

# Foreign Language Education in the Primary School in Scotland: A Possible Model for Japan

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## **Introduction**

Like Japan, Britain is an island country. While physically it may never have experienced the *sakoku* or “closed country” period, it has been accused, by Britons and non-Britons alike, of having an “island mentality”. This is compounded by the fact that the majority of Britons are monolingual speakers of English, the *de facto lingua franca* of the day. Scotland in particular, on the western fringes of Europe, has historically had few links with other countries that impinge upon the lives of ordinary citizens. Even today the expectation is that all our new immigrants have a duty to learn perfect English, so that we are not inconvenienced by having to learn a few phrases in another language, tune into a non-native accent, or heaven forbid, slow down and speak more simply to learners of our own language. Some nations may joke that it is unpatriotic to learn a foreign language and some Scots may see it as a right to be able to speak their mother tongue to everyone else. Yet such attitudes are being gradually eroded thanks in part to the Modern Languages in the Primary School (MLPS) initiative, backed by considerable funding from the Scottish Executive, and the creation of an infrastructure in recent years to facilitate foreign language (FL) learning.

In this paper I will briefly outline the rationale behind Modern Languages in the Primary School (in Britain, European languages are referred to as “modern” languages because of the contrast with Latin and Ancient Greek taught widely until recently); the training of teachers for MLPS; the implementation of this programme; its successes; and how it has evolved, particularly since the year 2000. I will also draw parallels with the present situation in Japan and finally suggest how Japan can use this tried-and-tested MLPS model to aid the development of its own local FL programmes in the primary school, particularly in light of the funding

announced in August 2006. Before I discuss the MLPS programme, it should be noted that Scottish primary education is 7 years in duration, (P1-P7) roughly from age five to eleven, and secondary school is for a minimum of 4 years, (S1-S4) until 16 years of age, but with the option to remain at the same school for a further one or two years (S5 and S6). Compulsory education is from 5 to 16. Both state primary schools and secondary schools are entirely free of charge.

### **Situation in Japan**

Japanese is the official language of Japan and Japan alone. Japanese nationals cannot rely on other countries learning their language, when most other countries are pushing English as a foreign language too. It is plain commonsense for English to be taught as the main FL in Japan despite some misgivings about falling academic standards and some vociferous opposition to elementary school English education. In contrast, Scotland's MLPS programme has few critics because clearly learning a European language makes sense when membership of the EU allows all Scots the mobility to reside and work in any member state. In addition, Scotland's top two export markets are France and Germany, with Italy in fourth place.

Many Japanese elementary schools are rushing to include English language education as part of *sogo gakushu* (integrated study) in response to parental and societal demands, and as a start to what some see as the inexorable advent of compulsory English education at this level. Recent newspaper reports state that the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter MEXT) will propose one hour of compulsory English a week for all fifth graders from March 2007 (朝日新聞 08/29/2006) and back this up with 38 billion yen of funding for materials, and placement of an ALT in 10% of all public elementary schools, around 2400 schools.

However there is little evidence to suggest that starting a foreign language at an early age actually improves the final outcome (Cameron, 2000: 244) *unless* there is continuity and progression of instruction. Indeed the critical period hypothesis is not without controversy (Lightbrown and Spada, 1999: 60-68). Many people outside the FL profession cite the ease with which children seem to pick up languages, but they are usually referring to immersion situations, not limited classroom exposure. While it is true that children will pick up a native-like accent with more ease than an adult learner, this is only when exposed to a native-like accent. Exposing them to the poor pronunciation and grammar of an untrained teacher is unlikely to lead to native-like pronunciation or competence. To add to the already fraught issue of early English education, many boards of education and individual schools are creating highly effective programmes but not all pupils in Japan are receiving equal access to such education. Furthermore, primary school teachers, who might be proficient in English themselves, may lack the skills and confidence to teach the language to younger learners due to the lack of explicit instruction in FL classes at university. According to the Asahi Shinbun (03/11/2005) a MEXT survey of some 10,000 parents and teachers found that more than half of teachers were against compulsory English education at the elementary school while 70%

of parents with sixth graders were in favour of it.

