

Elementary School English Now (2014): Initiatives toward Globalization – Practices in Switzerland and Japan

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This report describes two elementary school classes that the author observed in 2014, one in Switzerland and the other in Japan, and puts forward suggestions as to what might be done in Japanese teacher education and training to ensure the successful introduction of English as an elementary school subject, as planned to start in 2020. The report first provides timelines for the introduction of English into elementary schools in Switzerland and Japan. The two class observations are then followed by interviews with the teachers, with a focus on the training they have received. In the last section, suggestions will be sought on relevant teacher training. This is a preliminary report on early English education in Switzerland and the potential lessons for Japanese schools.

Key words: elementary school English, teacher training, Swiss early English education

1. Introduction

On 26 September 2014, the Expert Council in the International Education Division, Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau in Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced *Five Recommendations for the English Education Reform corresponding to Globalisation*. This document recommends that, to support MEXT's plan for early English education from the third grade in 2020, third and fourth graders be team-taught by a homeroom teacher (as the main teacher) assisted by an assistant language teacher (ALT) and that fifth graders and sixth graders be taught by a homeroom teacher with specialised English language teaching abilities. Hitherto, MEXT's policy was that homeroom teachers – regardless of their English abilities – single-teach or team-teach English with ALTs at elementary schools. This policy has been in force since English was introduced at elementary schools on a trial basis in the Period for Integrated Studies in 2002 and in the Foreign Language Activities that officially started in 2011. Seminars and teacher-training for the elementary school homeroom teachers teaching these classes have been organised, but it has not been required of elementary school teachers that they should have good English abilities or an English language teaching background. Thus, the Expert Council's recommendation that fifth and sixth graders

should be taught by homeroom teachers with English language teaching expertise represents a drastic change in teacher education and training policy. And it brings to the forefront the question of how to improve training programmes for elementary school English teachers.

After outlining the timeframes for the introduction of English language classes in Swiss and Japanese elementary schools, this report describes two elementary school English classes that the author observed in 2014, one in Switzerland and the other in Japan. It concludes with some suggestions as to what might be done in teacher education and training to ensure the successful introduction of English as an elementary school subject, thus supporting the successful implementation of MEXT's *English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation* from 2020.

2. Timeframes

In this section, we see that Japan will introduce English as an elementary school subject about ten years after the Swiss educational system implemented a policy with very similar aims. (The timeline for the introduction of elementary school English in Switzerland and Japan is shown in Appendix.)

2.1 Switzerland

Switzerland's educational policies are coordinated by

the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK), a national-level body comprising the educational ministers of the country's 26 cantons. As is true of other policy areas in Switzerland's federal system, the primary responsibility for education rests with the cantons. Since the EDK adopted recommendations to introduce a second national language to all students in 1975 (EDK: 2012), different cantons have chosen different second national languages to be taught at primary school level. Kobayashi (1998) reported that different cantons have started second language education at different grades (eg French from the third grade in Ticino, French, German or Italian from the fourth grade in 11 cantons, from the fifth grade in 17 cantons etc) and that the language was taught not by subject teachers but by class teachers for roughly 100 minutes a week. Kobayashi (ibid) also reports that Canton Zurich decided to introduce English to the first grade in the autumn of 1998 on an experimental basis. The nationwide introduction of English into the primary education was promulgated in 2004, when the EDK adopted *The Strategy for Language Teaching*. In 2007, the Swiss Parliament approved a new *Languages Act (LangA)*, in which it was noted "that students must have skills in at least one other national language and one foreign language (generally English)" (EDK: 2012). In 2009, the new status of English language teaching in primary education was included in the so-called *HarmoS Agreement*, an intercantonal accord on the harmonisation of compulsory education.

Canton Aargau, on which we focus our attention in this report, chose English as the first foreign language to be taught to the third graders based on *The Strategy for Language Teaching*. The canton decided that teachers who wanted to teach English at primary schools would have to be certified as primary school English teachers by completing a teacher training course named TEPS (Teaching English at Primary School), and pilot studies were started at primary schools. Thus, English teaching at some Aargau elementary schools was already under way when the *HarmoS Agreement* was implemented in 2009.

In 2014, as this report is being written, the pros and cons

of early English education ("Frühenglisch" in German) are still being debated among teachers and on media, and this contrasts with the debates in Japan since the end of the last century.

2.2 Japan

As to the early stages of how English started to be introduced into Japanese elementary schools, Yamada (2009) reported as follows:

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology - Japan (hereafter, 'the MEXT') started to designate elementary schools as pilot schools to research and develop English conversation activities in 1992 ... In 1996 ... every prefecture finally had one pilot school for this project. (Yamada, 2009:69)

After the MEXT announced in 1998 that "international understanding" would be taught in the Period for the Integrated Studies, *A Guide for Elementary School English Activities* was issued in 2001. Then in 2002, English was introduced as a part of the study for "international understanding" in the Period for the Integrated Studies in the fifth and sixth grades.

