grammar being focused upon in that class when they were in elementary school, students may feel more comfortable approaching the lesson and less anxiety about what may have initially appeared to be something new for them.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed how junior high school teachers may be able to call upon the content of textbooks used in elementary school English classes to scaffold students in their language studies. By doing so, the metacognitive experiences of students may be triggered, creating a feeling of, "I've seen this before!" or "I remember doing this!" among the students, thus raising a sense of self-confidence in their language learning. In this study, we focused on instruction related to grammatical structures and language functions that appear in junior high school textbooks, but there is still room for further similar research.

First, it is commonly accepted that lexical knowledge is a clear indicator of the success one has in a foreign language. Therefore, it may be beneficial to investigate which vocabulary items appearing in junior high school textbooks can also be found in elementary school textbooks—either in the written form or visually through pictures—and how students could be reminded that they have already come across those words.

Second, the suggestions within this paper appear to ideal in theory, but these are mainly based on suppositions without, admittedly, any empirical evidence to support our claims. Thus, it will be beneficial to look at what really happens in the classroom through action research. By doing so, we will gain an understanding of whether or not using material from elementary school textbooks in the junior high school classroom will indeed spark students' metacognitive experiences and generate more confidence in their studies.

Third, even though more than a decade has passed since teachers at public elementary schools were first given the responsibility of conducting language classes, many are still dissatisfied with the lack of training of language teaching techniques and opportunities to communicate with junior high school teachers. Qualitative studies that focus on the opinions of teachers at elementary school and junior high school related to how English education at elementary school contributes to students' learning and communication skills at junior high school may bring research further insights and suggestions for improvements in language instructions at the respective schooling levels.

Whether one agrees with English being taught at elementary school or not, it is here to stay. It is the responsibility of language education researchers and teachers alike to find the most effective ways to help improve the English language skills of all students. We hope the ideas discussed in this paper will help language teachers find such effective practices as well as open the door to further research.

Notes
1. Even though the course was named *foreign language activities*, the principal language taught to students was English. The introduction of other languages, such as Russian and Finnish, was limited to simple greetings.
2. It should be noted that the analysis of the textbooks in this study was conducted in the 2020 academic year. From April 2021, some junior high school

textbooks were updated and may differ from the descriptions given in this paper.

Acknowledgments

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