The Influence of CEFR on English Language Education in Japan

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ABSTRACT

English Language Policy in Japan has traditionally been influenced by inner-circle sociolinguistic forces and by EFL trends in teaching policy and practice. At different levels of society and different levels of education the amount of influence differs. This paper attempts to explore these influences, and to show how in recent years the influence has shifted to a European one with the globalization of language policy through the development of the CEFR, notably regarding evaluation. It is hoped that future top-down change (using positive washback) based on CEFR and the accompanying 'Can Do' approach to goal setting and evaluation could lead to real change in teaching practices further down in the educational system.

Keywords : CEFR, Japan, CEFR-J, Language policy, influence, English, Can Do Lists.

1. 0 Introduction

The development and change of language policy in Japan is influenced by a number of sociolinguistic forces that originate both internally and externally. I would like to take a closer look at these influences, as they are fundamental in understanding Language Education and curriculum change in Japan. Notably, in recent years the influence of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has had fundamental influence on language education policy plans for the future.

2. 0 Traditional Model

The spread and influence of English throughout the world was conceptualized by Kachru (1985) as having three concentric circles relating to the use of English within those countries. These three circles are :

The Inner Circle (of English speaking countries) ; Where English is the native language.
The Outer Circle ; Where English is used as an additional 'common' language or *lingua franca* between groups whose native languages are not English.
The Expanding Circle ; Where English is used for communicating internationally, for business, finance etc.

The English language will play a different role in each of these circles. The roles of language were described by Kennedy (1995 : 84) as follows :
Native Language (NL) : used when the language is L1.
Second Language (SL) : used for communication with NL speakers by immigrants.
Additional Language (AL) : used as a *lingua franca* between speakers of different languages.
International Language (IL) : used for communicating with foreign nations but not used domestically.
Foreign Language (FL) : used for academia only, this is not likely with English due to its importance for business and technology.

2. 1

For the English language one might expect to see (NL) and (SL) as the typical roles in the *inner circle*. (AL) may be seen as the typical role for the *outer circle* and (IL) as the typical role for the *expanding*

circle. It should also be noted that in any country for which English is an 'additional language' it is likely to also have the role of 'international language'. This is the case in Japan.

2. 2

Language occupies different domains relating to the roles described above. In the inner circle, English is likely to be used in all domains（though ESL speakers may choose to use their own L1 when dealing with other speakers of that language）. Looking at Kennedy's （1995）'*table of domains and roles of English*' English as an （AL）（i.e. outer circle）is likely to be used at work, in education, the media, by law and institutions, whereas as an （IL）（i.e. expanding circle） it is likely only to be used in work and education. The domain of （AL） is typical where English is the medium for education, and in the domain of （IL）, English is typically one subject in a curriculum primarily taught in L1， such as the situation in Japan.

2. 3

Japan has been described as a country in the *expanding circle* by several authors, （Bisong 95 : 122, Kachru 94 : 138, Kennedy 95 : 97）. The（NL）in Japan is Japanese and it is used in all domains, Japan being monolingual. English is used in work （by some） and in education, labeling it as an （IL） or *international language,* typical of a country in the *expanding circle*.

2. 4

Inner-circle influences can affect EFL language teaching policy, curriculum and teaching styles throughout the education system. In Japan the move toward a more communicative language teaching policy can be seen as one of these inner-circle influences. Pressure by business and academic influence at the top levels i.e. the Ministry of Education seems to have encouraged change. It seems, however, that in recent years a change in the source of influence

has been seen and perhaps a move to more influence from the *outer circle* countries of Europe.

2. 5

Table 1 shows a simplified account of traditional inner circle influences in ELT at the upper-secondary level of education in Japan, based on Kennedy's 1995 study of inner circle influence in Malaysia. The main influence in Japan, since the Second World War has been the United States, though the UK and more recently Australia and New Zealand also have some influence.

