Portraying Political Struggles in the English-Only Policy for JHS

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Land Acknowledgement

- I am speaking from the UBC Vancouver campus, located on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territory of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam) people.

- For more information about the Musqueam people, visit https://www.musqueam.bc.ca

Introduction

- In Japan, a new version of the Course of Study (CoS), was enacted for junior high schools (JHS) in April 2021.

- English-only (EO) guideline (i.e., teaching English primarily in English) was introduced to the subject of Foreign Languages. *The EO guideline for senior high schools (SHS) was introduced in 2013.

- There are practical and ethical concerns on the EO policy (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Erikawa & Kubota, 2014; Kubota, 2018).

- There are little to no studies that investigated the making process in detail.

https://www.aichi-shinwa-taisei.ed.jp/junior/topics/2021/03/12/8780/

Research Questions

1. How has the wording of the EO guideline in the Course of Study for JHS emerged?

2. What negotiations were made by whom? Whose voice is represented and how?
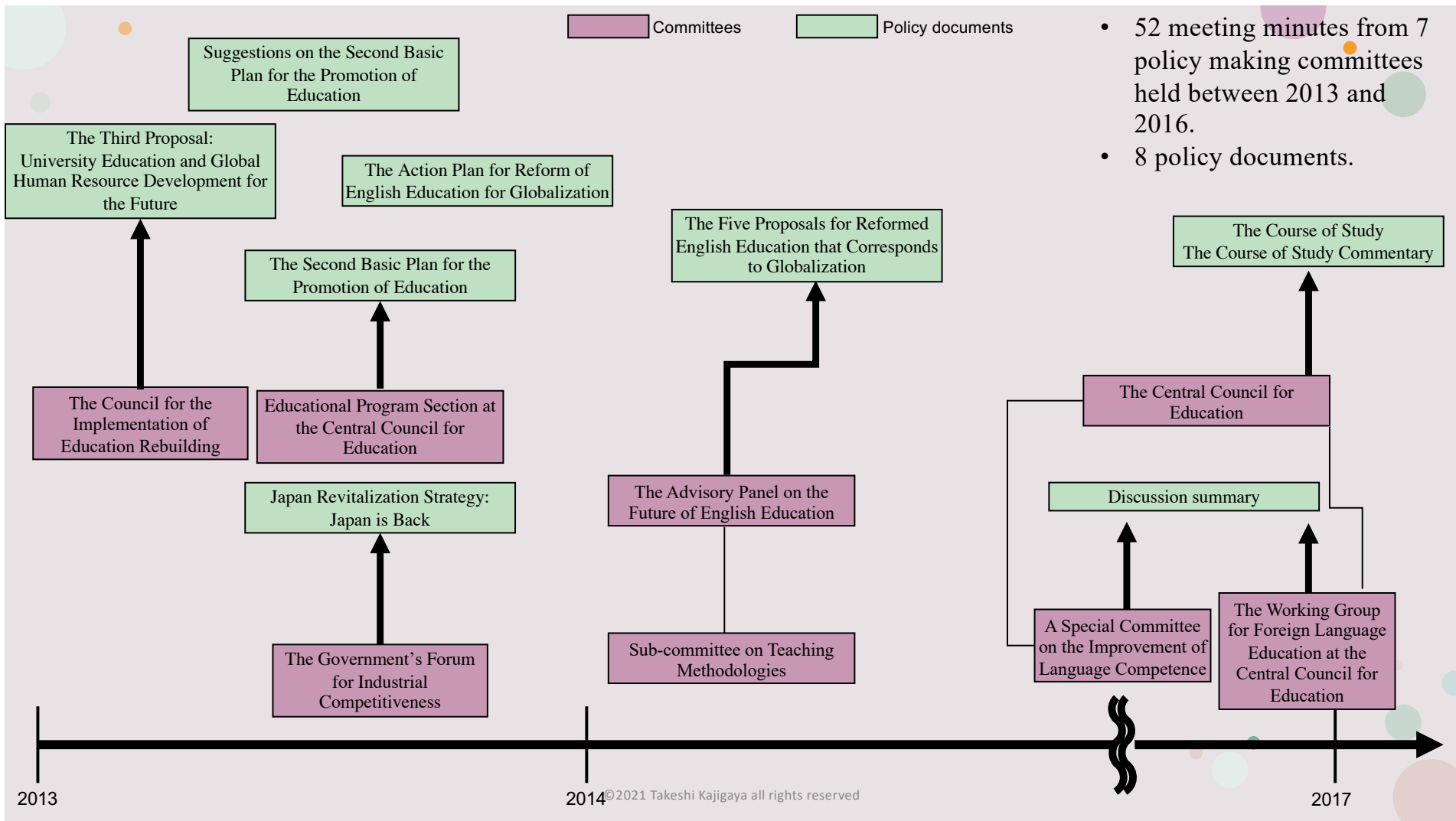
Conceptual Framework

- Policy as text (Ball, 1994, 2015)

- Usually codified after official legislative procedures and has the authority to organize people's behaviour.

