

Junior High School Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom-based Language Assessment

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate junior high school teachers' perceptions of classroom language assessment in terms of the importance of assessment criteria, the utilization of assessment methods, and the difficulties in assessment following the introduction of the new Course of Study in 2021, and to compare the surveyed junior high school teachers' perceptions with those of the elementary school teachers investigated in Fukazawa (2022). The results show that the assessment criteria, such as speaking interaction and students' ability to think, make judgments, and expressing themselves, emphasized in the new national guidelines, are considered important by JHS teachers. Written and performance tests were the two language assessment methods most commonly used in junior high school, while observation was the most commonly used assessment method in elementary school. Enhancement of language assessment literacy and filling of the gap between elementary and junior high schools are suggested as the implications of this study.

Keywords: Classroom language assessment; junior high school; teachers' perceptions

1. Introduction

Reforms in English education have been progressing rapidly in Japan, and there is greater emphasis on developing students' communication skills than ever before. However, the reform has not proceeded smoothly. The teaching practices in JHSs overemphasize students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and students have problems expressing their ideas and opinions in English in accordance with the situation and purpose of communication (Hayase, 2017; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2018a). Classroom-based language assessment in JHS has also been criticized because knowledge of grammar and vocabulary tends to be the center of assessment (National Institute for Educational Policy Research [NIER], 2020), and it focuses on students' understanding and achievement (Takeuchi, 2004). MEXT (2014) also points out that assessments that measure students' knowledge of grammar and sentence structures can often be seen regardless of the communicative goals of a lesson. On the other hand, the elementary

school language assessment tends to enhance students' self-affirmation and foster a sense of competence (Higuchi et al., 2013; Yorozuya et al., 2020).

Another problem is the difficulty of assessing students' language in terms of their ability to think and make judgments. Under the previous Course of Study, approximately 30% of the JHS teachers did not consider themselves able to assess students effectively in terms of their ability to think and make judgments, while more than 80% of them felt that they could effectively assess the knowledge, understanding, skills, and expression of students (MEXT, 2010). Osato and Yanagimoto (2019) states that teachers are still not familiar with this perspective for assessment.

To address this challenge, the new Course of Study (MEXT, 2018a) was fully introduced in JHSs in the academic year of 2021, following the introduction of the new national guideline for elementary school (MEXT, 2018b) in 2020. Speaking skills are emphasized in the latest version of the national guideline for lower secondary school English education and are divided into speaking production and interaction. The guideline also requires English classes to be conducted in English in principle. Along with the revision of the national guideline, a change in the way of language assessment is taking place in JHSs in which the importance of classroom-based language assessment is clearly emphasized.

The National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER, 2020) has shown how to assess the English skills of students in accordance with the 2018 Course of Study for lower secondary school. It recommends the assessment of five English skills in terms of (1) knowledge and skills, (2) students' abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves, and (3) motivation to learn. Language assessment, in terms of knowledge and skills, measures the extent to which students can understand the language rules they learned in class and acquire the skills necessary to understand, express, and interact in actual communication. With regard to the assessment of the knowledge and skills of students, it is the specific language items that have been focused on. Language assessment in terms of students' abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves measures the extent to which students can understand, express, and interact based on the context and purpose of communication. To assess the language skills from this perspective, authentic settings for communication are essential; there is no need for the use of specific language items. In the case of assessing motivation to learn, it is the students' willingness to communicate (considering the listeners, readers, speakers, and writers) that is measured.

Following the introduction of the new Course of Study for elementary schools (MEXT, 2018b), Fukazawa (2022) investigated the perceptions of elementary school teachers on assessing foreign language activities and foreign language and compared them with results from before the introduction of the national guideline, finding that, in terms of the importance of language assessment criteria, there were no significant differences in the perspectives of teachers concerning the evaluation of foreign language activities before and after the introduction of the new national guideline. Teachers tend to focus more on assessing the five English skills, including speaking production and interaction. Regarding assessment methods, teachers used observations and

reflection sheets for foreign language activities, and no significant differences could be observed between the two subjects. However, in the case of foreign language, teachers started using more paper tests, performance tests, and portfolios. Furthermore, it was revealed that teachers have difficulty evaluating all criteria, except for the motivation to learn in foreign language activities. In contrast, they have difficulty assessing speaking interactions and the ability to think, make judgments, and express themselves.