3. 0 CEFR

Now, I would like to take a look at how recently influence has shifted to that of a globalization of language policy with its roots in Europe. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* （CEFR） was published in 2001 in both English and French as a contribution to the European year of Languages. Since publication its influence at a global level has been significant and the implications for Japan are considerable.

3. 1

Following the Second World War and the birth of the Council of Europe and the EU, there became a greater need for language education to promote *the free movement of people, information and ideas in Europe* （Byram and Parmentar 2012）. The philosophy behind CEFR is based on over 30 years of research, finding its roots in promoting pluriliguism （an emphasis on learning the mother tongue plus two other languages） and based on the research associated with the 'Threshold Level', which were originally designed to support adult education of migrant workers. These threshold levels described in detail what a worker needed to know and to be able to do in a language in order to meet the challenges for

Table 1 Traditional Inner Circle Influences in Japan

Category ELT	Significant Inner Circle Influence
Language and learning theories	Generally yes, but usually restricted in application and a tendency to be outdated
Book publishing	Inner circle publishers have local branches, which mainly deal for the private ELT sector or tertiary education. State school ELT books are published locally
Content (topics) of textbooks	Mix of inner circle influence with locally popular topics and ideals. Ministry guidelines must be followed and controversial topics controlled.
Model of language	Yes-grammar, lexis, phonology, discourse (USA [GA] and UK [RP])
Writers of textbooks	State schools use local companies : may employ writers from inner circle but restricted by Ministry curriculum specifications. Private/Tertiary education-Yes : strong influences
Teachers	No. All local (other than private/tertiary) with some influence from inner circle assistant teachers (ALTs).
Location of training courses and source of trainers	Generally-no, though some inner circle influenced training schemes are being introduced at the local and national level and some overseas schemes are available for a minimal number of teachers. Ministry sponsored training schemes are on the increase.
Teachers' Associations	No/Yes, (organizations such as JALT, however not widespread in state system). Local professional organizations widespread.
Opportunity to publish	Yes/No Publishing in UK/USA possible but unlikely. Local journals are the norm.
International links professionally	Yes-Private/Tertiary Yes/No-state ; some links through JET and such programs. *Japanese schools overseas. University and teacher training links on increase Table 1

(See Table 9 : Kennedy 1995)

everyday life in another country. These were adapted for most of the countries in the Council of Europe and were also adapted and applied to school education.

In 1991 an intergovernmental symposium in Europe was asked to consider ;

(a) *the introduction of a Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for the description of objectives of language learning and teaching, curriculum and design, materials production and language testing and assessment, and*

(b) *the introduction of a European Language Portfolio (ELP), in which individual learners could record*

not only institutional courses attended and qualifications gained, but also less formal experiences with respect to as wide a range of European languages and cultures as possible.

(Byram and Parmentar 2012).

3. 2

The importance of a framework to mutually recognize qualifications and experience across languages and cultures was stressed. In order to accomplish this the framework was to be comprehensive, transparent and coherent. It is said to be designed to '*Raise awareness of a European identity with shared values and acceptance of cultural and*

language diversity' (Nagai and O'Dwyer 2011). In Europe the need for a clear way to compare language skills across languages has lead to a globalization of language policy around the world, particularly in the area of evaluation.

Following the CEFR guidelines, language programmes should be action-based, have autonomous outcomes and stress a need for coherent and trans-

parent content and evaluation. *It was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. (CEFR 2011)*

3. 3

The resulting level scale produced with descriptors

Table 2　Common Reference Levels : global scale

Basic User (A)	A 1 (Brealthrough)	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
	A 2 (Waystage)	Can understand sentences and frequently used 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.
Independent User (B)	B 1 (Threshold)	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.
	B 2 (Vantage)	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Proficient User (C)	C 1 (Effective Operational User)	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
	C 2 (Mastery)	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

Adapted from CEFR (2001)

selected from existing scaling had great impact globally. This reference list, and the accompanying 'Can-Do' descriptors or determinators have been adopted in many countries in order to increase transparency and coherence in language goals and evaluation.