- A product of compromise and political struggles, thus contains (ideo)logical inconsistencies (Codd, 2007; Johnson, 2013; Wodak, 2000)

- *Contexts of influence* and *policy text production* (Ball, 1994; Bowe, Ball, and Gold, 2007; Vidovich, 2007)

- *The context of influence*: The public or private arena where policy making is usually initiated. Key policy terms, policy discourse, value of education etc. are created and disseminated.

- *The context of policy text production*: The arena where different influences are concretized in the form of public policy. Rationales for policy is framed based on public commonsense and needs (cf. Codd, 2007; Edelman, 1988).

Methodology: Intertextual analysis

- Analytical technique in Critical Discourse Studies (Johnson, 2015).

- Traces text-to-text connections (e.g., direct quotes, explicit reference to another document, allusions, etc.) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016)

- Is useful in policy research, as policy documents rely on other policy documents and go through many revisions.

- Recontextualization can happen when a text moves to another context (e.g., from one policy document to another), with earlier versions of a text either expanded upon, filtered, and/or suppressed (Johnson, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, Wodak, 2000; cf. Kristeva, 1986).
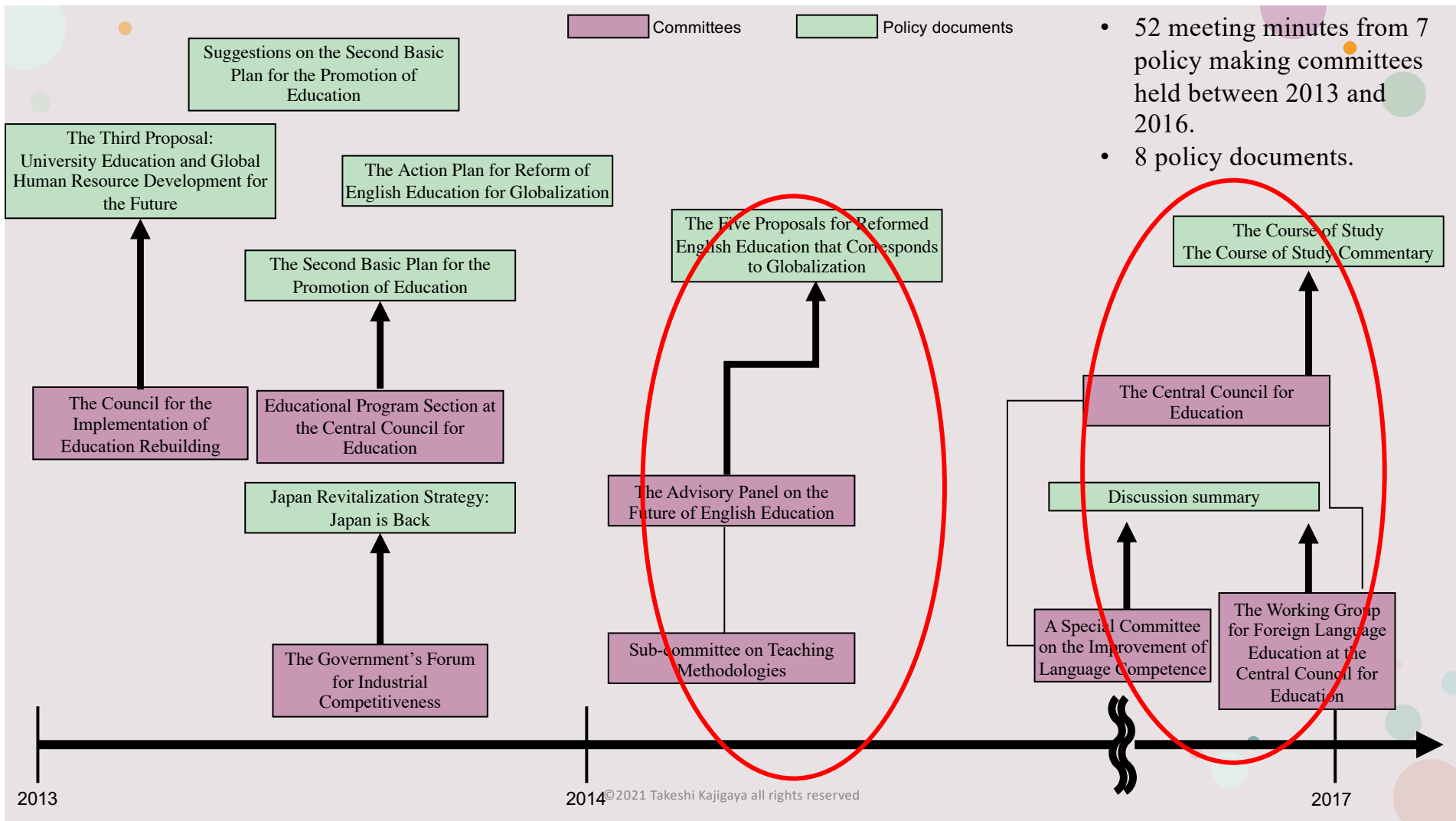
Data

