

Significance of Working Together to Create and Revise a Consistent Achievement Goal Chart: Focusing on Teachers' Narratives

Takashi Yamamoto, Tenri University, Japan

The IAFOR International Conference on Education in Hawaii 2023
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Japan's Ministry of Education and boards of education in each prefecture have been emphasizing collaborative activities between elementary, junior high, and high schools. However, it has been pointed out that collaboration between schools has not progressed very well. This may indicate the need for collaborative activity research in English education between different school types is greater than ever. Yamamoto (2019) conducted an interview survey of teachers who initiated a collaborative project in English education of a private school cooperation in western Japan (the first-generation teachers). He found out that what they seek is a "lean connection" and that setting consistent achievement goals is essential in connecting education of different school types. The project has continued, although the core members have changed. Based on Yamamoto (2019), the presenter set the following research questions and conducted interviews in 2021 to compare the attitudes of the second-generation teachers at elementary, junior high, and high school with those of the first-generation teachers. (1) Do the second-generation teachers have different mindsets from the first-generation? (2) How have collaborative activities centered on creating and revising a consistent achievement goal chart affected them? The results show that, unlike the first generation, the second generation has a more concrete and multifaceted perspective in their awareness of lesson planning, student understanding, and self-examination. The results also suggest that collaborative efforts centered on the goal chart have functioned as an opportunity for teacher development, fostering an awareness of collaboration among different school types and improving the quality of information exchange.

Keywords: English Education, Consistent Achievement Goal, Elementary and Secondary School Collaboration

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

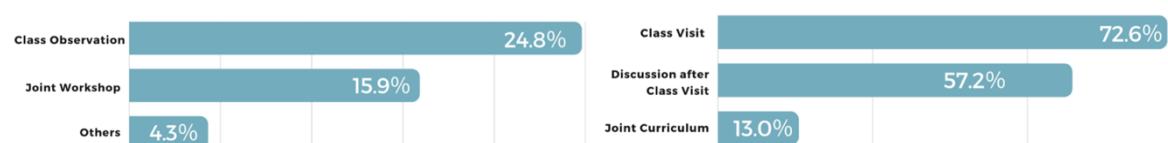
Introduction

In Japan, English education in elementary schools has been one of the required subjects since school year 2020. Before this movement, many prefectural boards of education established policies and goals to promote collaboration among elementary, junior high, and high schools regarding English education. Moreover, they started to carry out projects to promote such collaboration. The importance of promoting inter-school English education collaboration among different school types is generally recognized. For example, the percentage of prefectures with “established policies or goals to promote collaboration among different school types” is 63.8, 31 prefectures out of 47. Furthermore, 87.2% of 41 prefectures answered that they are doing some projects in practice to promote inter-school collaboration on English education (Zenkoku todofuken kyoikuiinkai rengokai, 2018).

According to the 2017 Japan Ministry of Education survey, 12.5% of high schools nationwide responded that they are collaborating with elementary schools, and 27.5% responded that they are collaborating with junior high schools. In contrast, the figure for elementary and junior high school collaboration is 81.2%, which is considerably higher than for elementary and high school collaboration (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017). This is thought to be due to the municipality in which the schools are located. Most elementary and junior high schools are established in the same city. In recent years, some schools have been established as integrated public elementary and junior high schools or compulsory education schools. 81.2% indeed seems high, but the rate was already 70.0 in the 2009 survey (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009). This means that their collaborative activities have not suddenly become more active in recent years.

Based on Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2017), let us look at specific forms of collaboration between schools. The bar graphs below show the responses to the question about what kind of activities high schools do with junior high schools. The most common activity is “teachers’ class observation,” followed by “teachers’ joint workshop on a specific theme” (Figure 1, left). Many of the activities between elementary and junior high schools are class observations followed by discussions (Figure 1, right).

Figure 1: Collaborative activities



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2017)

In sum, so far, cooperation among different school types in English education is considered necessary nationwide, and teachers’ exchange activities are conducted to some extent. Such actions include class observations and subsequent discussions, information exchange meetings, or joint training sessions.