The above outlines were designed as an easy to follow outline for non-specialists and as a reference for teachers and curriculum planners. More detailed and specific overviews would be required for teachers and learners within the educational system. Based on the different levels a detailed list of Can-Do descriptors was developed and these have been used to develop materials, assessment and self-assessment tools based on not only what the learners' resources are （i.e. their strategies and what they know） but also what they can do with them. Common reference levels produced are found in the areas of Listening and Reading （Understanding）, Spoken Interaction and Spoken Production （Speaking） and Writing （Writing）.

Examples from the *Common Reference Levels Self-assessment grid (CEFR 2001)*：

Listening

A1：*I can recognize familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.*

B1：*I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.*

C1：*I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.*

Spoken Production

A1：*I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.*

B2：*I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.*

C2：*I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.*

Writing

A1：*I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.*

B1：*I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.*

C1：*I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.*

(CEFR 2001)

3. 4

With such detailed Can-Do descriptors it became possible for learners and teachers alike to compare achievements and experiences across language and cultural barriers. This lead to the use of these reference levels for course and curriculum design which in turn, significantly influenced classroom practice and evaluation. It should be noted that these determinators were not designed specifically for English language programmes but were as a framework for languages globally.

4. 0 Japan and CEFR-J

Although the CEFR was developed to implement European Language policy it has been making significant impact on the Japanese education system in recent years. Due to the Geo-political situation, however, the influences are seen to be somewhat different to that of those in Europe. The pressure to learn a foreign language other than English in Japan is very weak and the government does little to promote plurilingualism. Also the teaching philosophy related to how the can-do statements can be achieved is an area which is still lacking. The major influence of the CEFR ideals lie in the promotion of transparency and coherence in development of the English Language curriculum and particularly in the area of evaluation. Glover (2011) noted that using CEFR can-do statement can increase learner's self-awareness of language use and ability and increased autonomous learning.

In recent years the Can-Do descriptor statements associated with the CEFR levels are strongly impacting school language education and Ministry of Education directives (Nagai and O'Dwyer 2011). Runnels (2014a) notes that CEFR has been criticized for not being based on second-language acquisition theory or on performance samples from actual learners, however, she goes on to note the significant impact it has come to have on second language education around the world.

4. 1

Negishi (2012) conducted surveys which showed that eighty percent of Japanese English language learners fall within CEFR 'A' level and that there are very few who are at level 'C'. It was decided that the present CEFR levels were not sufficient to represent the level differentiation of language learners in Japan. As a result, a local adaption of the CEFR levels with more detail in the early levels was developed, courtesy of research grants awarded to the Tokyo University of Foreign studies, with the aim of producing an alternate system to better meet the needs of Japanese language learners. A pre-A section was added and the lowest level 'A' was split into 5 sub-levels (A1, A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.1, A2.2), and the 'B' level was split into 4 sub-levels (B1.1, B1.2, B2.1, B2.2) rather than the original 2 level CEFR model.

CEFR-J Image
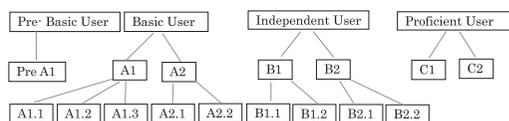
4. 2

Following the increased detail at early stages, an amount of re-ordering of the can-do statements was deemed necessary as the students tested seemed to find different levels of difficulty of task than those outlined in CEFR. This could, however, be related to how used to the type of task the students were rather than their level. Also with regard to self-evaluation scales and Can-Do lists, Japanese students are socio-culturally more likely to down play their abilities compared with their European counterparts. Though there is still little empirical data to support the CEFR-J model (Runnels 2014b), the need for local adaption of the European model can be seen to be an important one, and a much needed area for future research.

4. 3

An important aspect of the CEFR globally is that of evaluation. The framework offers an opportunity for students, evaluators or employers to compare different qualifications with a more coherent idea of what that qualification means in real language

ability. CEFR based Can-Do lists are now used for the score interpretation of most high-stake English qualification tests in Japan such as TOEIC and Eiken. These tests Runnels（2014a）, notes that the Can-Do lists for both are produced through similar empirical studies of test takers related to what they can do in English in their daily lives. These studies were administered immediately after taking the tests. This has also led to updates in these 'high stake' tests as the tests are adjusted to evaluate in line with what people should be able to do at each level of CEFR.