The goals of the new Course of Studies for elementary schools (MEXT, 2018b) and for lower secondary schools (MEXT, 2018a) were set considering Common European Framework of reference (Council of Europe, 2001), and it is necessary to improve current English education toward the same goals in both types of school (Takahashi & Yanagi, 2008). The connection between elementary and junior high schools has become more important than ever (Tanaka & Nakamura, 2017), and language assessment is not an exception.

In this context, this study investigates JHS teachers' perceptions of classroom-based language assessment based on Fukazawa (2022), following the introduction of the new Course of Study (MEXT, 2018a), and compares their perceptions with those of elementary school teachers. To accomplish these goals, the following two research questions were formulated:

- RQ 1. What perceptions of the classroom language assessment do JHS teachers have with regard to the importance of the assessment criteria, the utilization of assessment methods, and the difficulties in assessment following the introduction of the 2018 Course of Study?
- RQ 2. How do JHS teachers' perceptions of the classroom language assessment differ from those of elementary school teachers?

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

The survey was administered from September to November 2021 to 45 JHS teachers, all of whom work in public JHSs in Okinawa Prefecture. They included 12 English teachers who teach in the seventh grade, 15 teachers who teach in the eighth grade, and 18 teachers who teach in the ninth grade.

2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was created based on the questionnaire used in Fukazawa (2022; see Appendix). It included questions about the importance of each language assessment criterion, the assessment methods, the number of performance tests, and the difficulties in conducting classroom language assessments in JHSs. The language assessment criteria concern the following: 1) listening skills, 2) reading skills, 3) speaking skills (production), 4) speaking skills (interaction), 5) writing skills, 6) knowledge and skills, 7) thinking, making judgments, and expressing oneself, 8) motivation to learn, 9) understanding different cultures, 10) grammatical knowledge, and 11)

vocabulary. The first five criteria are about language skills. Criteria 6 to 8 are about the three main areas for developing the language skills emphasized throughout the new Course of Studies (MEXT, 2018a, 2018b). The importance of those language assessment criteria was investigated using a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, and 4 = strongly disagree. The degree of utilization of the assessment methods, such as observation, portfolio, written test, performance test, quiz, and reflection, was also investigated using a 4-point Likert scale. This scale was chosen since the Japanese tend to choose neutral responses on Likert-scale questions (Oishi et al., 2005). The participants were asked about the difficulties in language assessment with regard to the same 11 criteria mentioned above, allowing multiple answers.

2.3 Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire, given the nature of this study. As is indicated in Table 1, when the average score is less than 2, it is interpreted as indicating positive reactions by students, whereas if the average number is 3 or above, it is considered a negative reaction. To compare the teachers' perspectives between JHSs and elementary schools, t-tests were conducted. Effect sizes were also calculated and interpreted as following: .20 = small; .50 = medium; .80 = large (Cohen, 1988).

Table 1
Interpretation of the Importance of the Language Assessment Criteria and Utilization of the Assessment Methods

Average	Importance of the Language Assessment Criteria	Utilization of the Assessment Methods
1-2	Important	Utilized
2-3	Moderate	Moderate
3-4	Not important	Not utilized

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Junior High School Teachers' Perceptions of the Language Assessment

3.1.1 Importance of the Language Assessment Criteria

Table 2 shows the importance of language assessment criteria from the perspectives of JHS teachers. As per the interpretation shown in Table 1, all the assessment criteria are considered important, except for understanding different cultures (2.20), which is interpreted as neither important nor unimportant. The most important assessment criterion was the students' abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves (1.39). Knowledge and skills (1.40) was the second most important criterion, and motivation to learn (1.50) was third. In terms of language skills, speaking interaction was considered the most important (1.53). On the other hand, the average

scores of subskills such as grammar and vocabulary were not as high as for the other criteria (1.71, 1.80, respectively), although they were interpreted as being important.

