

# **A Proposal for a CLIL-oriented Period for Integrated Studies in Elementary Schools in Japan**

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## **1. Introduction**

The next set of national guidelines for elementary school English education is due to be implemented from the 2020 academic year. Flagged changes include the down shifting of the current year 5 and 6 ‘Foreign Language Activities’ (FLA) into years 3 and 4, with the FLA in years 5 and 6 being replaced by ‘English’ as a formal subject. In the year 3 and 4 curriculums, the 35 hours per year that are to be used for FLA are to be deducted from the hours that have been hitherto set aside in these grades for the ‘Period of Integrated Studies’ (PIS). Although to be confirmed, the MEXT-recommended ‘Hi, Friends! Book 1’ and ‘Hi, Friends! Book 2’ that are commonly used as the basis for school syllabi for FLA in years 5 and 6 respectively at many public elementary schools in Japan, will potentially now be used at year 3 and 4 levels from 2020.

In regard to the implementation of the subject ‘English’, however, major issues need to be addressed. These include acknowledged limitations in English skills among in-service teachers and the development of teacher-friendly curricula, syllabi and textbooks that are suitable for non-English education trained teachers, the increased burden on already over-worked teachers, as well as - and perhaps as important logistically for schools – settling scheduling issues. The elevation of ‘English’ to formal subject status means that at least two class periods per week need to be designated as ‘English’. However, the major problem is where, in an already crowded week of 30 periods (6

periods per day), schools are to 'find' the second of the English periods given that the first is already allocated to one of the two PIS slots. Without the re-instatement of Saturday morning schooling across the board in Japan, or a reduction from 45 minutes to 40 minutes per lesson, it is going to be extremely difficult for all current subjects to retain their present per-week allotment of slots in the schedule. At present, schools deduct the 35 hours for year 5 and 6 FLA from the 105 hours per year set aside by MEXT for PIS. Should schools deduct a further 30 hours per year from the PIS, only 35 hours per year would remain. Is the PIS as a designated class period, dying a slow death?

At the time of writing, MEXT has made no universal declaration concerning this issue, perhaps waiting for 'critical mass' to develop when enough municipalities and schools have decided for themselves before coming out with a decision. However, the MEXT-established 'Central Council for Education' (as reported 4 February, 2017 in the Mainichi Newspaper) has recommended that schools divide the second 45-minute period into three 15-minute 'modules' spaced throughout the week. The idea is that the modules be implemented either at the start of the first period or after students have completed lunch. While no definitive decision has been made as yet, teachers at a sectional committee meeting of the Japan Teacher's Union held in Niigata on 3 February, 2017, expressed concern that scheduling English modules after lunch would further reduce students' (and teachers') already limited free time during a typical day. Typically, schools designate 45 minutes for lunch, followed by another 15-20 minutes of cleaning (*souji*) before the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> period of the day. Reducing the 45-minute lunch period to 30 minutes three times a week would not only impact students' free time but also leave teachers (who also eat with students) little if any pupil-free time in the day. This cannot be good for a teacher's mental health. Moreover, scheduling modules before the first period would reduce the amount of

available time teachers have for greeting students and disseminating information about the day's schedule. Other teachers questioned the educational value of 15-minute modules as well as how such slots would relate to the content of the 45-minute English lesson.

This paper supports the viewpoint that rather than scheduling a second stand-alone English lesson each week, or adopting a module approach, elementary schools should utilize the Period of Integrated Study to integrate concurrent content from science, social studies, ethics, music and physical education with English: that is, to adopt a 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' oriented model for implementation into the existing PIS-framework. In other words, each week have one period of formalized 'English-as-a-subject' and a further 'English-assisted' Period for Integrated Study (PIS).