Table 3　CEFR and 'High Stake' English Language Tests

CEFR	Eiken	TOEIC	TOEFL Ibt	IELTS
C 2				8.5-9.0
C 1	Grade 1	900	110-120	7.0-7.5
B 2	Grade Pre-1	740	87-109	5.5-6.0
B 1	Grade 2	520	57-86	4.0-4.5
A 2	Grade Pre 2	400	40-56	3.0
A 1	Grade 3-5	365		2.0

Adapted from British Council（2015）
and English 4 U（2013）

4. 4

These Can-Do lists provide test takers and educators with a comprehensive overview of the proficiency levels provided by the test score or grade. This supports the adoption of the CEFR principle that the proficiency level of the language user should be described by positive and concrete behavioural terms. Can-Do statements provide information that the score or grade on a test could not. This kind of information can be far more useful for employers than a simple grade or score.

Following the European trend we can see that Can-Do descriptors are becoming useful tools to describe language ability in a way that is transparent and coherent. We do have to be aware, however, that the empirical data supporting these CEFR-J statements and level is still limited.（The original CEFR Can-Do lists are based on extensive research data）

5. 0 CEFR in the Education System

Little（2006a）argues that to date（the CEFR's）impact on language testing far outweighs its impact on curriculum design and pedagogy. North（2009）also states that '…*the impact of the descriptive scheme or other aspect of the CEFR on curriculum or teaching have as yet been very limited*'. Little（2006）also mentions that '*On the whole the CEFR has no more occasioned a revolution in curriculum development than it has promoted the radical redesign of language tests.* Some criticism of the CEFR comments that narrowly focused 'Can Do' descriptors can be too narrow to reflect on teaching and build syllabus based on them.（Negishi and Tono　2014）. Sugitani and Tomita（in Byram and Parmentar　2012）note that in Japan CEFR influences the areas of teaching English as an international language and developing can-do statements, leading to transparency and efficiency, primarily at the tertiary level. They however comment that *there is a need to debate how to contextualize the CEFR structurally in Japan before thinking about the application of can-do statements.*

5. 1

Sugitani and Tomita（in Bryam and Parmenter 2012）note that *there is a significant gap in the influence of the CEFR between school education and university education. In school education, which is very tightly controlled by central government, reference to the CEFR is scarcely evident,*

However in more recent government plans, CEFR and the Can Do statements which accompany its ideals, have become more forefront.

Table 4 TOEIC Listening score 430–495 (Can Do)

Listening	Speaking	Interacting
◆ understand simple questions in social situations such as "How are you?" "Where do you live?" and "How do you feel?" ◆ understand a salesperson when she or he tells me prices of various items ◆ understand someone speaking slowly and deliberately, who is giving me directions on how to walk to a nearby location ◆ understand explanations about how to perform a routine task related to my job ◆ understand announcements at a railway station indicating the track my train is on and the time it is scheduled to leave ◆ understand someone who is speaking slowly and deliberately about his or her hobbies, interests, and plans for the weekend ◆ understand directions about what time to come to a meeting and the room in which it will be held ◆ understand an explanation of why one restaurant is better than another	◆ introduce myself in social situations and use appropriate greeting and leave-taking expressions ◆ state simple biographical information about myself (e.g., place of birth, composition of family) ◆ order food at a restaurant ◆ describe my daily routine (e.g., when I get up, what time I eat lunch) ◆ talk about topics of general interest (e.g., current events, the weather) ◆ talk about my future professional goals and intentions (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year) ◆ telephone the airline to change my flight reservations to a different time and day ◆ tell someone directions on how to get to my house or apartment	◆ conduct simple business transactions at places such as the post office, bank, drugstore ◆ telephone a restaurant to make dinner reservations for a party of three ◆ give and take messages over the telephone

Following the TOEIC Can-Do guide (TOEIC 2016)

Despite a lack of discussion on the philosophy behind and the contextualizing of the CEFR standards for the Japanese educational model, the 'English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization', which was announced by the government on 13 Dec 2013, gave specific reference to CEFR levels. The plan outlines goals of junior high to be at CEFR levels A1-A2 and senior high at levels B1-B2.

