

A Comparison of Japan's Approach to Foreign Language Education with that of Other Island Nations

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the place of foreign language education in Japan today and into the future, and investigate what can be learned from other countries. Research on countries with similarities to Japan's situation, namely Taiwan and Ireland, will be presented and recommendations will be made based on successful policies in those countries. Research includes observation of classes, examination of course material, interviews with teaching and training staff, and analysis of testing results.

Keywords : Japan, Taiwan, Ireland, International Ranking, Leaving Certificate, Languages Initiative, Elementary School, High School, English Language Education, Japanese Language Education

この研究では現在の日本の外国語教育を議論し、将来に向けて、他の国々から何を学ぶことができるかを調査しています。日本の教育状況に類似点がある国々の中から台湾、アイルランドの教育システムの研究を発表し、それらの国々で成功した方策に基づいて提言をします。研究の方法は授業の観察、教師およびトレーナーとの会談、教材の調査、統計の分析などが含まれています。

キーワード : 日本／台湾／アイルランド／国際ランキング／ Leaving Certificate ／ Languages Initiative ／ 小学校／高等学校／英語教育／日本語教育

1.0 Introduction

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Japan has been teaching English in its current form since 1977 at its junior high schools and high schools¹. It has invested a significant amount of money on Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)², who are hired from abroad and mainly provide language instruction in public junior and senior high school classrooms. Japanese teachers are the main teachers and use the ALTs at particular times to supplement their classes with authenticity. Japan is planning to introduce Eng-

lish classes for public elementary schools from 2011³ and, as government guidelines for such education remain vague, it is searching for an effective way to carry them out.

However, despite the huge amount of resources spent on English education, Japan is almost at the bottom of Asian countries who have their average TOEFL⁴ scores published by ETS⁵, coming 21st out of 24 countries in 2007 in their published research data.⁶ Some give reasons for this, with “language distance” being often cited as a major cause of average Japanese students not performing as well as their peers in other countries. It is true that language distance is greater for the Japanese people than for many other countries. One example of language distance is word order difference. The SVO pattern of English is frequently

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mirrored in many Asian languages, for example in Chinese, but the SOV (reversing the object and verb) pattern is found in Japanese.⁷

Another reason given for lack of rapid progress in English by Japanese students is relative geographical isolation. Japan is an island nation in eastern Asia with the Pacific Ocean to one side, and China, the Korean peninsula, Taiwan and Russia to the other. The case has been made that, despite significant trade with English speaking countries, the Japanese people cannot feel the urgency to learn English in such a geographical situation.

The English education system in Taiwanese elementary schools was researched and the findings compared to that of the Japanese system. The reason Taiwan was chosen was that, while it neighbors Japan and has a geographical isolation, international testing results and league tables for the Cambridge YLE⁸ showed that Taiwanese elementary school age students were outperforming their Japanese counterparts. In connection with this, public and private elementary school education will be discussed later. Furthermore, they are ahead of Japan in introducing English education in elementary schools, so Japan may have something to learn from their experience.⁹

However, while using Taiwan as comparison point for Japanese English language education allow us to compare two countries with a similar geographical situation, the question of language distance was still not addressed. Although there is a lot to learn from Taiwan's experience, another country was needed with which comparisons could be made.

Ireland was chosen as a second comparison point. It is an island country in Western Europe and has the Atlantic Ocean to one side and Britain and France to the east and south. English is the mother tongue of its people¹⁰, although various languages are offered as an optional part of the school curriculum. Since 2000, Japanese has been available as a subject in some high schools, examined at the state level with other subjects.

We have a situation in which a people, living in an island country similarly isolated as Japan, are learning

Japanese where their native language is English. Logically, the language distance of Japanese from English is the same as English from Japanese. Therefore, the language distance felt by the Irish when learning Japanese is the same as that felt by the Japanese when learning English. How have the Irish high school students fared with this new language on the state syllabus? The result, learning environment and methodology used to teach students are discussed.

2.0 Taiwan

Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, was designated a special English area by the government who instructed the National Taipei University of Education to begin a training program for potential teachers in. The professor in charge of this program is Dr. Chen, a Taiwanese.

Teachers and facilitators at public elementary schools in Taipei city and the surrounding county were interviewed. One private school was visited in a different county (Yi-Ling County). The head of the Taipei elementary school English language teacher training program at the National Taipei University of Education was also interviewed. In total, 9 elementary school English teachers, 1 professor and 2 facilitators were interviewed from 5 different schools and 1 university. The information below is based on information obtained at the interviews and during class observation (Appendix A, Appendix B).

It was found that the requirements to become an elementary school English teacher (or to remain one) were decided by the government to be the following:

1. Hold a bachelor degree or a master's degree.
2. Required training differed for students, members of the general public and current teachers:
 - ① Students: Pass the two year training program¹¹
 - ② Members of the public¹²: Pass the English proficiency test and do a 1 year training program.
 - ③ Current teachers: Pass the English proficiency test and do a 6 month training program.

3. Students had to obtain 600 points in the TOEFL paper test (or the CBT13 equivalent of over 213 points). Non-students were expected to get an equivalent in the initial proficiency test.

The government decided to make all elementary school English teacher positions full time, and on the same level as teachers of other subjects. This means that an English teacher is treated in the same way as a math teacher or a homeroom teacher. Part time teachers are not required and all staff are government employees, with the benefits that are attached to it. This led to a large number of applicants to the training program, as a government job with its related benefits is seen as attractive in Taipei. Students who carried out demonstration classes and passed the final tests were made elementary school teachers. Currently, about 0.6047% (one student in 160) passes the tests each year to become an elementary school teacher, with the others either trying again the next year or giving up.

2.1 Students' ability

The government asks the teachers not to encourage students to take outside tests, such as the Cambridge Young Learners Test¹⁴ while in elementary school. The observed ability of the students was high, and was estimated to be at least 2 grades (years) higher than that of the Japanese elementary school students we are familiar with in our city of Kanazawa. Looking at the level of English presented in their textbooks and comparing to those used in Japan, this opinion could be confirmed. However, without a method of evaluation, this remains just an opinion. Based on experience, both of the observers (both of whom are elementary school English teachers in Japan) thought that the level

was "higher" than that of Japanese elementary school children who receive English education as part of their curriculum.

Facts were needed to back up the opinions of the observers. Results of the Cambridge Young Learners English Test are published by the Cambridge ESOL, by country. The entry level¹⁵ of these tests is recommended to be taken by children who are between 7 and 12 years old. Countries which have over 400 applicants only are published and the results are broken down into each of the 4 skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Elementary school English teachers in Taiwan told us that students who take these tests most likely go to cram schools¹⁶ outside their English classes in school. It is also known that most of the students who take these tests go to cram schools (or "English conversation schools") in Japan¹⁷, which are also outside their English lessons. Although the quality of the cram schools has an effect, these results may also reveal the English education school students receive (or otherwise) at elementary school.