Yamada (ibid) continues:

In 2007, the MEXT began to appoint a key school from every 40 elementary schools, to be made a model school in local areas. They will establish methodologies of how to teach international understanding and English language activity classes, and how to pursue practical ways of implementing their plan, including the effective use of ALTs and local personnel.

Preparations for implementing the Foreign Language Activities have been going on for over a decade. However, uncertainties still surround methodologies and pedagogy with the result that teachers at many elementary schools are still perplexed as to what and how to teach. According to a survey conducted in 2009 by the Obunsha Company, 52.5% of the responding elementary school teachers in charge of English language activities express anxiety about the course's introduction as a mandatory part of elementary school education. ... According to the MEXT (2009b), in 2009, 97.8% of elementary schools in Japan are planning to implement the Foreign Language Activities in the fifth and sixth grades, 25.3% of them giving 11 to 20 class hours and 53.8% of them giving 35 class hours a year. (Yamada, 2009: 70)

In 2011, Foreign Language Activities of 35 class hours a year were made compulsory in the fifth and sixth grades

in elementary schools. In 2013, the MEXT announced its “*English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation*,” which sets out that measures will be taken in FY 2014 to introduce one to two class hours of action-oriented English classes in the third and fourth grade, and three class hours of English (under the subject heading of English) in the fifth and the sixth grade. On September 26, 2014, as noted above, the MEXT Expert Council on English Education followed up with its recommendations that third and fourth graders should be team-taught mainly by homeroom teachers working with ALTs, and that fifth and sixth graders be taught by homeroom teachers with English teaching expertise. Further, every elementary school should have an ALT by FY 2019. The MEXT aims to fully implement its “*English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation*” in 2020, the scheduled year of the next Tokyo Olympics.

2.3 The time lag

In regard to the policy for subject teachers – i.e. teachers with English language teaching expertise – to teach English, Japan is following Switzerland’s lead by an interval of about 10 years. In Switzerland, the relevant policy was announced in 2004 and fully implemented from 2009, whereas in Japan the announcement was in 2013 with full implementation planned for 2020.

When the EDK adopted *A Strategy of Language Teaching* and the *HarmoS Agreement*, Canton Aargau, the canton we focus on in this report, decided to give specialized training to primary and secondary school teachers who opted to become primary school English teachers, and decided that “Frühenglisch (early English)” should be taught by teachers with a formal certification as primary school English teachers. This training programme is seen as a success (Bader: 2006, 2007).

3. Class observations in Switzerland & Japan

In this section, two class observations are described, followed by interview reports with the teachers and brief

summaries of the training they have received.

3.1 At a primary school in Canton Aargau, Switzerland

About 300 students are enrolled in the first to the fourth grades in this primary school. There are three classes in the third grade and two classes in the fourth grade. Two English teachers teach three 45-minute classes to each of the third and the fourth grade classes. I observed two fourth graders’ classes of the same content taught by Ms M on 18 September, 2014. In the following sections, I will describe the class, the interview I had with the teacher, and the teacher training the teacher received.

3.1.1 The class

I observed two fourth graders’ classes taught by Ms M. In the first class I observed, there were 23 students, and in the second class, 24 students. The atmosphere of the two classes, the class content and the students’ reactions were very similar.

Class procedure

(Below, the figures in parentheses [] show the timeline.)

[0 – 15’] Listening and speaking using an audio-visual material

① The students viewed a story *Why Giraffes Have Long Necks*. The teacher told the students to watch it silently first, but some students spoke along with the characters on the screen. (Although it was the first time for the students to watch the video, they had previously read the story in the textbook and had listened to it on a CD, and it seemed natural that some students unconsciously uttered the words along with the characters.) All the students were watching the screen curiously, and giggled as the giraffe’s neck got longer and longer. In the second viewing, the teacher told the students to speak with the narrator. There were only a few students who seemed unable to speak along with the narrator.

② In “Now, You Say It,” as the sentences in the story appeared on the screen, the students read them in chorus,

and the model reading was heard after that.

③ The students watched children playing a game singing a song on a video first. In the second viewing, the lyrics appeared and the students sang together. The teacher asked what was happening in English, and the students answered in German, which the teacher recast into English.

[15' ~ 20'] **Spelling animal names using the Activity Book**

The teacher asked the names of the animals in the Activity Book in English, and the students answered the names and spelt out the names orally. First, the student who was asked to answer spelt the name orally, and then the class spelt it in chorus orally. More than half of the students wanted to be called, answer and spell the names of the animals.

