

Japanese English Language Education at the Preschool Level: Institutional Possibilities, Home Options and the Utilization of Both—Part 1

Mikio Brooks, Asia University, Japan

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Abstract

The implementation of formal English language classes at the Japanese elementary school from the year 2020 has recently revived interest in early childhood English education programs among parents and educators. As more parents have become interested in providing children with language learning opportunities in English, so has the market—along with the number of English language preschools and internationally oriented nursery-kindergartens. Furthermore, the multitude and variability of these types of preschools and programs make it difficult for parents, given their individual family circumstances, to determine what is the best school for their child and his future. Knowing what kind of English language preschool programs are available can help inform parents to make sound decisions about their children's future. Simultaneously, when these programs or institutions are unaffordable or out of reach, by drawing upon proper knowledge about bilingualism, parents can implement an action plan for promoting long-term bilingualism. In the first part of this multi-paper series, the author outlines the current system of early childhood education in Japan. Then it considers factors that may be involved in the why the number of internationally oriented kindergartens and day nurseries have increased throughout Japan. Finally, it examines four different types of English language preschool programs and options that are available in Japan, simultaneously presenting a framework for analysis and evaluation of potential preschool sites for parents interested in raising their children bilingually or biculturally. In the subsequent essays, the author plans to discuss common myths associated with bilingualism and attempt to debunk these myths based on research. The multi-series paper will also consider ways in which parents can create consistency, form and manage effective language boundaries, maximize language input and positively overcome obstacles towards fostering and educating their child bilingually in the realm of the home. Simultaneously, the forthcoming versions of the paper will try to explore ways in which educational objectives and language input at the preschool can complement or help reinforce what is taking place within the home.

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Outline of Current Japanese Early Childhood Education and Care system

According to scholar Mariko Ichimi Abumiya (2011), the beginnings of both Japanese kindergartens (*youchien*) and day nurseries (*hoikuen*) date back to over a century ago in the late 19th century. Both have historically developed and co-existed under distinct systems, with kindergartens being associated with the educational sector and day nurseries linked to the welfare sector. Ishikida (2005) outlines, in its modern form, *youchien*, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports Science and Technology (MEXT) provide three to six-year-olds with approximately four hours of instruction each day. Day nurseries were founded under the guidance of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHWL)(formerly known as the Ministry of Health and Welfare) as part of social welfare programs for working parents and guardians. These facilities watch over and provide full-day care to children ranging from newborn babies, toddlers, and pre-school aged children up to the age of six. They were established to assist guardians who are unable to care for the children due to work commitments, health problems, or responsibilities that entail the care of sick or elderly family members.

In the year 2012, the Japanese government authorized three laws to enact *The Comprehensive Support System for Children and Childcare* (CSSCC). According to Abumiya (2015), this was a historic measure in the field of Japanese Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), enabling a comprehensive support system for child-rearing with sound financial resources to be implemented at the national level. In addition to the existing kindergartens and day nurseries, this enactment helped to establish a type of facility called Unified type ECEC Centers (*youjien*) which are regarded to be both a school education site as well as a facility for social welfare. Unified type ECEC Centers fall under the supervision of the Japanese Cabinet Office (CO). They are also capable of providing both instruction and care to children between the ages of zero to five.

Although the enactment of the CSSCC tries to streamline and consolidate some of the guidelines and resources for each of the facility types, there are differences especially in the curricular standards, the qualifications of its staff, and the number of instructional or care hours that the center provides for the children and their guardians. For example, kindergartens and kindergarten type ECEC Centers fall under the supervision of MEXT and are governed by the educational principles and guidelines outlined in the “*National Standards for Kindergartens*”. Simultaneously, in order to become a teacher at a *youchien*, one must pass the *Kindergarten teacher certificate* and become a *youchien kyoyu*, which is based on the Educational Personnel Certification Law. Day Nurseries or *hoikuen* have traditionally fallen under management of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and follow the standards mandated in the “*Guidelines for Nursery Care at Day Nurseries*”. In order to be hired at a day nursery or a day nursery type ECEC Center, one must obtain the certification of *Qualified childcare worker*, also known as *hoikushi*, which is dictated by the Child Welfare Laws and Regulations. For unified type of ECEC Centers, the curricula falls under the supervision of “*Curriculum for Education and Childcare in Unified Type of ECEC Centers*”. To oversee children between the ages zero to two, one must obtain the certification for *Qualified childcare worker* and for children between three and six, one must obtain a special qualification as an *ECEC teacher (hoiku kyoyu)*. Instructional and childcare times also differ amongst the three groups with