Review of previous studies

Previous studies in various subject areas, not limited to foreign language education, argue that exchanging information enhances collaboration among different types of schools. Many practices in schools based on this logic have been reported. Naoyama (2013) states that

information exchange and interaction among different schools are essential to reach the first state of collaboration. They shorten the distance in feelings, and the distance in content is shortened through curriculum collaboration. In other words, the process is from information exchange to curriculum improvement. The author does not object to this position. Exchanging information would undoubtedly be necessary. However, Aoyagi (2016), Matsumoto (2013), and others have pointed out that despite these efforts, the reality is that in many schools, collaboration among different types of schools in English education has yet to progress sufficiently. This indicates that further research on collaborative activities is needed to examine what and how to enhance collaboration among schools.

There are few studies dealing with collaborative activities to set achievement goals, which is the focus of this project and research, as a trigger for promoting collaboration. Okazaki (2014) and Okazaki (2016) have addressed the issue of setting achievement goals in English language education. In particular, Okazaki (2016) points out the significance of setting achievement goals together as effective for positive changes in teaching practices and beliefs and for improving collegiality within the English department of a high school.

The author started a project in 2013 with teachers from an elementary school, a junior high school, and a high school. We believed that jointly creating achievement goals that are consistent and connected could be a catalyst for promoting collaboration based on Okazaki's viewpoint. This project aims to create an achievement goal chart that has consistency from elementary school to high school graduation in English communication skills and the educational philosophy of the schools.

Their schools are affiliated with private school cooperation. Collaboration between schools would be challenging even if they are private schools. When they exist as one junior high school or one high school, it tends to have a stand-alone mindset, and in many cases, educational activities are completed at each school. The schools in question have their own entrance exams, and it used to be hard to see what they were doing in each, though they are located close together. The goal chart in Figure 2 is the 2022 edition made through their collaborative work. Based on it, we have also been working on verifying the achievement of the goals and evaluating the students' degree of accomplishment.

Yamamoto (2019) surveyed the attitudes of teachers involved in this project. He interviewed the teachers who started the collaborative project in 2013 (hereafter referred to as "the first-generation collaboration teachers"). In this project, teachers worked together to create a consistent English education achievement goal chart for their junior and senior high schools. From the interviews, Yamamoto (2019) extracted what they sought in the project is a "lean connection (p.12)" and claimed that making a consistent achievement goal chart can be an essential factor in connecting schools of different levels.

The project, initiated to connect a junior high school and a high school, is still ongoing as of 2022; in 2018, an elementary school was added to the project. Moreover, the core teachers of the project have been replaced over the years.

Figure 2: Goal chart 2022 edition

2022年度 T-SEEGs 学園英語教育ガイドライン 小学校 中学校 高等学校 到達目標表(CAN-DOリスト) T-SEEGs 学園英語教育ガイドライン作成プロジェクト

First Step for "The World" 世界を知るための第一歩(英語学習への準備)→英語に慣れ親しむために、心豊かな英語にふれ慣れ親しみます。

English for "Me" 可能性を広げるための英語→自分の可能性を広げるために必要な英語の力を身に付けます。

English for "You" 他者に貢献するための英語→「預言」も「預言」も、世界に向けて、人のために役立つ、意図を持って必要な英語の力を身に付けます。

English for "The World" 世界を知るための英語→英語学習を通して世界に心を向け、異文化を理解する態度を身に付けます。

学習領域	高校3年 [H]		高校2年 [H]		高校1年 [H]		中学3年 [J]		中学2年 [J]		中学1年 [J]		小学5-6年 [E]		小学3-4年 [A]	
	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標	目標	到達目標
Reading	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解	読解
	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
Listening	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解
	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解
	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解
	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解	聴解
Writing	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
Speaking	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後
	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後	読後

In 2022, the author conducted an interview survey to compare the attitudes of “the second-generation collaboration teachers,” who are involved in the project currently, with the first-generation teachers.