[20' ~ 27'] **Identifying sounds and objects**

The teacher asked in English what they liked to collect. For some words, the teacher asked the students what they were in German. After that, the students spelt the objects in their Activity Books and put stickers that illustrated the objects they spelt. The stickers were in the Activity Book, too.

[27' ~ 30'] **Checking the expressions to use for a board game**

The teacher showed the phrases she wanted the students to use for the board game on the blackboard, and had the students practice saying them. At first, the students were unable to tell the meanings, but as the teacher showed the board for the game, they realised that they had used those expressions to do the game before. This showed how context-dependent the students' understanding of meaning was.

[30' ~ 35'] **Checking how to play the board game**

The teacher explained how to play the board game to the students, interacting with them mostly in English with some use of German.

[35' ~ 40'] **Playing the game in pairs**

The students played the game in pairs. Every student looked excited. For the game questions and answering them, they used the expressions they had learned. There

was a mixture of English and German language use.

[40' ~ 45'] **Consolidation and giving assignments**

The assignments had been written on the blackboard. The teacher asked the students what the assignments were and the students answered in English.

The author's comments on the class

The students had had three class hours of English in the previous year and the class I observed was at the beginning of the fourth grade. I was impressed by how naturally the students voiced English when they were watching the video. Most of the students were able to understand the teacher's classroom English and the story they had been reading, and use the expressions they had learned in class.

The teacher conducted the class almost all in English. She spoke clearly and in simple English, with beautiful native-speaker-like pronunciation. The students looked comfortable and happy with it and were able to follow the teachers' instructions confidently.

The class was using Macmillan's "*Here Comes Super Bus 2*" textbook and its companion activity book. There are also related CDs and DVDs to use in class. I thought these materials were well-suited to classroom uses and supporting the teacher in ensuring effective pupils' language learning.

3.1.2 Interview with the teacher

What follows are excerpts and a summary of the interview with the teacher Ms M immediately after this class and following e-mail exchanges in September 2014.

Question 1 "How did you get the training to teach English at elementary schools? What do you think of the training you received?"

(Answer to Question 1) I took the teacher training to be an elementary school English teacher that is known as TEPS (Teaching English at Primary School). You have to get a certificate to be an elementary school English teacher.

On one hand, I liked all the knowledge about linguistics, methodology and didactics they taught us in TEPS. In addition I was very lucky to have a teacher from the US whose mother tongue is English. She was great and it was fantastic to learn from her and to

exchange our experiences as English teachers. Another good thing was sharing materials for practical use: chants, songs, stories, poems, etc. On the other hand, we sometimes had to do exercises similar to those we do with the kids at school. That was quite boring and a waste of time because we are all experienced school teachers and we know a lot about worksheets and activities that are suitable for children at this age.

Question 2 “You said you have always been a primary school teacher. How do you compare your work before and after you became a primary school English teacher?”

(Answer to Question 2) In Switzerland, we make the comparison between ‘class teacher’ (what I was before) and ‘subject teacher’ (what I am now). In my opinion it's much easier and more relaxed to work as a ‘subject teacher’. I can concentrate much more on the specific subjects and prepare them very well. As a ‘class teacher’, I was always super busy and responsible for so many things besides the main teaching (mostly social problems the kids had, intensive work with the parents, filling in forms for administration issues, and so on). My workload was always unpredictable depending on the school kids’ situations. Now I have got back the freedom to focus on the main thing a teacher should do: to teach!

Question 3. “How much English do you use in class? How much do they understand it?”

(Answer to Question 3) Directions are mostly, 100% in English, and as I use them repeatedly, my students understand them. When I introduce new expressions, I use both English and German. Also, as we noticed in class, the students’ understanding of the language is quite context-dependent. Therefore, I really think pictures and other aids to provide students with context in introducing English are very important.

Question 4. “What kinds of teaching materials, textbooks and others, do you use?”

(Answer to Question 4) We use “Here Comes Super Bus” series as textbooks with the third and the fourth graders in all primary schools in Aargau. They come with CDs and DVDs and other sources that teachers can use in class, and activity books for the students. We follow the textbook syllabus. Our students like the textbooks and the stories in them. It is very easy to use them, and I think they are good. Besides, we have readers for the students to read.

Question 5. “How do you assess the students’ English abilities? Or is there any assessment of the students’ achievement in English at all?”

(Answer to Question 5) We have to assess the students’ English abilities in four skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. We made some comparisons in Switzerland and the result was that they do well in reading, listening and writing. But they fail in speaking. Their speaking skills should be better! I have been talking about this situation to many English teachers, and we all do agree that the classes are too big for successful speaking sessions! If there are 24 students in one class, I'm not able to listen to each of them all the time and correct them. And there is no time for speaking assessments. I can't work with the kids individually. If I could work with smaller groups I could practise conversation skills much better. Therefore, we always ask the Department of Education for more English lessons per class. Let's say two lessons with the whole class (24 students) and two lessons with half of the group (12 students) per week. The students would still get three lessons per week (the amount they should get) but the teacher would get four lessons per week.