kindergartens providing a standard four hours of service per day, while day nurseries offering a standard eight hours of service and unified type of ECEC Centers supporting four to eight hours of care per day. In recent years, even kindergartens like day nurseries are allowing for extended hours of care to meet the needs of parents and specific family needs. Information regarding the three categories of facilities and its respective features have been summarized in Table 1: “Kindergartens, Day Nurseries and ECEC Centers in the CSSCC.”

Table 1: Kindergartens, Day Nurseries and ECEC Centers in the CSSCC
Adapted from: National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER.go.jp)

Category of Facility		<u>Kindergarten/ Kindergarten type ECEC Center</u> (School Education Institution)	<u>Day Nursery/ Day Nursery Type ECEC Center</u> (Child Welfare Facility)	<u>Unified Type of ECEC Center</u> (Facility positioned as both a School Education Institution And Child Welfare-Facility)
Governing Authority	Supervision	MEXT	MHLW	CO
	Funding	MEXT	(CO) Cabinet Office	
Standards		“National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens”/ Unified ECEC Curriculum	Guidelines for Nursery Care at Day Nurseries/ Unified ECEC Curriculum	Curriculum for Education and Childcare in Unified Type of ECEC Centers
Target		Ages 3 to 6	From ages 0 to 6 (Those requiring childcare due to jobs, health etc.)	From ages 0 to 6, regardless of parent’s work status or other reasons
Qualification for the Staff		Kindergarten teacher certification (<i>youchien kyoyuu</i>)	Qualified childcare worker (<i>hoiku-shi</i>)	0 to 2yrs: Qual. Childcare worker 3 to 5yrs: ECEC Teacher
Education and Childcare Times/ Hrs		4 hours a day (since 1997: extra hours available)	8 hours a day (Longer → up to 11hrs)	4 to 8 hours a day, according to family situation.

According to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, there were a total of 22,909 Early Childhood Education and Care Centers in 2008 (*MHLW Press Release from 2015*). This number grew to approximately 32,793 in 2017 with over 2.5 million pre-school aged children enrolled in these types of facilities (*Press Release from 2017*). Abumiya (2015) summarizes her findings regarding the increase in numbers of Japanese ECEC Centers by asserting, “it shows a pluralistic and comprehensive image of how the ECEC is developing, in response to the current trends in families and the economic situation in Japan.”

Internationally-Oriented and English-Medium Instructional Kindergartens and Day Nurseries in Japan

For the purpose of this paper, we would like to shift our focus towards internationally-oriented kindergartens and day nurseries that may have different degrees of utilizing the English language within its curricula, instructional programs and/ or daycare routines. As the primary contributor to the *International School Times* webpage, Murata (2016) presents a framework for comparing nursery-kindergartens and preschools in Japan according to the language medium and the curricular focus of the institution. Table 2, titled “A Comparison of Nursery-Kindergarten and Preschools

in Japan” helps to cross-examine and conceptualize early childhood education in Japan in light of English language education.

