

Introduction of English Curriculum at Elementary and Secondary Schools in Japan

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Abstract

The new government curriculum guidelines from 2020 will bring significant changes to English education at elementary and secondary schools in Japan. Notable features of the renewal this time are earlier start of English education at elementary schools (from Grade 3), English taught in English at junior high schools, and its synchronism with the reform of college entrance examinations. Critical changes will occur at the entrance and exit of the elementary and secondary education. After Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology issued an action plan to "Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities" in 2003, English education changed, e.g. English activities from Grade 5, recommendation to teach English in English at senior high schools, or introduction of listening tests in college entrance examinations. However, its achievement level is not regarded satisfactory, and Japanese government represented its concern in "Strategy to Foster Global Human Resources (2012)," warning that Japan might miss an opportunity for revitalization. It is true that foreign language education plays an important role in the prosperity of a country or a nation as globalization of the economy is moving forward. However, school education is not only for getting a victory in the international competitions. For the peaceful and sustainable world, to raise awareness as global citizens and to encourage friendship, cooperation and action from every corner of the world are crucial. As shown in "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," adopted in the United Nations General Assembly, not the competition to create minor winners but coexistence and co-prosperity on a global scale is strongly desired. Foreign language education is essential to develop concern and empathy toward different countries or cultures, awareness that windows of the own house are open to the world, or a sense of ethics that any action of oneself entails global responsibility. Elementary school education is particularly important as young children are, in essence, to learn and develop infinitely. Further consideration on the content, method, and system of foreign language education is desirable for children's development with friendship across the borders. Along with these points of view, some implications and challenges through the practices at Ritsumeikan Primary School, where the author worked as principal for five years, will be reported.

INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH CURRICULUM AT ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN JAPAN

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ENGLISH EDUCATION UNDER PRESSURE

<Government's Push>

- 1984 Ad Hoc Council of Education
- 1994 Oral Communication as a course
- 2003 Action Plan for Japanese with English Abilities
- 2008 English activities from G5
- 2012 Strategy to foster global human resources
- 2013 Plans to reform English education in response to globalization
- 2017 New Curriculum Guidelines

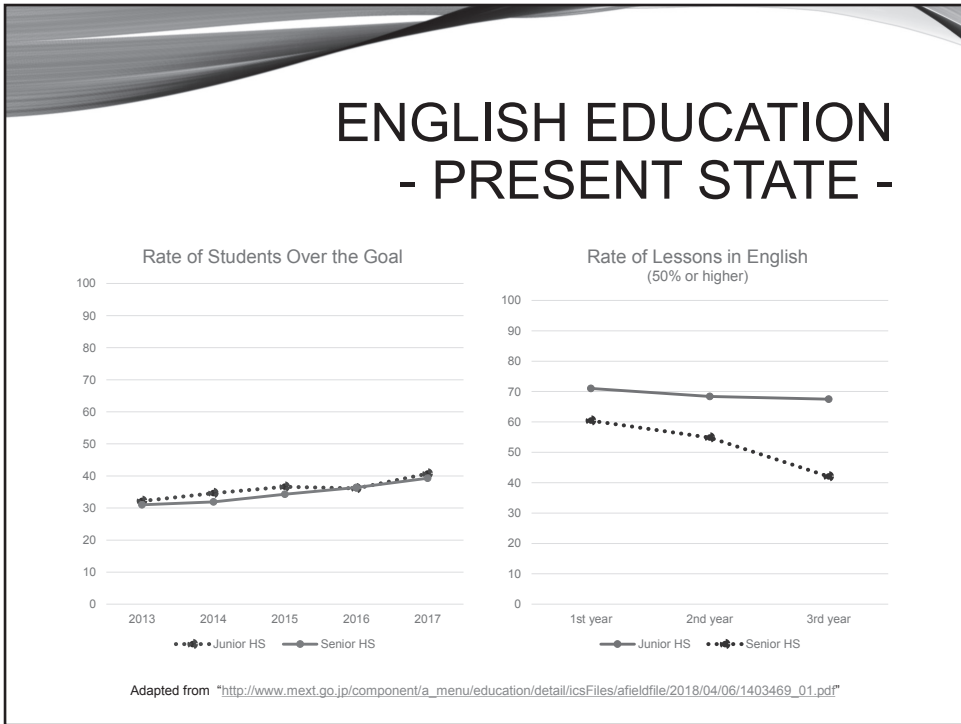
1990's: Better English Abilities
2010's: Globalization