Question 6 “I am impressed that the students are assessed in the four skill areas. Aren't there any negative aspects in assessing the students in English such as demotivating slow learners? What do you do with such problems?”

(Answer to Question 6) Your thoughts about assessments are very important - we were discussing them, too, in Switzerland. In my experience, all of the students get a chance to get good marks - at least in one of the four skills. Therefore, it really makes sense to assess them in all of the four skills (but of course you need three English lessons per week, not just one). Some kids are brilliant in speaking exercises, but don't do well in writing activities (normally, the very extroverted students). Some shy kids don't say much in class, but focus very well on copying words in English; while in listening activities all of the students do very well because it's the easiest skill. In my opinion, it makes sense to do English assessments, and my experience has told me that the marks are generally much higher than, for example, in German or Maths. The assessments can't be difficult because they are for beginners. Imagine they learn the numbers from 1 to 20 and the colours in the first few English lessons. So there isn't much to test, and students mostly do very well. But the English mark they get on the report is not important for progressing in their school career - in comparison with Maths and German.

Ms M's answers raise the following points for consideration:

- (1) about the needs of teachers undertaking training
- (2) about who should teach elementary school English
- (3) about textbooks and other teaching materials

(4) about assessment at elementary school

3.1.3 The teacher training programme in Canton Aargau: Teaching English at Primary School (TEPS)

When the EDK adopted *A Strategy of Language Teaching* and the 2004 *HarmoS Agreement*, which stated that “a first foreign language (national language or English) be learned from the third grade” (EDK: 2012), Canton Aargau chose English as the first foreign language to be taught, and it was also decided that practising teachers who wanted to teach English at primary schools would have to be certified as primary school English teachers by completing the Teaching English at Primary School (TEPS) course.

Ms M undertook this training programme. Below is the description of this training programme based on Bader (2006) and Bader (2007).

Programme objectives:

- To be able to plan teaching English at the primary level
- To become familiar with the communicative approach in language teaching.
- To know how the speaking skills and the linguistic knowledge of children develop in a foreign language
- To apply a story-based, content-and task-oriented approach to teaching
- To be familiar with adequate teaching materials and the evaluation of the teaching materials
- To be familiar with appropriate terminology and literature

Programme content:

Course contents 1

- Introduction & language learning in Europe and Switzerland
- First lessons, songs, rhymes and skills of the teachers
- Language acquisition
- From listening to speaking, methodology of story-telling
- Skills development (listening)

- Sequencing lessons, lesson planning and integrated skills
- Skills development (speaking)
- Communicative language teaching
- Language awareness and grammar
- Multiple intelligences and learning styles
- Vocabulary
- Games

Course contents 2

- Task-based learning / task-dependency
- Skills development (reading)
- material evaluation
- Skills development (writing)
- Content-based teaching I
- Content-based teaching II & language support
- Classroom language / arts & crafts
- Portfolio for primary students
- Assessment
- Intercultural learning
- Technology (computers)

Requirements for certification as a primary school English teacher:

- Eight weeks stay in an English-speaking country
- Passing CAE (C1 level) exam
- 180 hours of teacher training with TEPS and successful completion of a didactics exam

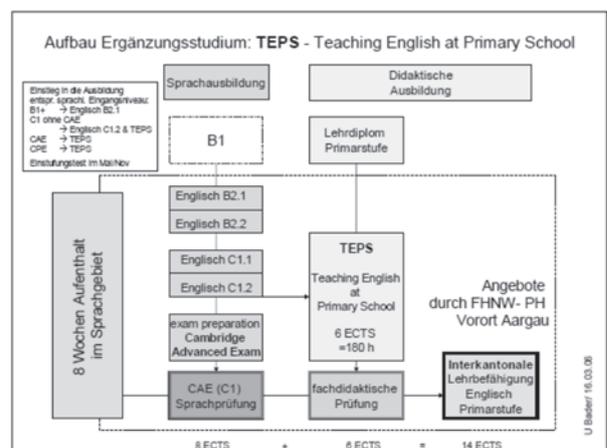


Figure 1 TEPS Excerpt from Bader (2006)

On the TEPS programme, Prof Bader states:

TEPS was a programme for practising primary teachers. We had a very positive response, even though the training was very demanding: Language level C1, nine months of teacher training in ELT that ended with an oral exam. The teachers learned a lot and were able to teach independently with the materials they had to use.