Committees
Policy documents

- 52 meeting minutes from 7 policy making committees held between 2013 and 2016.
- 8 policy documents.

Suggestions on the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education

The Third Proposal: University Education and Global Human Resource Development for the Future

The Action Plan for Reform of English Education for Globalization

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The Course of Study The Course of Study Commentary

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Discussion summary

A Special Committee on the Improvement of Language Competence

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Findings

Struggles 1 in the Advisory Panel on the Future of English Education (英語教育の在り方に関する有識者会議 *Eigo kyōiku no arikata ni kansuru yūshikisha kaigi*) [the Panel]

- 11 members (9 education experts & 2 businesspersons)

- The Panel published the "Five Proposals for Reformed English Education that Corresponds to Globalization" (グローバル化に対応した英語教育改革の五つの提言 *gurōbaruka ni taiou shita eigo kyōiku kaikaku no itsutsu no Teigen*)[Five Proposals] on Sep. 26th, 2014.

- Committee members were for the EO guideline or did not oppose to it. Only one member, Yukio Ōtsu, showed strong oppositions.

Struggle 1: The goal of grammar-translation

MEXT & a majority of members

- The goal of FL education is to improve communicative competence.
- The EO guideline for SHS was successful to some extent.
- The EO guideline is a means to maximize exposure to English and provide opportunities for communication.

Ōtsu

- Proponent of "'language' [*kotoba*] education (*contra* 'English' education)"
- 'communication' taking place in classrooms are 'quasi-communication' -> true communicative competence cannot be improved without the knowledge of Japanese.
- Ōtsu's view: The goal of FL education -> improving competence of language as a whole, not of distinct *languages*, which requires meta-linguistic knowledge, language comparisons, etc.

Struggle 1: The place of grammar-translation

○ こうしたことから，中学校では，小学校との学びの連続性を図りつつ，身近な話題について理解したり表現したりするコミュニケーションを図ることができるようにすることが適当である。その際，文法訳読に偏ることなく，互いの考えや気持ちを英語で伝え合う学習を重視する。

<div align="right">(9th meeting of the Panel, Handout 2, p. 4)</div>

- "… In JHS, it is appropriate to help students be competent to understand, express, or communicate about familiar topics… In so doing, teachers should not be inclined to grammar-translation and should place importance on learning in which students exchange thoughts and impressions in English"

【大津委員】(中略)ここはとても私は重要な部分だと考えます。(中略)つまりここで主張されていることは、文法訳読というものが英語教育にとってよろしくないものである、避けるべきものであるというような認識は全くなく、問題は、文法訳読に偏ってしまうというところに問題があるのだという理解でよろしいでしょうか。
【吉田座長】 じゃあ、榎本さん、どうぞ。
【榎本課長】 そう理解しております。

Ōtsu: I think this part is extremely important. This means that [MEXT] does not recognize grammar-translation as bad for English education at all, or it to be avoided. [MEXT thinks that] the problem is inclination to grammar-translation. Is my understanding correct?
Chairman Yoshida: Please, Mr. Enomoto.
Enomoto (from MEXT): Yes, that's my understanding, too.   (9th meeting, the Panel)

Struggle 1: The place of grammar-translation

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- "… In JHS, it is appropriate to help students be competent to understand, express, or communicate about familiar topics… In so doing, teachers should not be inclined to grammar-translation and should place importance on learning in which students exchange thoughts and impressions in English"

- Matsumoto argued that GTM was against the current political direction.