## 2 Current MEXT guidelines for FLA and PIS

The English versions of the current 'Course of Study for Elementary Schools' (MEXT, 2011) are posted online on the MEXT website. Like curriculum outlines the world over, they are deliberately equivocal documents, intended merely as guidelines and therefore allowing various interpretations by school authorities. They offer general 'recommendations' rather than 'regulations'. In regard to FLA in particular, given its 'newness' in the elementary school curriculum and the ongoing debate and structure of English education at this level, the course guidelines are non-restrictive and allow schools and teachers the flexibility to arrange their syllabi according to the levels of English expertise amongst the teachers in a school. One speculates that with the increase at universities in numbers of students that study elementary school English education, and the increase in levels of expertise of teaching English among current in-service teachers, the guidelines could become more restrictive and more tightly controlled. However, as of the

time of writing the guidelines are suitable in being open to interpretation. Chapter 4 of the ‘Course of Study for Elementary Schools’ (MEXT, 2011) outlines the objectives for content and syllabus design for ‘Foreign Language Activities’. In regard to Subsection II ‘Content’, the objectives state that pupils are “to *become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of the foreign language, to learn its differences from the Japanese language* (emphasis added), and to be aware of the interesting aspects of language and its richness.” Under ‘Lesson Plan Design and Handling Content’, Point 3(4) states that “the instruction on the content and activities should be in line with pupils’ interest. Effort 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*” (emphasis added). These guidelines make two things very clear: First, that pronunciation of English and how it is different from Japanese is a goal of FLA. Second, that FLA is to utilize content from other subjects.

In Chapter 5 of the ‘Course of Study for Elementary Schools’ (MEXT, 2011), the objectives for content and syllabus design for the ‘Period for Integrated Studies’ are outlined. In regard to ‘content’, the guidelines state that ‘each school should determine its own content based upon the overall objectives’. Subsection III ‘Syllabus Design and Handling the Content’ Point 1(5) states that “Learning activities should be conducted in the light of the conditions of each school: for example, learning activities about *cross-synthetic tasks, including international understanding* (emphasis added), information, environment, welfare/health, learning activities about tasks based on pupils’ interests and concerns, and learning activities about tasks depending on characteristics of the local community and the school such as people’s lives, traditions and culture of the local community.” Furthermore, point 1(6) advocates that “teachers should make an effort to connect knowledge

and skills acquired in *each subject, moral education, foreign language activities* (emphasis added) and special activities with each other and to utilize them in learning and living so that such knowledge and skills can be applied comprehensively.” These guidelines make it very clear that the PIS is to be cross-synthetic and draw on content from all other subjects, including content from FLA.

### 3. CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), a teaching methodology that originated in Europe in the 1990s and has been adopted by several educational authorities in European countries - most notably Spain, Finland and the Netherlands – is gaining attention in Japan as an alternative to current methodologies that focus primarily on the teaching of English as an academic subject. Marsh (2002, p. 2) states that ‘CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language.’” The primary framework upon which to build CLIL-oriented syllabuses incorporates the 4Cs principles of CLIL (Coyle, 2007; Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols, 2008; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Ikeda, 2011; Yamano, 2013). These are:

- (1) ‘Content’ which refers to
  - the specific subject matter in a curriculum
- (2) ‘Communication’ which refers to the
  - language of learning (the language of the subject’s content)
  - language for learning (language required for engaging in classroom activities)
  - language through learning (language that emerges during the lesson)

- study skills needed for listening, reading, speaking, writing, researching
- (3) 'Cognition' which refers to the degree to which classroom activities utilize
- lower order thinking skills (LOTS): remembering, understanding, applying
  - higher order thinking skills (HOTS): analyzing, evaluating, creating
- that connect the understanding of content to language
- (4) Community/Culture which refers to
- the modes of interaction such as individual, pair, and group work
  - the development of pluricultural understanding and principles of global citizenship

In Japan, advocacy for the methodology has been led by academics such as Makoto Ikeda, Yoshinori Watanabe and Shinichi Izumi at Sophia University in Tokyo who principally have focused upon disseminating theory about CLIL and establishing CLIL-oriented courses at tertiary level. Since 2011, Sophia University has positioned itself as the center of CLIL implementation and research at this level, although Shigeru Sasajima of Saitama Medical University and his colleagues, working independently, have also been heavily involved in implementing CLIL-oriented courses.

Such has been the impact of the CLIL movement in Japan, that the methodology is also being implemented and researched at lower academic levels. Relevant to this paper have been the efforts of Yuki Yamano (Utsunomiya University) and Katsuko Kashiwagi (Osaka Kyoiku University) who have focused upon CLIL and its potential as a methodology at elementary school level. Yamano (2013) investigated both CLIL and 'regular' EFL classes at a Japanese elementary school, and

claims that CLIL “can contribute to increased student engagement and learning of content and language” (2013, p. 28). Moreover, Yamano and a team of teachers (Mayumi Takizawa, Hiroko Kashimoto and Kazuyo Hasegawa) have generously uploaded extensive lesson plans for CLIL units on the ‘primary.cliljapan.org’ website, that, it is assumed, have been taught at elementary schools in the Kanto and Kansai region.

