Lessons from Hong Kong English Education: HOTS-Integrated Language Learning

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1. Introduction

This paper looks at English education in primary schools in the 'People's Republic of China Hong Kong Special Administrative Region', or 'Hong Kong SAR' for short: a place that has had a long history with English education. Partially funded by the International Center of Aichi University of Education, a team composed of three Aichi University of Education professors and nine English teacher-trainees, recently visited Hong Kong to observe English lessons in primary schools. The aim was to not only investigate current English teaching practices but also bring Japanese methods of teaching English in elementary schools into sharper force for our AUE teacher-trainees. The hope was for them to be able to look at both systems objectively, furnish them with ideas for their future careers as teachers, as well as motivate them to improve their own English skills. A comment from Dr Yoshitaka Kozuka to the author regarding the excellence of the elicitation skills of a particular teacher during his observation of her lesson, determined the course of this report. This paper includes a review of two of the observed lessons and a commentary on some of the features of their English education system.

2. A Very Brief History of Language Education in Hong Kong

From the time it became a British colony in 1842 through to 1974, English was the official language of government, commerce and education in Hong Kong. However, closer UK diplomatic and economic

ties with mainland China brought about partly as a result of US President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972, also brought changing attitudes and with them the passing of the Official Languages Ordinance of 1974 by the Hong Kong government. This ordinance made Chinese (i.e. Cantonese Chinese) a co-official language with English. Primary[1] and secondary schools, which under the British had exclusively used English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI), were strongly encouraged by the Education Commission to switch to Chinese-as-a-medium-of-instruction (CMI). However, principals were given the right to choose the 'medium of instruction' (MOI) of their own school. With the choice up to them, principals looked to staff and parents for opinions and guidance. The results, according to Kirkpatrick (2007), contrasted markedly. Kirkpatrick states that a 1990 Education Commission report showed that while a majority of primary schools had used the 16 years in the interim to become CMI – more than 90% of primary school students were in CMI schools by 1990 – more than 90% of secondary school students had remained in EMI schools in 1990. Kirkpatrick (2007) attributes this to the fact that 6 of the 8 universities in the territory were EMI institutions, and parents saw CMI secondary schools as disadvantageous when it came to both entering and coping with studies at EMI universities.

With the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China looming large and the continued reluctance of secondary schools to adopt CMI, the Education Bureau was becoming concerned that the lack of CMI in secondary schools prior to the handover would allow Putonghua to gain a greater foothold in school curriculums after the handover, than it would have

[1] The British-English terms 'primary school' and 'secondary school' are used in Hong Kong instead of 'elementary school', 'junior high school' and 'high school'. So, 'P1' denoting 'Primary 1', is equivalent to elementary school grade 1.

had had Cantonese been the medium of instruction of the school prior to the handover. As a result, and in an effort to preserve Cantonese against 'big brother Putonghua' (Kirkpatrick, 2007), a few months before the 1997 handover, the education bureau decreed that only 110 out of 460 secondary schools would be allowed to continue as EMI schools, and all others would become CMI. Although uproar from schools and parents soon followed, the Bureau remained firm and only four more schools were allowed to remain EMI, bringing the total up to 114.

The 1997 handover saw Hong Kong become the 'Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China'. A Putonghua curriculum, taught by 900 in-service teachers who had received training in the 1997-1998 school year, was implemented in primary and secondary schools from the 1998-1999 school year. A further 1900 in-service teachers had been trained to teach Putonghua by the end of the 1999-2000 school year. Now, nineteen years later, and with mainland Chinese being allowed freer access to Hong Kong for travel, business and education, Putonghua ability is rightly seen as an essential skill for Hong Kong-born Chinese. It is well-established in primary and secondary schools as a subject with adequate supplies of both skilled teachers and resources.

Officially, since the addition of Putonghua to the curriculum, the government of Hong Kong S.A.R. has followed a 'biliterate and trilingual' policy. The policy, which aims to ensure that Hong Kong students become biliterate in written English and Chinese, and trilingual in spoken English, Cantonese and Putonghua, has been guiding the curriculum design in Hong Kong primary schools (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2012). How three languages co-exist in one school is remarkable and worth reporting on. In a 2012 case study of a government primary school, Wang and Kirkpatrick (2012) report that the school uses English as the MOI for English, PE, and Visual Arts subjects, Cantonese as the MOI for

Math, General Studies, Music, IT and Chinese literacy (P1-P3) subjects, and Putonghua (i.e. Mandarin) as the MOI is used for Putonghua lessons and Chinese literacy in the higher grades (P4 - P6). An interview with the principal revealed that the goal of the school was to have an MOI distribution of roughly 45% Cantonese, 30% English and 25% Putonghua across its subjects.