The most important assessment criteria, such as the students' abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves, knowledge and skills, and motivation to learn, and speaking interaction, overlap with the points emphasized in the new Course of Study (MEXT, 2018a). The results indicate that the JHS teachers take the core elements of the new Course of Study seriously for their classroom-based language assessment. The importance of grammar and vocabulary as an assessment criterion received less focus than specified by NIER (2020), which might indicate changes in teachers' perceptions from knowledge-oriented classes to communication-oriented classes.

Table 2
Importance of the Language Assessment Criteria

Language Assessment Criteria	N	M	1. Strongly Agree		2. Agree		3. Disagree		4. Strongly Disagree	
			n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)		
Listening ability	45	1.69	20 (44.4)	19 (42.2)	6 (13.3)	0 (0.0)				
Reading ability	44	1.57	22 (50.0)	19 (43.2)	3 (6.8)	0 (0.0)				
Speaking ability (production)	44	1.61	25 (56.8)	11 (25.0)	8 (18.2)	0 (0.0)				
Speaking ability (interaction)	45	1.53	25 (55.6)	16 (35.6)	4 (8.9)	0 (0.0)				
Writing ability	44	1.68	19 (43.2)	20 (45.5)	5 (11.4)	0 (0.0)				
Knowledge and skills	45	1.40	28 (62.2)	16 (35.6)	1 (2.2)	0 (0.0)				
Thinking, making judgments, and expressing themselves	44	1.39	27 (61.4)	17 (38.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)				
Motivation to Learn	44	1.50	23 (52.3)	20 (45.5)	1 (2.3)	0 (0.0)				
Understanding different cultures	45	2.20	9 (20.0)	19 (42.2)	16 (35.6)	1 (2.2)				
Grammar	45	1.71	15 (33.3)	28 (62.2)	2 (4.4)	0 (0.0)				
Vocabulary	44	1.80	14 (31.8)	25 (56.8)	5 (11.4)	0 (0.0)				

3.1.2. Language Assessment Methods Utilized in Junior High Schools

All the language assessment methods were frequently used according to the perceptions of JHS teachers (see Table 3). The average scores of written tests and performance tests were closest to 1 (1.13 and 1.35, respectively), indicating that they are the most common methods of classroom language assessment in JHS. Questions 4 and 5 in the questionnaire also asked the number of speaking and writing tests. The average number of speaking tests held in a year was 4.22, and that

of writing tests was 4.24. Reflection (1.40) and portfolios (1.41) were also commonly used methods for language assessment; both are submitted by the students. Using reflection makes it possible for teachers to include students' self-assessments in language assessment. While quizzes and observations were also used often, they were not as frequently used as the other assessment methods (1.82 and 1.87, respectively).

According to the results, summative assessment, such as written and performance tests, was the most common method for classroom-based language assessment. However, since these tests are often used to measure language knowledge, such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structures, in JHS (MEXT, 2014; NIER 2020), English teachers must be careful with what they intend to measure using those tests.

Table 3
The Language Assessment Method Utilized in Junior High Schools

Assessment Method	N	M	1. Strongly Agree		2. Agree		3. Disagree		4. Strongly Disagree	
			n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)		
Observation	45	1.87	15	(33.3)	22	(48.9)	7	(15.6)	1	(2.2)
Portfolio	44	1.41	29	(65.9)	12	(27.3)	3	(6.8)	0	(0.0)
Written test	45	1.13	39	(86.7)	6	(13.3)	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)
Performance test	43	1.35	30	(69.8)	11	(25.6)	2	(4.7)	0	(0.0)
Quiz	44	1.82	17	(38.6)	19	(43.2)	7	(15.9)	1	(2.3)
Reflection	45	1.40	34	(75.6)	6	(13.3)	3	(6.7)	2	(4.4)

3.1.3. Difficulties in Conducting the Language Assessment in Junior High Schools

Question 6 asked JHS teachers about the difficulties in conducting the language assessment, and Table 4 shows the results and their rates. Most difficult for JHS teachers was assessing speaking interaction (68.9%). Question 7 was an open-ended question about the reasons. The most common comments about the difficulty in assessing speaking interaction is as follows: "Regarding speaking interaction, I feel that assessment and instruction are quite difficult." Another comment pointed out more specific difficulties, stating: "When creating a rubric, I always wonder how to set assessment criteria" and "Since speaking interaction is improvised, it is difficult to assess when the unexpected answers come." In addition, there were comments relating to practicality, such as "It is difficult to observe all the students' speaking interaction simultaneously."