5. 2

The new plan is to be introduced with the new course of study in 2020, to coincide with the Tokyo Olympics. The plan also proposes that Japanese teachers of English should evaluate language skills with the use of 'Can-Do' descriptors, and it specifies the attainment target of the Japanese people's English proficiency in terms of the CEFR levels. If should be noted that the evaluation of performance skills such as spoken English and interaction through performance testing and the use of rubrics is stressed. This type of change could lead to a significant change at the classroom level. There are concerns that 'leaping' at the can-do statements alone, without understanding of the CEFR philosophies, could lead to a somewhat distorted version of CEFR goals. It is important that the type of activity used to help students reach their 'Can-Do' goals are also in line

Table 5 Grade Pre 1 Eiken Can Do list（Eiken 2008）

Speaking
Can make explanations and express his/her opinion about topics relevant to a range of social, professional, and educational situation.
Can speak at length about topics that he /she has researched（e.g. presenting the results of a research assignment, giving a presentation at work）.
Can ask questions and express opinions about the content of lectures and presentations, etc., concerning his/her work or field of expertise.
Can make a complaint about products or services（e.g. about damaged products or unsatisfactory service）.
Can handle routine tasks and transactions at public facilities（e.g. sending a letter at a post office, borrowing books from a library）.
Can describe his/her state of health when visiting the doctor, etc.
Can handle tasks and transactions on the telephone, provided that they are of a routine nature（e.g. making an appointment at the dentist or hair salon）
Can describe the plots of books he/she has read or films he/she has seen.

The EIKEN Can Do List（2008）

Image of Government Plans to Radically Strengthen English Education
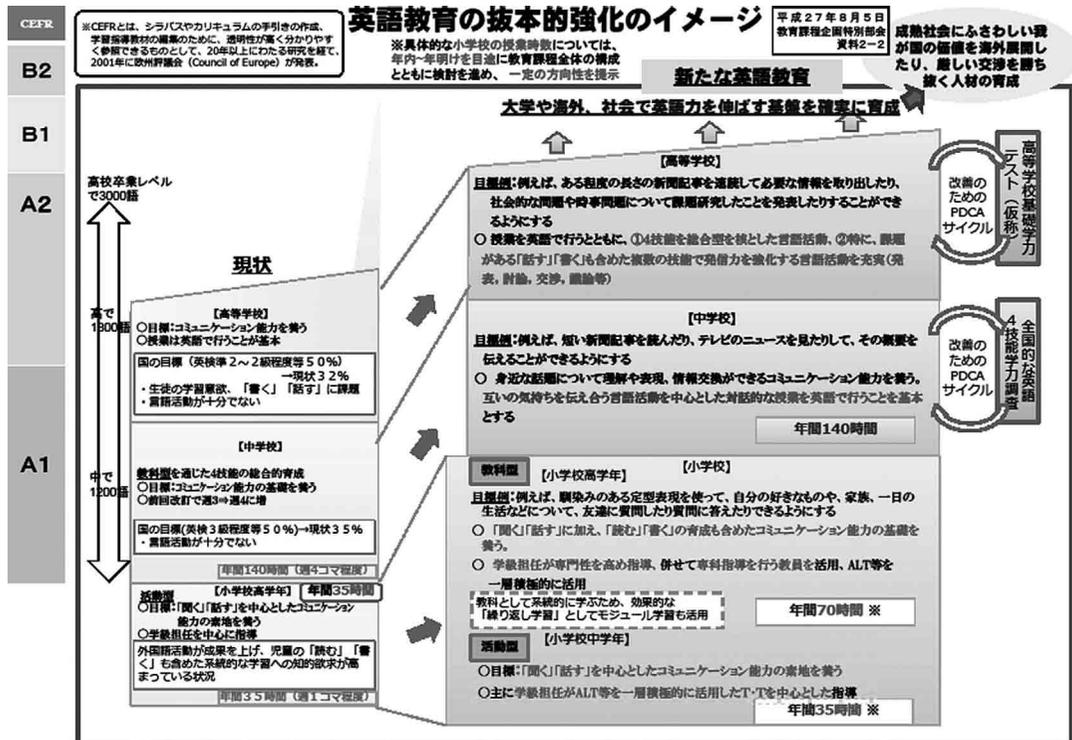
MEXT（2015）