According to this table *hoikuen*, *youchien* and unified early childhood education centers which are also known as *youjien* are institutions in which are taught in or provide care in the Japanese language medium. Private international preschools and kindergartens, nursery-kindergarten programs of international schools, and privately-run English daycare centers and services can be grouped together in the quadrants where instruction, interaction and care occur with the English language medium. *Youchien* and to a certain degree, *youjien*, as well as private internationally-oriented preschools and kindergartens and nursery-kindergarten programs of international schools fall into the category of where the curricula and/ or daily routine emphasizes education. In contrast, the daily interactions, routines and curricula of *hoikuen* or Japanese day nurseries and English daycare facilities and services tend to be more focused on nursery-care. Simultaneously, *youchien* and private international preschools, nursery-kindergarten programs and kindergarten programs can be grouped together according to ages of children enrolled (ages three to six), while *hoikuen* and daycare centers in English or Japanese can be classified in another category according to ages zero to three.

Table 2: A Comparison of Nursery-Kindergartens and Preschools in Japan
(According to Language Medium and Curricular Focus)

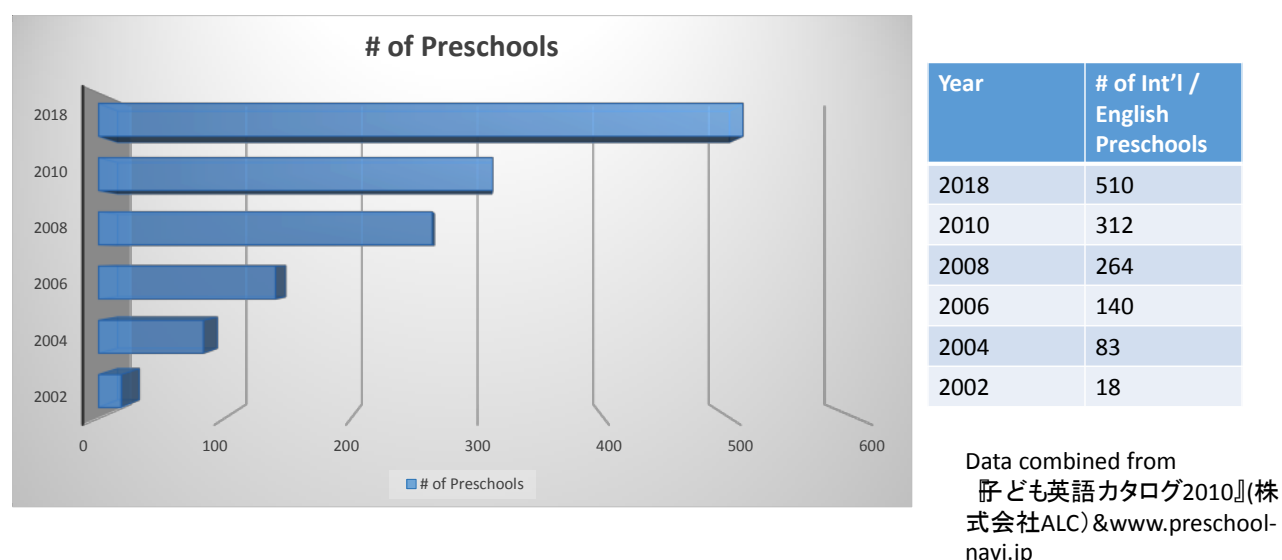
(Adapted/Translated from: The International School Times, Murata, 2016)

Curricula/ Daily Routine is Focused more on/ Emphasizes: Education (Age 3 to 6)	幼稚園 (<i>you-chi-en</i>) Kindergarten (Y o-u-j ien 幼児園/ Unified ECEC Centers)	Private International Preschools and Kindergartens and Nursery-Kindergarten Programs of International Schools
Curricula/ Daily Routine is Focused more on / Emphasizes: Nursery-Care (Age 0 to 3)	保育園 (<i>ho-iku-en</i>) Nursery-Day care	Day Care in English
	Japanese Language Medium	English Language Medium