The second most difficult task was assessing the students' motivation to learn (64.4%). The most common reason given for the difficulty was that the teachers were unsure how to assess the students' motivation. For instance, one comment was, "I do not know how to assess motivation to learn." Other typical comments were about the practicality of assessing students' motivation, such

as “I would like to observe students’ motivation to learn in class, but I found it difficult to do it for every student” and “Much feedback is required to see students’ motivation and the amount of work increase.” Finally, some comments express the teachers’ confusion: “I am confused because assessing students’ motivation to learn is rather different from the assessment previously used.”

Assessing thinking, making judgments, and expressing oneself was the third most difficult task (40.0%). The teachers seem to have difficulties in understanding the concept of the ability to think, make judgments, and express oneself, stating, “It is challenging to distinguish the questions for measuring knowledge and skills and those for measuring the abilities to think, make judgments, and express oneself.” As a result, they have problems assessing students’ English skills in a balanced manner; to quote, “Knowledge and skills becomes the focus of the test.” The teachers thought that speaking ability (production) was also difficult to assess (35.6%). According to the comments, teachers worried about the reliability of assessing speaking production, stating: “I feel that assessing speaking production tends to be subjective.”

Table 4
Difficulties in Conducting the Language Assessment in Junior High Schools (N = 45)

Difficulties in Assessing ...	<i>n</i>	%
Listening ability	3	6.70
Speaking ability (production)	16	35.6
Speaking ability (interaction)	31	68.9
Reading ability	9	20.0
Writing ability	7	15.6
Knowledge and skills	1	2.20
Thinking, making judgments, and expressing themselves	18	40.0
Motivation to learn	29	64.4
Others	0	.00

The results show that the teachers felt difficulties assessing speaking skills, especially speaking interaction. This feeling is understandable because it is difficult to ensure the reliability of the speaking test, for it is a subjective test (Fulcher, 2003; McNamara, 2000). The feasibility of conducting speaking tests is another significant obstacle to assessing speaking in an actual classroom situation, for assessing many students with a speaking test requires considerable time (Matsuzawa, 2002). JSH teachers also report difficulty assessing the students’ motivation to learn because motivation is not always observed clearly. While English teachers feel uncomfortable assessing the students’ abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves, they are comfortable with assessing students’ knowledge and skills, which supports MEXT (2010).

3.2 Comparison of the Perceptions of Elementary and Junior High School Teachers

3.2.1 Importance of the Language Assessment Criteria

Table 5 compares the importance of language assessment criteria between elementary school and JHS teachers. Fukazawa (2022) did not ask about the students' knowledge and skills or their abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves. Therefore, the importance of the respective assessment criteria could not be compared, and thus they were omitted from the table.

According to the results of t-tests, significant differences were observed in listening ($t(92) = -4.14, p < .001, d = .85$), speaking production ($t(91) = -3.21, p < .01, d = .67$), and motivation to learn ($t(91) = -3.49, p < .001, d = .72$). The average scores of these assessment criteria for foreign language are significantly lower than those for JHS English, which means that JHS teachers consider those criteria less important than elementary school teachers do.

Table 5

Comparison of the Importance of the Language Assessment Criteria Between Elementary Schools and Junior High Schools

Language Assessment Criteria	Foreign language		English in JHS		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	(<i>N</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>N</i>)			
Listening ability	1.20	(49)	1.69	(45)	-4.14	.00	.85
Reading ability	1.55	(49)	1.57	(44)	-1.33	.89	.04
Speaking ability (production)	1.20	(49)	1.61	(44)	-3.21	.00	.67
Speaking ability (interaction)	1.33	(49)	1.53	(45)	-1.70	.09	.58
Writing ability	1.78	(49)	1.68	(44)	.66	.51	.20
Motivation to learn	1.16	(49)	1.50	(44)	-3.49	.00	.72
Understanding different cultures	2.35	(49)	2.20	(45)	.86	.39	.22
Grammar	2.43	(49)	1.71	(45)	4.48	.00	.93
Vocabulary	2.17	(48)	1.80	(45)	2.39	.02	.50

Note. The data on foreign language were obtained from Fukazawa (2022).