with CEFR goals. Opportunities for students to be involved in realistic interaction using a foreign language will help the students to develop real communicative skills and not just knowledge about the language which has been the typical mode for evaluation.

The CEFR distinguishes between four kinds of language activities : reception (listening and reading), production (spoken and written), interaction (spoken and written), and mediation (translating and interpreting) Little（n.d.）

At present, reference to Can-Do list for assessment goal parameters are used across many of the government documents for future English education plans 「Gaikokugo Working Group（MEXT 2016）」. It is expected that all teachers will be expected to develop curricula and produce teaching plans using Can-Do lists for evaluation and class/unit goals. This, it is hoped, will make the classes more communicative and provide teachers and students alike with coherent communicative or interactive goals related to what students can actually do in English rather than simply what they know.

5. 3

As Sugitani and Tomita（in Bryam and Parmenter 2012）note *in school education detailed Courses of Study furnished by the government provide a clear structure for language education, including grammatical structures to be mastered, the number of vocabulary items to be memorized and the language functions and situations to be covered.* The government then authorizes textbooks which are based on the course of study and used in schools across the country. The only real way to create change is from a Top-Down change from national government level. Moving toward significant change in the Course of Study by 2020 it seems that a significant CEFR influence will be apparent in the future of Japanese English language education.

5. 4

The curriculum, recently revised to have more communication-oriented teaching, currently has the following overall objectives at the lower secondary level :

To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

（MEXT, 2008a）

And objectives at the upper secondary level :

To develop students' communication abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

（MEXT 2008b）

However, comments by Knight, G.（1995 : 20）on previous guideline changes still seems to hold true : *...merely represent a policy statement based on the needs of the business community and on current pedagogical thinking. The ends are broadly stated as a move away from grammatical competence towards a wider communicative competence.*

He goes on to mention however that the means of achieving this goal are not explored, and the guidelines have had little effect on curriculum planning in schools.

5. 5

It is however, far from certain that the primary aim of the ELT curriculum locally is to ensure a basic competence in language use. Sano et.al.

（1984：170）made some enlightening comments on the communicative goals from the view of local needs.

English is not and never will be an instrument to do something with, but one subject in the whole curriculum, which aims to promote the overall development of our future citizens. This fact has led us to adopt a 'growth model', rather than a 'skill model'…

We value the 'communicative ability' of our learners, but it is for the sake of its contribution to self-expression and personal growth as well as for its practical usefulness in English-speaking societies.

It is hoped that the latest plans for improvement in language education can overcome this mentality.

This gives us some insight into how the aims of Mombukagakusho（the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Culture ; hence with referred to as 'the Ministry'）, influenced strongly by the inner circle, notably through business needs, may not actually reflect what happens in classrooms all over the country（or vice versa）. The level of inner circle influence can be seen to be very different at the macro-level to that at the micro-level. With the introduction of more coherent and transparent ideas through CEFR it is hoped that this would lead to more change at the classroom level.