This problem is particularly pertinent for Initial Teacher Education institutes. From my own experience as a teacher trainer at one such institute, trainee elementary school teachers at Japanese universities take two English classes per semester for the first two years of their university education, a not inconsiderable total of 180 hours, on top of their six years at junior and senior high school. But few if any of these university classes are designed to train them in how to *teach* English (Kane, 2003). While some students have reasonable ability in English (TOEIC 500 plus), they have not been trained as FL teachers. Many more trainee teachers have very basic English skills and have not yet mastered the grammar taught in junior high school. Some are understandably anxious at the prospect of teaching a language they are not proficient in. It is impossible to ask these students to teach the kind of structural syllabus traditionally taught in Japanese schools. Clearly a great deal has to be done to train these teachers and to support them if they are all to teach English in the future.

### **The seeds of MLPS**

In 1989 Scotland began once again to pilot foreign language classes in 76 primary schools after an initial attempt in the 1960s. (Muir (1999) discusses this pilot scheme.) The previous initiative had fizzled out in the face of teachers' lack of enthusiasm and pupil's lack of progress, most probably due to both the grammar-translation methodology employed and the lack of continuity with the children's secondary school curriculum. The pilot in the late 1980s, however, based on a communicative syllabus, was highly successful (Tierney and Gallestigi, 2005: 4) and it was decided to adopt the programme for French, German, Spanish, and Italian throughout the country.

Initially MLPS entailed a secondary school FL teacher "dropping in" to visit feeder primary schools and work with classroom teachers. Later surveys of the MLPS system showed that linguistic knowledge alone was insufficient; the teacher must also understand the particular ethos of the primary school (Driscoll 1999: 52). So in the mid 90s, this provision by drop-in secondary school teachers changed to FL provision by classroom teachers who had undertaken a 27-day national training programme, completed on a day-release basis over 4 terms, who would then be responsible for FL in their school.

In 1998 the first professional evaluation of MLPS was conducted by a team from the University of Stirling. (This report can be found at <http://www.cilt.org.uk/research/aap.htm>; a follow up report was published in 2001 at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47176/0023873.pdf>) Despite the success of and high regard for MLPS evidenced in the research, there were questions as to the efficacy of the programme, notably whether it made any difference at later stages of a pupil's education. Specifically there was great variation among primary schools concerning time allocation, the introduction of reading and writing, and continuity with the local high school. Another national study completed in 1998, *Foreign Languages in the Upper Secondary School* ([http://www.scotland.gov.uk/edru/Pdf/ers/interchange\\_59.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/edru/Pdf/ers/interchange_59.pdf)), showed that while FLs are a compulsory for most pupils until the end of S4 and more S4

pupils were achieving a pass in national exams in FL than in mathematics, pupils were still likely to drop their FLs in S5, making them less likely to use FLs in their future careers and to study a language at university. The reasons pupils gave for this were firstly that they could see no immediate benefit in learning an FL, and secondly that they believed that FL Higher, the National Qualification generally taken in S5, were difficult with little chance of achieving a good grade. Being English speakers no doubt contributes to the former reason although recent research warns us that we should not be so complacent about the status of English as an international language (Graddol, 2006). In addition, the researchers found that FLs could not do what the pupils wanted, that is to access other cultures at a level appropriate to their age group, and to communicate with European peers. Many pupils were demotivated by the disparity between their own FL skills and those of European teenagers.

### **“Citizens of a Multilingual World”**

This then was the climate in which the then Scottish Minister of Education and Industry, Helen Liddell, set up a Ministerial Action Group on Languages in 1998. The remit of the Action Group was to “secure the place of modern languages within the curriculum; to improve the quality of modern languages at Standard Grade [national tests taken by S4 pupils]; and to ensure a greater degree of continuity in language learning in schools” (*Citizens of a Multilingual World*: 4). The group was also to consider how to ensure a supply of trained teachers so that every child in P6 and P7 would receive FL classes. The group comprised business people, language teachers, university professors, and other educators. Members reviewed the research, school inspection records, and policy evidence concerning MLPS, and they listened to the views of many concerned individuals and institutions both face to face and on their website before publishing their final report in December 2000, under the title of *Citizens of a Multilingual World*. The entire text can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/mwki-05.asp>.