We trained over 500 teachers (practising teachers and also teacher-training students) so far, and about 100 teachers come back voluntarily to university every year for teacher development courses.

(excerpted from an email exchange of October 2014 with the author by courtesy of Prof Bader)

3.2 At an elementary school in Fukui Prefecture, Japan

About two hundred students from the first to the sixth grades are enrolled at this elementary school. The school was appointed as a pilot school in 2014 under MEXT's "English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation" as announced in 2013. Until this year, the Foreign Language Activity classes were taught only once a week to fifth and sixth graders, which is currently the normal practice throughout Japan. As a pilot school this year, the Fukui school started to teach the Foreign Language Activities class once a week to the third and fourth graders and the English subject twice a week to the fifth and sixth graders.

An English teacher with junior high school experience, Ms I, was appointed at the pilot school to team-teach with homeroom teachers the Foreign Language Activities in the third and fourth grades and the English subject in the fifth and sixth grades. When she teaches the Foreign Language Activities with the homeroom teachers, she takes the role of an ALT, but when teaching English as a class subject to the fifth and six graders, she teaches the class as the main teacher, and the homeroom teacher is supposed to assist her.

As a pilot school, the Fukui school is mandated to develop curriculum and teaching methodologies, and it held two open classes as a demonstration for elementary, junior and senior high school teachers in 2014. The author of this paper was appointed as an advisor for this project and, in this capacity, I observed four classes (two third-grade

classes and two sixth-grade classes) and I have advised the pilot school teachers in regard to class procedures, approaches, teaching methods and materials.

3.2.1 A class observation

I report here on a sixth-grade class taught on 28 October, 2014. Ms I, who is Japanese, (hereafter, the JTE), was the main teacher, and Ms A, the homeroom class teacher (hereafter, HRT), was assisting Ms I in this English class. There are thirty-four students in this class. According to a survey, 85% of the students say they like English.

Class procedure

(Below, the figures in parentheses [] show the timeline.)

[0 – 5'] Greeting and singing as a warm-up

Before the class started, the students were cheerfully singing the theme song of a Disney movie Frozen in English with the HRT and the JTE. After greeting the two teachers in English, they sang "When I Grow Up" in a chanted rhythm. They have sung this song in two previous classes, but it seemed that some students were having difficulty in saying the words, and the HRT was helping them.

[5' ~ 12'] Listening to JTE talking about American children's future dreams

The JTE explained to the students about the top three dreams of American children in English. The HRT showed photos, interacting with the JTE in English.

[12' ~ 40'] Guessing classmates' future dreams

① The JTE explained to the students what they planned for the class, again interacting with the students in English.

② The JTE showed pictures that illustrated the future dreams of the students in this class, and had the students repeat after her, practising the names of typical job roles in English. The HRT repeated after the JTE with the students.

③ The JTE and the HRT explained a guessing game in English. Both of them had three hint cards with illustrations showing their dreams of the future when they were children. They interacted in English, and some students giggled and voiced possible answers.

④ The students took part in the guessing game in groups. (The students had already drawn hint cards showing their future dreams.) The JTE and the HRT went around the classroom, and helped the students.

⑤ The students stood up, went around the classroom, and took part in the guessing game with different classmates.

[40' ~ 45'] Reflection in Japanese

The students wrote down in Japanese what they were able to achieve in class, and some students got the chance to tell the class what they found good and what they had done.

The author's comments on the class

This class worked well as a team-taught class. The roles of the JTE and the HRT were clearly understood: The JTE, as a language expert, provided plenty of comprehensible input so that the students could output the language later in the class with the use of paraphrasing, gestures and pictures. The HRT, knowing her classroom students well, provided appropriate support for class and for individual students. There was good collaboration between the JTE and the HRT in the class procedure. There was also plenty of input of the target expressions from both the JTE and the HRT. Thus, later in the class, the students were eager to use English to tell their classmates about their dreams for the future.

By way of comparison, the Swiss class used different kinds of good ready-made teaching materials, while most of the materials used in the Fukui class had been created by the teachers and the students. It is true that the tailor-made materials are ideal, and that it would be easier to personalise the activities using them. On the other hand, I thought that creating such materials for each and every class would not be practical in terms of time and effort.

3.2.2 The teachers' comments after the class

The JTE, the main teacher Ms I

I am satisfied with the class in that the students achieved what we aimed at, that was, to enable the students to experience the joy of expressing themselves, and being able

to interact with and be understood by others in English. We made good use of what the students have been studying in the Period for Integrated Studies.

