

The Challenges of Teaching English Language Classes in Japanese Primary Schoolsⁱ

Walter DAVIES

Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education

Hiroshima University

Kazuaki TSUIDO

Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education

Hiroshima University

Midori OTANI

Faculty of Education, Shimane University

In April 2011, English language classes will become a mandatory part of the national curriculum for primary schools. In this article, we consider how this is happening, examine some of the problems of implementation and consider how small steps could be taken to aid the development of language classes in grades 5 and 6 of primary schools. In particular we focus on the possibility of university support for teacher development at primary school level.

Given that the curriculum is to be implemented in April 2011, we take the government changes as a given in terms of setting the framework for English teaching in primary schools. This article is not primarily a critique of government policy, rather it is a consideration of the challenges faced in the implementation of the foreign language component of the new curriculum. In it, we initially consider the overall structure of the Japanese system of mainstream education in relation to its bureaucratic nature and how curriculum changes are made. We then focus on the needs of teachers because, as Burden (2000) notes, it is they who are the main directors of action within classrooms. Their role is vital in turning materials and curriculum guidelines into the development of students' abilities through instruction and guidance both inside and outside the classroom. We consider teaching materials and guidelines, and discuss how changes could be made that involve teacher participation in developing materials, lesson plans and ideas.

THE LIMITS OF EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE

A key concept in this article may be labelled as the limits of effective influence, which we use to describe organizations, and has its parallel in academic research: Kozulin (1999) notes that writers such as Vygotsky criticized the over-extension of results of particular experiments, so that new theory, effective in solving a range of specific problems, is used as a general explanatory principle to explain almost everything, and finally collapses under the weight of its own claims. Similarly, Widdowson (1991) cautions against theories which are seen as overarching solutions to language teaching, but where there are no problems specified. Such warnings concern the use of theory in areas where it is not effective. In a similar way, we argue that in

the sphere of institutions and organizations, each has limits of effective influence. Central government, local government, and schools are all linked in an overall system, but it is important to consider what each organization can do effectively. In addition, in this article we consider how a national university might be effective in supporting change. It is therefore important to consider the structure of Japan's educational system and the way decisions are made. Furthermore, given that this article is written from a university perspective, it is useful to examine how educational change can occur through the collaboration of institutions.

BUREAUCRACY, CURRICULUM, AND CHANGE

Curriculum change is taking place within an established system of mainstream education, one that can be described as bureaucratic. In examining how change may be effective, it is important to consider the nature of bureaucratic systems, how curriculum can be defined, and examine ideas on change in relation to university-school collaboration.

The nature of bureaucratic systems

As we argue in another article (Tsuido & Davies, 2009), the Japanese system of mainstream education involves a bureaucratic structure with change being implemented via a powerful centre in the form of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (MEXT). Policy changes filter down to schools via the local boards of education. Middlehurst (1993) makes the following comment on such a system:

A central feature of a bureaucracy is a hierarchical structure of formal chains of command aimed at providing order and method out of potential chaos present in large, complex organizations, which none the less exist to achieve a common purpose. (p. 55)

With its hierarchical structure and formal chains of command, bureaucracy is usually categorized as transactional, tending to exercise power through the establishment of roles within an organizational structure. This dovetails with MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed's (1997) comment on Handy's analysis of organizational cultures, in which they identify a role culture with a hierarchical system involving formal procedures for management within the organization. A related feature of a bureaucratic form of organization is the division of responsibilities into non-conflicting units, noted by Middlehurst (1993):

In order to reduce the emphasis on individuality and the potential for individual discretion, the bureaucracy is based on a clear division of labour with carefully defined and circumscribed responsibilities. (p. 55)

A key issue in Japan is how aims and objectives are achieved within a transactional system which may value order and stability over creativity and innovation, particularly as the latter carry with them the risk of conflict.