In addition to its initial remit, the Action Group identifies the following key issues which had to be addressed before recommendations could be finalized: the need for a rationale for FL learning; the basis for a language entitlement for all students (for example, children with special needs); negative attitudes surrounding FLs; the transfer of responsibility from central government to Local Authorities and schools; the “marketing” of FLs; decisions about which languages should be taught and how this would fit in with the teaching of heritage languages (e.g. Gaelic) or community languages (e.g. Cantonese, Urdu); MLPS starting age, time allocation, teacher provision, and support; continuity from MLPS to high schools; Initial Teacher Education FL training; Continuing Professional Development for teachers; and FL for lifelong learning, employment, and leisure. The group was particularly concerned with the lack of motivation to learn a FL in Scotland, given that our native language is English, and the lack of links with other European countries for the average Scot.

After much consultation and research, the Action Group addressed these needs in the statement of 11 entitlements below which they submitted to the Executive in December 2000.

We propose that all students in Scottish schools should be entitled to an experience of learning a modern language which: begins no later than Primary 6; builds on their prior experience of language development, learning and use; is continuous and progressive in the same language; covers a minimum of six years of study, or its equivalent of approximately 500 hours; develops a usable competence in the language which is sustained through regular opportunities for interaction with native speakers and for accessing information by means of modern technologies; is delivered effectively through high-quality programmes of study by appropriately qualified teachers; provides regular, reliable and helpful feedback on their progress; promotes positive attitudes to other cultures and develops strategies for learning other languages; leads to a National Qualification, thereby placing them in a framework that contains flexible routes to further qualifications if they so choose; allows for the study of an additional language during their period of compulsory schooling; provides well-informed and up-to-date guidance concerning the advantages of continuing to study and use modern languages in education post-16 and in later life (*Citizens of a Multilingual World*, 2000: 8).

The report noted that 500 hours was only a starting point, not nearly enough to produce fluent speakers, and hoped this figure would be increased once their recommendations for staffing were implemented. 100 hours at Primary school would mean 75 minutes a week for P6/7 and the Group recommended that this be delivered on the basis of 15 minutes per day from the classroom teacher.

In September 2001 the Scottish Executive's Response (by good luck with Jack McConnell –soon to be First Minister– at the helm as the Minister for Education, Europe, and External Affairs) gave strong support to *Citizens of a Multilingual World* with greater funding and the adoption of all of the Action Group's recommendations, in full or in part. (The entire text can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/mwki-00.asp>) Since that time, many of the promised initiatives have already materialised such as the creation and distribution of a leaflet outlining the rationale for FL learning to parents and high school students. (These too can be viewed online at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/society/cmwgp.pdf> and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/society/cmwsp.pdf>) In addition since 2001 a total of 22.5 million pounds (approximately 50.6 billion yen in a country with a population of fewer than five million people) has so far been allocated for FL (personal email from parliamentary assistant to the First Minister, August 2006). There is a clear willingness on the part of the Executive to promote FL learning in Scotland, which has spread down to (or up from) all of the teachers, administrators, children, and parents I spoke to as I researched this paper.

More recently, in 2005 a report *Progress in Addressing the Recommendations of Citizens of a Multilingual World* was published, detailing the successes of FL in Scottish schools since 2000, and an update was released in 2006. The report found that 99% of primary schools were now offering an FL, and that European languages were diversifying, Spanish was continuing to increase, while the decrease in German learners had stopped, and other languages were being added, notably Mandarin. (The entire text of these follow up reports can be found at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmiecoaml.pdf> and <http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/Resources/documents/hmie2006update.pdf>).

While 99% of primary schools are now offering at least one FL, there is considerable variation between local authorities and even between schools in the same local authority.

Below I discuss two schools in the same area with entirely different approaches.

### **Teaching models 1: Full Immersion**

Condorrat Primary School in Cumbernauld has both an English stream and a Gaelic stream (a full immersion programme). P1 and P2 in the Gaelic immersion stream are completely educated through that medium alone. In P3 English reading and writing are introduced to these pupils. Today there are just under 66,000 speakers of Scots Gaelic, mainly concentrated in the north and western highlands and islands of Scotland, perhaps all of them bilingual in English. So it is unsurprising that only two out of the 120 families with children in the immersion programme had a Gaelic background. Why then would they choose a Gaelic education for their children? The head teacher suggested that smaller class sizes, Irish ancestry, or perhaps parents' recognition of the value of a bilingual education were factors in families choosing the Gaelic immersion programme. Whatever the reason, children come from as far as 15 miles away, at the local authority's expense. Since so few of the pupils have a Gaelic parent or guardian, those without any Gaelic knowledge are helped by CDs for the reading book—as the classroom teacher explained “the teacher goes home with the book!”— and a homework club. There is also provision in the community for adults to learn Gaelic and an intensive summer camp held on the Isle of Skye. Teachers at this school are generally simultaneous bilinguals but one teacher who had just joined the school was an additive bilingual. The other teachers in the staffroom joked about how his grammar would be the best.