Using the available results from Cambridge ESOL, the following information could be seen (Table 1):

It can be seen that Taiwanese students score much higher on all skills than their Japanese counterparts. This tells us that either the quantity of English education or the quality of English education I elementary school, or both, is not sufficient in Japan. After elementary school English education is introduced in Japan in 2011, the results can be checked again to see if the cause of the above results was quantity or quality. The results should be taken a few years after 2011, to allow time for the education to take effect.

Table 1 Comparison of Japan and Taiwan average scores on the Cambridge Young Learners Test

Results 2007	Reading&Writing	Listening	Speaking
Maximum possible	5	5	5
Japan	2.725	3.32	3.873
Taiwan	4.057	4.069	4.584

Source: Cambridge Young Learners Statistics (2007), http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/research/grade-stats/2007/yle_s.html, retrieved October 19th, 2008

3.0 Ireland

The Republic of Ireland began teaching Japanese in high schools under the Post Primary Languages Initiative, began by the department of education in 2000. The Post-Primary Languages Initiative has been in place since September 2000 with the purpose of implementing the policy of the Department of Education & Science of diversifying, enhancing and expanding the teaching of languages in second-level schools. Italian, Japanese and Spanish were selected as the initial target languages - Spanish for the obvious reason that it is one of the three most widely spoken languages in the world; Italian for its accessibility and the cultural and business opportunities which it affords; Japanese as a gateway to Asian language and culture. In November 2001 Russian became the fourth target language in the project. Students had, before the Languages Initiative began, the opportunity to choose a foreign language and this was limited to French, German, and Italian. The Language Initiative expanded the choice of languages available to students.

The Irish department of education's guidelines are in force over the whole country, so each school has follows the same rules and works to the same standards. This is different than the situation in Taiwan (where Taipei City is a special English area), and Japan (where local governments can be a step ahead of the government. However, in Ireland, the teaching content of the subjects in the Languages Initiative in the first year of high school education is left up to the teachers to decide. In the following years until graduation, the 2nd and 3rd years of high school, the departments' guidelines must be followed closely.

Places visited were the capital, Dublin¹⁸ and the city of Cork¹⁹, in the south. The percentage of Irish born people (over 3 years old) who speak English as a first language is over 99% in both cities (Census, 2006). Teachers from two schools were interviewed and their classes observed. Following that, the Languages Initiative Coordinator's opinions were also asked. It was found that all three gave the same information and this reflects the effectiveness of guideline communication by the government. This may be an advantage of

Ireland's small size and population (5.98 million). The results of the interview can be found in Appendix C.

Not all schools offer Japanese language education. Some offer Russian, Polish, Estonian, etc. The greatest factor deciding the language that is offered is the availability of teachers. If a Russian teacher is available in a school's area, that school may offer Russian, and similarly for other languages. In Cork, for example, 2 teachers are available to teach Japanese in the city and the surrounding hinterland. Therefore, any school in Cork which decides to offer Japanese may do so, after negotiating the class times with the department of education and the teacher.

Japanese language education in Ireland begins in the fourth year of secondary school, referred to as Transition Year²⁰. This is equivalent to first year of high school in Japan, but is not as focused on examinations. All students take the Japanese class and education begins with teaching about culture. The first Japanese class of the year was observed. In the first class, students are asked what they know about Japan and this is expanded on by the teacher. Students are then asked what they would like to learn about Japan during the year. It was noticed that most topics chosen by the students were topics in the prescribed textbook, which students hadn't yet seen, or that the teacher guided them toward mentioning those topics. There were some outliers and these were also written on the blackboard along with the others. The teacher told the students that the contents of the Japanese course for the year would be what were written on the board. There was a feeling of satisfaction in the class when this was said, as the students felt that their needs and desires were being taken into account. The content of the Japanese classes does not include the writing systems (katakana, hiragana and kanji²¹) in the first year.

Students can choose to continue Japanese language education when they begin 2nd year of high school, or they can decide to drop it as a subject. The number of students who choose to continue to study Japanese is about 20% (1 in 5 students). The reason given by the teachers for this low number is that students have an impression that the writing system is too difficult, or

that they feel that they would not become a capable enough user of Japanese to perform well in the Leaving Certificate²².

The students who continue to take Japanese for their final 2 years (high school 2nd and 3rd grade) do so with a view to getting as high a score as possible in the Leaving Certificate Examination. They must master the hiragana and katakana writing systems in that time, as well as learn 100 kanji. The system is explained as being a communicative system. While it has been shown that the communicative approach only does not seem to be optimal for language students (Yoneda, Lynch, Woods, 2008), when combined with a skills based style of education as well as being offered as an elective subject, it seems to work well. While the Japanese government's ideas of a communicative approach seemed to focus around speaking, the Irish department of education's idea of a communicative approach seems to be one which involves using all four skills to communicate. The following describes the communicative approach in the Languages Initiative:

“The syllabus is “communicative” in the sense that it is based on the purposes to which learners are likely to want, need, or expect to put the knowledge and skills they acquire in class, and in the sense that the objectives detailed in the syllabus are expressed in terms of language use. Teaching about the target language and culture also features together with the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.” *National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2004*

Teacher training is heavily emphasized in the Lan-

guages Initiative. The teachers interviewed, an Irish national and a Japanese national, had both returned from a 6 week summer training program in Tokyo. This was paid for by the Irish government and was organized by the Languages Initiative. A similar training schedule is planned for every teacher, every year. Teachers teach alone, i.e. do not have teaching assistants. They both have government recognized teaching qualifications and are highly proficient in Japanese, being either native speakers of the language or having graduated from a Japanese program in university.

After the initial year of learning about Japanese society and culture, the students have 2 years of learning the language, including grammar, the writing system and context of usage. They then do the Leaving Certificate just before graduating. The Leaving Certificate has 2 levels for most subjects, ordinary level and higher level (math has 3 levels), with higher level being the more difficult of the two. As Table 2 shows, the percentage of students who chose higher level Japanese in 2008²³ is 100% of the total. The number of students (of the total number) who get a “B” or more in higher level Japanese is 64.7%. This is higher than in other languages introduced either before or in the Languages Initiative²⁴.

3.1 Reasons for higher competence in Japanese

Teachers gave the reasons students' scores being higher in Japanese as:

1. Japanese is a more exotic language to students than European languages are. This gives it a “cool” factor among students. They like to talk about it and use it between themselves. This feeds into motivation and results in higher scores.

Table 2 Percentage breakdown of candidates by grade awarded in Japanese.