In this paper, the three schools (two primarily government-funded and one primarily privately-funded) visited by the AUE tour group in February 2019, were found to use the same MOI languages for the same subjects as the 2012 case study, suggesting that this may be a general pattern across primary schools in Hong Kong S.A.R.

3. General overview of the English curriculum

Contemporary online documents from the Education Bureau (EDB) reveal that curriculum in primary school is divided into Key Learning Areas (KLA), including: Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Personal Social and Humanities Education (i.e. similar to Moral Education in Japan), Arts, and Physical Education. In general, periods in primary school are 35 or 40 minutes long per lesson. A timetable from a government primary school visited by the team, shows 8 periods per day, with 20-minute recess periods after 3rd and 6th periods. This amounts to only 40 minutes per day when students are not in lessons. At least once a week, each subject has a 'double period' resulting in a 70-minute lesson. As well as the intensive 40 periods per week, homework is an essential part of study, and outside each school's teachers' room, racks of shelving full of homework can be found. Students are taught to find their teacher's name and put their homework in the assigned cubicle before the start of the school day.

3.1 English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) lessons at primary schools

In the English KLA, the six years of primary education are divided into Key Learning Stage 1 (KLS1), encompassing P1 to P3 (i.e. Primary 1 to Primary 3), and Key Learning Stage 2 (KLS2) from P4 to P6 (i.e. Primary 4 to Primary 6). In talking about curriculum levels, teachers have shortened these to KS1 (Key Stage 1) and KS2 (Key Stage 2). Key Stage 3 (KS3) refers to Years 7 to 9 in secondary school.

In terms of its organization and design, the English KLA can perhaps best be described as a dual-node programme consisting of a 'Literacy' node and a 'General English' node. Schools have up to 8 English lessons per week, with 3 designated as literacy programme lessons (see below) and 5 as 'General English'. All English lessons are EMI, meaning there is no use of the L1 in English lessons, particularly from P2 and up[2]. The EDB has funded schools with more than 6 classes to employ at least one 'Native English Teacher' (NET), who is a fully qualified and experienced teacher from Australia, the UK, USA or Canada. Of the NET scheme, the EDB website states that in order to "enhance the teaching of English language and increase the exposure of students to English, a Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme has been implemented in public-sector secondary and primary schools since the 1998/99 and 2002/03 school year respectively" (retrieved 24 February, 2019).

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[2]A principal and English teacher that the author talked with said that generally speaking, in P1 it is okay to use the mother tongue at the beginning of the year but as they get older they encourage the students to decrease their usage of the L1. The principal declared that English teachers should be role models of English users and she expected them to only use EMI in lessons, just as she expected her Putonghua teachers to only use PMI in lessons. She also said that students know to use the language of each particular teacher upon greeting or meeting them outside of lessons.

Depending upon the size of the schools, some schools can have up to 4 NETs at one time.

3.2. Native English Teacher (NET) & Local English Teacher (LET) collaboration

In general, there are two teachers in each English lesson made up of one of the following pairings:

(a) The 'Local English Teacher' (LET) and the homeroom teacher (HRT), or
(b) The LET and the NET.

The LET (Local English Teacher) is a specialist role at the school and he or she only teaches English, much like PE, music and art teachers at elementary schools in Japan. He or she is responsible for working with other LETs in the school to implement the 'General English' programme that the EDB recommends should take up 5 of the 8 English lessons per week. To teach the other three lessons per week, the EDB has funded for a least one NET to be placed in each public-sector school. Of the three schools we visited, two of them had two NETs and the largest school (750 pupils) had three. The affiliated primary school of AUE's partner university in Hong Kong, The Education University of Hong Kong, had two NETs at the Jockey Club Primary School.

In schools with EDB-funded NETs, the school is obligated to implement at least one of the primary literacy programmes (PLP-R, PLP-R/W see below) in P1-P3 that were developed by the NET division of the Education Bureau. As a further proviso, co-planning and co-teaching involving the NET and LET are among the commitments that need to be fulfilled. Professional collaboration is fostered with school-based support provided by Advisory Teachers from the NET Section, who play the role of a language education consultant. Yes, the Hong Kong Education

Bureau has a dedicated NET division that is staffed by highly experienced former NETs in the roles of advisory teachers (AT). The ATs tasks include recruiting and acclimatizing new NETs to Hong Kong, familiarising recruits with the various NET programmes and expected methods of delivery of these programmes, developing and maintaining programmes and resources, liaising with the LET division and co-developing integration of the literacy and general English programmes, conducting professional development courses for NETs, as well as visiting NETs on site and working with them and LETs on the school-based curriculum.