The activities the teachers are currently undertaking as part of the collaboration project are as follows: collaborative meetings, revising and publishing the goal chart once a year in April, students’ English speech and recitation contest, teachers’ collaboration workshops, and student visits to different schools and exchange meetings. The meeting is held once a school term, and their main topics are the goal chart, teaching and evaluation methods, joint events, and student situations. The goal chart is distributed to all elementary, junior high, and high school students, English teachers, and other relevant parties.

Research Questions

Here are the two research questions of this study.

- (1) Do the current English teachers involved in collaborative activities in collaborative activities have a different mindset from the teachers who initiated the activities?
- (2) How have collaborative activities centered on creating a consistent achievement goal chart affected them?

Interviewees

Let us overview the survey. The researcher interviewed three English teachers, Keiko, Nozomi, and Takuro (Their names are pseudonyms). Keiko is a female elementary school

English teacher in her 30s. Nozomi is a female junior high school English teacher in her 30s. And Takuro is a male high school teacher in his 40s. They are “second-generation collaboration teachers.” They were all assigned to be in charge of revising the goal chart in a situation where this collaborative project had already started.

Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in August 2021, which lasted 40-50 minutes each. The researcher compared them with the previous survey results. Data were transcribed, and qualitative content analysis was conducted through coding. The questions were the same as those of the first-generation teachers were asked in the 2019 survey:

- (1) How has your involvement in this project changed your thinking about “goal setting,” “collaboration,” and your teaching style?
- (2) What is the state of being “collaborative” like?
- (3) What are some of the challenges you face when collaborating?

Results and Discussion

The second-generation teachers had similar views to the first generation-teachers regarding the nature of the collaboration and the challenges they faced. However, the author refers here to the following imposing points. Many narratives suggest that second-generation teachers have more “concrete forms of connection” and “more focused perceptions of the student condition” than first-generation teachers. What are extracted from their narratives are: (a) Specific, multifaceted understanding of students’ English language skills, (b) Teachers’ perception of their own specific growth, and (c) Recognition that collaboration is being promoted.

(a) Specific, multifaceted understanding of students’ English language skills

While the first-generation teachers made relatively abstract comments, such as “collaboration requires lean connections throughout the information (Yamamoto, 2019, p.12).” On the other hand, many of the second generation’s narratives were more specific in describing the skills and status of the students. They talked about their reflections on teaching based on the existence of the achievement goal chart, their commitment to collaborative activities, and their recognition of different school types. For example, Nozomi said, “I have come to realize that, for example, this student is not very good at writing, but is very good at presentation.” Keiko described her class with the words like, “More and more children are able to respond accurately to questions and instructions.” Takuro said, “If I notice that my students are more into on listening, I think I need to cover this part of the course while developing their skills.” Moreover, Takuro also said, “I always look at the goal chart and decide what we will do in class. I find out, like, ‘Oh, this is where they are expected to reach.’ ”

(b) Teachers’ perception of their own specific growth

After describing their students, all the teachers talked about their own teaching methods and views or beliefs on English language education. Furthermore, all of them talked about the remarkable changes due to their involvement in the project. For example, Nozomi, a junior high school teacher, said, “I have started to pay particular attention to whether my classes are at the appropriate level for new students.” Takuro as a high school teacher, reflected, saying,

“I have improved my classes, which tended to focus on explaining grammar, and I have gained a perspective to increase interaction among students.” For Keiko, an elementary school teacher, the goal chart seems indispensable to planning her classes. Her words are: “I have come to look at the achievement goal chart and think about what activities are necessary to achieve them.”

(c) Recognition that collaboration is being promoted

Though the amount of time teachers spend in face-to-face activities is not that large, elementary and junior high school teachers often expressed an increased awareness that they can share information about different types of schools and that they can cooperate with each other more than the actual amount of time spent. They all spoke positively and favorably about the nature of these collaborative activities. For example, Keiko said, “I really appreciate the collaborative events for students.” “It would be nice if other subject teachers had collaborative meetings as well.” The following is Keiko’s comment. “I am most grateful for the current environment in which we can learn about trends at each facility and revise the goal chart each year.” Nozomi said, “I feel like we are working together now.”