Level	Year	Total Students	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
			90%+	85%+	80%+	75%+	70%+	65%+	60%+	55%+	50%+	45%+	40%+	25+	10+	>10
Higher	2008	99	30.3	5.1	11.1	10.1	8.1	6.1	12.1	8.1	0	2	2	5.1	0	0
Ordinary	2008	0														

Source: State Examination Board, http://www.examinations.ie/statistics/statistics_2008/nat_stats_2008n.pdf, p5

2. Partly because of the above, students have made websites and blogs relating to learning the Japanese language at the Leaving Certificate level. These serve as help for students who are having difficulty. A vibrant community of young, technically savvy Japanese learners has quickly developed and has increased the awareness of the Japanese language, society and culture.
3. Japanese is an optional course. The number of students who choose Japanese is low (20% of those who took it compulsorily in the first year of high school chose to continue). Those who choose to do it feel a responsibility to see it through to the end and get a good score. The small class size also helps in teaching.
4. Giving students a taste of the course for one year helps the students to make an informed decision on whether they would like to continue or not.
5. The department's role in giving Japanese the same status as that of other subjects is an important factor. Students can gain points if they get a good score in Japanese. As they are all starting at the same point (zero), and the goal is in a manageable time frame (2 years), so they find it easier to plan for a good score. In the case of other languages, for example, Irish, some students may find they have poorer ability than others by the time they reach high school and may be discouraged because of the gap between their level and the level expected for the higher level Leaving Certificate Irish paper. Many end up choosing the ordinary level paper. This is in spite of studying the Irish language for 13 years.

3.2 Level of the Leaving Certificate Examination

Past papers of the Leaving Certificate Examination of Japanese are available from booksellers or from the government²⁵. They are also available online²⁶. The level of the examinations, in terms of the CEF, is not given. However, according to the Japanese teachers, the higher level is comparable to the JLPT²⁷ level 4

but is more difficult in some areas as the language is tested actively in the Leaving Certificate, while being only passively tested in the JLPT. The Leaving Certificate examination is more demanding in that students have to write a short essay, give written answers instead of multiple choice ones, and an oral exam is included²⁸ (not included in the JLPT).

3.3 Failures of the Irish education language system

The success of the Japanese language in Ireland needs to be contrasted with the state of the Irish language there. Ireland has been teaching the Irish language as a compulsory subject in its schools since the early days of the Irish Free State (established in 1922)²⁹. Ireland's constitution states that Irish is the main language, with English being the second³⁰. Despite this, the vast majority of Irish people do not speak Irish well. While most receive 13 to 14 years of Irish language education, holding a basic conversation in the language is often an impossible task. This failure of the Irish language system is documented in a book on compulsory Irish education by Dr. Aiden Kelly³¹. In his book, he explains why the Irish language education failed due to being compulsory for all students. "The (Irish language education) policy increasingly became associated in the public mind with compulsion and examination and resentment built up over the necessity of passing Irish in order to be awarded school Leaving Cert examinations or to qualify for state employment," he says. It seems that the failure of the Irish language was due to the compulsory studying of the subject, while, in contrast, studying the Japanese language as an option after an initial compulsory year seems to be a reason for success.

Attempts have been made to improve the situation, with extra credit being offered for students who opt to do all examinations through the Irish language (e.g., writing a history paper using the Irish language instead of the English one). However, most students do not have the ability to make that a consideration. The University of Limerick awards up to 40 bonus points for mathematics (Higher Level) in an increasing scale of points starting at 5 bonus points for a C3 continuing

up to 40 for an A1 grade. This is an attempt to correct the recent decline in demand for scientific subjects (in 2007, 16.5% of students attempted the Mathematics (Higher Level) paper)³². A system such as this has also been discussed for the Irish language, but it is not received the same level of support from colleges or industry as mathematics has done, possibly due to the relative lack of connection with the economy or with international affairs.

4.0 Conclusions

A comparison could be made between elementary school English education in Japan and that of Taiwan. Although the education is not in all elementary public schools in Japan yet, it is being taught in public schools in some areas and will be taught in all schools from 2011.

There were also lessons to be learned from the Irish experience in teaching languages in high school, especially from the success of the Japanese language as part of the Languages Initiative and from the failure of the Irish language education system.

4.1 Lessons learned from Taiwan for implementation in Japanese elementary school education from 2011

Comparing Japanese English education in elementary school with that in Taiwan led to a number of recommendations (Appendix C). The main points are written here.

1. English teachers should be specialist teachers who are very proficient in English.
2. Do not accept people who have applied to be English teachers if they do not meet the standards.
3. English teachers should be full-time, well paid and have job security
4. English teachers should be taken from:
 - i. The university student population.
 - ii. Current teachers.
 - iii. The general population (working in other industries).
 - iv. Foreign workers who are skilled teachers

and are proficient in Japanese.

5. Team-teaching is not necessary if the English teacher is proficient in L1 and L2 English and is well trained.
6. A room dedicated to English education only should be used.
7. English education should start in 1st grade of elementary school and be held for a minimum of 2x40 minute periods per week.
8. Educational goals (concrete, not just wordy statements) should be drawn up by the MOE³³, and translated further into smaller, meaningful goals/skills to be achieved.
9. Continuity of education could be achieved by elementary school teachers meeting junior high school teachers. Workshops could also be held at the time.
10. The government should set an English test to be taken by students at a certain grade in elementary school (e.g. grade 4) for the whole country, and recommend against outside testing.
11. A list of English books and materials to be used should be drawn up by the government.
12. A reward system is important as student participation is essential for language education.
13. English should be taught as a serious subject, as important as the other subjects. It is not "play time" and not learned without hard work.

4.2 The lessons learned (from the Irish experience) to be implemented at junior high school and high school in Japan

There were also lessons to be learned from the Irish experience, especially from the failure of its Irish language education system and the relative success of its Japanese language system. As the success in English is regarded as very important in this era of globalization, a longer term of study is advocated for English education in Japan than is used for Japanese education in Ireland.

1. English education should be compulsory from the first year of elementary school until gradu-

ation from junior high school. It should then be an optional subject for high school. This would allow students not interested in the language to focus on other things, and allow teachers to spend more time with interested, focused students. Resources could be moved to elementary school if fewer students took the subject at high school.

2. Students should be given a say in what they would like to study in as far as it is possible. This would make them more interested in the subject.
3. Use only highly qualified teaching staff. The teacher should be very proficient in English.
4. A teacher should be regarded by others as just that, regardless of nationality. However, this is dependent on accepting only highly qualified staff. It is often expected of a foreigner to give a more entertaining class than a Japanese national would, and for the Japanese national to teach basic skills like grammar more solidly. The expectations of a teacher in Ireland is the same, regardless of nationality. If all teachers are highly qualified, they should all be capable of the same job.
5. Regular training should be put in place for all English teachers. This training should involve testing and incentives.
6. If students do not do the work required, they should fail the subject. There is no retake of exams in the Leaving Certificate. This is usually also the case for regular examinations in school. Japan needs to think about the same policy of letting its students fail regular examinations in high school and have the students either learn from the experience, or decide to use their energy in other subjects.

English education in Japan has a lot to learn from that in other countries. A major point to be considered is to raise the standard of English of its teachers, at all levels, and to keep it high. Comprehensive training and retraining needs to be put into place. The

compulsory nature of English for all students also has to be considered, especially at high school. In short, students should begin their English education at a younger age in a more serious way, and be given the option to finish receiving that education once they have reached the maturity to make that decision, in their mid-teens.

