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Japanese Use in English Language Classrooms for Young Learners

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of L1 (Japanese) in the L2 (English) classroom for young learners (aged 6 - 11). There is increasing recognition that judicious use of L1 may aid second language acquisition. Support for this "optimal use position" is premised on cognitive processing theory, socio-cultural theory, student preference and motivation, and research on vocabulary learning. I utilized a qualitative multiple case study approach, using a survey instrument to investigate the beliefs and practices of five teachers working in private English conversation schools (Eikaiwa) in Japan. Four of the five teachers surveyed indicated that they believe judicious use of Japanese is beneficial. The responses however suggested a lack of awareness of some of the potential benefits of L1 usage, particularly as a tool for peer-to-peer language-related interaction. Responses also indicated the significance of institutional factors in modifying teacher practices. The fifth respondent adheres to a strong "monolingual policy". This suggests that there remains a divergence of opinions and practices on this issue and that it is a fruitful field for further research. The paper concludes with a reflection on my own beliefs and teaching practices which are consistent with the optimal use position of allowing judicious use of Japanese when doing so facilitates language learning.

Keywords

Eikaiwa, Young Learners, Teacher Beliefs, Teacher Practices, Code-Switching, L1 Use, Translanguaging, Optimal Use, Japanese EFL

1. Introduction

The use of students' first language (L1) by students and their teachers in the second language (L2) classroom ("L1 use" or "code-switching") is controversial. Cook (2001: p. 403) traces opposition to L1 use back to the late nineteenth century

when the "direct method" of teaching L2 in L2 became established. However, in practice L1 use remains a feature of language classrooms particularly when students and teachers share an L1. There has been a reassessment of the value of L1 use, with scholars such as Cook (2001) and Macaro (2009) arguing that it can serve a valuable role in second language acquisition (SLA). More recently, such code-switching has been reframed as "translanguaging", which García and Kleyn (2016: p. 14) define as the "deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire". This reassessment is particularly relevant in Japan due to the 2020 MEXT curriculum reforms. These reforms have transitioned English from an "activity" to a formal academic subject in Japanese elementary schools. The reforms suggest that in principle classes should be conducted in English to maximize student exposure to the language. This shift has intensified the debate over the "monolingual principle" versus the practical necessity of using L1 in the classroom (MEXT, 2017). While these reforms relate specifically to public education, the current study investigates the issues in the context of Eikaiwa schools for children. Eikaiwa are private, commercial English conversation schools that operate independently of the formal Japanese education system. Despite playing a "crucial role in Japan's English education landscape", San Jose and Guitche (2025) observe that the pedagogical methods used within Eikaiwa are rarely the subject of academic research. In contrast to public schools, the Eikaiwa environment is driven by commercial objectives which focus on customer satisfaction: obtaining and retaining student-customers. These commercial objectives may not always align with the best pedagogical practices (San Jose & Guitche 2025).

While teaching in this children's Eikaiwa context, a shift in my own practice away from a monolingual approach was prompted by a pilot project I conducted prior to this study. This involved recording and transcribing a one-to-one interaction between myself and a young student. Through this process, I observed patterns where I allowed the student to use her L1 to facilitate her own understanding and learning. For example, when the student used Japanese to seek language assistance or confirm the meaning of input, my analysis suggested that permitting and responding to these L1 utterances was conducive to the success of the lesson. These observations served as the primary catalyst for the current investigation into wider teacher perspectives. As a consequence of this observation and similar experiences, I have become more permissive of Japanese in my classroom. In this study, I use qualitative methodology to conduct and evaluate survey responses of five Eikaiwa teachers to examine the relationship between their beliefs and their actual classroom practices regarding L1 (Japanese) use. One significant finding was that while most teachers believe in the "optimal use" of Japanese for scaffolding and affective support, their practices are often constrained by institutional "English-only" policies. This study illustrates how these teachers strategically use the L1 to reduce learner anxiety and negotiate meaning despite these pressures. It suggests the need for further investigation into "optimal use" frameworks that can better meet the pedagogical needs of young English learners in Japan.

2. Literature Review

2.1. "Personal Theories" on L1 in Instruction

Macaro (2009: p. 36) identifies three "personal theories" regarding L1 use: the "virtual position", "the maximal position" and the "optimal position". Adherents to the virtual position believe that L2 can only be learnt through L2 and support exclusive use of L2. This is also known as the monolingual principle (Levine, 2003: p. 356). Adherents to the maximal position accept some L1 as unhelpful but unavoidable in practice. Adherents to the optimal position believe that judicious use of L1 can enhance learning (Macaro, 2009: p. 36). Cameron (2001: p. 201) identifies the purposes for which teachers use their young students' L1, as shown in **Table 1**:

Table 1. Teachers' use of L1 in the classroom.