Conclusion

Regarding the first research question, we can say that second-generation teachers have a somewhat different awareness than first-generation teachers. The first-generation teachers described collaboration in relatively abstract terms, such as “lean connections (Yamamoto, 2019, p.12)” throughout the information. On the other hand, second-generation teachers have a more concrete and multifaceted perspective on teaching, student understanding, and self-examination. The second research question was how this project is affecting second-generation teachers. We could say to this question that collaborative efforts centered on creating the goal chart may be functioning as an opportunity for teacher development for them and other teachers in each school. A school corporation office staff and the author, a university faculty member as a coordinator, also have participated in this project. However, what we are doing is by no means a supervisor-subordinate issue. It is an opportunity for each teacher to develop and improve their skills as a language teacher who belongs to one cooperative unit. The schools in this case study are working together to create a consistent achievement goal chart and are continually revising it and exploring ways to validate it. Previous studies address that setting goal activities is suitable for positive change in teachers, such as classroom practices, their beliefs, and enhancing collegiality within an English department of a school. Based on them, broadening the involvement to different school types should foster an awareness of collaboration among them and improve their quality of information exchange. Finally, the author would like to add that this presentation is based on a case study of one project and is not a “collaborative model of English education” that can be widely generalized.

References

- Aoyagi, A. (2016). Sho-chu-ko renkei shita eigo kyoiku no torikumi to sono tenbo: Yamagata-ken sho-chu-ko-dai renkei programu wo motoni (Actions and prospects of English education in collaboration with elementary, junior high and high schools: Based on a collaborative program among elementary, junior high, senior high schools, and university in Yamagata Prefecture), *Yamagata University Research on Teaching and Educational Practice*, (11), 1-9.
- Matsumoto, S. (2013). CAN-DO risuto no sakusei ni yotte kitai sareru eigo kyoiku no makuroteki kaizen (Macroscopic improvements in English education expected from the creation of a CAN-DO list), *One World Info*, 2013, Spring, 2-3.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2009). Heisei 21 nendo koritsu sho-chugakko ni okeru kyoikukatei no hensei jisshi jokyo chosa no kekka nitsuite [On the results of the 2009 survey on the status of curriculum development and implementation at public elementary and junior high schools]. https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/1269841.htm
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2017). Heisei 29 nendo eigo-kyoiku jisshi jokyo chosa no kekka ni tsuite [On the results of the 2017 survey on the status of English-language education implementation]. https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/1403468.htm
- Miura, T. (2007). Chu-ko-dai de eigo ni yoru kodoryoku ikusei wo do tsumiageruka (How to build up behavioral skills development in English at high school and university level), *Bulletin of the Faculty of Education, Shizuoka University*, 39, 185-197.
- Naoyama, Y. (2013). Gaikokugo kyoiku ni okeru sho-chu renkei (Elementary and junior high school collaboration in foreign language education), *Sho-chu renkei Q&A to jissen*, (pp. 6-7). Tokyo: Kairyudo.
- Okazaki, H. (2016). Can-do risuto no settei • katsuyo no seika to kadai: kenkyu kyotenko no eigo kyoshi no shiten kara (The outcomes and challenges of setting up and using can-do lists: Perspectives from English teachers at a research hub school), *CELES Journal*, 45, 87-94.
- Ueda, K. (2012). Sho-chu renkei no eigo kyoiku (English education linking elementary and junior high schools), *The Bulletin of the EIPJSJ*, Vol. 48, 117-120.
- Yamamoto, T. (2019). Eigo kyoiku ni okeru gakushu totatsu mokuhyo settei ga motsu sho-chu-ko renkei suishin no kanosei (Potentialities of goal setting process in English education to promote elementary-secondary school collaboration), *Foreign Language Education Theory and Practice*, No.45, 1-22.
- Zenkoku todofuken kyoikuiinkai rengokai. (2018). *Heisei 29 nendo kenkyu hokokusho* [Research report for SY 2009]. http://www.kyoi-userdata/pdf/report/h29_1_bukai.pdf

Contact email: taka-y@sta.tenri-u.ac.jp