Curriculum

Changes are being made in the planned curriculum for primary schools, and curriculum can be defined in a broad sense. For example, Johnson's (1989) definition is one that includes all the relevant decision making processes of all the participants. He notes that these decisions have some concrete form:

The products of the decision making processes generally exist in some concrete form and can be observed and described: for example policy documents, syllabuses, teacher training programmes, teaching materials and resources, and teaching and learning acts. (p. 1)

Johnson uses the general term 'products', and this term carries with it the risk of considering these as something final and unalterable. In relation to items such as policy documents, published syllabuses, and teaching materials, then in keeping with Widdowson's (1978) observation that texts require interpretation, the first line of the quotation can be re-written to reflect this: 'The results of these decision making processes are partially revealed in concrete form, and they can be observed and discussed'. However, a further problem of the broad definition is that it becomes all encompassing. For teachers, it is important to consider the parameters of their decision-making opportunities in a bureaucratic system; central government and local government have made a variety of decisions, specifying areas to be taught, time to be allocated to teaching, and materials to be used in classes. We define these decisions as forming the 'statutory curriculum', one that is prescribed by central and local government. Teachers receive these prescriptions primarily through written documentation. We argue that it is part of the planning role of teachers to engage in the interpretation and evaluation of documents and materials, and to consider how to develop teaching in their own school and classroom contexts, a necessary step for the successful implementation of the statutory curriculum.

The 'statutory curriculum' can be contrasted with 'school curricula', which develop in the particular contexts of schools. One key issue that contributes to this is the level of diversity between schools. For example, at the secondary level of Japanese education, schools themselves can be academically diverse, ranging from elite schools that have rigorous entrance examinations to schools which are much more local in orientation. While the primary sector is less diverse academically than the secondary sector, it is currently diverse in terms of the level of development of English language programs. Schools have had the option of teaching English language classes since 2002, so that some schools have established programs while others are starting them for the first time in 2011. Given this diversity, teachers in particular need to carefully consider how the statutory curriculum is implemented.

In view of this diversity of programs, it is useful to consider curriculum in a way that can be related to specific schools rather than the education system as a whole. We have defined the government prescribed curriculum as the statutory curriculum. However, learning takes place in the context of schools and classrooms, and so it is important to consider conceptions of curriculum that align more closely with particular school programs; in his analysis of curriculum

development, Brown (1995) focuses on the elements of the language curriculum:

The view that I wish to promote is that curriculum development is a series of activities that contribute to the growth of consensus among the staff, faculty, administration and students. (p. 19)

In developing his curriculum model Brown outlines six interlocking elements: needs analysis, goals and objectives, language testing, materials development, language teaching and program evaluation. Brown's approach focuses much more on a teaching organization, such as a school or university. Different schools are likely to develop their courses in different ways depending on their resources. Consequently, in this article, we define those decisions made by a particular school as its 'school curriculum'; through the interpretation and evaluation of the statutory curriculum, individual school curricula are developed. It is in the area of school curricula that we consider how a university could contribute to English language education in the primary sector through collaboration with teachers and schools.

Change and collaboration

In relation to educational change, Fullan (1993) examines a variety of factors, one of these being the relationship between schools and wider organizational structures. He places strong emphasis on collaboration:

Small-scale collaboration involves the attitude and capacity to form productive mentoring and peer relationships, team-building and the like. On a larger scale, it consists of the ability to work in organizations that form cross-institutional partnerships such as school district, university and school-community and business agency alliances, as well as global relationships with individuals and organizations from other cultures. (p. 18)

In terms of larger scale collaboration, he cites the Learning Consortium in Canada, a large project that involves four school districts and two higher education institutions in and around Metropolitan Toronto, involving 500 schools and 13,700 teachers in the Consortium boards. The aims of the Consortium are focused on "teacher development, school development, and the restructuring of districts and the faculty of education to support improvement on a continuous basis" (p. 121). However, Fullan also notes that there are concerns about school-university partnerships, summarizing Winitzky, Stoddart and O' Keefe, who note five criticisms: lack of data on such collaborations, overly top-down reforms, lack of acknowledgement of the pressures created in a system of education, mismatches between teachers' and professors' views on teaching, and reward structures that do not encourage collaboration.