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6.0 Appendix:

6.1 Appendix A

Questions and observation points for the Taiwan Research Trip, (Feb 2008) and the Irish Research Trip (Sep 2008)

Taiwan Questionnaire Results (6 schools)

Irish Questionnaire Results (2 schools and one government office)

Taiwan	
<i>There were 5 elementary schools (schools 1, 3, 4, 5, 6) and one university (school 2). Two elementary schools were in Taipei city, two were in the Taipei county area. They were private schools, ultimately controlled by the government. One elementary school (school 6) was a private school in a different county, as indicated. Some schools/the university are not mentioned below in some of the questions in the case where the question was not answered or was irrelevant. Shown is a summary of the main points of the interviews. The audio was recorded for some of the interviews and are available, on request. School 1, 3, 4: Video clips of the classes are available, on request.</i>	
<u>School 1:</u>	<u>Taipei Municipal Guang Fu Primary School (Taipei City)</u> – 2 teachers interviewed. Class observation.
<u>School 2:</u>	<u>National Taipei University of Education (Taipei City)</u> – Professor in charge of Education and the teacher training program for Taipei, Dr. Chen, was interviewed. No class observation. See Appendix B for a more detailed interview.
<u>School 3:</u>	<u>Taipei Municipal Yin Chiao Primary School (Taipei City)</u> – 1 teacher interviewed. Class observation.
<u>School 4:</u>	<u>Chung-Chang Elementary School (Taipei County school)</u> – 3 teachers interviewed. Class observation.
<u>School 5:</u>	<u>Chung-He Elementary School (Taipei County school)</u> (Set up by the Japanese over a century ago) – 3 teachers and 1 facilitator interviewed. No class observation.
<u>School 6:</u>	<u>Chung Dau International School (Yi-Ling County)</u> <i>Private School</i> – 1 facilitator interviewed. No class observation.
Ireland	
<i>There were 2 high schools (schools A, B) and one government office (school C). The answers were recorded and put together, due to the similarity of the results. In cases where replies differed, it is indicated below.</i>	
<u>School A:</u>	<u>Colaiste Muire, Cobe (Cork County)</u> – 1 teacher interviewed. Class observation.
<u>School B:</u>	<u>Scoil Dabheid (Cork City)</u> – 1 teacher interviewed. No class observation.
<u>School C:</u>	<u>Government office of The Languages Initiative (Dublin)</u> – Person in charge of education and the teacher training program was interviewed. No class observation
<u>Not all schools answered all questions.</u>	

Questions:	A. English/Japanese as public education
1.	Is English/Japanese compulsory in Taiwan/Ireland? If so, for which levels is it compulsory?
School 2:	Yes, at all levels. In Taiwan, elementary school English education is compulsory from 3 rd grade. It is recommended from 1 st grade. Taipei city is a special region and has more funding for education than other areas. Elementary school English education is regarded as compulsory for Taipei City. Funding for English education is provided by the local governments. Taipei City has the funding for and access to good staff and facilities. Some areas of Taiwan are agricultural and are not able to fund a good educational system. They have English education, but sometimes it is very basic. Therefore, elementary school English education happens from 1 st grade up in Taipei City (richer local government), while in the countryside the agricultural districts cannot afford to start English education until 3 rd grade (at elementary school). Even then, it is of higher quality in Taipei compared to the countryside.
School 1, 3:	Taipei City – from 1 st grade.
School 4:	Taipei County school, so English is taken from grade 3.
School 5:	Taipei County school, but all grades took English education.
School 6:	Private bilingual school. All grades have English Education
School A, B, C:	No, not for all schools. It is compulsory where a school has put in place a Japanese program, but only for the 1 st year of high school. Then it becomes an optional subject.
2.	How many class hours do students have (per week)? How long is one class?
School 1:	2 x 40 minutes (grades 1-6)
School 2:	2x 40 minutes. Better schools have 4or5 x 40 minutes. These schools are about 20% of the schools in Taipei.
School 3:	2 x 40 minutes (grades 1-6)
School 4:	80 minutes (from grade 3). No classes for grades 1 and 2. (We saw the 80 minutes being taught consecutively, not split into 2 classes).
School 5:	Grade 1-2: 1x40 minutes, Grade 3-6: 2 x 40 minutes
School 6:	20 classes per week x 40 minutes (various subjects (science, etc) taught in English)
School A, B, C:	2 x 45 minutes.
3.	Who teaches the class?
School 1, 3, 4, 5:	A Taiwanese teacher (alone)
School 6:	Foreign teachers teach 7 classes (using English only), Taiwanese teachers teach 13 classes, using English but also some Chinese. Foreign teachers come mainly from South Africa, and a Canadian teacher is also present.
School A, B, C:	A person with high proficiency in Japanese who holds a (government) recognized teaching license for high schools.
4.	How were the teachers trained?
School 1:	A prospective teacher needs to graduate from university, on either a degree course or a master's course. In the past, there was not an official preference for the type of masters but now there is an official preference for a prospective teacher to have majored in English (although it is still not essential). After graduation, in order to become an elementary school teacher, they study for 2 more years at the National Taipei University of Education (under Dr. Chen). One of the subjects they have to take during this time psychology. They take oral tests, written tests and have to do demonstration practical classes. This is very difficult (according to Ms. Rachael and Ms. Won) and lower than 0.6047% (one student in 160) passes the tests to become an elementary school teacher (data source: Ms. Won). I omitted to ask if the teachers can retake the exams again and again, which may account a little for the very low pass figure.
School 3:	College lectures taught her how to teach 4 skills. Government provides workshops. English teachers have many opportunities to interact with each other in the school as well as with homeroom teachers. They discuss with the homeroom teachers the contents of the class. Homeroom teachers provide support regarding behavior in the classroom.