The homeroom class teacher, Ms A

I am doing my best to study English. I often make mistakes, but I do not mind. My students will be able to feel easier in speaking when I try myself. I am trying to support the students in studying English enjoyably. That is why I try to enjoy singing English songs with the students outside class. In the Period for Integrated Studies, the students have been thinking about their future dreams, thinking about what they like doing and what kind of person they want to be in the future. Although Ms I knows my homeroom class students well by now, I still think that I can act as a bridge between the students and the JTE, and I am happy to take this role. I think the students enjoyed expressing themselves in this class, and that they achieved the class goal.

3.2.3 Elementary school teacher training system in Japan

Homeroom class teachers have voluntarily or otherwise participated in seminars and training to conduct English language activities in elementary schools since English started to be taught in the Period for Integrated Studies in 2002, and then in the Foreign Language Activities classes. This year, in 2014, the MEXT has started to implement its plan for a new teacher training programme (see Figure 2). This section describes elements of this new teacher training system, and the programmes that local educational boards and research institutes are providing to elementary school teachers.

Programmes from educational boards and research institutes

As a sample kind of the programmes available to elementary school homeroom class teachers, we list below the seminars that were offered by the educational board and the research institute in Fukui Prefecture in 2014:

① Date: 30 May

Theme: *Elementary School Foreign Language Activities (Planning a Class)*

Participants: Teachers who are teaching Foreign Language Activities for the first time

Trainers: Educational board staff teacher, an elementary school teacher

Length: 2 hours 40 minutes

② Date: 17 June

Theme: *Practical Workshops*

Participants: Any teacher

Trainer: University professor

Length: 2 hours 40 minutes

③ Date: 10 July

Theme: *Practical Workshops for Elementary School Foreign Language Activities*

Participants: Elementary & junior high school teachers

Trainers: City Educational Board ALTs

Length: 2 hours 40 minutes

④ Date: 6 August

Theme: *Practical Workshops for Elementary School Foreign Language Activities*

Participants: One teacher from every elementary school (obligatory)

Trainers: University professor, educational board staff teachers

Length: 5 hours 30 minutes

The training programmes above were intended primarily for elementary school homeroom teachers. They focused mainly on how to plan activities in class, and only the third programme dealt with English pronunciation, including about seventy minutes of practice. This would not be enough to allay the anxiety of elementary school homeroom teachers who have little confidence in their English abilities but still have to take responsibility for their school's Foreign Language Activities classes.

MEXT programme for “English Education Promotion Leaders” in 2014

Ms I, the JTE who taught the class reported here as its main teacher, is one of the two (would-be) “English

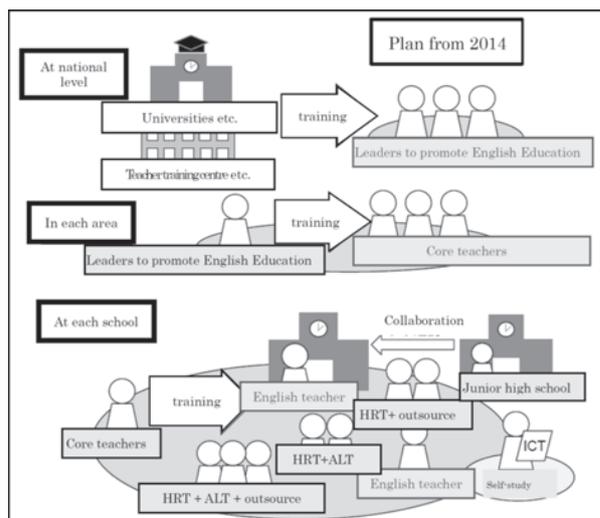


Figure 2 Plan for a new teacher-training system by MEXT adapted from MEXT (2013/12/17), translation by the author

education promotion leaders” in Fukui Prefecture.

As we have seen in Section 2.2, a new teacher training system has been established (as shown in Figure 2) under the 2013 *English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation*, and the MEXT started training (would-be) “English Education Promotion Leaders” in 2014. The programme content is as follows:

Stage One: Five-day practical training (in July or September, totalling 27 hours)

Stage Two: Practice at appointed schools

Stage Three: Five-day training as teacher trainers (in November or December, totalling 22 hours)

Stage Four: Practice teacher training at seminars organised by local educational boards

After completing Stage Four, the participants will be certified as “English education promotion leaders.”

The MEXT is seeking to train these leaders at the national level so that they, in turn, can train core teachers from each elementary school. The core teachers are then responsible for training at their individual schools.

4. Discussion

This report outlines two cases of English tuition at elementary schools, one in Switzerland and the other

in Japan, highlights how the teachers went about their respective assignments and provides some perspectives on elementary school English teacher training in Japan. Both classes were impressive in the way that students were encouraged to be active and positive towards expressing themselves in English. How did the teachers achieve this?