- Ōtsu: … Mr. Matsumoto, do you think translation… should be avoided in Japan's English education?

- Matsumoto: [W]hat I'm saying is that I would like the government to not change its [policy] directions… Because the Courses of Study up until now have made efforts to reduce translation in classroom, I think it's not a good idea to obstruct those efforts… I think there is no doubt that we should avoid [translation] in classroom instructions, at least for now.

(9th meeting, the Panel)

Struggle 1: The place of grammar-translation

- En'nyū (from MEXT): … [The CoS for SHS] says that "conducting English classes in English in principle" means to place English language activities at the center of English classes. So, as I explained before, it doesn't say classes should be conducted solely in English.

(9th meeting, the Panel)

Struggle 1: The place of grammar-translation

Ōtsu

- Both Japanese and English should be used.
- The goal of foreign language education is 'language' education.

○こうしたことから，中学校では，小学校との学びの連続性を図りつつ，身近な話題について理解したり表現したりするコミュニケーションを図ることができるようにすることが適当である。その際，文法訳読に偏ることなく，互いの考えや気持ちを英語で伝え合う学習を重視する。

"… In JHS, it is appropriate to help students be competent to understand, express, or communicate about familiar topics… In so doing, teachers should not be inclined to grammar-translation and should place importance on learning in which students exchange thoughts and impressions in English" (Five Proposals, n.p.)
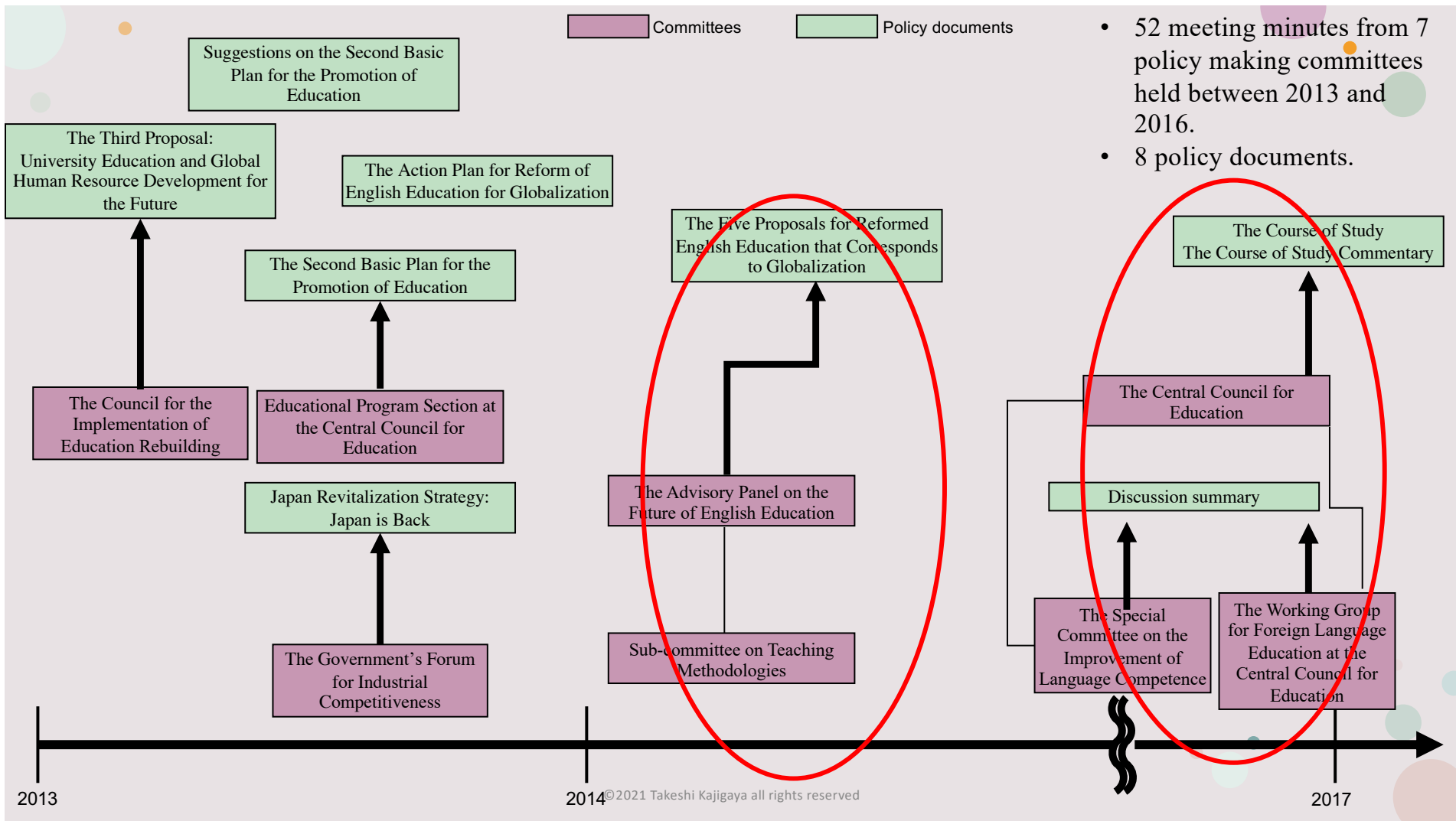
MEXT & a majority of members