As mentioned above, in the classroom NETs are expected to at the least be co-teachers of the 3 literacy lessons with LETs. In two of the three NET-LET lessons we observed, the NET and LET co-taught the lessons with each taking the lead at various stages. The professional relationship and team-teaching partnership between the NET and LET had become so fine-tuned that transitions between lesson leadership roles within the lessons were seamless. For the General English lessons, the LET-HRT combination is the norm. However, the LET is clearly the dominant teacher in these lessons with the HRT fulfilling roles as dialogic partners and assistants. Experienced LETs can often teach the lessons by themselves which frees up the HRTs to go back to the teacher's room to work by him- or herself. The author saw LET-HRT lessons and also LET-only lessons.

3.3. The Primary Literacy Programme (PLP)

In regard to the literacy node (3 of the 8 lessons per week), KS1 (P1 to P3), it can encompass two programmes. In P1, the 'Primary Literacy Programme – Reading' (PLP-R), introduces students to learning to read English medium stories through the use of 'Big Books'. This is extended with the addition of writing skills in P2 and P3 in the 'Primary Literacy

Programme - Reading/Writing (PLP-R/W). Introduced in 2007/08, PLP-R/W is an enhanced version of PLP-R and serves to support programme schools in enriching their English Language curriculum by promoting and supporting the use of a systematic approach to developing students' literacy skills and by providing big books and small picture books designed by the NET Section to support shared and guided reading in Key Stage 1. It also supports teachers' professional growth, including NETs', by providing professional development workshops and opportunities for experience sharing and dissemination of good practices, as well as units of work and support packages as resource support for teachers. Implementation of the programme is not compulsory. According to Mr Joe Leung, Chief Curriculum Development Officer (p.c.), currently about 200 schools, about 40% of local primary schools in the public sector, are implementing PLP-R/W and most have adapted the programme to suit their own contextual needs. Both the PLP-R and PLP-R/W also include extensive phonics components.

In the NET section, innovations and improvements to curriculum are ongoing. In 2015/16, they introduced 'Space Town', an enhanced version of PLP-R/W, but with an additional pedagogical focus on e-learning and self-directed learning. It also provides stronger support in terms of its link with the school's GE programme. Like the PLP-R/W, 'Space Town' lays emphasis on the use of a systematic approach to literacy development, teachers' professional growth and their professional collaboration. Currently about 70 schools are implementing 'Space Town'.

In KS2 (P4 - P6), the NET division has also developed programmes to integrate with the GE lessons even though the deployment of a NET in P4 - P6 is not a mandatory requirement for schools. The Key Stage 2 Integration Programme (KIP) was introduced in 2009/10 as a literacy programme supporting students' literacy extended development in Key

Stage 2. Similar to PLP-R/W, KIP advocates a systematic approach to literacy development, provides school-based support and resource support, and attaches importance to teachers' professional development. The main difference between PLP-R/W and KIP in terms of NET deployment, is that as most primary schools choose to have their NET teach and/or co-teach with the LET in KS1, the direct involvement of the NET in P4 - P6 lessons in a KIP school is not compulsory or common. That is, NETs are primarily utilized in P1 - P3 levels. According to Mr Leung (p.c.), currently about 40 schools are implementing KIP. One more innovated programme introduced in 2015/16, is the Keys 2 Literacy Development (Keys2). It is an enhanced version of KIP, laying emphasis on developing students' reading and writing skills progressively with the use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies. Apart from literacy skills, Keys2 promotes the development of students' metacognitive skills and the use of formative assessment. Currently over 20 schools are implementing Keys2.

In the General English lessons taught by the LET, P1-P3 students focus on learning the mechanics of English (i.e., punctuation, pronunciation, orthographic skills and grammatical features). Each school's LET group selects a core textbook to be used as the basis for the GE programme. At present, there are 15 EDB-approved printed textbooks in use in P1-P6 across Hong Kong primary schools with another 6 e-textbooks available for download onto iPads and tablets. Perhaps by chance, the three schools we visited each used the 'Primary Longman Express' series, which has an 'A' and 'B' version for each of the P1 to P6 levels. At the time of writing, it is believed that all GE textbooks in use in Hong Kong are English-only.