The class I observed in Japan was a model class that provided the students with a lot of motivating input, aroused their intellectual curiosity, and motivated them to speak the language. In this case, the main teacher was an experienced junior high school English teacher who has been teaching English at four elementary schools for the last seven months, while the homeroom class teacher was a good learner model and learning supporter. Still, this leaves open the question of how to provide good training to elementary school teachers if homeroom class teachers were to teach the subject. Kawabata (2008:25) points out two problems in the lack of elementary school teachers who are licensed to teach elementary school English. One is that elementary school teacher training courses at colleges and universities do not yet have “English language education” as an official subject yet, and the other is that there is still no official certification for elementary school teachers who have received appropriate training as elementary school English teachers.

By contrast, in the Swiss canton of Aargau, all the elementary school English teachers have received two years of teacher training to be certified as elementary school English teachers. As outlined in Section 3.1.3, the Canton Aargau model has been producing good results –although it should be noted here that, in Switzerland as a whole, the results of introducing English as the first foreign language in the third grade have reportedly been mixed.

Switzerland is not the only country to have introduced specialised training for elementary school teachers of English. Table 1 shows the equivalent programmes or teacher qualifications in a range of countries that introduce English tuition at elementary school level. These comparative data suggest that, if English is to be successfully taught as a school subject at primary school

level, an adequate training programme for teachers is a prerequisite. In this regard, Ushiro et al. (2014) and others have published similar proposals. The experience of Canton Aargau, which 10 years ago invested in two years of thorough training for its practising teachers, will provide some useful ideas on how teachers in Japan could receive appropriate training and how other stakeholders, including schools, parents, educational boards and the government, might support this process.

Table 1 English teaching at elementary schools: an international comparison

Countries	Teacher training and/or qualifications	Sources
Korea	Teachers who have received 120 hours of training in English conversation (70%) and English language teaching methodology (30%)	Higuchi (2008)
Taiwan	- Teachers who passed English proficiency tests held in 1999 and took one year (360 hours) of training in English and teaching methodology and another year of internship - Teachers who gained elementary school English teaching licence in elementary school teacher training courses	Aikawa (2008)
Hong Kong	Teachers who have passed the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers Requirement and have acquired and learned “subject knowledge” and “pedagogy”	Hara (2008)
Indonesia	Teachers with English teaching licence or elementary school teaching licence, or fluent speakers of English	Naka (2008)
Finland	English teachers or class teachers (with high English proficiency)	Ito (2014)
Sweden	Elementary school English teachers with English teaching licence	Hayashi (2011)
Holland	Elementary school teachers (Their teaching licence includes the ability to teach English.)	Hayashi (2011)
Denmark	Subject teachers with high English proficiency and specialised knowledge	Nishio (2011)
France	Elementary school teachers (They have to submit the certificate of a foreign language proficiency of C1 level.)	Matsuura (2011)

5. Conclusion and for further research

This report has presented two examples of early-stage English teaching – one in Switzerland and one in Japan. Both examples offer useful hints on how teachers can be trained to teach English effectively in an elementary school setting. Certainly, these are isolated examples that may not be representative of experience on a nationwide scale. That said, it may be useful to seek answers to the following questions in subsequent research:

- What are the keys for the success of elementary school

English teaching in Canton Aargau?

- What has this success in Canton Aargau involved?
- What is the current experience with the TEPS programme? Can we get any input from this experience?
- The success or otherwise of “early English” in Switzerland is quite widely debated in Swiss media. What problems is “early English” experiencing, if any?
- What can Japanese educationalists learn from the Swiss experience overall?

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Summary in Japanese (和文抄録)

2014年9月、筆者は、スイス、アーガウ州の小学校4学年の英語の授業参観及び担当教員への聞き取りを行った。10月、日本、福井県内で文部科学省指定「英語教育強化地

域拠点事業」に採択された小学校での、6学年の研究授業参観および研究会に助言者として参加した。これらの2つの授業は、どちらも、児童が生き生きと英語で自己表現をする素晴らしい授業だった。

2013年、文部科学省は、『グローバル化に対応した英語教育改革実施計画』を発表し、小学校中学年で活動型英語教育を週1～2コマ程度、小学校高学年で教科型英語教育を週3コマ程度、実施に向け2014年度から逐次改革推進するとした。2014年9月26日、「英語教育の在り方に関する有識者会議」は、「今後の英語教育の改善・充実方策について 報告～グローバル化に対応した英語教育改革の五つの提言～」を発表し、「小学校高学年における英語の教科化においては、英語の指導力を備えた学級担任や、専科指導を行う教員を含めた、より専門性を重視した指導体制について検討する必要がある。」とした。スイスでは、学校教育は基本的に州が責任を持つが、EDK(the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education)という全26州の文部大臣の組織がスイス国全体の学校教育の調整役をしている。2004年、EDKは『言語教育戦略』および『国家共通の枠組みを作る中期作業プログラム (HamosS Agreement)』を全会一致で採択し、第1外国語(公用語あるいは英語)教育の初等学校3年生からの開始を決定した(EDK:2012)。これを受け、スイスAargau州では、この第1外国語として英語の導入を決定し、2009年の実施に向け、初等学校英語教員養成プログラム Teaching English at Primary School (TEPS)を開始した。Aargau州では、初等学校で英語を教えるためには、このTEPSを受講し初等学校英語教員の免許を持つことが要求された。現職の初等学校教員、中等学校教員から、初等学校で英語を教えることを希望する教員を募り、現職にありながら、2年間で180時間の研修受講を課した(Bader:2006)。