School 4:	All teachers (we met) had cram school backgrounds and we confirmed that one teacher had a master's degree.																								
School 5:	Teachers studied for one year and took a government examination to become a teacher. (They came from other professions not related directly to teaching). They were the first group of trainees to become primary school English teachers under the elementary school English program. They learned pronunciation, teaching and reading skills in their studies. Other teachers who already were teaching in a school got 6-12 credits to become an English teacher (need 20 credits to become a teacher, so that appears to have reduced the course to about 6 months for those existing teachers). The one year teacher training course was designed by the same group who designed the shorter course, i.e. the one the existing teachers took. They studied at the Taipei Normal University. They first did a proficiency test, and then entered the teacher training program. The course is called "How to teach English in Elementary School".																								
School 6:	New teachers watch lessons from the back, and also review the lesson plans. When they teach, the supervisor watches their lessons and reviews their lessons plans. The supervisor gives ideas and suggestions on how to improve a lesson.																								
School A, B, C:	Teachers from Ireland must have a university degree, with an added higher diploma for teaching in high schools. The university degree must have included Japanese as a foreign language. Teachers from Japan must have a university degree and a teaching license for high schools. Both receive yearly training updates, in Ireland and in Japan. They also receive separate initial training from the Languages Initiative program.																								
5.	What are teacher's qualifications like: (TOEIC, JLPT, etc.)?																								
School 1:	They need the TOEFL test. A figure of between 200 and 300 (CBT) was mentioned by Ms. Won, and agreed to by Ms. Rachael. TOEIC is not necessary, nor did it seem important to the teachers.																								
School 2:	Dr. Chen said a TOEFL (paper test) figure of 600 or more was needed. (See TOEFL comparison chart, below) (Since 1998): They need to get a BA (some get an MA), recommended to be in English. Then they have 2 years of English teaching instruction, followed by tests including a TOEFL test. They then serve 1 year as an intern before becoming teachers.																								
School 3:	A TOEFL score of 213 (CBT) is needed for teachers to teach English.																								
School 4:	None mentioned.																								
School 5:	High English proficiency needed. No test mentioned																								
School 6:	All teachers have a government recognized qualification. Foreign teachers must have a teaching license recognized by the Taiwan MOE. The Taiwanese teachers must also meet the MOE standards. That is the reason they need to source from South Africa – as teachers in America rarely seem to have the required license.																								
School A, B, C:	Non-native speaker must have at least JLPT level 3, with at least a year of having lived in Japan. Native Japanese speakers need the teaching license mentioned in question four (above).																								
	<p>TOEFL Comparison Chart:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Paper</td> <td>350</td> <td>400</td> <td>450</td> <td>500</td> <td>550</td> <td>600</td> <td>650</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CBT</td> <td>63</td> <td>97</td> <td>133</td> <td>173</td> <td>213</td> <td>250</td> <td>280</td> </tr> <tr> <td>iBT</td> <td>20</td> <td>32</td> <td>45</td> <td>61</td> <td>80</td> <td>100</td> <td>115</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Paper – Paper Test, CBT – Computer Based Test, iBT – Internet Based Test</i> Source: TOEFL website (www.ets.org)</p>	Paper	350	400	450	500	550	600	650	CBT	63	97	133	173	213	250	280	iBT	20	32	45	61	80	100	115
Paper	350	400	450	500	550	600	650																		
CBT	63	97	133	173	213	250	280																		
iBT	20	32	45	61	80	100	115																		
6.	Who decides the curriculum?																								
School 1:	Ms. Won and Ms. Rachael said "The MOE".																								
School 2:	Later, Dr. Chen said the MOE lays the framework, but the curriculum is decided by each teacher and school with the city government.																								
School 3:	The government sets the guidelines but teachers have opportunity to choose the textbook they like. Discuss the textbooks with other teachers.																								

School 4:	The teachers do. They discuss it together. They choose their own books. They choose the books from the government approved list.
School 5:	Study goal and what to learn is decided by the MOE. Teachers choose books.
School 6:	The school decides themselves.
School A, B, C:	The Language Initiative, under the auspices of the Department of Education
7.	<u>What are the textbooks like?</u>
School 1:	Different versions are available to choose from. Once a series is decided, the class follows that series all the way up.
School 3:	Each grade could use different series of textbooks, depending on the students' level and proficiency. Books are locally produced, and verified for use by the MOE. Using a book called "Hello Darbie!" book 4 for the 3 rd grade class. They just started using this series this year, but have skipped books 1, 2, and 3, starting from book 4.
School 4:	Similar to the school 3 book, with more emphasis on phonics. They have a number of books at one level of the series, e.g. student book, workbook, quiz book.
School 6:	Non-English subject textbooks are the same as those used by native English speaking children. However, they use books from Asia (Singapore) for subjects like math, as it is of a higher standard than North America. English books are imported from America or, sometimes if the cost is too high, they import books produced in Asia (Singapore). We noticed a publisher they use for some of their non-English subject books (science) is McGraw Hill/Macmillan.
School A, B, C:	Books are authored and published in Ireland, under the directions of the Department of Education. Three books are being used by the students, Katakana Kantan, Hiragana Kantan, and Nihongo Kantan. (ISBN: 0 946452199 , ISBN: 0 9548677-3-4 , ISBN: 0-9548677-7-7 respectively)
8.	<u>What are the teaching materials like?</u>
School 4:	Used pre-prepared boards, cards, sentence strips. Much more emphasis on word cards than on picture cards.
School 6:	Native speaker level.
9.	<u>How is the teacher's working condition?—salary, teaching load, preparation time, etc.</u>
School 1:	The salary is average; they get the same salary as teachers of other subjects. The job is a tenured position, essentially a government position. Salary rises according to experience and years on the job. Teaching load is 21 classes per week, the rest of the time going to planning, preparation and correction of exams.
School 3:	A working week is from Monday to Friday.
School 5:	No difference in conditions between teachers within a school. They did mention that there is a difference between public and private schools. Private school teachers have higher pay.
School 6:	Foreign teachers have 22 classes a week. Taiwanese teachers have 20 hours a week. The rest of the time is used for preparation. Salaries are higher than in public schools.
School A, B, C:	Hired by the Department of Education. However, Japanese is still in a transitional phase so teachers have some uncertainty about the future. Teaching hours are 16 class hours a week, salary is the same as other teachers, rising according to experience and years on the job. The rest of the hours is taken up by travel time between schools, planning, preparation and correction of exams.
10.	<u>Does your school support English/Japanese outside the classroom?</u>
School 3:	Had English signs all over the school. They have a system where every Tuesday the children have to say the "English Password" before entering the school. The password list is displayed in the classroom, for example, "Good morning". All the school helps with this.
School 4:	Some (minimal) English signage around the school.
School A, B, C:	No, they don't.
11.	<u>What is the "connection/consistency" like between different levels of schools? (i.e. how do they pick up where the last school left off – transition)</u>

School 1:	It is a nine-year ladder system (persistence of education system). This supports students from when they enter elementary school until they complete junior high school. (Note: According to Dr. Chen, it is a K-9 system. The curriculum starts in kindergarten, and finishes in junior high school).
School 2:	They have a K-9 education standard system, requiring them to master (in 4 skills) the contents of one level before progressing to the next. This information is given to the junior high school to continue.
School 3:	For higher grades, have more quizzes and tests for students to prepare for junior high school. For consistency, every year the junior high school teachers in Taipei city come to the school and have a meeting with the elementary school English teachers.
School 5:	Meeting every semester, but they don't think it helps a lot. They have also experienced situations where kids relearn the basics in junior high school.
School 6:	Not an issue yet. The bilingual elementary school is very new (started last year, from an existing regular school base). They will start at the elementary school and move up gradually until the plan reaches as far as high school.
School A, B, C:	Not applicable.
12.	<u>Do students use L1 in English/Japanese class?</u>
School 1:	Teachers use very little Chinese (Dr. Chen: There is a rule not to use Chinese), students in grades 1-3 and 4-6 do not differ in their use of Chinese in English class – they all use a little Chinese. (Judging by Ms. Rachael's expression, she wished they would use less Chinese in English class). They use half English-half Chinese in class. They occasionally use English when speaking to each other.
School 3:	Yes, they do.
School 4:	Yes, a lot.
School 5:	Lower grades use more Chinese than upper grades.
School 6:	Some, but not much.
School A, B, C:	Yes
13.	<u>Do they teach reading/writing as well as oral skills?</u>
School 1,3,5:	Yes. 4 skills based education.
School 4:	No conversation, although the teacher said she teaches 6 skills. Listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar and culture. Another teacher said she teaches 2 groups of skills. She teaches input skills first, namely listening and reading (in that order). Following this output skills, writing and speaking (in that order) are taught.
School 6:	Yes, 4 skills education.
School A, B, C:	4 skills based education.
14.	<u>What is the goal of English/Japanese education?</u>
School 1:	See the MOE manual for this information.
School 3:	For her (personally), the students will learn English for a long time so, in elementary school, she hopes the students can enjoy learning English as well as learning something (not only fun and games). For higher graders, she asks them to learn more words because it is important for them.
School 5:	For Taiwan's economy, to broaden the minds of the children. To see the world through an English window. To have cultural perspectives. Taiwan does a lot of business with other countries, so it is important. It is the best tool for communication with the world (commercially or culturally). (School 5, lower grade teacher). If you can't read or write well, it is ok. It is important to speak and have fun. Just get the words out, even if you make mistakes. Make them feel interested in English and never think about big goals or future goals that are far in the distance.
School A, B, C:	To make students more internationally minded. The Department of Education also hopes that a percentage of students who take Japanese at Leaving Certificate level will continue and become proficient enough in the language to give Ireland an economic advantage.
15.	<u>How do you evaluate their education in the short term/long term?</u>