Purposes of Use Identified by Cameron (2001)	
1) explaining	7) testing
2) translating	8) talking about learning
3) instructions	9) feedback
4) checking understanding	10) discipline and control
5) eliciting	11) friendly talk
6) focusing attention	

Cameron (2001: p. 202) also identifies two L1 uses by young learners: asking for help and responding to the teacher's questions. Similarly, Aoyama (2020) observes that students utilize the L1 to engage in "metalanguage": discussing task procedures and confirming understanding to maintain the flow of the lesson. Reflecting these findings, I observe extensive negotiation of meaning and other LREs in my classes; however, I also observe communication unrelated to lesson content, a category Aoyama (2020) excludes from her definition of "sidetracking" (strategic L1 use to resolve difficulties and return to the "main track" of English), but which Serpas (2023) identifies as a primary concern for teachers regarding students "slacking off".

Izquierdo et al. (2016) observe that studies focusing on young learners often reveal infrequent L2 use. Izquierdo et al.'s (2016) study of secondary school English classes in Mexico supports this concern, finding that L2 use by teachers typically accounts for less than half of teacher talk. However, quantity of L1 use is context specific. Giannikas (2011: p. 327, 330), for example, found that whereas public school teachers used English as little as 2%, private school teachers spoke up to 100% English. In this latter context, Macaro (2009: p. 38) suggests that students will miss learning opportunities due to underutilization of L1. Whether the problem is too much L1 or not enough L1, Sali suggests teachers need guidance to "identify when and how L1 could be a facilitative tool and when it is being overused" (Sali, 2014: p. 317).

2.2. Theory and Evidence: Monolingual Principle

The monolingual principle is usually premised on interactionist approaches to SLA which highlight the role of comprehensible L2 input, L2 interaction and pushed L2 output (see discussions by Macaro, 2009: p. 36; Lee & Lo, 2017: p. 122; Levine, 2003: p. 343). However, Macaro (2009:37) observes that interactionist theorists generally ignore the role of L1 rather than arguing against its usefulness. Evidence does suggest that increasing children's naturalistic exposure to English increases acquisition (Dahl & Vulchanova, 2014). However, evidence to suggest that L1 use hinders acquisition is lacking (Macaro, 2009: p. 38). Nevertheless, a common argument is that if students expect their teacher to understand and explain things in their L1 they will make less effort to use and understand L2. Moreover, if L1 is allowed for some purposes, it is feared that usage will escalate, thus reducing opportunities for both input and output. This viewpoint is expressed by Paul (2010: p. 80):

> "There is a great danger that if we allow the children to use their native language, the amount of English they use in class may become less and less over time".

This argument points to the need to ensure that L1 usage is managed carefully, and L2 input and output is prioritized. It does not however preclude the possibility that some L1 use might facilitate acquisition (Cook, 2001: p. 409).

Another justification for the monolingual principle is the "argument from L1 learning" (Cook, 2001: p. 407). It is argued that since infants acquire their L1 exclusively through L1 use, then L2 teaching should try to replicate these conditions. Cook (2001: p. 407) points out the flaw in this argument: L2 learners already have a first language which affects how they learn, store and use the second language. A further justification identified by Cook (2001: p. 407) is the "argument for language compartmentalization". Since interference from L1 can affect L2 learning, it is suggested it is desirable to keep the languages separate. However, evidence supporting cognitive processing theory reveals that languages are stored, processed, and activated in tandem (Macaro, 2009: p. 37). Cook (2001: p. 408) concludes that "keeping the languages visibly separate in language teaching is contradicted by the invisible process in students' minds" (see also Nation, 2013: p. 45). Therefore, if the basis for prohibiting L1 use is weak, is there any basis for allowing its use? The first justification identified by Macaro (2009: p. 37) is based on cognitive processing theory. Macaro suggests that the associations learners invariably make between L1 and L2 should be exploited. Evidence suggests that first language definitions are an effective component of vocabulary learning and valued by learners (see Nation, 2013: p. 122, 425, 429).