The example of the Learning Consortium is one that takes place in Canada, and this raises the issue, noted by Roberts (1998), that ideas coming from areas such as the USA and Canada may not work in more centralised and hierarchical systems. Given the bureaucratic nature of

Japan's system of education it seems unlikely that universities would be involved in something on the level of the Learning Consortium. However, there are a variety of ways in which universities could contribute to English language education in primary schools. Our arguments in this article involve the development of school curricula, in which teachers have the opportunity to critically evaluate ideas and prescriptions and adapt them to their own situations. If prescriptions are seen as opportunities for debate and discussion, then they can act as a focus for decision-making on classroom teaching. It is in this spirit that university-school collaboration could help in the effective implementation of the new statutory curriculum for primary schools.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

A variety of changes have been made to the statutory primary curriculum in the last twenty years, with language learning strongly associated with cross-cultural understanding. In 1992, a number of schools were designated as pilot schools for the implementation of classes on cross cultural understanding. 10 years later, all primary schools were able to teach such classes within the framework of the revised Course of Studyⁱⁱ; as part of this curriculum area, they were allowed to teach foreign languages. In 2011 there will be full implementation of language classes as part of the cross-cultural understanding component of the primary school curriculum. The successful implementation of the program will depend on "homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities", who are expected to "make teaching programs and conduct lessons" (MEXT, 2010, section III, 1:5).

Given that central government policy documents can only give broad guidelines, it is teachers who must judge how to implement those guidelines in the context of their own schools and classrooms. This is also reflected in MEXT's policy document for primary schools:

Taking into account the circumstances of pupils and the local community, each individual school should establish objectives of foreign language activities for each grade in an appropriate manner and work to realize them over a period of two school years. (MEXT, 2010, section III, 1:2)

The government's curriculum document also states that "efforts should be made to increase the effectiveness of teaching by, for example, taking advantage of what pupils have learned in other subjects, such as the Japanese language, music and arts and handicrafts" (MEXT, 2010, section III, 1:4). Thus, teachers are encouraged to integrate English language classes with other areas of the overall primary school curriculum.

In terms of training for the implementation of the new statutory curriculum, the approach in many prefectures has been top-down, an example of which can be seen in Shimane Prefecture. In the years 2007 and 2008, the national government implemented an in-service program for foreign language activities, which was targeted at teachers' consultants in each prefecture, and involved five days of training for each consultant. The participants were then required to go back to their prefectures and to instruct teachers on the basis of what the consultants had learned on

the national level program. At least one teacher from every primary school attended the two-day prefectural in-service teacher development program, either in 2008 or in 2009. Those teachers who joined were then expected to plan in-house teacher development programs at each school. This process is in keeping with a top-down bureaucratic system: the information on the policy of foreign language education filters down from central government to each board of education in the prefectures and then to each school through designated personnel.

In terms of materials, government organizations have been responsible for the provision of teaching materials. In the case of Hiroshima Prefecture, two sets of materials will be used, depending on whether a primary school is under the control of the City Office or the Prefectural Office: Prefectural Office schools will use the Ministry authorized materials. However, City Office schools will use materials developed by the City Office.

Prefectural Office materials and schedules

In keeping with a bureaucratic system, there has been a considerable amount of central government planning in relation to materials and how they can be taught, with teaching materials and documents supplied by MEXT, focusing on two textbooks, one for Grade 5 (Eigo Note 1) and one for Grade 6 (Eigo Note 2). Schools and teachers have also been supplied with a variety of items for developing language classes, such as monitor screens and IT-based materials for classroom use. Textbook materials are on computer disks, so that teachers can show them on a monitor screen while teaching. Schools have also been issued with very detailed lesson plans designed to cover approximately 36 classes in each yearⁱⁱⁱ.

Regarding the scheduling of classes, teachers are expected to teach one class (45 minutes) in a week. Foreign language activities are not designated as a subject in their own right, so that teachers are not required to grade each student. However, they are expected to evaluate their students by describing how they have been engaged in foreign language activities.