School 1:	They use quizzes and tests. These tests are not public tests, they make them themselves or use/adapt tests from the textbooks. They evaluate both short term and long term progress.
School 3:	In Taipei city, everyone takes a listening, reading and writing test when in grades 4 and 6. The test is a government test and it is free. Practice tests are available in book stores. It is called the 台北市英語學習評量. (Translated as the Taipei City English Learning Evaluation).
School 5:	The higher grades have a 30 minute quiz every 2 weeks (listening, reading and writing), after every unit. They get a midterm test and an end of term test.
School 6:	2 formal exams, mid-term and end-of-term. The exams are 3 skills only (listening, reading and writing). Speaking is evaluated during class.
School A, B, C:	Short quizzes are used in the first year. Examinations use the Leaving Certificate style from the 2 nd year of high school.
16.	<u>Do children participate well in class?</u>
School 1, 3:	Yes, they all do. This is due to having rewards (both teachers emphasized this).
School 4:	We observed high levels of concentration and participation for the whole 80 minutes.
School 6:	Yes, they get rewards, and they are interested in talking to the foreign teachers.
School A, B, C:	Most students are very enthusiastic, as they have chosen the course as an option. Students taking the mandatory first year Japanese course are also enthusiastic as they see it as an exotic subject.
17.	<u>Do children like English/Japanese? –Do teachers ever care about that?</u>
School 1:	It depends on the day/ class content. Children like English when they can do activities, and are not so keen about tests. Teachers acknowledge this but view it as a normal part of education. They do not worry too much about it. They concentrate on children getting satisfaction from good results and also the reward system. (Note: Dr. Chen said that games produce children who do not view English as a real subject, thus, when they go on to junior high, they perform even worse than students who have never studied English at all. This is because they cannot change their view of English from a “fun, easy, not serious subject” to a “serious subject with goals and rewards”. See that interview for more on this point).
School 3:	YES! (to both questions). Teachers make sure the classes are fun as well as content driven.
School 6:	Yes, students seem to enjoy the classes and school staff monitor and evaluate the teachers’ classes. Staff make recommendations to make sure there are enough activities to keep the students motivated.
18.	<u>Do they have assignments? If so, what kind?</u>
School 1:	Quizzes, tests and games. (Note: This contrasts with what Dr. Chen says in her interview).
School 3:	Teachers have them listen to CDs, and ask them questions to check if they have listened to the CD. They don’t give students heavy assignments. Teachers tell them if they listen to the CD at home, they will learn more quickly and will have more time to play.
School 4:	A detailed list of homework is given. Students take note of this carefully, and are given time (in the middle of the 80 minute class) to do this.
School A, B, C:	See question 14.
19.	<u>Do they go to cram/language schools outside school?</u>
School 1:	Yes. They speak more English at the cram schools.
School 3:	Quite a few. There is a trend for children to go to cram schools in Taipei.
School 4:	More than 70% of children do.
School 5:	Maybe 60% of children go to cram schools (higher grades).
School 6:	No, they don’t. It is school policy not to allow that, and this is explained to the parents.
School A, B, C:	Most students do not, although about 10% get lessons (a teacher who comes to their house).
20.	<u>To what do the teachers pay attention to keep the children’s motivation for English/Japanese?</u>
School 1:	Reward system. Tangible rewards.

School 3:	Uses a competition reward system (boys vs. girls). Both teams seem evenly balanced. Doesn't keep the scores to save up points for tangible rewards or for their grades.
School 4:	Used group competition.
School 6:	Reward system and activities.
School A, B, C:	Focusing on culture seems to keep their motivation. No special rewards system is used.
21.	<u>Does language distance/difference affect the students L2 production?</u>
School 1:	There was a split opinion on this. Ms. Rachael said there was no real language distance between English and Chinese. Mr. Won said there was and that it affected the students' production of English. (They started speaking Chinese with each other to discuss this further). They concluded that the language distance was not so large, so it was not a big problem. Some problems caused by word order were given by Ms. Won: 1. In Chinese, the adjective often comes at the beginning of the sentence, so students often do the same in English. (Ms. Rachael said that was a rare case in Chinese, and that she could not agree fully with this example). 2. Commonly used language can show differences from the norm in Chinese, and that is carried over by the student into English. For example: The Chinese word order causes the students to say "too me", when they mean "me, too" (私も) in English.
School 3:	Instead of "I like you very much", they say "I very like you" Pronunciation is also affected, although Chinese and English have some phonetic similarities. For example, the children when trying to say "3", they say "see", not "three". There is no 'th' sound in Chinese.
School 4:	They pay attention to phonic problems.
School 5:	They gave an example of a famous English professor in Taiwan (Jang Shian Junn). She sent her daughter to a bilingual kindergarten. She regrets doing so as it has stifled her mother tongue development as well as affecting her focus in English class.
School 6:	It influences them for the first and second year of education. After that, the problem solves itself. The languages separate themselves. However, she mentioned that the students' level of Chinese is higher in schools where monolingual education is carried out.
School A, B, C:	It has a huge influence at this level and age.
Questions:	B. Language Use and Society (Some questions refer to Taiwan only)
1.	<u>Is English/Japanese being used in everyday situations? If so, how much and where?</u>
School 1:	No, not really. However, advertisements (both on the street, and on public transport) are often in English and this means the students always have a chance to see English being used. The school is in the city so they see these things every day. Students in schools outside big cities like Taipei do not have this influence.
School 3:	No.
School 6:	Often the parents can speak English very well, which is why they send them to the school. The parents help them with their homework and speak to them in English if possible.
School A, B, C:	No.
2.	<u>Do they have TV shows in English especially for children?</u>
School 1:	Yes. Not a lot but the ones they have are quite famous. They have ones made in Taiwan and foreign ones (like Sesame Street).
School 3:	A TV show for children called "E-for-kids".
School A, B, C:	No.
3.	<u>How important is English/Japanese in Taiwan/Ireland?</u>
School 1:	It is important to get a good job.
School 3:	Very important.
School A, B, C:	Not important in general society.
4.	<u>Is there "language divide" in business? (salary, status, etc).</u>