2.3. Sociocultural Theory

The second theory cited by Macaro (2009: p. 37) is sociocultural theory. Antón and DiCamilla (1999: pp. 234-236) identify the L1 as a tool that enables tasks to be brought within learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky,

1978). It can provide scaffolding, allows students to problem solve by externalizing inner speech and facilitates collaboration. Antón and DiCamilla's (1999: pp. 237-244) analysis of classroom interactions illustrates how students use their shared L1 in these ways to accomplish L2 learning. In a further example, Newton and Nguyen (2019: p. 44) describe students using their L1 in LRE's with the resulting English transferred to production. Macaro's (2009: p. 38) third justification rests on the observation that bilinguals frequently code-switch thus suggesting that this is a natural phenomenon. A further justification for L1 use relates to issues of student preference, affect, and motivation. Lee and Lo (2017: p. 128) found a preference for code-switching in the classroom particularly amongst less proficient and less motivated students. Sali (2014: p. 314) observed teachers using L1 "to make an affective connection and thus to create personal warmth in the classroom". However, while some L1 use might reduce anxiety (Vaivrand, 2024), increasing L2 use does not appear to increase anxiety (Levine, 2003: p. 352). Based on these foundations, Macaro (2009: p. 39) proposes the principle of optimal use:

> "Optimal use is where code-switching in broadly communicative classrooms can enhance second language acquisition and/or proficiency better than second language exclusivity".

2.4. Recent Studies in the Japanese Context

In the Japanese context, recent research by Serpas (2023) provides quantitative support for the benefits of L1 use across the Japanese EFL context (including both teacher and student perspectives) but lacks sector-specific resolution and qualitative case-study analysis to see how Eikaiwa commercial policies specifically create dissonance in teacher beliefs.

In the context of public high schools, Aoyama (2020) examined the use of L1 using a mixed-methods case study approach. Aoyama describes how students utilize the L1 to resolve both procedural and linguistic difficulties, allowing them to efficiently return to the "main track" activities of the class. Aoyama labels this process "sidetracking". Rather than "laziness" or a reluctance to use English, Aoyama's analysis suggests that students' use is a strategic tool to maintain interaction. Reflecting the findings observed in some teachers in the present study, Aoyama (2020) identified a dissonance in students who acknowledged the benefits of L1 use but nevertheless expressed guilt for not adhering to the monolingual ideal.

Specifically, in the Eikaiwa context and focusing on student outcomes and student perceptions, Vaivrand (2024) conducted a quantitative study of young learners. It was found that the use of translanguaging strategies significantly reduced student anxiety and perception of task difficulty. Noting that students often expect L1 support to scaffold their learning, he also cautioned against potential overreliance on the L1. This quantitative evidence complements the present study's qualitative focus on teacher beliefs, suggesting that the "optimal use" position is not only preferred by teachers for affective reasons but is empirically supported by

student experiences in the private sector.

2.5. Research Questions

Based on the theoretical framework of "optimal use" and the identified need for qualitative inquiry in the Eikaiwa sector, this study investigates the relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher practices within the unique institutional constraints of the Eikaiwa setting. Specifically, I address the following research questions in relation to Japanese use in English classes for young learners:

- RQ1: What do teachers in the Eikaiwa context believe regarding the use of L1?
- RQ2: What are the actual classroom practices of these teachers regarding L1 use?
- RQ3: How do these beliefs and practices align with SLA theory, empirical evidence, and institutional policy?

3. Methodology

The research context for this study is the Eikaiwa sector, specifically small, private after-school English classes for elementary-aged young learners (6 - 11 years old). The five participants are current or former co-workers who taught in this context. I composed and administered a survey with reference to Dornyei and Csizer (2012: p. 74), and all items were explicitly framed to elicit responses regarding students in the 6 - 11 age range. Some survey questions were adapted from Levine (2003). The survey instrument was comprised of the following sections.

- Part A: Teacher's Use of Japanese (Quantitative): This section used a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always) to measure the frequency of L1 (Japanese) by the teacher for 12 specific classroom purposes including those identified by Cameron (2001: p. 201) such as instruction, discipline, and providing feedback.
- Part B: Students' Use of Japanese (Quantitative): Using the same 1-5 frequency scale, this section records teacher observations of student-to-teacher and student-to-student L1 interaction. It focused on how learners use their native language to negotiate meaning and complete activities.
- Part C: Responses and Context (Qualitative): This section was comprised of open-ended questions to gather more nuanced data regarding the teachers' specific stance on L1 use. It also collected data on the teachers' context by identifying institutional policies, school "English-only" expectations, and external factors such as parental or colleague pressure.
- Part D: Pedagogical Beliefs (Attitudinal): Participants indicated their level of agreement (from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) with 19 statements regarding the efficacy of the L1. This section explored the tension between "English-only" ideologies and the perceived benefits of allowing some Japanese use in class.
- Part E: Demographic and Proficiency Data: The final section collected participant background information, including years of teaching experience in pri-

mary education and self-reported Japanese language proficiency (aligned with Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) levels).