City Office materials and schedules^{iv}

The situation for Hiroshima City Office primary schools is different from the Prefectural Office primary schools. Hiroshima City Office was granted permission by MEXT to initiate its own program. This was focused on three areas: mathematics, English and logico-mathematical skills. The City Board of Education set up a committee, which made proposals to the board, which in turn made decisions on the proposals. The committee developed its ideas in consideration of both the primary school curriculum and the junior high school curriculum, working to ensure links between the two levels. The board accepted these proposals and a program has been set up in accordance with them.

For the primary school statutory English curriculum, the committee proposed a syllabus that was focused on lexis, with grammar playing a supporting role for classroom activities. 500 items of vocabulary were chosen, and these were converted into teacher flashcards and packs of smaller-sized student cards. In classes, teachers will be able to use four or five sets of such cards for classroom activities. A textbook was designed, listing the 500 words and with nine

units of material for Grade 5 and nine lessons for Grade 6.

In contrast to the prefectural schools, English is to be a designated subject in the City Office schools. Consequently the allocation of time to language teaching is greater and students are to be graded by their teachers. In terms of weekly teaching, the committee recommended that there should be 90 minutes of English teaching. However, rather than have two sessions of 45 minutes each, the committee recommended that shorter sessions could be used to re-cycle key vocabulary and so consolidate what had already been learned. Consequently English classes are to be broken down into one 45-minute class, which will be used to introduce new words and grammar, followed by three 15-minute classes in which students will cover what has been initially learned in the longer 45-minute session. The City Office has created example lesson plans both for 45-minute and 15-minute lessons with worksheets to be used in the classroom

DISCUSSION

In this article we have documented a number of key changes taking place in language education at primary schools. We have argued that teachers are central to the process of change, and that success is dependent on them being able to exercise critical judgment in interpreting materials and guidelines in light of their own school and classroom contexts. Through this process the statutory curriculum is developed into a particular school's curriculum. An example of this can be seen in a class observed by two of the authors (This is summarized in the appendix^v). In the observed class, and the teachers' subsequent comments on it, they had made clear decisions based on the particular classroom situation that they had, relating to L2 (English) and L1 (Japanese) use, the grouping of students for activities and classroom management abilities, which are discussed in the next paragraphs.

In terms of L1 and L2, the teachers themselves were bilingual in their approach. Both were comfortable in speaking English to the students and used their Japanese and English to good effect, encouraging students to speak, whether this was in English or Japanese and then responding in English or in both languages where they felt this aided comprehension. They made clear decisions on when to use English and when to use Japanese. This reflects Komiya Samimy & Kobayashi's (2004) discussion of bilingual-monolingual approaches to the classroom, where they recommend an intercultural competence model of teaching, viewing English as an international language and promoting bilinguals as the ultimate models for teaching rather than monolingual teachers.

There is also the issue of whole-group versus small-group/pairs. In the observed class, the students worked as a whole group for at least half the class on a variety of activities which involved listening and practising English while thinking about other cultures. Most of this time was teacher-fronted, but highly interactive, with the teachers addressing questions to the students, eliciting responses, drilling words and using whole class activities with a strong emphasis on group cohesion. In the second half of the class, pair work and group mingling activities were introduced. In comments after the class, the teachers observed that with a large number of students this was the best way to maintain concentration and focus.

In terms of craft knowledge, one factor which is rarely covered in books on theory is the ability of teachers to manage their classrooms. One of the reasons for the success of the class was the professionalism of the teachers, in their preparation, presentation and classroom management skills, and also their rapport with the students of the class. These skills are often referred to as craft knowledge. Much of what made the class successful related to the teachers' use of their craft knowledge to develop a class that was both entertaining and informative for their students.