3.4. The text-type derived P1-P3 syllabus

The syllabus and methodology of the literacy node to the English curriculum through KS1 and KS2 is text-based. Designed by the NET division to integrate with the GE syllabus, the text-based syllabus design and methodologies have been directly imported from Australian primary school education. In fact, the practices observed in the classrooms in Hong Kong on this visit, mirrored what the author himself was doing 30 years ago in his primary school language arts lessons. The text-based syllabus focuses on developing a learner's literacy through familiarization with, exploration of, and creation of different text types such as literary recount stories (e.g. texts about everyday events in the past), narratives (e.g. the three little pigs), procedural recounts (e.g. cooking a cake), information reports (e.g., at the supermarket), and factual descriptions (e.g. animals of the sea), among others. Topical content includes both fictional and non-fictional materials ranging from texts such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar' through to factual descriptions of 'Fur', 'Space' or 'Recycling' that are used in the higher grades. Students work through first exploring the features of a text type and then creating their own original texts of the same genre. For example, investigating the features of a flyer for toothpaste teaches them to create their own flyer for a product of their own. Over the years, the NET division has developed a suite of original storybooks that are contextually-appropriate to the Hong Kong students.

Before proceeding with the reviews of the lessons, it should be noted at this juncture that teachers' lesson plans, their objectives, questioning, and instructional activities in English education in Hong Kong (and Australia) are constructed so as to carefully consider the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT) (Andersen et al, 2001) for the cognitive domain. A brief explanation of the RBT and how lesson objectives are designed is warranted.

4. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy and its use in lesson planning

The original Bloom Taxonomy of the cognitive domain (Bloom, *et al.*, 1956), was a well-defined and broadly accepted objective-writing tool for teachers for categorizing types of thinking into six different levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The taxonomy of thinking types was hierarchical in cognitive complexity rather than being a ranking of 'ability'. In other words, a student exhibiting creativity or an activity generating creativity cannot be judged to be a thinker of greater ability or an activity of greater value than another student or activity that exhibits or requires analytical ability. The student or activity can merely be said to be utilizing or requiring more cognitively complex thinking. A second dimension categorized types of knowledge into 'declarative', 'conceptual' and 'procedural' so that a matrix was constructed whereby any objective could be categorized as incorporating a type of knowledge (on the X-axis) and a level of cognitive complexity (on the y-axis). The 'Revised Bloom's Taxonomy' (RBT) (Anderson *et al.*, 2001), further subcategorized the original taxonomy and re-arranged the hierarchical complexity order (Krathwohl, 2002). Additionally, the authors of the RBT added 'metacognitive knowledge' to the three original knowledge types. In regard to the levels of cognitive complexity, the RBT renamed 'synthesis' to 'create' and made it the most cognitively complex category. Furthermore, the authors converted the different category titles to their active verb counterparts: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. hierarchy

Both the Bloom's, and the RBT, have been used widely in K-12 education in particular when it comes to writing lesson objectives, formulating teachers' questions and designing classroom activities for the reinforcement of subject content. Krathwohl (2002), in describing how to use the RBT to write objectives, states that objectives are "framed

in terms of (a) some subject matter content, and (b) a description of what is to be done with that content. Thus, statements of objectives typically consist of a noun or noun phrase – the subject matter content – and a verb or verb phrase – the cognitive process/es" (p.213). Examples of objectives include:

The students will be able to;

(b) predict[verb]what the hungry giant wants to eat [content]

(c) match[verb]aural information with picture texts on p.56[content]

(a) analyze[verb]the poem [content] and identify[verb] the rhyming structure [content]

The cognitive levels of a teacher's questions to students are a key factor in determining the cognitive engagement of students. Gallagher and Ascher's (1963) hierarchical taxonomy includes

(a) Cognitive-memory questions. These require recognition, rote memory and selective recall. They align with the RBT's remember and understand categories.

(b) Convergent questions. These combine the RBT's apply and analyze categories. They have only one answer but they require analysis of given or remembered data in order to arrive at the answer.

(c) Divergent questions. These require application and analysis of data before resulting in a new direction or perspective on a topic or problem. There is more than one possible solution. RBT's apply, analyze and create categories.

(d) Evaluative questions. Their highest level dealing with matters of judgment, choice and value. RBT's evaluate categories.

5. Teaching literacy

The P1 students are introduced to English through the 'Primary Literacy Programme-Reading' (PLP-R) in the form of 'Big Books', oversized versions of storybooks and texts. All language focuses (e.g. particular vocabulary or phrases) are drawn from within their context of

situation and culture. In other words, children study a language item or phrase based on its context of use. Teachers intensively question the students as to how and why a particular word or phrase was used, and children roleplay the different characters, imitating the intonation patterns and, at times, adapting and changing key characters or events in the text.