Each CLIL unit is centered on a theme with 3 CLIL lessons built around it and content drawn from other subjects. The themes and subject-derivation of the four units that are available online for Year 5 or Year 6 (the actual class levels of each unit are unclear) students are:

1. Animals (Yuki Yamano)  
:arts and crafts; science; social studies
2. Energy - Solar Power (Mayumi Takizawa)  
:arts and crafts; science
3. Colors (Hikoro Kashimoto)  
:arts and crafts; science; social studies
4. The World in a Supermarket (Kazuyo Hasegawa)  
: arts and crafts; mathematics; social studies

The lesson plans explain lesson content and classroom activities in terms of their applicability to the 4Cs. What is also interesting is that lesson structure does not adhere to the traditional PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production), but rather to Ikeda’s (2012) ‘new’ PPP:

- Step 1: Presentation/Input
- Step 2: Processing
- Step 3: Production/Output.

The major difference, at least on paper, is the focus on ‘processing’ in the second stage of a lesson. Processing refers to the level of cognitive demand placed on learners by the teacher’s efforts to facilitate the

learners' higher order thinking skills (HOTS). According to Ikeda, CLIL learners have an additional cognitive load imposed on them while using the target language (Ikeda, 2011). To use Yamano's (2013) example, the input phase involved the learners studying the names of various colors and animals in English, while the processing phase tasked them with synthesizing their knowledge about colors and animals and their names in English in order to mix colored clay, create their own colors, and eventually produce animal figurines and drawings in the production phase. Thus, in a CLIL-lesson, for example, the skilled teacher can lead learners to generate content and language by themselves. Yamano (2013) reported that in her investigation comparing learners in a regular English lesson and a CLIL-oriented lesson, the latter learners generated more 'new' language in the processing and productions phases of the lesson than did the 'traditional' PPP learners who were involved in structured oral activities designed to practice saying the names of colors and animals.

Ikeda's 'new PPP' approach to teaching English has exciting potential in Japan given that it appears designed to replace the relatively ubiquitous PPP methodology. Not only does the methodology entail language learning on one cognitive level but it also brings in elements of a cognitive methodology that has been practiced for decades in other education systems: 'discovery' or 'inquiry learning'. In 'discovery learning', learners are tasked to 'discover', 'inquire', 'hypothesise about' and create knowledge for themselves rather than being 'told' and 'informed' by the teacher beforehand which is arguably the greatest drawback to the PPP as it is practiced in Japan. How successfully 'discovery' is achieved depends upon the teacher's expertise in referential questioning and creating activities that stimulate learners to test hypotheses, analyze and evaluate results in the process of creating what is new knowledge for them. Ikeda's 'processing' step in lesson structure



appears to have been motivated by this type of learning and Bloom's taxonomy.

#### 4 The organization of content

##### 4.1 Japanese elementary schools

The six years of a Japanese elementary school are divided into three levels composed of years 1 and 2 (lower), years 3 and 4 (middle) and years 5 and 6 (upper). The number of subjects depends upon the level with the number increasing the higher the level. Years 1 and 2 students undertake 5 periods per day for a total of 25 per week. From year 3 and upwards, there are 6 periods per day for a total of 30 per week. At a typical school, years 1 and 2, students take (1) Japanese language (*kokugo*), (2) life skills (*seikatsu*, which combines social studies and science), (3) arithmetic (*sansuu*), (4) music (*ongaku*), (5) drawing and crafts (*zuko*), (5) special activities (*tokubetsu katsudo* or *gakkatsu*, such as homeroom activities), (6) physical education (*taiiku*), and (7) ethics (*dotoku*). From year 3 to year 6, *seikatsu* is split into Science (*rika*) and Social Studies (*shakai*), and a period for Integrated Studies (*sogoteki na gakushu no jikan*) is added to the curriculum. In years 5 and 6, a further subject, home economics (*kateika*), is also added.