Ideals and family resemblances

In terms of analyzing the observed class, it is important to note that the school itself has a strong academic reputation, and has allocated resources to English language education, so that ways of teaching English have been developed where over 30 students (a whole class) are taught together. In terms of the diversity argument, stated earlier in this article, the school has a well-established English program. Can such schools provide a model for schools which are implementing language programs for the first time in 2011? Our argument in this article is that, while the statutory curriculum is a guideline for all schools, school curricula will differ depending on the complex interaction of a variety of key factors including the students, the teaching philosophy of a particular school, the English level of teachers, and the number of students in a class. Richards and Rodgers (2001) have pointed out the importance of context in considering teaching approaches and methods:

In trying to apply approaches or methods, teachers sometimes ignore what is the starting point of language program design, namely a careful consideration of the context in which teaching and learning occurs, including the cultural context, the political context, the local institutional context, and the context constituted by the teachers and learners in their classrooms. (p. 248)

The arguments in this article are written predominantly on the basis of this starting point, and in the discussion that follows we consider how teachers can be aided in the process of making decisions on their own classroom teaching. Rather than take a method or approach as an ideal towards which a teacher must develop his/her teaching, it can be considered as a source of ideas to develop teaching in a particular context. The potential risk of teaching theories associated with methods and approaches is that they are used dogmatically, so that various techniques are ruled in, and others ruled out. However, the position we take in this article is that 'either/or' statements are often a clumsy way to approach teaching issues that are specific to classroom situations, and that a great deal of theory, while useful as a focus for discussion, should be considered rule-of-thumb rather than categorical.

Given that schools are working with the same statutory curriculum, the outcome of the curriculum change is likely to be a set of school curricula that resemble each other but vary; different groups of teachers will find their own ways of implementing the statutory curriculum.

Hierarchical and Lateral Links

We have argued that the Japanese system of education is bureaucratic, with a hierarchical structure and role-based system. The usual strengths of a bureaucracy are stability and order. However, the weaknesses of such a system are that top-down mandates do not necessarily cause effective change at the bottom of the hierarchy. We have argued that the statutory curriculum, particularly in terms of guidance and materials for the classroom, should be critically assessed by teachers, who need to teach according to their school and classroom circumstances. This has been noted in MEXT's curriculum guidelines, cited earlier in this article. We have also argued that implementation of the statutory curriculum is likely to create a set of related but differing school curricula – a set of family resemblances – as schools in different contexts find ways of implementing the statutory curriculum. The sharing of ideas emerging from these school curricula and discussion of their merits is a way in which individual teachers and groups of teachers might develop.

Teacher development

In relation to teacher training and development, Roberts (1998) makes a distinction between training and development, identifying training as a way of addressing perceived deficits in teachers' knowledge and skills. In comparison he notes that development "implies more divergent objectives, which allow for teachers' individual differences and which are determined by teachers' sense of their own learning needs" (p. 22). He categorizes ways of teacher learning under a variety of headings: teaching itself, professional collaboration, innovation and research, helping others to learn, courses/formal situations, self study, language learning.

Given that Roberts includes courses in his definition of teacher development, training can be considered as a subset of a much larger process. How then might a university be able to facilitate collaboration in a lateral process that helps link schools and teachers?

Creating support for teacher development

In the top-down process that is occurring, schools and teachers have been supplied with a considerable amount of materials and documents in order to implement the statutory curriculum. A university has the capacity to create a forum for the exchange of ideas that could be linked into a process that aids teachers in adapting the statutory curriculum to the needs of their particular schools; Roberts (1998) argues that successful courses are as much about processes as about content. Many courses established by central government tend to be one-off courses, such as brush-up training for secondary school teachers in the Ministry's 'Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities', or training designed for the renewal of teaching licenses. In terms of teacher development, it is likely that language classes at primary schools will change as teachers become more comfortable with teaching such classes and wish to develop their own language skills and language teaching, a much more on-going process.

How then could a university help to support teacher development for busy professionals