Significant differences were also observed in grammar ($t(92) = -4.48, p < .001, d = .93$) and vocabulary ($t(90) = 2.39, p < .01, d = .50$). These results show that, in comparison to elementary school teachers, JHS teachers consider grammar and vocabulary more important assessment criteria. In particular, the effect size *d* for grammar shows large differences between elementary and JHS teachers' perspectives.

On the other hand, no statistical differences were seen in speaking (production), reading, or writing abilities. Fukazawa (2022) compared elementary school teachers' perspectives on the importance of these assessment criteria on foreign language before and after the introduction of the new Course of Study for elementary school (MEXT, 2018b), finding that their importance was significantly higher in 2021. This might be why no significant differences were observed in the importance of these assessment criteria between elementary and junior high schools.

According to these results, subskills such as grammar and vocabulary are still a vital part of classroom-based language assessment (NIER, 2020) in JHSs, which might reflect the importance of high school entrance examinations, which have a significant impact on education in Japan (Shizuka, 2006). Listening, speaking production, and motivation to learn are considered more important in elementary school English classes than in JHS English classes. Moreover, in elementary schools, it is the affective elements like motivation to learn that are emphasized (Higuchi et al., 2013; Yorozuya et al., 2020), as well as listening and speaking skills. To facilitate a smooth transition from a foreign language in elementary schools to English in JHSs, these gaps should be considered, especially in the first year of JHSs.

3.2.2 Language Assessment Methods Utilized in Elementary and Junior High Schools

The average scores of the language assessment methods used between elementary school and JHS English classes were compared using t-tests (Table 6). A significant difference was observed only for observation ($t(92) = -6.78, p < .001, d = 1.40$), such that the elementary school teachers used significantly more observations than the JHS teachers did. Based on the JHS teachers' perception, observation (1.87) is the least frequently utilized assessment method of all the methods on the list. In JHSs, written tests (1.13), performance tests (1.34), and reflections (1.40) are the most frequently used assessment methods, while observation (1.08), performance tests (1.18), and portfolios (1.22) are the assessment methods most often used in elementary schools.

Table 6
Comparison of the Language Assessment Methods Between Elementary and Junior High Schools

Assessment Method	Foreign language		English in JHS		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	(<i>N</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>N</i>)			
Observation	1.08	(49)	1.87	(45)	-6.79	.00	1.40
Portfolio	1.22	(49)	1.41	(44)	-1.47	.14	.51
Written test	1.31	(49)	1.13	(45)	1.73	.09	.66
Performance test	1.18	(49)	1.34	(43)	-1.63	.11	.66
Quiz	2.22	(49)	1.82	(44)	1.98	.05	.39
Reflection	1.24	(49)	1.40	(45)	-1.14	.26	.32

Note. The data on foreign language were obtained from Fukazawa (2022).

These results seem to correspond to the important language assessment criteria for each school type. On the one hand, JHS teachers tend to use summative assessments, such as written tests and performance tests, to measure students' knowledge and achievement (MEXT, 2014; NIER, 2020; Takeuchi, 2004). On the other hand, elementary school teachers use observation to check students' self-affirmation and sense of competence (Higuchi et al., 2013; Yorozuya et al., 2020), which may be related to students' motivation to learn. Language assessment methods reflect what the teachers intend to measure. Again, JHS teachers need to consider what and how to assess students' qualities and abilities to bridge the gap between their teaching practices and language assessment and that of elementary school teachers.

3.2.3 Difficulties in Language Assessments between Elementary and Junior High Schools

Elementary school teachers and JHS teachers share similar tendencies of difficulties conducting the language assessment (see Table 7). Elementary school teachers as well as JHS teachers consider speaking ability (interaction) to be the most difficult to assess (53.1% and 68.9%, respectively). Both groups of teachers also have difficulty assessing students' abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves (49.0% and 40.0%, respectively). Indeed, speaking ability (production) is one of the most challenging skills to assess for both elementary and JHS teachers (24.5% and 35.6%, respectively).