In order to determine actual numbers of international preschools, nursery-kindergarten programs of international schools and English day care facilities in Japan, the author consulted several Internet websites including the *International School Times*, the *Tokyo Association of International Preschools*, and the *Preschool Navi* as well as published resources such as the *Guide to International Schools in Japan* (Pover, 2009) and the *2010 Children's English Language Catalog* (ALC publishing, 2010). A review of these resources helped to identify a growing trend since the early 2000s. According to the *2010 Children's English Language Catalog*, numbers of internationally-oriented preschools, day nurseries and kindergartens as well as those that explicitly taught or provided care in the English language medium in 2002 were

estimated at a merely 18 schools. In 2004, that number rose to 83 and in 2006, 140 schools were accounted for by the publication. The growth trend continued where in 2008, the number of schools were reported to be at 264 and in 2010 the numbers further expanded to 312 internationally-oriented and English language medium kindergartens and day nurseries. In use of the *Preschool Navi* website's search function of locating internationally-oriented and/ or English language medium preschools which include both day nurseries and kindergartens on their portal, it revealed that there were a total of 510 schools (that ran half-day and/ or full-day services) in operation as of this year in 2018. Figure 1: Estimated Numbers of Internationally-Oriented Preschools in Japan organizes these estimates in graphic form.

Figure 1: Estimated Numbers of Internationally-Oriented Preschools



MEXT's 2003 "Action Plan", 2011 Revision and Visions for 2020 regarding English Language Education at the Elementary School Level

In 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) asserted in its official report ("Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities": Plan to improve English and Japanese abilities, 2002) that "it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English." Subsequently in 2003, it announced an "Action Plan" to cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities." This marked for the very first time in which MEXT clearly and specifically spelled out its goal to improve the standard of English language education at the national level. As a result of these announcements, the ministry introduced English classes at the elementary school level, in which fifth- and sixth-graders were given the opportunity to become familiar with English in a non-formal classroom environment, if schools decided to incorporate them into the curricula.

An article written by Mizuho Aoki in *The Japan Times* ("English heads for elementary school in 2020 but hurdles abound," 2016) explains further changes that

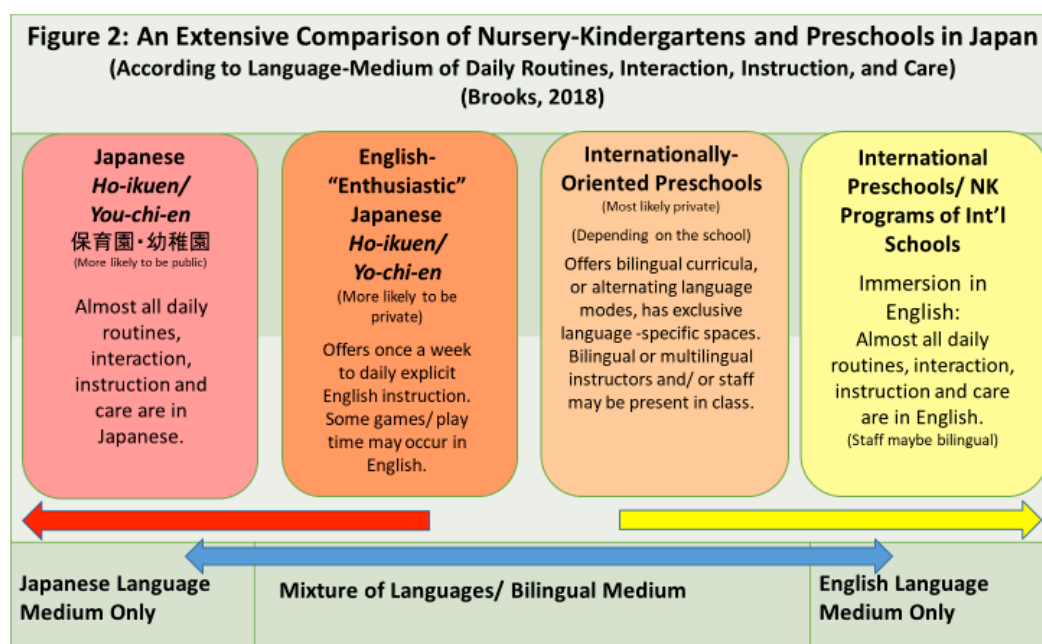
were made to the elementary school English education curricula in the year 2011. During this academic year, these formerly “optional” language introductory sessions were transformed into foreign language activity classes with more structure and regular scheduling. In its latest transformation, the same article outlines some of the more drastic changes that are going to occur with English language education at the elementary school level by the year 2020. After a two-year transition period, English will be taught as a formal class for the first time in public elementary schools. In 2020, English will become a required subject for fifth- and sixth-graders with the annual number of classroom hours doubling from the 35 to 70 hours. Reading and writing will also be taught explicitly in conjunction with designated textbooks and students will be formally assessed and graded. In addition to the changes with the upper level grades, foreign language activity classes will also become mandatory for third- and fourth-graders as well.