Due to the length of the survey instrument, it is not possible to reproduce the survey in full detail in this paper. Appendix 1 provides an accurate representative sample of questions from each section, consistent with Given (2016).

3.1. Data Collection

Sampling was purposeful, and convenience based; the five participants are my co-workers and former co-workers all of whom have English as their L1. At the time of the survey the participants were working at three different schools operated by different companies. It was recognized that the size of the available sample (N = 5) would limit the scope of this research. Accordingly, rather than attempting a statistical survey, data were collected as a qualitative multiple case study using survey responses to generate detailed teacher profiles. It is important to mention, as Talmy (2010: p. 143) notes, that interviews (and by extension surveys) provide only an account of facts and beliefs contingent on the context. It is possible that participants' actual practices and beliefs differ from what they report due to a wish to give a "correct" answer, or imprecise or misunderstood questions. In addition, it would be preferable to observe actual lessons. Although, as Izquierdo et al. (2016: p. 28) notes, such observations may also produce unreliable data due to the observer effect. Problems with the survey instrument were also identified which may reduce the validity of the results. One respondent (Teacher B) noted in personal correspondence that some questions were ambiguous. He also suggested that the specified age range (6 - 11) was too broad as his practices differed depending on the age of his students, even within this bracket. For these reasons, the results must be treated with caution. The schools authorized permission to conduct the survey. Adequate time was provided for conducting the survey as well as verifying data received.

3.2. Data Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using a qualitative case-study approach. Each participant's responses were analyzed as a whole to identify their individual "personal theories" regarding L1 use (Macaro, 2009). The analysis was conducted in three stages:

- Categorization: Likert-scale responses from Parts A and B were reviewed to establish a baseline of reported frequency and agreement for each participant.
- Thematic Coding: Open-ended responses from Parts C and D were analyzed inductively (Friedman, 2012), identifying recurring themes, such as institutional pressure, student anxiety, and pedagogical "guilt".
- Triangulation: For each teacher, quantitative frequency data were compared against qualitative belief statements using a deductive approach to determine their alignment with Macaro's (2009) virtual, maximal, or optimal positions.

4. Results

The survey results are presented as individual case studies for each of the five participants. This approach allows for a holistic view of how each teacher's classroom behavior interacts with their personal pedagogical theories. The data for each teacher are organized into three key areas:

- Reported Frequency of L1 Use: An overview of how often the teacher and their students utilize Japanese for specific classroom functions.
- Qualitative Contexts and Rationales: Detailed responses regarding the specific situations that trigger L1 use and the institutional factors influencing those decisions.
- Pedagogical Stance: An analysis of the teacher's underlying beliefs concerning the "monolingual principle" versus "optimal" L1 use.

4.1. Teacher A

This teacher reports that students use Japanese in class extensively. He is permissive of students' Japanese use and uses his knowledge of Japanese to prompt students to switch their Japanese questions and statements into English. He permits less proficient students to use Japanese with each other to complete activities.

Teacher A's beliefs tend towards Macaro's optimal position. He attributes value to the teacher's use of Japanese in class but not to students' use of Japanese. He believes students should not speak Japanese but is in favor of teacher's use. Consistent with this he agrees that a teacher's Japanese use can help students learn vocabulary but does not agree that students use of Japanese with the teacher assists learning. This suggests he does not see any value in the teacher-student code-switching interactions he reports in his own classes. He is also undecided on the value of activity related peer-to-peer interaction in Japanese. This suggests a divergence between Teacher A's views and sociocultural perspectives, which identify such peer interaction as a critical tool for scaffolding and externalizing inner speech (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999).

4.2. Teacher B

Teacher B uses Japanese at least occasionally for most of the surveyed purposes and reports extensive use of Japanese by students. He utilizes his understanding of students' Japanese to confirm comprehension. He also enables communication and provides input by responding to students' Japanese statements in English. He allows students to use Japanese to complete activities stating that he "let[s] the students work out the meaning in Japanese and confirm they are correct using English." This is a clear example of using the L1 as a scaffolding tool to bring tasks within the learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Teacher B falls between Macaro's maximal and optimal positions. He believes that a teacher's L1 explanations can assist with learning and that student-student interaction using the L1 facilitates learning. On the other hand, he does not believe that students' use of Japanese with the teacher aids learning. He also suggests that

ideally no Japanese should be spoken by the teacher and that an English only policy, though impractical, would be in students' best interests. Teacher B's comment that "I believe the expectation or pressure to use English is essential, not prohibition of Japanese" helps to clarify these somewhat contradictory positions.