Despite the 7 or so different 'types' of lesson activities in lower elementary grades, years 1 and 2 are only assessed in five subjects, with the remainder classified as 'activities' on report cards. Teachers write general comments about a student's levels of participation in 'activities'. Students in years 3 and 4 are assessed in seven subjects, while those in years 5 and 6, in eight subjects. The current 'Foreign Language Activities' (FLA) - the hours for which are deducted from the hours assigned to the 'Period of Integrated Study' (PIS) - that is implemented in years 5 and 6, is not assessed.

#### 4.2 Content in Science and Social Studies

In the Japanese elementary school, subjects such as science, social studies, and moral education are each organized into separate unit themes. For example, the Year 5 social studies textbook (Tokyo Shoseki) lists the following units:

- Unit 1: Understanding Our Country
- Unit 2: Our Lives and Food Production
- Unit 3: Our Lives and Manufacturing
- Unit 4: Our Lives and the Information Society
- Unit 5: Our Lives and the Environment

In Science, the Year 5 textbook (Dainihon Tsusho), lists the following units:

- Unit 1: Weather and Information
- Unit 2: Chain of Growth – Plant Germination
- Unit 3: Chain of Growth – Growth of Plants
- Unit 4: Chain of Growth – Birth of a Killfish (medaka)
- Unit 5: Chain of Growth – Birth of a Human Being
- Unit 6: Chain of Growth – How Fruits and Seeds are Borne
- Unit 7: Flux Water
- Unit 8: Electromagnetism
- Unit 9: How do things Melt
- Unit 10: Pendulums

All subjects are organized similarly into ‘units’ within each grade year. In general, although the content of each subject is independent of other subjects, some commonality can be observed. For example, ‘growth’ is a possible common theme between Unit 2 in Social Studies and Unit 2 in Science. The role of the teacher in the PIS is to integrate the content of the different subjects and their units and (up until FLA was

implemented across all Year 5 and 6 grades in 2011) create three ‘general’ lessons per week. Since 2011, only two ‘general’ lessons have been scheduled. In reality, although schools *should* allocate all general hours to integrated content classes, due to time pressures, school camps, sporting events, special events and other unexpected changes to syllabi that come up during the year, the number of the scheduled hours that are actually used as PIS hours varies from school to school. An informal survey by the authors of 49 elementary school teachers in December 2016 found that less than 50% of schools actually follow MEXT recommendations in this regard due to the above school calendar commitments.

#### 4.3 The Primary Years Program (PYP)

How Japanese education organizes curriculum and each subject’s syllabus into distinct and separate units contrasts with how curriculums are organized in international education systems.

In many countries, in addition to public government-run schools and private schools (usually run by religious denominations, university corporations with affiliated schools, or even private companies) there is an ‘international school’ system that operates independently of government control in terms of curriculum. The international school system focusses upon providing a ‘western-style’ education that prepares students to enter universities located in countries other than the ones in which they are living. In most international schools, the student population mainly consists of children of people that have been transferred to the host country for business purposes so the education expenses are usually borne by their employers. However, there are also children whose parents are natives of the host country but who wish their children to attend universities in foreign countries in the future or those who wish their children to become fluent in English (or the

language of the medium of instruction). However, due to tuition fees being far greater than public and private schools in the host country, the number of local students attending these schools is fewer than non-host country students. Many of these international schools are run by private corporations or religious organizations and many operate schools in a variety of countries. Many are also members of the same professional organizations, religious associations, or are 'feeders' for the same associations of foreign universities. The schools often share staff, curriculum, and even students if they move from country to country with working parents. In Japan at the time of writing, there are 28 international schools with 15 of these located in Tokyo.

One of the more common curriculums offered by international schools is the 'International Baccalaureate' (IB) Diploma. At present, over 4000 schools around the world offer the IB Diploma upon matriculation from high school. The IB is a curriculum that seeks to standardize achievement across national boundaries so that a graduate can ostensibly enter an undergraduate course at a university in any country that recognizes the IB. That is, a student graduating with an IB Diploma from Senri International School in Osaka is eligible to apply for universities in any number of countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK, and even Japan. Even though the IB Diploma is only received by students graduating from senior high, the IB Organization (IBO) does offer IB programs at the elementary and middle school levels: the 'Primary School Program' (PYP) and the 'Middle Year Program' (MYP). In Japan at present, there are 21 schools that offer the PYP, 11 schools that offer the MYP, and 29 schools that offer the IB Diploma (retrieved from <http://ibo.org>).