*Citizens of a Multilingual World* noted that “provided certain conditions are fulfilled, immersion delivers markedly higher levels of proficiency than when the language is taught as a school subject” (2000: 17). Since then several local authorities have been experimenting with full or partial immersion programmes such as a French partial immersion programme in Aberdeen where up to 80 minutes a day including all expressive arts and mathematics are taught in French by qualified native speakers, and the full immersion programme in Gaelic, implemented by bilingual teachers in Condorrat.

I observed the Gaelic immersion programme's P1, a week into their first term in school. As the head teacher had mentioned, the class sizes were relatively small. The classroom teacher, who is bilingual from birth, took a class of 14 children. Only four children were complete beginners. The other 10 had attended Gaelic pre-school education. Their classroom was a very welcoming and bright, with toys, pictures, and books, and clear spaces available for other activities. After their morning break, the teacher was doing number work with children. She spoke only in Gaelic except to aid one pupil who was confused and speaking out in English to complain that the other children were cheating at Bingo! Most of the children who interacted in short private chats did so in Gaelic. They then moved on to review colours and animal names. Finally the children were allowed to colour pictures of animals the appropriate colours as directed by the teacher, while soothing background music played. The teacher reinforced colours and animal names while encouraging the children individually.

In this school four European languages as well as Gaelic as a foreign language are taught.

The children use video-conferencing to communicate with linked schools in Europe. Bearing out relevant research on bilingualism, another classroom teacher, who is trained to teach German, stated that the Gaelic immersion pupils cope much better with FLs. They have less inhibition, more positive attitudes, and better pronunciation than the monolingual children.

The website for this school can be found at: <http://www.northlan.gov.uk/education+and+learning/schools/primary/condorrat+primary+.html>.

### **Teaching models 2: The MLPS-trained teacher**

Unlike the immersion programmes, which tend to rely on native or bilingual teachers, the “specialist teacher” method is implemented by an MLPS-trained classroom teacher. I observed a French class in Saint Bernadette’s Primary School, Motherwell, which was taught to P5 pupils. The teacher had chosen to take an evening course which ran for twenty weeks two years previously, building on his own knowledge of the language, as part of continuing professional development. There were ten participants on this course, whose knowledge of French varied from Degree Level to none at all. After ten weeks of mainly French language instruction, the remaining ten weeks were conducted entirely in French. Each member prepared a lesson to teach the other participants, reviewing the topic they had studied the previous week, ending up with a language learning game. In this way, participants improved their own level of French while building up a stock of activities, which they could later use in the classroom. They were also provided with considerable resources by the local authority, North Lanarkshire council. From this year the local high school, Our Lady’s High School, Motherwell, has produced a set programme for all of its feeder primary schools to use in P6 and P7, which should lead children to S1 ready to continue the French programme where it left off. This P6/P7 programme is an organised French curriculum, favoured by the classroom teacher, and includes reading and listening skills assessments. There are CDs with songs and listening/speaking activities. The creators say that older resources can be used to supplement it.

While the 2000 report *Citizens of a Multilingual World* recommended that MLPS programmes should begin no later than P6, the head teacher at this school had gone further and decided to begin mainly oral French in P5 in order to introduce reading and writing skills for the first time in accordance with local authority directives. By the end of primary school these children will have had 120 hours of French instruction.

I observed a French class taught to P5. The pupils, as young as eight years of age, moved from their own classroom to the computer room. There were around 30 children. This was their second French class. They quickly found their seats and the teacher began to review the previous lesson: greetings and numbers. The teacher was very supportive of the children’s attempts, and encouraged the other children to do likewise, emphasizing how learning a new language is a new and strange experience “but never laugh because we are all learning.”