School 1:	English is necessary. In some cases, if you don't speak English, then you cannot get the job. It is seen as a part of the hiring process. It affects getting a job, your salary and your status.
School 3:	Most people want to take tests like TOEIC because they think it helps them find a job they like. People who speak English have more opportunities.
5.	<u>Is English used in classes like social studies, music, etc?</u>
School 1:	No, very little or none.
School 3:	No.
School 5:	No.
6.	<u>Do parents talk (or, at least, try to talk) in English?</u>
School 1:	Yes, they do. They try a lot! Ms. Rachael said that, to some parents, English is more important than Chinese. This has an effect on their Chinese ability. (She seemed worried about that).
School 3:	Most parents in Taiwan communicate in Taiwanese or Chinese. There are some parents who try to communicate in English to help their children. Most parents ask their children to spend more time on English because they think that English is important for them.
School 5:	Probably more educated parents are more involved. Some parents have no involvement in their children's English education.
School 6:	Yes, they do.
7.	<u>Do parents have any input or concerns regarding education?</u>
School 5:	These days parents don't want teachers to push their students too hard. This is a new development, it used not be so.
School 6:	Yes, they have expressed the concern that their children get too much homework.
8.	<u>Is a language type preferred, e.g. American/British English?</u>
School 1:	American English.
School 3:	American English is used in elementary school.
Questions:	C. Testing, using the Cambridge Young Learners English (CYLE) Tests and the CEFR
1.	<u>Who takes CYLE Tests?</u>
School 1:	Maybe some cram schools.
School 3:	In Taipei city, the government asks us not to encourage students to take such tests but most cram schools give students the opportunity to take these kinds of tests. Schools in general don't do these tests.
School 6:	As many of the students who wish.
2.	<u>Is CYLE popular?</u>
School 1:	They don't think so. GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) is popular, but it is not taken by elementary school students. It is taken by junior high school students. Having a good GEPT score helps the student to enter a good high school.
School 2:	These are not appropriate for Taiwan; she feels it is for native speakers of English, or for those who have languages close to English. (Dr. Chen's comment on school 1's above usage of "good high school"): The top high schools are public high schools in Taipei, and the top students (who enter those schools) come from public junior high schools. However, it is not fair to say that the private system is worse than the public system. The number of private schools is relatively few; therefore the ratio of good students who come from public junior high schools will be higher than those from private schools, all else being equal.
3.	<u>Does the Council of Europe Framework influence your education system?</u>
School 2:	Council of Europe Framework: They are trying to fit it into their education system, and had the "Can Do" statements translated into Chinese in December 2007.

Survey questions designed by Sakiko Yoneda (Hokuriku Gakuin University) and edited/adapted by Gavin Lynch.
Taiwan questionnaire conducted by Gavin Lynch and Craig Woods (Hokuriku Gakuin University).
Ireland questionnaire conducted by Gavin Lynch.

6.2 Appendix B

Interview with Professor Chen, Professor of Education/ Department head/ Researcher in English Education at the National Taipei University of Education

Visit date: Monday, Feb. 27th, 2008

Interviewer: Gavin Lynch

The following is interesting information from the interview with Professor Chen.

Strong education of teachers began in 1998 and took 4 years before they started producing good graduates who could pass the required standards and take up jobs as teachers in Taipei. Thereafter, the quality of education (in elementary schools) started to improve.

They had experienced a lack of consistency in education before that. Some students were going from elementary school to junior high school but, with different teachers, the hard work of the previous teacher was sometimes not continued. Students were losing motivation in junior high school because of that, erasing the gains they had made in elementary school. English, as a whole system of education, needed to be supported right up to at least when the student graduated from junior high.

Lists of words and sentence patterns were created and were placed into one of three levels: fundamental, intermediate and high progression levels. There were two lists within each level, an active list and a passive list. The active list HAD TO be learned by the student, across four skills, i.e. they had to learn how to speak, listen to, read and write those words. This included spelling the words correctly. The passive list consisted of essential words, but was considered too difficult to learn across 4 skills at the students' level. Examples of these are 3 syllable words. The students had to learn to recognize these words and sentence patterns, (i.e.

listening and reading) but not to use them (i.e. speaking and writing). When a student progressed to the next level, the teacher was expected to change the previous level's passive list to active, as well as teaching the new level of words and sentence patterns.

These lists acted as "Can-Do" statements, helping the consistency and connection of education as students went up from one level to the next. The word lists from the Council of Europe Framework (CEF) were considered, but were deemed too difficult for students to start with.

Dr. Chen mentioned education in Korea. She said it started well and the government put a lot of effort into it. However, there was not enough teacher training so the effects were not lasting. Reasons for failure of the Korean system are that there was no assessment (the Korean government wanted children to learn English by getting to like English, through games they would learn English naturally), and that Koreans depend on outside things for improving the students' speaking ability. An example is the English village, a theme park-like place outside school where people could get immersed in English. A typical class consists of instruction in Korean, then watching a video with English content. Therefore, students receive English education, but do not produce much English at all in schools. (Note: She did not mention the cram school system; she was just talking about the school system run by the government). She said that the parents were becoming to get disillusioned with English education in Korea. It can produce results to pass their classes, but their children cannot use English effectively across 4 skills. She said that may explain the falling trend in the CYLE (starters) for Korea.

Students in junior high school started performing better in Korea, but parents and teachers are recently starting to lose faith and are starting to expect less

from the governmental education system. In one school Dr. Chen visited, she was very surprised to hear that the superintendent (of English education) in the school expressed the view that English education is a waste of time and money. She felt that if the teachers feel like this, then we can expect the children to start feeling the same. She feels that this is a reflection of the lack of specific and quality training for teachers.

She also said that English should be viewed as an academic subject by everyone, including all teachers and students. It should be challenging from the beginning. If games are played, students get a false sense that English is not serious and they will lose motivation when it gets serious during junior high school. Students who were educated using the “learning through play” method do worse than students who have never learned English before in junior high school due to having an unrealistic perception of English. English should be taught from a young (elementary school or before) age and should be as challenging and as important as their other subjects. It should be understood by everyone that it takes years of hard work to learn and that there are benefits only at the end of a long road.

While Korea and Japan can hire native speakers to work in their schools, Taiwan cannot do so (by law). It is to protect jobs and to keep controls of quality of education. There are also issues of stability (a foreigner may leave a job after only a couple of years). She is hoping to start to use foreigners more in classes, especially as she cannot expect Taiwanese teachers to have the skills in pronunciation as native speakers do. At the moment, all school jobs are tenured jobs (jobs for life), but they would like to hire foreigners on a contract basis (or, highly skilled and stable “i.e. married to Taiwanese women” native speakers on a tenure basis). There is an experimental school at the moment and they are trying some things out there. In an ideal world, highly motivated foreign teachers would be an important part of the education process in Taiwan.

Private schools often use native speakers. This is not only for education, but also for advertising that

they are superior (whether true or otherwise).

