Preservice and Inservice EFL Teachers’ Perceptions of the New Language Education Policy to “Conduct Classes in English” in Japanese Senior High Schools

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The recent (2009) version of the national Course of Study of MEXT (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) includes measures to improve students’ communicative competence in English in Japanese senior high schools. This new language education policy is to be implemented in 2013 in spite of many native English-speaking as well as Japanese EFL teachers’ uncertainty about their roles in enacting the policy. Some scholars have asserted that the lack of alignment of the policy’s message with teachers’ perceived realities is likely to lead role confusion and ambiguity amongst teachers, which will make the implementation of the policy unsuccessful. Others have reported on some failures of language education policies which were developed and implemented by governments of other Asian countries in a top-down manner (e.g., ‘Teaching English Through English (TETE)’ policy in South Korea). This presentation therefore discusses major research findings of a qualitative case study in which preservice and inservice EFL teachers’ perceptions of the Japanese new language education policy were explored and analyzed. Primary data were gleaned from multiple sessions of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 4 participants (2 preservice teachers and 2 inservice teachers). The collected data were analyzed employing Grounded Theory Approach (GTA). Accordingly, all transcribed interview data were segmented in consideration of every utterance’s meaning and subtle nuance (in this stage, translation from Japanese into English was done). Open coding was then conducted to identify properties and dimensions in all segmented data. Referring to identified properties and dimensions of data, axial coding was done to verify the relationships among categorized data (i.e., sub-categories and core categories). After the axial coding, selective coding was carried out to verify the relationships among targeted phenomenon (which include sub-categories and core categories connected by common properties and dimensions) and construct a theory which would explain the targeted phenomenon. Finally, a concept map (a category diagram) and story lines were developed. In the presentation, some information regarding the research background is described, the research design and its rationale are
explained, and the major research findings are reported on showing some parts of the concept map, excerpts of interview data, and story lines. Implications are also proposed for policy-makers to develop and implement language education policy successfully in Asian EFL contexts in general and Japanese EFL contexts in particular.