with heavy time commitments to their schools? One avenue would be to offer courses that involve a materials development component, oriented towards materials creation driven by teachers' needs. Such materials development, involving the writing of lesson plans and teaching materials, would be a way of focusing on the classroom. These plans and materials could then be made accessible on websites. An example of bottom-up materials development and dissemination exists in Sendai (<http://www.sendaialtspace.com>), where a webpage has been set up to help ALTs in their life and work; a major component of the webpage is a collection of ALT-created materials. This gives ALTs the opportunity to communicate their ideas and work to a wider audience. If teacher development courses for primary school teachers could be oriented towards materials development, then banks of materials could be developed by teachers working in particular contexts and made accessible through websites. Such websites could also act as a means of communicating teaching theory and ideas to busy teachers who do not have the time to physically attend courses. One of the risks for projects of this kind is the fear of losing control. As we noted above, bureaucracy focuses on the division of responsibilities into non-conflicting units. To reduce the risk of conflicts, such projects would require the collaboration of key change agents, such as teacher-consultants^{vi}, who could facilitate the creation of time and space for teachers to work towards the production of practical ideas and aims for themselves and their students.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have considered the challenges facing primary school teachers in relation to teaching language classes in 2011. We have argued that Japan's educational system is bureaucratic, and that this tends to result in a transactional system of leadership where communication is hierarchical and top-down. We argue that this promotes stability, but risks stifling change because it does not create many opportunities for teachers to integrate new ideas with the craft knowledge that is essential for successful teaching. While in mainstream compulsory education, policy may be made by government, it is teachers who must transform curriculum prescriptions into actual classes. Our argument, in keeping with a previous article (Tsuido & Davies, 2009), is that universities can provide the opportunities for teachers to come together to discuss teaching, develop and disseminate materials.

Finally, this article has been concerned with effective change. Our position is that change is inevitable, but change can be negative in the form of stagnation and a stifling of ideas, or it can be positive, with ideas being integrated and developed in a manageable rate. Japan's educational system is bureaucratic, and this means that educational change is unlikely to be rapid. In this situation, schools and teachers need the support of institutions such as universities and other organizations to develop their own capacities and to evaluate and implement changes that are appropriate to their own school contexts as part of an on-going process of development. Consequently, we advocate a process of little steps: Universities are places of ideas; through university involvement in creating spaces and environments where teachers can discuss and interpret government documents, develop and share ideas and plans, a steady teacher

development process could be encouraged generating ideas and materials out of the specific teaching contexts that are the various school and classroom realities of the primary school sector.

REFERENCES

- Brown, J. D. (1995). *The elements of the language curriculum*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Burden, R. (2000). Feuerstein's unique contribution to educational and school psychology. In Kozulin, A. & Rand, Y. (Eds.). *Experience of mediated learning*. (pp. 45-54) Oxford: Pergamon Elsevier Science.
- Davies, W. & Tsuido, K. (2008). The Vicissitudes of education policy: assessing top-down change on English language education in Japanese high schools. *Hiroshima Studies in Language and Language Education*, 11, 1-14.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: probing the depths of educational reform*. London: Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. (1999). *Change forces: the sequel*. London: Falmer.
- Johnson, R. K. (1989). A decision-making framework for the coherent language curriculum. In Keith Johnson R. K. (Ed.) *The second language curriculum* (pp. 1-23). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Komiya Samimy, K. & Kobayashi, C. (2004). Toward the development of Intercultural communicative competence: theoretical and pedagogical implications for Japanese English Teachers. *JALT Journal*, 26/2, 245-261.
- Kozulin, A. (1999). Vygotsky in context. In Vygotsky, L. *Thought and language*. (pp. xi-lxi). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- MacGilchrist, B., Myers, K. & Reed, J. (1997). *The intelligent school*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Middlehurst, R. (1993). *Leading academics*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology. (2010). Course of Study chapter 4 foreign language activities. www.mext.go.jp/a-menu/shotou/new-cs/youeryou/eiyaku/1261037.htm.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology. (2003). Action plan to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities". www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/03072801.htm.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology. (2009). *Eigo note 1*. Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology. (2009). *Eigo note 2*. Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan.
- Roberts, J. (1998). *Language teacher education*. London: Arnold.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd. ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tsuido, K. & Davies, W. (2009). How universities could support change in secondary education. *Hiroshima Studies in Language and Language Education*, 12, 1-16.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1991). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1978) *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX: OBSERVATION OF A GRADE 5 CLASS TAUGHT USING EIGO NOTE 1

The class was team taught by two Japanese teachers, one of whom was working at the school as an English specialist. It was taught to a full class of students and involved the use of a monitor screen. This was used to show key pages from the textbook, focusing on countries and traditional dishes, and also other activities created by the teachers.