After teacher presentation, the children engaged in pairwork, practicing the questions and answers, and playing finger games to review numbers. The language was mainly presented in unanalyzed chunks for pupils to remember, except for expressions of age where the teacher

wrote on the whiteboard “*j’ai huit ans*” and translated it literally to emphasise where children should place the number corresponding to their age. The teacher talked a little about different levels of formality for *bonjour* and *salut* and taught them noticing strategies, such as rising intonation on some questions. He also motivated children by explaining the authenticity of the task: “I know you know your partner’s name already but we’re just doing this for practice.” The teacher also used the target language for classroom management and praising children’s attempts. The pupils all seemed to have a very positive attitude to French: there were many volunteers to answer the teacher’s questions, engage in pairwork, and even attempt to speak French with unsuspecting parents in the playground after class!

The website for this school can be found at: <http://www.northlan.gov.uk/education+and+learning/schools/primary/st+bernadettes+primary+.html>.

### **Problems with MLPS training and implementation**

This is not to say that everything in the MLPS garden is rosy. Three major issues still remain to be resolved: perhaps the greatest problem in Scotland is the disparity among schools and local authorities. For example, one small local authority, East Renfrewshire, teaches French to all pupils from pre-school up. This paper also outlined above the differences between two schools in the same local authority.

The second problem that has emerged is the lack of MLPS-trained teachers. MLPS was originally intended to be implemented by a trained classroom teacher, who would embed 15 minutes or more of the FL into the daily routine of the class, and link the FL with other areas of the primary curriculum. Unfortunately this has not happened. Research published in 1999 by national development officers for MLPS showed that by that date, some 4500 teachers had completed the MLPS training programme, double the number required (Tierney and Gallestigi, 2005: 4). However, not all of these teachers are assigned to the upper school, while many more are not teaching FLs because of maternity leave, retirement, or promotion. The 2006 HMI update expressed concern that funding was being wasted by training more and more MLPS teachers instead of using the trained teachers better and freeing the money to fund more innovative FL projects. Nearly 20 years after the problem was identified, Initial Teacher Education Institutes have yet to make FL pedagogy equivalent to MLPS training mandatory for B.Ed. or PGCE qualifications, while MLPS trained teachers are being promoted, changing schools, leaving the profession, or retiring. Clearly teacher training ought to be a priority for any local authority requiring classroom teachers to implement MLPS.

The final issue, with perhaps less relevance to Japan, is the focus on one language at the expense of others. The table below shows the percentage of local authorities offering the four main FLs at primary school level.

As can be seen from the above table, French is by far the language of choice for MLPS. There are many reasons for this: parents’ pressure; its dominance at secondary school; its prestige; the Auld Alliance between the two countries; France’s position as Scotland’s top export market and its position as a key player in the EU. Figures from 2005 show that last



Table: Percentage of Primary Schools in each Authority offering languages in 2004

Authority	No. of Schools	French	German	Spanish	Italian
Aberdeen City	57	98%	49%	4%	0%
Aberdeenshire	156	100%	24%	3%	0%
Angus	60	88%	45%	0%	0%
Argyll & Bute	87	86%	2%	0%	0%
Clackmannanshire	19	100%	0%	0%	0%
Dumfries & Gallo.	111	81%	19%	2%	0%
Dundee City	41	98%	39%	20%	0%
East Ayrshire	47	81%	17%	0%	0%
E.Dunbartonshire	37	86%	11%	0%	0%
East Lothian	35	100%	14%	0%	0%
East Renfrewshire	24	100%	0%	0%	0%
Edinburgh City	102	99%	43%	4%	9%
Eilean Siar	39	100%	0%	0%	0%
Falkirk	48	92%	25%	0%	0%
Fife	146	80%	53%	0%	0%
Glasgow City	198	88%	3%	13%	5%
Highland	185	94%	2%	1%	0%
Inverclyde	28	88%	0%	14%	0%
Midlothian	36	75%	61%	0%	0%
Moray	46	87%	48%	0%	0%
North Ayrshire	53	100%	4%	9%	0%
N. Lanarkshire	130	82%	11%	7%	4%
Orkney Islands	21	76%	48%	5%	0%
Perth & Kinross	78	63%	18%	0%	0%
Renfrewshire	52	96%	27%	14%	2%
Scottish Borders	71	86%	8%	0%	0%
Shetland Islands	33	88%	21%	0%	0%
South Ayrshire	45	100%	0%	0%	0%
South Lanarkshire	125	72%	20%	7%	0%
Stirling	43	100%	0%	0%	0%
W.Dunbartonshire	35	66%	37%	0%	0%
West Lothian	66	100%	53%	0%	0%
Scotland	2258	89%	22%	4%	1%
Authority	No. of Schools	French	German	Spanish	Italian