- Japanese is allowed as a supplementary language.
- The EO guideline's purpose is to increase exposure to English and opportunities of communication.
- The purpose of foreign language education is to improve (oral) communicative competence.

Matsumoto

- Japanese should not be used

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- **The Special Committee on the Improvement of Language Competence** (言語能力の向上に関する特別チーム *gengo nōryoku no kōjō ni kansuru tokubetsu chīmu* [Special Committee])

- 16 members (15 education experts & 1 member from a business sector), including Japanese and English policy making committee members.

- Compiled a Discussion Summary on Aug. 6th, 2016.

- **The Working Group for Foreign Language Education at the Central Council for Education** (外国語ワーキンググループ *gaikokugo wākingu gurūpu*) [Working Group]

- 15 members (14 education experts & 1 member from a business sector)

- Compiled a Discussion Summary on Aug. 26th, 2016.

- Ōtsu was not a member, and there was no discussion on 'language' (*kotoba*) education.

Struggle 3: The place of meta-knowledge

- **Discussion Summary by the Special Committee:**

> 言葉そのものについて学ぶことは、言葉がどのように成り立っているか、自分がどのように言葉を使っているかという足場を意識させることでもある。このメタ言語的な感覚や気付きを促すことは、子供たちの言語能力を向上させる上で極めて重要である。

- "Encouraging [children to acquire] this kind of meta-linguistic sense and awareness [e.g., functionality, register, pragmatics, etc.] is extremely important in improving children's linguistic competence." (p. 9)

> 日本語と外国語を相対的に捉えることによって、その構造や語彙などの仕組み、それらが有機的に結び付いているシステム、その背景となる文化など、日本語と外国語の違いに気付き、それぞれの理解を深めることができる。また、言語、文化、習慣、時代が違っていても、表面的な違いを超えた深いところでの共通性があるということを理解できる。

- "By understanding Japanese and English relatively,... [children] can deepen understanding of each language" (p. 13)

Struggle 3: The place of meta-knowledge

- There were some oppositions to the Discussion Summary by the Special Committee.

- Sakai: [W]hat can be said from the past instructions [of Foreign Languages] is that staying at the level of such meta-knowledge is a big problem. On the contrary, I think [the CoS] has changed its direction to [nurturing] competence to communicate with others, and let [students aware of meta-knowledge] through [communication]. So I think what the Special Committee says is reasonable, but the ways to enact [their report] should take into account each subject's characteristics.

(10th meeting, Working Group)

Struggle 3: The place of meta-knowledge

> ○　「知識・技能」については、語彙・表現や文法などの知識の習得にとどまらず、それらを活用して実際のコミュニケーションを図ることができるような知識として習得されるとともに、コミュニケーションを行う目的・場面・状況等に応じて、自律的・主体的に活用できる技能が外国語の習熟・熟達に向かうものとして評価することについて留意する。

- "On Knowledge and Skills, evaluation should be made on not only the acquisition of such knowledge as vocabulary, expressions, or grammar. [It should be made based on the understanding that] such knowledge is acquired as knowledge that enables actual communication, and [that] foreign language competence is trained and mastered by the skills to autonomously and actively utilize [such knowledge] depending on the goals of communication, and places and situations in which communication takes place."

  (Handout 3-1, 10th meeting, Working Group)

- Matsumoto -> The wording places too much importance on meta-knowledge, which is against MEXT's direction. The position that "meta-knowledge is secondary and learned through communication" should be highlighted, not "meta-knowledge, then communication".