The specialist warmed up the class by asking the students questions about the weekend, and where students responded in Japanese, she would report the comment in English. The homeroom teacher then talked to the class and asked questions.

Using the monitor screen, the teachers then started to introduce flags from countries such as Switzerland and France. The specialist introduced some useful symbols on the monitor and said the words: circle, star, stripes, slash. Where possible these words were elicited from the students. The specialist then drilled each of the words several times. One student was invited to the front of the class and stood with his/her back to the monitor screen, and the teachers changed the flag on the screen. The rest of the students shouted out clues using the words they had learned or other things they knew about the relevant country, while the student at the front tried to guess it. This procedure was repeated several times to cover the key flags in the textbook and additional flags that might be of interest to the class: A British flag because one of the observers was from the UK; a Chilean flag because the news had been covering the rescue attempt of some Chilean miners.

In the next stage of the lesson, using the monitor, the teachers introduced the key food vocabulary from the textbook: spaghetti, sukiyaki, bibimba, pizza, gratin, sushi, kimchi, hamburger. Students then played a game in pairs, where one student cupped his/her hand around the finger-tips of another student. The teachers told the students to listen for a key word, then read out the food items, and when the key word was spoken, the student with the cupped hand tried to catch the fingers of the other student. After this students were asked to open their books, and to listen and match pictures of the food items to the relevant country's flag. In the final stage of the lesson, the teachers taught the students a short dialogue:

A: What do you want?

B: I want _____.

This was drilled using some different food words. The students were then paired and asked to practice the dialogue. Finally, they were asked to choose a food item and mingle, asking "What do you want?" and trying to find someone who wanted the same kind of food. At the end of the class they sat down and wrote a short reflection in Japanese on what they had done during the class.

i This study was partially supported by a Grant-in-Aid from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology for Scientific Research (C), No.21520634.

ii This refers specifically to the “Period of Integrated Studies,” in which “English Conversation” can be introduced as a part of the broader “Cross Cultural Understanding”.

iii In addition to the government’s aid, the major publishing companies have also placed “teacher-friendly” supplementary materials with simple lesson plans on the market. However, these are often too expensive for schools to buy them.

iv We wish to express our deepest gratitude to Prof. Yanase for discussing the City Office materials in detail. Any inaccuracies in the article are entirely the responsibility of its three authors.

v The school we visited was Mihara Elementary School, attached to Hiroshima University. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to Prof. Fukuzawa and to the teachers at the school for allowing us to observe the class.

vi Tsuido and Otani started to hold a very informal in-service teacher development program with the collaboration of a teacher-consultant in Shimane Prefecture in July, 2010.

要 約

日本の小学校における英語教育に関する課題

デービス・ウォルター

広島大学外国語教育研究センター

築 道 和 明

広島大学外国語教育研究センター

大 谷 みどり

島根大学教育学部

本論文では、初等教育にみられる英語教育に関わる変化を考察し、大学がどのような形で教員研修に寄与しうるかを議論する。まず、文部科学省をトップにした日本の教育行政システムを「官僚的」という言葉で形容し、学習指導要領をはじめとした国によるカリキュラム（本論文では、「法律で定められた」カリキュラムと呼ぶ）をそれぞれの教室に応じて教師が解釈し、適切に吟味することの必要性（本論文では個々の学校現場で具体化されたカリキュラムとする）を指摘する。次に、カリキュラムの趣旨を具体化した教材として『英語ノート』と広島市が編纂した教材、『英語科』とを分析し、前者を用いた授業観察の一部を検討する。結論として、いかなる教育改革においても、個々の学校現場に応じて教師が適切にカリキュラムの方向性や趣旨を理解し、柔軟に修正することの重要性を指摘し、伝達講習と呼ばれる「国→都道府県→各学校」といったトップダウンによる情報伝達とは異なる形での教員研修の可能性を吟味し、そうした研修実現のために大学が果たし得る役割を考察する。