Going back to Figure 1, the graph show that the growth trend in the numbers of internationally-oriented preschools and day nurseries and kindergartens that are conducted in the English language accelerates after the year of 2002—the year in which MEXT made its crucial announcement in its plans for bolstering the English abilities of future generations. In each of the years beyond 2004, the number of schools steadily rises most likely indicating that there was a viable market need for these schools. One can hypothesize that, as the amount and degree to which English language education was incorporated into the elementary school curricula increased, so were the interest levels among Japanese parents with children of pre-matriculatory ages before first-grade amplified as well. One possible interpretation is that as parents realized that more English was going to be incorporated even at public elementary schools, more parents wanted to give their children a “head-start”. Other factors such as changes in the number of international marriages and families in which would like to educate their children multilingually and/ or the number of Japanese parents with international study abroad experience themselves, in turn wanting some sort of international, multicultural, or multilingual experience for their own children could be possible factors leading to the rise in the need for these type of schools; hence, the increase in the raw number of such schools. Possible avenues for future research could include a cross-examination of other factors that possibly led to the growth of these type of schools and simultaneously, analyzing whether the growth trend will continue in the future.

The Problem of Deciphering “What Actually is an Internationally-Oriented Preschool?”

Trying to decode or determine whether an institution or facility is actually an “internationally-oriented” preschool, solely based on institutional name can be quite confusing and problematic. When conducting an Internet search for international preschools in Japan or when browsing comprehensive lists that can be found on websites such as *Preschool Navi*, one will find many institutional names with the words “International”, “Bilingual”, “English”, prefixes and words such as “Duo”/ “Dual” partially embedded in their names. In other cases, the school name will be utilizing the English word “Kindergarten”, “Pre-school”, “Daycare”, or a combined portmanteau form such as “Kindercare”. On the other hand, the institutional name may have the *katakana* word of [*purii-su-kuu-ru* プリースクール] forming the official school name.

Although Murata’s framework, “A Comparison of Nursery-Kindergarten and Preschools in Japan” which has been depicted in Table 2 is useful for a general discussion of internationally-oriented preschools in Japan, it makes it difficult for parents who would like to send their children to a bilingual, English-language medium-based, or an internationally-oriented institution to make specific decisions on what type of school they would like to actually send their child to. Therefore, the author would like to present alternative framework that centers upon a continuum of language use for daily routines, interaction and care to help conceptualize and analyze specific institutions so as parents can make informed decisions for the family and their child’s future. Figure 2: “An Extensive Comparison of Nursery-Kindergarten and Preschools in Japan: According to Language-medium of Daily Routines, Interaction, Instruction and Care (Brooks, 2018)” seeks to posit and examine specific institutions in a more multi-faceted manner.



An Extensive Comparison of Nursery-Kindergartens and Preschools in Japan: Explaining the Four Models Housed Within

On the one end the spectrum, we have Japanese *Hoikuen* and *Youchien* where almost all daily routines, interactions and care are conducted in the Japanese language medium. A description along with some characteristics of such an institution may be as follows:

- Sending a child to this school/ facility may cost lower than other institutional options due to the fact that many are publicly operated.
- The proximity of the school may be close to the home of a family.
- A high percentage of teachers and staff will be certified.
- Proper safety/ illness/ natural disaster protocols will likely be in place.
- It will most likely be full-immersion in Japanese throughout the day.
- Peer interaction and play of the children will occur in the Japanese

language medium.

g) In many cases, lunch and snacks are provided by certified staff and chefs.

h) Potential disadvantages could include very little or no input in English (or the second language).

i) Depending on the family, there could be cultural differences / differences in daily routines of the

daycare center and in the home.

j) All paperwork for registering are in Japanese and entry is not guaranteed for all families.