This highlights dissonance between the teacher's beliefs and the realities he experiences in the classroom. The data suggest that while the teacher values the pedagogical benefits of L1 interaction, an internalized "English-only" ideal constrains him from giving full effect to these benefits. This results in a conflict: he utilizes code-switching for what he considers to be effective instruction but hesitates to acknowledge that such use is a legitimate pedagogical goal.

4.3. Teacher C

Teacher C never speaks Japanese in class. However, he is permissive of students' Japanese use and uses his knowledge of Japanese to respond to students in English and prompt students to restate their utterances in English. Although he is undecided on the merits of an English only policy, his other beliefs align with Macaro's optimal position. He believes Japanese use is beneficial for a number of the surveyed purposes. Significantly he supports use for affective and motivational reasons. Teacher C's response highlights the power of institutional factors in determining L1 usage. Unlike his co-workers he adheres to his school's English only policy for teachers notwithstanding his beliefs.

4.4. Teacher D

In Teacher D's context teachers are expected to use only English. Students are encouraged to speak English but there is no strict prohibition on Japanese use. Students are provided with written activity instructions in Japanese. Teacher D reports speaking Japanese occasionally for most of the surveyed purposes. In comments he indicates that he prefers to use written translations for teaching purposes.

Teacher D reports extensive use of Japanese by students. He is quite permissive of this use when it is lesson related or for the purpose of communicating with the teacher. He allows students to use Japanese with each other to complete activities. He also responds to students' Japanese utterances in English and/or prompts them or provides scaffolding to restate in English. Teacher D's beliefs align well with Macaro's optimal position. He agrees with most of the suggested benefits of Japanese use and considers an English only policy neither desirable nor practical. However, he observes that overuse of Japanese by teachers appears to hinder acquisition and stresses that Japanese should be used by teachers sparingly.

4.5. Teacher E

Teacher E's beliefs and practices align with Macaro's virtual position. He sees a monolingual policy as both a desirable and achievable outcome. He uses Japanese only for occasional classroom management functions. He strictly enforces his schools' policy prohibiting student use of Japanese. Teacher E's practices appear

rooted in strong beliefs that his young learners' L1 serves no useful function in English acquisition.

5. Discussion and Implications

The literature regarding beliefs and practices is reflected in the beliefs and practices of my colleagues. While most respondents support the judicious use of Japanese in the young learner's English classroom, Teacher E's response indicates that opinions continue to diverge on this issue. On reflection, my own beliefs align with Macaro's optimal position. I am convinced by evidence of links between L1 and L2 from cognitive processing theory which accord with my own language learning experience and observations of my students. I am also swayed by the arguments of sociocultural theorists. In class, I follow a policy of optimal use. I use Japanese sparingly but for a variety of purposes. Like my colleagues, I allow students to communicate with me in Japanese, but I respond in English and try to prompt them or provide scaffolding to allow them to restate what they wish to say in English. In so doing, I believe that, consistent with socio-cultural theory, I am helping students to reach their ZPD (Aoyama, 2020). In addition, my English responses provide comprehensible input. When appropriate, I allow students to use Japanese to work together to accomplish tasks where the end product is English. Finally, I believe that occasional use of students' L1 increases students' comfort (Aoyama, 2020; Vaivrand, 2024) and helps to break down the barrier that exists between these students, the English language, and native English speakers. It is my opinion that "optimal use" is actually a sophisticated pedagogical tool for supporting the needs of young students in Japan.

However, a tension exists between these pedagogical best practices and the commercial reality of the Eikaiwa sector. As San Jose and Guitche (2025) argue, the Eikaiwa environment is distinct from compulsory education; it is a business where "student satisfaction" and "retention" are primary objectives, often creating a conflict between commercial gain and educational purpose. While the needs of young learners may best be met by an "optimal use" approach, private institutions often face unique pressures from parents and "English-only" marketing. The adherence to the monolingual principle by some participants may be partially attributed to these commercial expectations and to the related "Native Speaker" identity whereby L2 exclusivity is often marketed as a sign of quality (Serpas, 2023). Glasgow and Paller (2016) make a similar observation in the elementary school context, arguing that the "native speaker" monolingual ideal often conflicts with the socio-cultural needs of young learners. In this context, while Teacher E's approach differs from my own and from the approach advocated in this paper, it cannot be concluded that a monolingual stance is "wrong". Indeed, Teacher E's strict adherence to L2 exclusivity may be entirely driven by these institutional factors and the need to fulfill the "native speaker" role expected by the school. It also may be that any loss of learning opportunities stemming from a prohibition of L1 use is outweighed by the gains from increased L2 input and "pushed output".