One of the greatest single problems for teachers and the Ministry appears to be the problem of the entrance examinations. University entrance examinations require the students to do a lot of translation and grammar exercises that test the students' ability to translate between written L2 and L1, and to manipulate grammar in a somewhat artificial way. The result is that the teachers feel bound to teach those particular skills to the students rather than give time to communicative development. This 'washback effect'（Kay, G.S. 1995：7) con-

tinues down through the system. Thus the high school entrance examinations take a similar form to those of the universities. This results in teachers from junior high school upward trying to 'teach the test' rather than develop communicative skills. Many students also seem reluctant to move away from grammar based or Audio-linguistic classes, and recognize their immediate needs as being the tools required to pass the entrance examinations. Often the students need to pass exams outweigh their want to communicate, emphasizing the fact that what happens in the classroom will be little changed by a change in curriculum aims without a change in the testing mechanism. Recently the government has been stressing the importance of goal and evaluation coherence, and are looking to radically change the major University Central examination（MEXT2015）. Experts are looking into how to suitable evaluate all four skills at this level.

In the past, the introduction of listening tests at the university and high school entrance exam level led to positive washback at the lower levels. Such a move towards communicative testing at the university level would surely encourage more positive washback throughout the system and help the Ministry reach its goals at the secondary school level. This would lead to an increase in the inner-circle influenced trends toward communication which may be a direct result of CEFR influence

5. 6

If we were to look at Tollefson's（1989：26）diagram for the *representation of language planning in second language acquisition*, and apply it to the Japan model, it would seem that there is a strong influence of the inner-circle countries, mostly the USA due to strong political and business connections, on those at the top of the power scale, i.e. at the macro level, with regard to language policy and mode of langu-

age. However, the aims stated by the Ministry （macro level） are often not seen to be represented in the curriculum and materials that are produced. Curriculum and materials often seem to reflect the internal requirements for grammar and lexis based testing. As we move down through the educational system it becomes apparent that internal influence （expanding circle） becomes more and more important. Conflict can clearly be seen between the 'inner circle' influences and local needs, throughout the system. The Ministry goals and classroom reality have been very different, though credit should be given to those educators who are able to meet the Ministry goals and their students' needs. Recent influence from the CEFR and Can-Do approaches to evaluation could lead to a significant amount of change at the classroom level at the future. The concept of evaluating students on what they can do with a language rather than what they know about a language is a somewhat new concept for Japan. As the change appears to be coming Top-Down, it is hoped that future centrally produced examinations will be altered to represent these government moves. If they do, as the 'high-stake' tests such as Eiken and TOEIC have done, then this change in concept may have meaningful influence.

6. 0 Conclusions

The Ministry has traditionally appeared to recommend a curriculum and materials heavily influenced by 'inner-circle' forces and through business needs. This curriculum was interpreted and represented by locally produced materials and texts, representing a powerful local influence. However local practitioners are not equipped, trained and perhaps not willing to carry out such a program. At the classroom level each teacher has his/her own goals and teachers and students alike tend to see their goals to be that of passing examinations rather than the Ministry goals of communication skills.

As mentioned above, teaching tends to aim at preparing students for highly competitive examinations. These examinations are traditionally based on the written form and they ignore the spoken form almost completely. They test the students' control over abstract code rather than their communicative competence. Reform in the examinations, based on CEFR and Can-Do statements could lead to reform throughout the system. A goal of increased communicative competence would require evaluation and examinations based on interaction and communicative skills not just knowledge of language.

Top down change, rather than vague changes in educational goals, is the only realistic way to cause positive change throughout the system in Japan. Positive washback, creating a real need for students to attain communicative competence, through evaluating using CEFR style Can Do lists, could be seen to be the most effective process of change.

There is however little teacher training, and in particular there is little supplementary language training for 'would be' teachers. Though the Ministry is implementing more training for teachers, at present the teachers are not properly equipped to realistically to attain the Ministry stated education goals or to adapt to the CEFR influence. Teacher training relating to how to develop students' ability to achieve 'Can-Do' levels is essential.

The traditional model of a strong Inner Circle influence seems to be changing. The globalization of language education policy from Europe through CEFR may indicate a strong 'Outer-circle' influence, or even a move away from English language policy toward a more global view of language policy.

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