The IBO organizes and implements curriculum quite differently to Japanese public education. For example, at 'Ajman Academy', a school of 1200 pupils that is located in Ajman in the United Arab Emirates, the

PYP is implemented from kindergarten (two levels: KG1 and KG2) through to PY6 (Primary Year 6). The curriculum for each year level is composed of 6 units known as 'blocks'. Each 'block' has its own 'Point of Inquiry' (POI) *or theme*, which serves as the focus point for all the academic content from all the subjects. That is, content in each subject is oriented to the block's central theme. Each block is taught over a period of 6 to 7 academic weeks. From PY4 through to PY6 the thematic POI for each block is the same, but the focus varies per year level. For example, in PY4 (year 4) the focus of Block 1's POI, 'Who We Are', is 'I am a Learner'. The central idea is 'Understanding different ways of learning can empower people'. In PY5 (year 5), the POI is still 'Who We Are', but the focus is now 'Making the Right Choices'. The central idea is now 'Choices are essential to the development of a personal values system'. Even though all subjects are to be taught with the theme in mind, each POI also has 'primary' subject focuses. For example, the subject focuses in PY4 Block 1 'Who We Are: I am a Learner' are Mathematics, Physical Education, and Language. In other words, most of the content for that theme is taught in those three subjects. That is not to say the other subjects are neglected during that 6-week period. It means that the theme resonates more strongly through the lessons taught in those subject areas. In contrast, in PY5 Block 1 'Who We Are: Making the Right Choices' the subject focuses are Physical Education, Social Studies, and Language. The six blocks and themes of the PY5 curriculum are:

Block 1: Who We Are: Making the Right Choices

Block 2: Where We Are in Place and Time: My Country, My Home.

Block 3: How We Organize Ourselves: Natural Disasters.

Block 4: Sharing the Planet: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Block 5: How We Express Ourselves: Art Attack

Block 6: How the World Works: Light and Sound.

Each block is organized around a central idea, with key concepts, related concepts, lines of inquiry within the thematic POI. For example, the central idea of Block 4's 'Sharing the Planet' is 'the choices we make have an impact on our environment'. Within the block, science lessons would concentrate on topics such as environmental impact of plastics in the oceans, the degrading of solids, the processes of recycling etc.; mathematics might use authentic data about the tonnage of recyclable material collected in Toyota per year when teaching percentages or fractions; language classes would utilize web-based articles as reading material; social studies might look at poor children in India, Bangladesh or Brazil sorting through garbage tips for recyclable material for sale; field trips might be taken to recycling plants, etc. In all lessons, a block's theme is at the center of each subject's particular academic content.

## 5. CLIL Content.

As noted above, there are three types of content in a CLIL lesson: the 'language of learning', the 'language for learning', and the 'language through learning'. This section discusses the 'language of learning' which is the language of the content subjects from which the lesson is constructed. For example, in a CLIL unit about 'plant life', the vocabulary might include items such as 'plant', 'seed', 'germination', 'life cycle', 'stem', 'roots', 'pests', 'insects', 'petals', 'leaves' etc. Similarly, a unit theme of 'Climate Change' might include 'global warming', 'ice caps', 'weather', 'thunderstorm', 'drought', 'famine', 'typhoon', etc.

One criticism of the work of Yamano, Takizawa, Kashimoto, and Hasegawa is that the origin of the unit themes and how they would fit into a whole year scope-and-sequence listing of CLIL content remains unclear. For example, one wonders why 'animals' was chosen as a theme for Yamano's CLIL unit for Year 5. In the Japanese curriculum, 'animals' appears in the Year 3 Science syllabus. Moreover, what CLIL unit would

come before, and which CLIL unit would come after ‘animals’? In other words, without an understanding of how the authors view a complete CLIL syllabus and all the unit themes for each year level, the four unit themes that are online appear random in sequence and somewhat ‘one-off’. Additionally, it is not clear which year level each unit is meant for.

The suggestion here is that CLIL unit themes for Years 3 – 6 should be derived from what content the students are learning in other subject areas, principally science and social studies. At elementary school level, CLIL units should be seen to be supporting and reinforcing the learning of content rather than introducing new content. In the authors’ opinions, ‘new’ content should be taught in the L1 and remain within the subject from which it is derived. However, there is no reason why CLIL lessons could not re-teach prior learned content but utilize the English-equivalent terms for the key concepts and vocabulary of the content. Moreover, current in-service teachers are more likely to feel less pressured if the content of their English lessons mirrors what they have taught or are teaching in science or social studies.