Children / Teachers



1990's: Decreased teaching hours
2010's: Reform of Working Style



ENGLISH EDUCATION FROM 2020

- Starting English activities from Grade 3
- “English” as a subject from Grade 5
- English taught in English from Grade 7 (JH1)
- Test 4 skills at entrance examinations to colleges

Give Your Organization a Competitive Edge

- 1) hire, train and promote the most proficient candidates to build a stronger team
- 2) better prepare your students and strengthen your educational institution's global reputation
- 3) cultivate stronger talent for the international marketplace and improve the reputation of your country

<https://www.ets.org/toeic>

資格・検定試験一覧

- 英検 実用英語技能検定
- TEAP
- GTEC
- IELTS
- Cambridge English Qualifications
- TOEFL Junior Comprehensive 2018年12月実施開始
- TOEIC
- TOEFL iBT

<http://4skills.jp/>

ENGLISH EDUCATION FROM 2020

MANY PROBLEMS!

Who teaches?

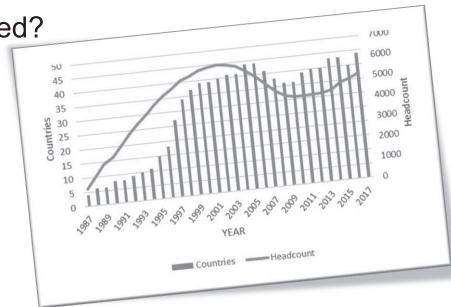
How and where is English used?

Do children enjoy learning?

Will AIs become saviors?



<https://blog.themusio.com>



Adapted from "History of JET programme,"
<http://jetprogramme.org/ja/history/>

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

After having achieved "economic prosperity" by 1980, the frontier has been lost, and advanced technology or existence of domestic market may cause "Galapagos Syndrome" of Japan.

Qualified personnel who should be the motive power of economic growth medium-to long-term perspective will run out.

Japan will miss an opportunity for revitalization, and gradually withdraw in the rapid change of the globalization era including the gain in power by BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) or VISTA (Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey and Argentina).

"Strategy to foster global human resources"
<https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/global/1206011matome.pdf>

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Three elements of Global human resources

Element 1

Linguistic &
Communication
skills

Element 2

Self-direction
Positiveness
Spirit for challenge
Cooperativeness
Flexibility
Sense of
responsibility &
mission

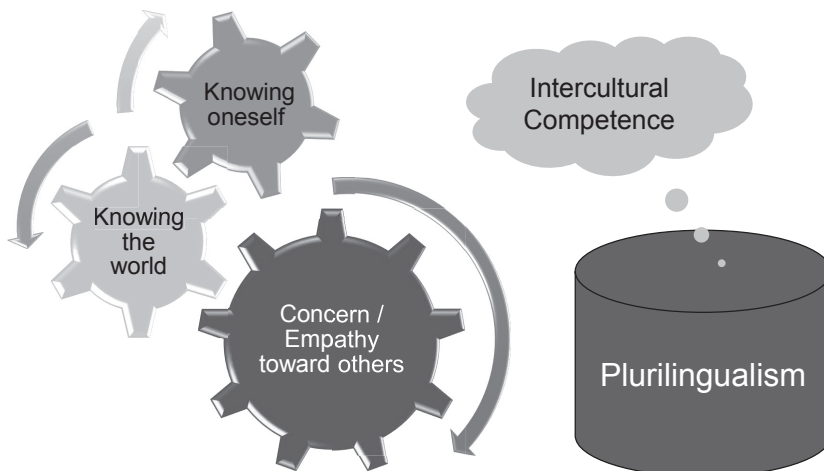
Element 3

Ability to understand
other cultures
A sense of identity as
a Japanese

"Strategy to foster global human resources"

<https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/global/1206011matome.pdf>

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION



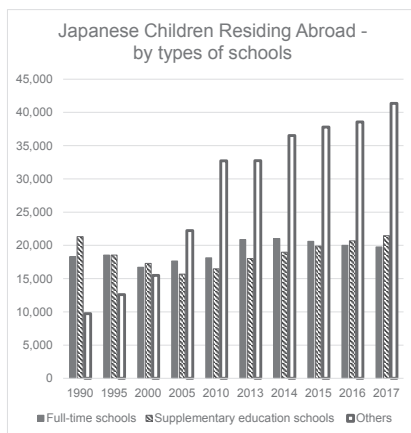
FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

...my dad is about to feed me a piece of bitter melon. Before he feeds it to me, he warns me that it is “dang” (Vietnamese for “bitter”). I eat it and understand what he means. The taste and the word become inseparable. So much so that when my college friend visited me and noticed the strange, wrinkly vegetable hanging in our backyard, I had difficulty explaining what it was in English. “Bitter”, technically the synonym of “dang”, didn’t seem accurate to me. “Bitter” didn’t describe my experience with this vegetable – “dang” did.