6.3 Appendix C

The following are recommendations to the Ministry of Education (Japan) based on observations of Taiwan’s education system.

1. English teachers should be specialist teachers. A special training program should be made and run by the government, with very high standards. It should be run like a masters program (but needn’t be a masters program) by a university in each region. Every other measure may fail if the teachers are not specialist teachers who are very proficient in English.
2. The passing rate of the teacher training course need not be high; the most important thing is that the standard of graduates is kept high. Basically, do not be afraid of failing people who have applied to be teachers if they do not meet the set requirements.
3. English teachers should be given the same working conditions as other teachers (e.g. homeroom teachers). They should be full-time. Job security will attract better teachers.
4. English teachers should be taken from:
 - i. The university student population (English majors).
 - ii. Current teachers.
 - iii. The general population (working in other industries).
 - iv. Foreign workers who are skilled teachers and are proficient in Japanese.

All of the above would have to meet the standards required to be a teacher, go through a training program and pass the required final test. Experienced people (ii, iii, iv, above) would be given credits for their experience allowing them to complete the training course more quickly.

5. Team-teaching can take valuable resources away from education, especially if the foreign ALT is not an able English teacher, or does not have the skills/motivation required. Team-

teaching is not necessary if the (Japanese) English teacher is proficient in English and is well trained. The (Japanese) teacher can take both roles, with the majority of communication in English.

6. A “one-teacher, one-classroom” approach works best. A room dedicated to English education should be used for English education. This enables proper preparation of materials. It also promotes an English atmosphere among the students.
7. English education should start in 1st grade of elementary school and be held for a minimum of 2x40 minute periods per week.
8. Educational goals (concrete, not just wordy statements) should be drawn up by the MOE, and translated further into lists of words, phrases and skills that the students must master at each grade of elementary school. The junior high school teachers will also have access to these lists, allowing continuity of education at the secondary stage.
9. Teachers should meet at least once a year to discuss education. Having 5th and 6th grade teachers meet junior high school teachers would have the advantage of promoting continuity of education. Having teachers meet their peers would allow them to exchange ideas. Workshops should also be held, and could be facilitated by a designated university in each region. All of this is only possible if teachers are full-time English teachers at each level of education.
10. The government should set an English test to be taken by students at a certain grade in elementary school (e.g. grade 4) for the whole country. English education time should not be used for teaching about other tests (e.g. Eiken, Cambridge) after that time; it should be used only for English education in 4 skills. In-house tests are, of course, acceptable. Children who would like to sit other tests should do that in their own time (parental help, cram school, tutors).
11. A list of English books and materials to be used should be drawn up by the government. Schools are then free to choose from those books lists, according to how they feel about their students' needs. At a minimum they would provide material for each class all the way from first grade in elementary school to third grade in junior high school. This would provide continuity of education from one level to the next.
12. A reward system is important. This keeps the children motivated and keeps control in the class. The system works best if the children are in a team (e.g. pink team vs. blue team). Points can be given and taken away from each team during the class. These points should have some meaning at the end of the semester. Student participation is essential for language education.
13. Teaching well across 4 skills is important. English should be taught as a serious subject, as important as the other subjects (Japanese, Math, etc). It should not be treated lightly, or be regarded as “play time”. English is a subject that can be learned, it cannot be mastered using the “learn naturally through play” technique with only 80 minutes a week.

<注>

- 1 Tanabe, Y. (2004) . What the 2003 MEXT Action Plan proposes to teachers of English. *The Language Teacher*, 28 (3) , 3-8.
- 2 Japan Local Government Center <http://www.jlgc.org/activities.php?cid=295>
- 3 MEXT (2008) : http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/13/01/010110c.htm
- 4 TOEFL - Test of English as a Foreign Language www.ets.org/toefl/
- 5 ETS - Educational Testing Service: www.ets.org
- 6 TOEFL Test and Score Data (2007) http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/71943_web.pdf
- 7 Crystal, David (1997) . *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 8 YLE: Young Learners English Tests (2007) , http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/research/grade-stats/2007/yle_s.html

- ⁹ Taiwan cannot be taken as a whole. Taipei city is a specially designated English educational area for elementary schools, and the county area of Taipei also gets a lot of knowledge, funding and training support when compared to the rest of the country. Some parts of Taiwan have very little access to quality English education.
- ¹⁰ The Irish language is the official language of Ireland. However, less than 1% of the population actually uses it on a daily basis. (Irish Census, 2006) . Historically, the need for using Irish has diminished to such a point that the vast majority of Irish are now English speaking monolinguals.
- ¹¹ The title of the program is “How to teach English in Elementary School” (title translated from Chinese)
- ¹² Members of the public are people who are neither students nor teachers. One teacher we interviewed was working for an airline company before entering the training program.
- ¹³ CBT – Computer Based Test
- ¹⁴ Cambridge Young Learners Examinations: <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/young-learners/yle.html>
- ¹⁵ *ibid*
- ¹⁶ Cram schools are schools which are privately run and have business hours outside regular school hours (evenings, weekends, etc) . If parents choose to and can afford to do so, children are sent there to catch up on work missed at regular school, or to get further ahead of their peers.
- ¹⁷ Information obtained from the Cambridge Testing Center, Matsumoto, Nagano.
- ¹⁸ The population of the Dublin region was 1,045,769 in 2006 (Census, 2006)
- ¹⁹ The population of the Cork region was 190,384 in 2006 (Census, 2006)
- ²⁰ The first year of high school, when a less rigid curriculum is in place.
- ²¹ Hiragana and katakana are phonetic writing systems which mainly use inseparable consonant-vowel groups. Kanji is a writing system which uses logograms imported from China in the first millennium AD.
- ²² The Irish examination system which general high school students take before graduation. The results of the Leaving Certificate are the only data that is considered when the majority of universities and colleges decide on which applicants to accept.
- ²³ Leaving Certificate statistics (Department of Education Statistics, State Examination Board) : http://www.examinations.ie/statistics/statistics_2008/nat_stats_2008n.pdf, p5. It should be noted that the ‘A’ and ‘G’ to the left of the results stand for Ardléibheil (Higher Level) , and Gnathléibheil (Ordinary Level) respectively.
- ²⁴ *ibid*
- ²⁵ Past papers available from: Government Publications Sales Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin.
- ²⁶ Past papers (2004) available online at: <http://leavingcert-japanese.com>
- ²⁷ JLPT: Japanese Language Proficiency Test
- ²⁸ Shiawase: <http://www.shiawase.co.uk/2008/01/12/irish-leaving-cert-japanese-nihongo-kantan/> Retrieved October 31st, 2008
- ²⁹ The Irish Language: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language Retrieved October 31st, 2008
- ³⁰ Constitution of Ireland, Article 8
- ³¹ Kelly, A. (2002) *Compulsory Irish: The Language and the Education System, 1870S-1970s*, Irish Academic Press 2002
- ³² Central Applications Office (2007) : http://www2.cao.ie/app_scoring/points_stats/LC07PTS.pdf
- ³³ MOE: Ministry of Education.