With this in mind, and after an analysis of the key themes and concepts taught in Years 5 and 6 science and social studies, the following CLIL themes are suggested.

YEAR 5	
MODULE 1	CLIMATE CHANGE
MODULE 2	PLANT LIFE
MODULE 3	MARINE LIFE
MODULE 4	MANUFACTURING
MODULE 5	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
MODULE 6	PEOPLE AS RESOURCES/ECO LIFE
MODULE 7	POWER OF NATURE/NATURAL DISASTERS

YEAR 6	
MODULE 1	SOLAR ENERGY
MODULE 2	SELF AND SOCIETY
MODULE 3	ENVIRONMENT: RECYCLE, REUSE, REDUCE
MODULE 4	ELECTRICITY
MODULE 5	CYBER SAFETY
MODULE 6	SPACE EXPLORATION
MODULE 7	GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

A positive in favor of the use of CLIL by Japanese elementary school teachers not confident in their own English ability or their ability to teach English, is that CLIL methodology does not exclude the use of the L1 during lessons. Partial instruction in both the L1 language and the vehicular language — in this case, English — is a form of code-switching which has been termed ‘translanguaging’. Translanguaging allows teachers and beginner learners to use the L1 and L1 materials to support teaching in the L2. For example, depending upon the level of the students in any particular lesson, the L1 could be used for outlining and summarizing the main points, while the L2 could be used for the specific activities.

A second positive is that CLIL and its focus on the integration of content and language is complementary to the ‘Period for Integrated Study’. Yamano and her colleagues’ work has shown that a CLIL-oriented PIS unit that utilizes L2 English can complement MEXT’s stated objectives for the PIS to integrate content from various subjects. For example, a PIS unit titled ‘Climate Change’ can not only blend language content but also subject content from science, social studies, and mathematics. Moreover, schools would not have to further reduce PIS-designated hours to accommodate a second ‘English’ lesson per week, were English to be used within the blended CLIL-PIS lesson.



A third positive is that by the end of year 4, Japanese pupils have already been taught a ‘gairaigo’ vocabulary of some 162 words in social studies and science. ‘Gairaigo’ refers to words from other languages that have been rendered into the Japanese katakana script. For example, ‘sports’ is rendered as ‘supo-tsu’ in romanized katakana and pronounced likewise. The ‘Critical Period Hypothesis’ (Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Lenneberg, 1967) while limited in evidence as to its validity, is supported in second language acquisition research to some extent when it comes to younger learners achieving greater levels of native-like pronunciation and fluency than older learners. As the critical period is posited to be between 2 and 13 years of age, it behooves Japanese English education for children in years 5 and 6 to also be taught the native pronunciations of these ‘katakana words’ and also shown how the two — e.g. *sports* and *supo-tsu* — differ in written and spoken forms.

## Conclusion

This paper has suggested that CLIL-oriented English lessons be adopted in one of the two weekly periods assigned to the subject ‘English’ in Years 5 and 6 in Japanese elementary schools. Yamano’s (2013) development of CLIL units needs to be expanded and developed within a whole-year syllabus. However, CLIL units should be developed that complement and support the concurrent content being taught in Science, Social Studies and Mathematics. Thematic topics have been suggested but the construction of teaching plans, then the teaching and evaluating of the units are the next steps in the process. As early as 2018, MEXT is expected to announce textbooks and syllabi for years 5 and 6 prior to the rolling out of English as a formal subject in 2020. As noted above, one of the stated objectives of MEXT is to introduce reading and writing into the curriculum. That said, there are concerns that the transition from ‘FLA’ to ‘English’ could lead to, in the long term, the demotivation of

students for English. An oft-repeated objective of curriculums is that English should be a tool for communication, however, in the authors' opinions, it would be a backward step should year 5 and 6 English lead to an over-emphasis on reading and writing at the expense of speaking and listening. The fear is that MEXT will introduce a rigidly structured grammatically or linguistically-oriented syllabus that would under-emphasise the importance of English as a tool for *spoken* communication. The recommendation here is that MEXT abandon the plan for two formal English lessons per week, keep it at one and use another hour per week that has been allocated to a Period for Integrated Studies for an integrated lesson that includes content from science, social studies, moral education, music, (among others) and English.

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