The purpose of this research is to explore "renkei" on English language education between elementary school and junior high schools.

The new course of study has been implemented since 2000 and it has enabled elementary schools to conduct English activity such as conversation in General Studies, as part of International Education. Since English activity is not compulsory, however, its curriculum, teaching materials, the number of lessons or instructors varies according to schools, and various activities have been practiced. Therefore, students' English learning experience begins to show the varieties and it gradually affects English language lessons in junior high schools. Thus, it is important for elementary and junior high schools to make a connection between them or do "renkei".

In Sanda city where I work as a junior high school English teacher, six years have passed since the Board of Education officially introduced English Activity to elementary schools, but its practices vary according to elementary schools.

The author, a junior high school English teacher, had a simple puzzlement that if English education varies according to elementary schools in one junior high school district, English instruction in the junior high school would be more or less problematic. Besides I had hoped that if the connection of English education between elementary schools and a junior high school worked out well, Students' English learning in a junior high school could efficiently be developed.

Approximately two types of "renkei" in the preceding studies have been practiced. One is "continuity of students' learning" and the other is "students' and/or teachers' interaction". In the type of continuity of students' learning Hida (2007) shows us a good practice. Being a junior high school English teacher as well as an elementary school English teacher, she functionally arranges communication competence in linguistics, and reported that they were able to create a coherent curriculum between the two levels of schools. In the type of students' and/or teachers interaction, Takahashi (2007) reported a case where a group of junior high school students visited elementary school classes and interacted with them and stated that this practice was successful because the junior high school English teachers positively involved in the exchange program, trying to make a connection of English language education between the elementary school and the junior high schools.

These two cases above, however, do not
describe the teachers’ beliefs, which could be a basis of their practice. Likewise as a junior high school English teacher, I could imagine that these practices would be a very hard work for the teachers. I was assured that there must be strong teachers’ beliefs which drove them into practices in order to make a successful connection.

I would like to argue here that in order to make a successful and coherent connection of English language education between elementary and junior high schools teachers who are involved need to share their beliefs about English education in addition to these two elements mentioned above. Graves (2000) argues that defining teachers’ beliefs becomes the basis in the language course design. In this sense sharing teachers’ beliefs become important in promoting the connection of English education. I believe that connecting teachers’ beliefs will become the foundation of the connection of English education between elementary and junior high schools. So In this paper, the concept of “renkei” and its implication to the elementary and junior high school relationship will be discussed, and the process in which “renkei” becomes collaborative curriculum development between primary and secondary level of language teaching will be reported.

The present paper consists of 5 chapters. Chapter 2 introduces two practices in which my colleague, the Assistant language teachers (ALTs) at Junior High School A and I gave the English lessons and had interaction with the students. It also introduces the utterances of two teachers; one is given by an elementary school teacher and the other is by a junior high school English teacher.

Chapter 3 reports “the joint teacher meeting” and the teachers’ beliefs on English language teaching.

Chapter 4 introduces a case study by presenting the activity which was proposed in the meeting mentioned in Chapter 3, which was for the 7th graders who experienced English Activity at the elementary schools to make a video clip of the introduction of the club activities at Junior High School A.

Chapter 5 concludes this study by advocating the framework for developing a collaborative curriculum of English lessons in one junior high school district based on the series of the collaborative English lessons. The framework which will be advocated is the metaphor of “Collaborative Gear”. The “renkei” consists of two gears; one for the junior high schools and the other for the elementary schools. Each gear stands for the process of developing a unit of English lessons with the following four stages circulating around the gear; “sharing beliefs and defining the contexts”, “formulating goals”, “practice”, and “reflection”. If the teachers at both schools are actively and collaboratively engaged in the curriculum development, they begin to generate dynamism, which is the power to drive forth “renkei”. If both gears are adequately engaged, then “renkei” for the English lessons to work effectively occur and English language teaching will occur more effectively due to the common goals shared and the lessons planned toward reaching these goals.

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