Table 7

Comparison of the Language Assessment Difficulties Between Elementary and Junior High Schools

Difficulties in Assessing ...	Foreign Language (N = 49)		English in JHS (N = 45)	
	n	%	n	%
Listening ability	8	16.3	3	6.7
Speaking ability (production)	12	24.5	16	35.6
Speaking ability (interaction)	26	53.1	31	68.9
Reading ability	9	18.4	9	20.0
Writing ability	9	18.4	7	15.6
Knowledge and skills	12	24.5	1	2.2
Thinking, making judgments, and expressing themselves	24	49.0	18	40.0
Motivation to learn	11	22.4	29	64.4
Others	0	.00	0	.00

Note. The data on foreign language were obtained from Fukazawa (2022).

Elementary school and JHS teachers also differ in other respects. JHS teachers consider motivation to learn much more difficult to assess (64.4%) than elementary school teachers do (22.4%). While elementary school teachers perceive the assessment of knowledge and skills as difficult (24.5%), JHS teachers do not (2.2%).

As mentioned above, speaking skills are among the most challenging skills to assess, considering the reliability and feasibility of the assessment (Fulcher, 2003; Matsuzawa, 2002; McNamara, 2000). In addition, students' qualities such as their motivation to learn and ability to think, make judgments, and express themselves must be assessed, which is not straightforward. Again, it is essential to reinforce the language assessment literacy of JHS teachers (Koizumi et al., 2017). Considering the differences in difficulties that elementary and JHS teachers face, it may be possible for them to cooperate and help each other. JHS teachers possess the strength to assess knowledge and skills, which elementary school teachers need to improve, while elementary school teachers are better than JHS teachers in assessing students' motivation to learn.

4. Conclusion

Research Question 1 concerned JHS teachers' perceptions of classroom-based language assessment. It was found that JHS teachers consider the following four assessment criteria the most important: (1) students' abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves, (2) knowledge and skills, (3) motivation to learn, and (4) speaking interaction. These are all related to the major points revised in the Course of Study (MEXT, 2018a). Grammar and vocabulary as assessment criteria were not as important as expected from previous studies such as NIER (2020). In terms of assessment methods, written tests and performance tests were the two most common methods used. These summative assessments, especially written tests, are often used to measure language knowledge in JHSs (MEXT, 2014; NIER, 2020; Takeuchi, 2004), but utilization of performance tests could be a good sign for assessing communication skills. In addition, JHS teachers had difficulties assessing students' speaking skills, especially their interaction, motivation to learn, and abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves. Since assessing speaking is one of the most challenging aspects of language assessment (Fulcher, 2003; Matsuzawa, 2002; McNamara, 2000) and motivation or ability to think and make judgments are not always observable, it seems necessary for JHS teachers to enhance their language assessment literacy.

Research Question 2 dealt with the differences between elementary school and JHS teachers' perceptions of classroom-based assessment. With regard to the language assessment criteria, JHS teachers consider grammar and vocabulary more important than elementary school teachers do, while elementary school teachers consider listening, speaking production, and motivation to learn more important. When the assessment methods utilized were considered, summative tests were standard in JHSs, while observation was a commonly used assessment method in elementary schools. This might be because practical goals vary by school type: While

developing English knowledge is central in JHS language classrooms (Hayase, 2017; NIER, 2020), the learning process, participation, and affective element are focused on in elementary schools (Higuchi et al., 2013; Yorozya et al., 2020). Furthermore, elementary school and JHS teachers share the same difficulties when assessing students' speaking skills and their abilities to think, make judgments, and express themselves. They also have different difficulties when conducting language assessment. While JHS teachers have problems assessing students' motivation to learn, elementary school teachers considered themselves not good at assessing students' knowledge and skills, which support MEXT (2010).