Depending on the situation of the municipality a family could be wait-listed.

k) If the parents don't speak Japanese they may have communication difficulties with teachers.

On the other end of the spectrum where the predominant language of interaction, instruction and care will be in the English language medium, we have the categorical group of International Preschools and Nursery-Kindergarten programs of International Schools. A description along with some characteristics of such an institution may be as follows:

a) Many of these institutions aim for/ proclaim "full-immersion" in English in terms of the care,

interaction, communication with parents, and provide explicit instruction in the English language medium.

b) Most of the teachers and staff will be certified (according to non-Japanese academic standards).

c) Proper safety/ illness/ natural disaster protocols will likely be in place.

d) Peer interaction and play of the children will be more likely to occur in the English language medium.

e) Due to the fact that these will be private institutions, the tuition/ day care expenses will be

anywhere between 80,000 to 200,000 yen per month. Therefore, it may be unaffordable for

many non-affluent families.

f) Depending on the family, there could be cultural differences / differences in daily routines of the

daycare center and in the home. (Especially, if the Japanese language or Japanese culture is dominant at home.)

g) Lunch and snacks may not be provided by the school. Therefore, parents may have to prepare

meals and snacks on a daily basis.

h) Depending on the family, the location of the school may be far from home (or the parents'

workplace) and/ or is extremely inconvenient in terms of commute.

i) Unlike public daycare facilities or programs they institutions they may not have care or

supervision for extended hours available. Hence, it may not be a viable

option for some families.

Identifying how a specific preschool is aligned on the spectrum will depend on gathering information about a specific school. In some cases, based on some preliminary research, it may not be such a difficult task to do, especially if it fits into one language medium extreme or the other. However, for some schools, even after looking beyond the initial clues, it may not be so apparent. It may be necessary to look beyond just the school name and delve into the Homepage layout and analyze the language interface to dig a little deeper. Clues that are located on the main homepage of an institution may be indicative of the school's philosophy and language mediums it functions or operates in. In any case, for evaluative and assessment measures, the author has included two checklists in the Appendix titled: Appendix A: Checklist for Evaluating or Assessing an Early Childhood Education and Care Center in Japan and Appendix B: Checklist for Further Evaluating or Assessing an Early Childhood Education and Care Center in Japan. Appendix A is intended to help parents and families determine where on the spectrum does a specific ECEC center, preschool, or nursery-kindergarten fit into. Appendix B is proposed as means to help parents and guardians determine how other non-language medium related factors or characteristics would potentially make the school or "good fit" or not for the individual child and/ or family. Using the checklists, especially Appendix A can help with the analytical process of identifying preschools that fall in the middle ground categories of English-"Enthusiastic" Japanese *hoikuen* and *youchien* as well as those that are categorized as internationally-oriented preschools.

Located slightly to the left of the center of the continuum, we have the model of English-"Enthusiastic" Japanese *hoikuen* and *youchien*. The author chose the phrase English-"Enthusiastic" as means to describe Japanese *hoikuens* and *youchiens* that are functioning mostly in Japanese but to some extent, try to eagerly incorporate some form of or extent of English into their daily activities or routines. These institutions might for example, offer a weekly 30-minute session in English with an outside native English teacher or, conduct certain daily routines in English, or have a set song that is consistently sung in English every day. Ultimately, each individual institution will vary according to factors such as founding philosophies, staff availability and clientele needs. A hypothetical description along with some characteristics of such an institution may be as follows:

- a) These may either be private or public but more likely to be privately owned. Nonetheless, day care fees and tuition are usually reasonably priced.
- b) The proximity of the school may or may not be close to the home of a family.
- c) Percentage of teachers and staff that are certified will vary according to each institution.
- d) Proper safety/ illness/ natural disaster protocols will vary according to each institution.
- e) One advantage of enrollment could be that exposure to non-Japanese teachers and staff may foster sensitivity towards people of diverse backgrounds.
- f) Peer interaction and play of the children will likely occur in the Japanese language medium.

g) Depending on how much language input there is in the second language, there is a possibility

for the children acquire a degree of bilingualism.

h) However, the quality and amount of exposure to English will vary according to each institution.

i) The outcomes of exposure to English may be difficult to measure or see.

j) In some cases, if an English-speaking teacher is hired externally and is not present at the school

at all times, it may be difficult for parents and teachers to communicate / discuss aspects of their

child's development.

Located slightly to the right of the center of the continuum, we have the model of Internationally-Oriented Preschools. The author chose the phrase "internationally-oriented" to depict a range of preschool types that would likely utilize both language mediums of English and Japanese. How specific interactions take place in which language and aspects such as how daily schedules are organized, or how certain spaces on the premises of the school or arranged or allocated according to language will vary greatly according to each individual institution. Some schools and programs may offer bilingual curricula, or have certain times of the day that operate in the English language mode, or the Japanese language mode. Depending on the school, a certain part of the school might be designated as an "English-speaking zone" and/ or "a zone where it is okay to speak Japanese" but in other spaces children and staff are required to speak in English. In many cases, such institutions will likely have bilingual instructors as well as bilingual administrative staff members hired at the school. A hypothetical description along with some possible characteristics of such an institution may be as follows:

a) Fees and tuition may cost more than public daycare and kindergartens, but are usually more

affordable than international preschools and preschools of international school programs.

b) The proximity of the school may or may not be close to the home of a family.

c) The Percentage of teachers and staff that are certified will vary according to each institution.

d) Proper safety/ illness/ natural disaster protocols will vary according to each institution.

e) Like English-"enthusiast" ECECs, an advantage of enrollment could be direct interaction with

non-Japanese teachers and staff may foster sensitivity towards people of diverse backgrounds.

f) Peer interaction and play of the children will depend on the make-up of enrollment at the school

will be dependent on: How diverse or internationalized are the backgrounds of the children?

g) Depending on how much language input there is in the second language, there is a possibility

for the children acquire a degree of bilingualism. Nonetheless, researchers such as Grosjean

(2012), especially emphasizes the importance of using the minority language at home in terms of frequency and in its purpose.

h) The quality and amount of exposure to English will vary according to each institution.

i) The outcomes of exposure to English may be difficult to measure or see.

j) Similar to situations at other institutions, if an English-speaking teacher is hired externally and

is not present at the school permanently, the parents and teachers may have a hard time

communicating or discussing the development of the child in terms of language and / or in other respects.

Utilization of the Framework and Links to Subsequent Themes of the Paper

Many of these descriptions and characteristics that are listed here have been organized and formulated based on a combination of both the author's in-person visitations and observations at more than a half-a-dozen preschools in the Tokyo area, and through information obtained on nearly another dozen schools by means of browsing and researching information about specific schools on the Internet. These generalized descriptions were written with the intent of potentially helping parents that plan to raise their own children bilingually or multiculturally with an analytical framework for assessing and evaluating how and to what extent did a specific school or institution utilize or function in the Japanese language, in the English language or with a combination of both languages—in essence trying help locate where on the spectrum did a specific preschool a fit and which model it might mirror or emulate. By no means was it created to “evaluate” whether a specific school was “good”, “bad” or “mediocre”. The author's goal is to ultimately help parents find the “appropriate” school or program that fits the needs of their child and /or goals of their own family.