(10th meeting, Working Group)

Struggle 3: The place of meta-knowledge

The Special Committee

- Meta-knowledge is important in language competence.
- Linking Japanese and English improves language competence.

(cf. Ōtsu in the Panel)

- Both Japanese and English should be used.
- Grammar-translation will improve the overall language competence.
- The goal of foreign language education is 'language' education.

- Draft: "[E]valuation should be made on not only the acquisition of such knowledge as vocabulary, expressions, or grammar"

↓

- Discussion Summary: "The next Course of Study should not place primacy on how much knowledge of vocabulary, expressions, grammar and so forth that students acquired".
- 'Meta-knowledge through communication' was rejected.

The Working Group

- Meta-knowledge is learned through communication.
- Communication is the primary goal of foreign language education.

(Discussion Summary, Working Group)

The Course of Study for JHS

New CoS for JHS

- 「授業は英語で行うことを基本とする」のポイントは，(略)「英語に触れる機会」と「実際のコミュニケーションの場面」であり，そうした趣旨の授業展開であれば，必要に応じて補助的に日本語を用いることも考えられる。

- 今回の改訂で「授業は英語で行うことを基本とする」という規定を導入したことには，もしこれまで日本語での文法説明や本文の和訳などに偏った授業を行っていたならば，そうした授業の在り方自体を見直し，必要な意味内容をいかに英語で伝えることができるかを考えて授業を工夫改善していかなければならないという意味が込められている

- The main aims of "conducting [English] classes in English" are... "exposure to English" and "place for authentic communication." If lesson flows take them into account, it is possible to use Japanese as a supplementary language.

- The reason behind the introduction of [the EO guideline] is, if teachers were conducting classes inclined to explanations of grammar in Japanese or translations of texts into Japanese, such conducting of classes should be reconsidered, and teachers should improve classes by exploring how they can convey necessary contents in English.

Old CoS for SHS

- 文法について説明することに偏っていた場合は，その在り方を改め，授業において，コミュニケーションを体験する言語活動を多く取り入れていく必要が ある。(中略)言語活動を行うことが授業の中心 となっていれば，文法の説明などは日本語を交えて行うことも考えられる。

- If classes were inclined to explanations of grammar, such instructions should be reconsidered, and classes should introduce more language activities in which students experience communication... If language activities are at the heart of classes, grammar explanation and so on can be conducted by mixing Japanese [and English].

Summary and Discussion

- In the Panel, the EO guideline was proposed as a means to maximize students' exposure to English and increase the opportunity for communication. However, the use of Japanese and GTM were defended by Ōtsu's strategic moves. MEXT had to reconcile two different opinions.

- Although Ōtsu was not involved in the WG, similar opinions were raised by the Special Committee, making MEXT compromise two different positions again.

- Meta-knowledge was raised as an essential component by the Special Committee, but it was downplayed by the WG members.

- In the end, although the use of Japanese was allowed as a supplementary language, too much use of it and GTM were recommended to be "reconsidered." This is markedly different from the old version of the CoS for SHS.

Summary and Discussion

- The "space" (Hornberger, 2005) of Japanese use was almost closed by MEXT and the majority of committee members, but it remained open by strategic moves by a committee member, and the discussions made in the Special Committee.

- In this way, the EO guideline has become a "policy assemblage" (Gorur, 2011; McCann & Ward, 2012) in which diverse views toward language itself and the purpose English education, and policy history (e.g., the past CoS) intersect, which "satisfies everyone partially and no one completely but receives the support of a majority of its creators nonetheless" (Johnson, 2013, p. 117).

- The conflation of different views and ideas also made the EO guideline the "cannibalized [product] of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas" (Ball, 1994, p. 16), making the text abstract and enabling multiple interpretations.

Summary and Discussion (cont.)

- Problems from a wider perspective are:

1. The EO guideline was proposed by non-experts of language education in the discourse of developing global human resources (Erikawa & Kubota, 2014), but such discourse was gradually faded, being replaced by the discourse of education (Kajigaya, 2021).

2. Nevertheless, there was little discussion on pros and cons of the EO guideline in the WG. In this situation, rhetoric like "I would like the government to not change its [policy] directions" (Matsumoto, 9th meeting) is dangerous.

3. Moreover, there was almost no one who opposed to the idea of the EO guideline -> selection of committee members is undemocratic? (cf., Morita, 2006; Terasawa, 2019)

- In the future, more studies on the <u>impact</u> of the EO guideline is needed.

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Thank you for listening!

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