The findings above hold two implications. One is the necessity of ensuring a smooth transition from foreign language study in elementary schools to English in JHSs in terms of language teaching and assessment. Since the Course of Studies for elementary school and lower secondary school aim at the same overall goals based on Common European Framework of Reference, cooperation between both school types is essential. Creating unified descriptors of language proficiency and sharing assessment criteria (Allen-Tamai, 2010; Takahashi & Yanagi, 2008) can narrow the gaps between elementary school and JHS not only in teaching methods but also in assessment criteria and methods to facilitate a smoother transition (Saida et al., 2018).

Moreover, the necessity of improving JHS teachers' language assessment literacy is implied. Many teachers did not know how to assess speaking interaction and motivation to learn. In accordance with the introduction of the new national guideline, English teachers need to assess students from new or different perspectives in language classrooms, and language assessments have thus become more complex. Therefore, it is essential for in- and pre-service teachers to improve their assessment literacy in higher education and teacher trainings (Koizumi et al., 2017; Tokyo Gakugei University, 2017). In addition, teachers had difficulty assessing students' ability to think, make decisions, and express themselves because they had problems distinguishing such assessments from those of assessing knowledge and skills. To assess students' ability to think, make decisions, and express themselves, Osato and Yanagimoto (2019) suggest (1) setting the purpose and situation of communication, (2) preparing assessment criteria clearly different from those of knowledge and skills, and (3) setting clear goals in the given communicative setting and developing students' English skills in the classroom accordingly.

This study has some limitations. It is necessary to investigate more teachers to enhance the generalizability of the results. Also, this study was conducted in the first year that the new Course of Study was introduced, so JHS teachers might not yet have become accustomed to the new way of language assessment. Therefore, further studies must be conducted. Furthermore, classroom-based language assessment is discussed only from JHS teachers' perspectives. Actual tests, such as written tests and performance tests, and students' learning must be examined for further information. Classroom-based language assessments are an essential part of language education, and they reflect what is taught and learned in language classrooms. Further research is required not only for better language assessment but also for better English education in Japan.

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Appendix: Questionnaire on JHS Language Assessment

「中学校英語評価」に関するアンケート（抜粋）

2. 英語の評価において、以下の観点を重視していますか。次の番号で回答してください。

(①はい ②まあまあ ③あまり ④いいえ)

- (1) 「聞く能力」を重視している。
- (2) 「読む能力」を重視している。
- (3) 「話す能力（発表）」を重視している。
- (4) 「話す能力（やり取り）」を重視している。
- (5) 「書く能力」を重視している。
- (6) 「知識・技能」を重視している。
- (7) 「思考・判断・表現」を重視している。
- (8) 「主体的に学習に向かう力」を重視している。
- (9) 「異文化に対する知識」を重視している。
- (10) 「文法の知識」を重視している。
- (11) 「文字や語彙の知識」を重視している。
- (12) 他の重視した観点があれば、ご記入ください。

3. 英語の評価において、以下の評価方法を活用していますか。次の番号で回答してください。

(①はい ②まあまあ ③あまり ④いいえ)

- (1) 「行動観察（生徒の活動の様子を見る評価方法）」を活用している。
- (2) 「ポートフォリオ」（生徒の提出物や作品を評価する評価方法）を活用している。
- (3) 「筆記テスト」（リスニング・リーディング・ライティングなどのペーパーテスト）を活用している。
- (4) 「パフォーマンステスト」（スピーキングやライティングなどを実際に行わせ評価するテスト）を活用している。
- (5) 「小テスト」（文字や単語テストのような短時間で行うことができるようなテスト）を活用している。
- (6) 「振り返りカード」を活用している。
- (7) その他に活用している評価方法があれば、ご記入ください。

4. 今年度実施する予定のスピーキングテストの回数を数字で回答してください。

5. 今年度実施する予定のライティングテストの回数を数字で回答してください。

6. 英語において、何の評価が難しいと感じますか。番号で選んでください。（複数回答可）

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|
| ①聞くこと | ②話すこと（発表） | ③話すこと（やり取り） |
| ④読むこと | ⑤書くこと | ⑥知識・技能 |
| ⑦思考・判断・表現 | ⑧主体的に学習に取り組む態度 | ⑨その他 |

7. 上の質問で評価が難しいと感じる理由を自由に記述してください。