Classroom observations and further communication with such practitioners would be illuminating and might provide insights into how to increase L2 production without necessarily prohibiting L1 use entirely.

Regardless of individual stance, it is necessary to ensure that L1 use by teachers and students is sparing, and within the context of a communicative classroom (Macaro, 2009: p. 39; Vaivrand, 2024). Moreover, Cameron (2001: p. 213) advises that whichever language is used or permitted should be "deliberately chosen to maximize language learning opportunities". There is a need for consultation between educators and administrators to clearly define the role of the L1. Rather than adhering to a rigid monolingualism, institutions should aim to develop optimal use policies that meet the practical needs of learners.

6. Conclusion

This paper has investigated the link between teacher beliefs and classroom practices regarding L1 (Japanese) use in the context of private English lessons for young Japanese students in Japan and answers the three research questions as follows:

RQ1: What do teachers in the Eikaiwa context believe regarding the use of L1? The majority of the teachers surveyed recognize the value of appropriate Japanese use for scaffolding and affective support. However, their beliefs are often characterized by dissonance; while they acknowledge the pedagogical utility of the L1, they experience significant pressure to adhere to a "monolingual principle", often driven by the specific commercial and professional expectations of the Eikaiwa sector.

RQ2: What are the actual classroom practices of these teachers regarding L1 use? Despite "English-only" ideals, Japanese is utilized in practice as a pragmatic tool for classroom management, meaning negotiation, and the reduction of student anxiety. However, the data suggest that peer-to-peer L1 interaction, which is identified in the literature as a strategic tool for learners, remains an undervalued and sometimes underused resource for language-related episodes in these classrooms.

RQ3: How do these beliefs and practices align with SLA theory, empirical evidence, and institutional policy? The study reveals a misalignment. While the teachers' instincts to use L1 for scaffolding align with sociocultural SLA theory and recent empirical evidence regarding anxiety reduction (Vaivrand, 2024), these practices often conflict with institutional policies. While current MEXT (2017) reforms and Eikaiwa marketing strategies emphasize "English in principle", the evidence suggests that excluding the L1 for ideological or commercial reasons is misguided.

Instead of a rigid prohibition, L1 use by teachers and students alike should be allowed, provided its use is deliberate and strategic to maximize learning opportunities. By formalizing an "optimal use" framework, educators can better support the academic and emotional needs of young English learners in Japan, bridging the gap between commercial expectations and pedagogical reality.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1: Representative Sample of Survey Questions

Part 1: Teacher's Use of Japanese in the Classroom

Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 5 = Always). This section contained 12 items, including:

- I speak Japanese to explain English grammar to students.
- I speak Japanese to set up and explain activities.
- I speak Japanese to manage the classroom and/or discipline students.
- When my students do not understand what I say in English, I repeat or explain it in Japanese.

Part 2: Students' Use of Japanese in the Classroom

Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 5 = Always). This section contained 7 items, including:

- My students speak Japanese to me to confirm their understanding of lesson content.
- My students speak Japanese to each other to help complete activities.

Part 3: Pedagogical Stance and Classroom Context (Qualitative)

Open-ended questions to investigate pedagogical strategies, including:

- How do you respond when students speak Japanese with each other to discuss lesson content?
- Describe the school/institutional policy regarding the use of English vs. Japanese in the classroom.

Part 4: Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

Participants indicated their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree). This section contained 19 items, including:

- I believe that a teacher's Japanese explanations can help students learn vocabulary.
- I believe that allowing Japanese use in the classroom reduces student stress and anxiety.
- I believe that ideally, no Japanese should be spoken in the classroom by the teacher.
- When I use Japanese in class, I feel guilty.

Part 5: Participant Demographics and Proficiency

Teachers' background information to contextualize findings, including:

- Total years of experience teaching English to children (6 - 11 years old) in Japan.
- Self-reported Japanese proficiency (mapped to JLPT N1-N5 levels).