この研究ノートでは、スイスのTEPSを終了した小学校英語教員が教える英語の授業と、日本の拠点校での英語専科教員と担任が教えるT-Tの授業について記述し、今後の日本の小学校英語教員研修の在り方を考える糸口をつかもうとした。

キーワード：小学校英語、教員研修、スイスの早期英語教育

Appendix 1: Timeline for the introduction of elementary school English in Switzerland and Japan

Switzerland		Japan	
1975	EDK adopted recommendations and decisions regarding the introduction, reform and coordination of the teaching of the second national language to all pupils during their compulsory schooling.		
		1992	MEXT started to designate elementary schools as pilot schools to research and develop English conversation activities.
1997	At the 100 th anniversary of EDK, the third language (English) in compulsory education became an increasingly pressing issue.		
		1998	MEXT announced <i>the Course of Study for Elementary School</i> . “International understanding” was to be dealt with in the Period for the Integrated Studies.
2001	The first ELP (European Language Portfolio) was approved by the European Council that started in Switzerland.	2001	MEXT issued <i>the Guidebook for Elementary School English Activities</i> .
		2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English activities started as a part of the study for “international understanding” in the Period for the Integrated Studies in elementary schools (fifth and sixth grades). • A <i>Strategic Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”</i> was announced, which planned to support English conversation activities at elementary schools.
		2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEXT adopted <i>An Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities.”</i> Use of ALTs was recommended to “enrich the elementary school English conversation activities.”
2004	EDK unanimously adopted <i>A Strategy of Language Teaching</i> and medium-term working programme to establish a common national framework (<i>HarmoS Agreement</i> to be implemented in 2009). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a first foreign language (national language or English) is learned from the third grade. • a second foreign language (national language or English) is learned from the fifth grade. • a third foreign language is optional from the seventh grade. 		
		2006	Foreign Language Division in the Central Council for Education recommended homeroom teachers team-teach with ALTs or with language experts at elementary schools for the time being.
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swiss Parliament adopted <i>Languages Act</i> that aims to encourage multilingualism and notes that students must have skills in at least one other national language and one foreign language (generally English). • The Intercantonal Agreement concerning <i>the Harmonisation of the Compulsory Education (HarmoS Agreement)</i> adopted the EDK strategies. 	2007 ~ 2008	National Centre for Teachers’ Development held a Training for Elementary School English Activities and International Understanding targeting prefectural educational directors, who supervised 30 hours of teacher training at each school within the two years of 2008 and 2009.
2009	HarmoS Agreement was implemented, and a first foreign language started to be taught from the third grade . Each language district decided which language to teach, a second national language or English, and actual implementation was done at each cantonal level.	2009 ~ 2010	The start of Elementary School Foreign Language Activities (fifth and sixth grades), being moved forward, was approved, and about 15 class hours a year were taught in 2009, and about 20 class hours in 2010 in most elementary schools nationwide.
		2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary School Foreign Activities was made compulsory (35 class hours a year in the fifth and sixth grades). • Study Group on the Improvement of Foreign Language Abilities compiled <i>Five Recommendations and Concrete Measures for Improving Abilities of English as an International Lingua Franca</i>, and recommended that teacher training colleges should set up a new curriculum dealing with Foreign Language Activities and that the study goals be shown in CAN-DO lists.
		2013	MEXT announced <i>English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation</i> , which stated that reforms will be started in FY 2014 to realise one to two class hours of action-oriented English classes to the third and fourth graders, and three class hours of English as a study subject to the fifth and sixth graders.
		2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEXT Expert Council on English Education made recommendations, in which they suggested the third and fourth graders be team-taught mainly by homeroom teachers and ALTs and that the fifth and sixth graders be taught by homeroom teachers with English teaching expertise and that every elementary school have an ALT by FY2019.
		2020	MEXT aims at the complete implementation of <i>English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation</i> .

Source on Switzerland: EDK (2012). Sources on Japan: MEXT homepage, Yamada (2009), Nishizaki (2009) and Kyoiku-shiryō No. 1299 (2014)