(Reproduced from the Languages in Scotland Database which can be found at [http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/Languages\\_in\\_Scotland/LL0-16/LL0-16answerwhich.htm](http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/Languages_in_Scotland/LL0-16/LL0-16answerwhich.htm))

year the number of teachers undergoing MLPS-training in French was 606; the figure for German was 96; Spanish trainees numbered 61; while only 26 teachers were training in Italian. As new primary school teachers qualify, the only FL they may have been exposed to is French; this in turn makes it more likely that French will remain the dominant MLPS language.

### **Some suggestions for EFL in Japanese primary education**

First of all, Japan needs to consider the goals of its primary English education and to set them out in the same clear and specific manner as the junior and senior high school curriculum. MEXT has earmarked 38 billion yen for elementary English education next year alone but what are its objectives? The Japanese high schools' curricula specify in great detail the objectives and content, the latter both from a situational-functional point of view and specific grammatical constructions. For junior high school the broad objectives are "To develop students' basic practical communication abilities such as listening and speaking, deepening the understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages." The entire text in English can be found at <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/shotou/030301.htm>. A similar document will have to be created for elementary school.

Once the elementary curriculum has been decided upon, materials will have to be made, teachers trained, and decisions made as to how to evaluate all these aspects of the programme (curriculum, materials, teaching, and student work.) Rather than an entitlement to English learning expressed in hours like the Scottish MLPS system, it would be better to specify what students should be able to do with the language by the end of certain stages and allow classroom teachers freedom to implement this. From a practical point of view, teaching phonics is essential. Teaching phonics also has the benefit of not overlapping with the junior high school curriculum. In addition, I believe reading and writing should be introduced. How else are pupils going to review and consolidate what they have learned?

In Japan, MEXT has promised to place Assistant Language Teachers in 10% of all elementary schools from April 2007. Obviously this leaves 90% of schools with no ALT. On one hand, these young native speakers of English serve both as models of the language and as willing participants in conversations with children, but on the other, MEXT is investing a considerable sum in training ALTs simply for them to leave Japan several years later. Would funding not be better invested in training Japanese primary school teachers to teach English? Sharpe (2001) discusses the current staffing of FL classes in English primary schools. In England, like Japan, primary school FLs are not compulsory. In advocating the establishment of a FL programme for this level, he considers teacher training in light of the research on MLPS in Scotland:

If primary MFL is eventually to be made a statutory requirement, it will not be enough simply to have a corps of primary MFL specialists. Non-specialists primary practitioners will need to be able to deliver the subject as well, just as they do for the other subjects of the primary curriculum (2001:132).

Rather than employing so many ALTs, at great expense, money could be better spent on

(i) training Japanese classroom teachers and (ii) enabling children to make their own English-speaking friends. In the past, this latter suggestion was impossible. The cost not to mention logistics of sending young children abroad was prohibitive. But now video conferencing enables us to speak to and see people on the other side of the world with widely available, reasonably priced computers, and free software. As computers become more common in the school and home, technology gives children the opportunities to study English outside of school. Links could be forged with schools in a similar time zone perhaps in Asia (eTwinning) and both groups of children would learn both computer use and English at the same time. In this way, perhaps, time could be found in the already packed primary curriculum to embed English into other classes.

In conclusion, if compulsory elementary English education is inevitable, the most important issues are *what* should be taught and *who* should teach it. Until a full training programme with monitoring mechanisms is in place, simply throwing money at the problem is unlikely to achieve much. It is also unfair to ask classroom teachers to teach a subject they may know little about themselves. It will also produce extremely patchy results. The priority for Japan must be an English training programme for classroom teachers. As for the curriculum, a complete overhaul of *all* English classes, in junior and senior high will be necessary if there are to be any concrete gains from primary English classes. There is little merit in having pupils repeat what they have learned in primary school once they enter junior high school. Simply rushing to jump on the English bandwagon will serve no one.

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