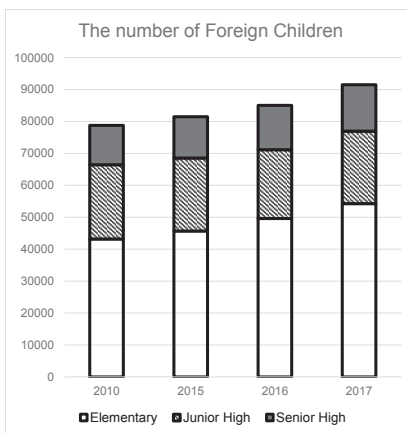
Dinh Xuan Phan, Vietnam-United States

Chiesa, Scott, & Hinton (eds.) (2012)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION



Adapted from
["http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/002/002b/1403130.htm"](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/002/002b/1403130.htm)



Adapted from
["http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/chousa01/kihon/1267995.htm"](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/chousa01/kihon/1267995.htm)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Cultural evolution has vastly outpaced biological evolution. ...

Now, we live in an interconnected world in which our actions have ripples in a broader global matrix. We need to extend our biologically based inclination for care to peoples in all corners of the world. Schools can play a key role in nurturing this cosmopolitan ethic of care.

And as Dewey put it, learning a foreign language fosters the “expansion of our own being” that enables cross-cultural empathy. This again underlines the importance of effective NNL education for developing global awareness, since, to say it with Wittgenstein; “The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”

Chiesa, Scott, & Hinton (eds.) (2012)

ENGLISH EDUCATION AT RITSUMEIKAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Strong Academic Foundation

Raising Global Citizens

Nurturing Open-mindedness

Ethics and Individuality



ENGLISH EDUCATION AT RITSUMEIKAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Let's make friends with children all over

- English as “subject” from Grade 1
- Two hours per week for G1 and G2, 3 hours per week from G3 (four hours for G5,6 from 2017)
- Team-teaching by a native English speaking teacher and a Japanese English teacher: two teachers for 15 children in the 4th and 5th grades
- English “Module Time,” twice a week in the morning
- Digital materials for electronic board made by teachers
- One tablet PC for each child

G6 TIMETABLE-RITSUMEIKAN

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Module	Calculation	Reading	English	Calculation	English	×
1 st Period	Japanese	Math	Social Studies	Science (Robotics)	PE	Japanese
2 nd Period	PE	Japanese	Japanese		ICT	Math
3 rd Period	Art	English	Math	English	Home Economics	Social Studies
4 th Period	Art	Social Studies	English	Ethics	Home Economics	HR
Lunch Time	School Lunch (Including preparation and cleanup)					Every other week
Cleaning	School cleaning as a group of different ages					
5 th Period	Math	Science	Music	PE	Library	
6 th Period	Integrated study	Science	Music	Math	Math	
Terakoya	Individual study support like Japan's small private school in the past					

G6 TIMETABLE-MEXT

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Module	※	※	※	※	※
1 st Period	○	○	○	○	○
2 nd Period	○	○	○	○	○
3 rd Period	○	○	○	○	○
4 th Period	○	○	○	○	○English
Lunch Time					
Module	※English	※	※English	※English	※
5 th Period	○	○	○	○	○
6 th Period	○	○English	○	○	○

Adapted from
["http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/01/31/1343704_01.pdf"](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/01/31/1343704_01.pdf)

ENGLISH EDUCATION AT RITSUMEIKAN PRIMARY SCHOOL



INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS



AFTER GRADUATION



WHAT IS IB?

Approaches to teaching / Approaches to learning

Studies in Language and Literature

Language Acquisition

Sciences

The Arts

Mathematics

Individuals and Societies

☆ Learning to “broaden students’ educational experience and challenge them to apply their knowledge and skills”

Theory of Knowledge / Creativity, Activity, Service / Extended Essay

Learner Profile
Inquirers / knowledgeable / thinkers / communicators / principled / open-minded / caring / risk-takers / balanced / reflective

Adapted from “Curriculum”
<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/>

TO FINISH

I believe that children are our future
Teachers are the heart of our future

Thank you for listening!

<http://www.lyric.net/artist/a052ba8/101e338.html>

(うきた きょうこ 宝塚大学看護学部)