In order to help make sound financial, educational and logistical decisions for their child's bilingual and multicultural development, the author would like to propose the following steps: 1) For families to first discuss, lay out and outline in written form what their specific educational, language and cultural goals are for their children; 2) Parents and guardians should then proceed to conduct research and complete visitations of potentials preschools or ECEC Centers, in person; 3) Upon completing evaluations of each potential location, parents should then finally, weigh the pros and cons of sending their child to that particular school or location in light of their future goals and the present financial situation and/ or familial circumstances. As reiterated before, it may not necessarily be choosing the ‘best’ school, but selecting the school that is “right” for the child and the particular situation that the family is in.

The goal of this paper was to first outline the current situation of Japanese Early Childhood Education and Care Centers and summarize differential characteristics of *Hoikuen*, *Youchien*, and the newer forms of unified care—*Youjien*.. Then it considered how the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's proposals to revitalize English language education at the elementary school level since 2002 have played a role in the growth of the internationally-oriented/

international preschool market. Finally, the paper proposed an expansive analytical framework for examining kindergartens, international preschools and internationally-oriented daycare centers based on the continuum of language medium or mediums utilized in the daily routines, interaction, instruction and care at a specific institutions. Forthcoming themes to be explored in the subsequent papers, include the exploration of definitions regarding bilingualism, bilinguality and biculturalism, the review and scrutiny of several myths about bilingualism that are relevant to the topic of language development at the preschool age level, and an inquiry into the process of planning and implementing a bilingual action plan at home in hopes of create links language and developmental links between preschools and home.

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Appendix A: Checklist for Evaluating or Assessing an Early Childhood Education and Care Center in Japan

Determining where on the spectrum does this ECEC center/ pre-school/ NK fit into?
(Simultaneously, is a good fit for our child/ children/ our family?)

<input type="checkbox"/> Founding Philosophy / Educational Philosophy Statement (webpage/ brochures)	<input type="checkbox"/> Explanations / information about curricula / daily or weekly schedules	<input type="checkbox"/> School visitation/ classroom observation opportunities (watching the teachers in action)
<input type="checkbox"/> Availability of Information in English and/ or Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Information on educational outcomes (self-reported/3 rd party assessed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Looking at the clues on the walls : Types of posters, colors, pics, achievements, writing, rules, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Language of Informational Sessions : Lang. spoken/ of the brochures/ Q &A	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership / organizational structure and titles of individuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening to the sounds that you hear : Language of songs, playing, talking, of teachers
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers : Certifications, nationalities, backgrounds and ratios	<input type="checkbox"/> Progression of students after completing the program	<input type="checkbox"/> Library : Size, type of books (lang.(s) of books), location in relation to entire school

Appendix B: Checklist for Further Evaluating or Assessing an Early Childhood Education and Care Center in Japan

Other factors for considering the ECEC center/ pre-school/ NK for your family. (Simultaneously, is it a good school? A good fit for our child/ children/ our family?)

<input type="checkbox"/> Tuition/ Day care fees	<input type="checkbox"/> Policies and Procedures for Lunch and Snacks	<input type="checkbox"/> School visitation/ classroom observation opportunities (See how the children/ teachers greet and interact with you)
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of Standard Hours/ Availability of Extended hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Size of the campus/ number of rooms/ space designated for play/ age-designated spaces	<input type="checkbox"/> Diversity in backgrounds of staff, teachers, and children enrolled
<input type="checkbox"/> Information on Safety and Illness Guidelines/ Protocol in the event of a disaster	<input type="checkbox"/> Proximity of school/ facility to local parks	<input type="checkbox"/> Using the sense of smell: Determining sanitation standards, whether staff is well-staffed/ under-staffed
<input type="checkbox"/> Distance to and from Home (Distance to and from Parents' workplace)	<input type="checkbox"/> Types of Toys / Play Facilities that are available (including times of bad weather)	<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet training/ usage philosophies

Figure 2: An Extensive Comparison of Nursery-Kindergartens and Preschools in Japan
 (According to Language-Medium of Daily Routines, Interaction, Instruction, and Care)
 (Brooks, 2018)