A school year in Hong Kong is divided into three terms. In a typical school, one text type or storybook is utilized as the content-basis for 4-6 weeks of English literacy lesson (i.e., PLP-R/W) periods. At the Jockey Club Primary School, two Big Books are covered per term for P1 - P3, making a total of 6 Big Books per year. Discussions with the other two schools revealed that this is the regular pattern. Each Big Book is accompanied by a smaller-sized version so that each student has a personal copy of the book for use in guided and independent reading lessons. Additionally, each Big Book is supplemented by 12 short story books that focus on similar themes and key vocabulary phrases that are found within the Big Book. Designed to be homework readers, students are expected to read two or three books per week for homework (depending on the school) and fill-in accompanying worksheets. Parents are expected to listen to their children read and sign a form saying they did so. This practice is not unlike parents of Japanese elementary school children.

The teaching of reading encompasses stages. Stage 1 involves oral 'Storytelling' in which the teacher or parent tells stories to the children and the children tell stories to the teacher/parent and peers. Stage 2 is 'Reading Aloud'. The teacher or parent reads aloud to children. Stage 3 is 'Shared Reading' in which the Big book is first scanned for comprehension of the scenes, and vocabulary is elicited form the students. The teacher then reads the story a number of times with the students first shadowing the teacher and then joining in where they can in

subsequent readings. The teacher uses a pointer to follow the words while reading. Stage 4 involves 'Guided Reading'. The students are in small groups and the teacher selects students to either read alone or in pairs or with him/her. As a student's confidence grows, he or she enters Stage 5, 'Independent Reading'.

The recommended structure of a typical 4-week module of a Big Book is for Week 1 to focus on reading the story so that children can enjoy it. 'Shared Reading' is a feature of this week. Week 2 then focuses upon deepening comprehension, identifying key vocabulary as well as phonics that are found within the story. 'Guided Reading' is the focus of this week. Weeks 3 and 4 focus on consolidation of their reading skills with more 'Guided Reading' and by week 4, advancement into fully 'Independent Reading' of the text. More phonics are highlighted and instructional activities involving production of similar but original texts are undertaken. The phonics syllabus is divided into 7 levels and is taught in P1-P3.

A typical initial lesson introducing a Big Book is sub-divided into four stages:

Stage 1: Before Reading
Stage 2: Reading of the Book
Stage 3: After Reading
Stage 4: Follow-Up Activities

The following Shared Reading lesson — part of the PLP-R/W programme — was observed at a government primary school. The lesson was team-taught by the NET and the LET, and it was the first lesson in Week 1 introducing a 'new' Big Book.

5.1 Lessons from Hong Kong

Lesson 1: 'The Very Hungry Giant'

Level: P2 at a public-sector primary school
Teachers: NET and LET
Location: English classroom
Course: PLP-R/W (primary literacy programme – reading/writing)
Physical characteristics of the room:

The Big Book was placed on an easel at the front of the room. The two teachers stood either side of the book. The children were seated in chairs placed in rows and grouped in front of the book. There were 27 students. Behind the students were 5 oval-shaped tables, not desks. The walls and whiteboard were covered in English vocabulary, brightly colored pictures, phonics charts, Bloom's Taxonomy charts, and student produced stories and pictures. Beanbags and bookracks were arranged in at the back of the room. The flooring was half wooden and half carpeted with the beanbags and bookracks on the carpet. The space was obviously a self-access reading and learning space. A desk, which served as the NETs workspace was in one corner.

Stage 1: Before Reading

This lesson was the first of a unit of work (each Big Book garners 10-12 lessons which takes approximately 4 to 6 weeks of lessons). The lesson started with the teachers drawing attention to the title, writer and illustrator of the story. They then asked the students to look at the picture on the front and speculate as to what the story might be about: in this case, a hungry giant who wanted something to eat. The students freely gave their predictions and there was no attempt by the teachers to say 'no' to whatever a student said. Instead, the teachers would question the group with 'What do you think?', 'Is that right?', and 'What does that look like?'. The book was then opened and the pictures on each page were

decoded for possible meaning? There was no attempt to read the words, but rather each picture was discussed and decoded. Questions included; 'What is the giant doing?' 'What do you think he wants?', 'How do think he feels?' 'How does his face look?'. The treatment of vocabulary was interesting in that at no time did the teachers volunteer the vocabulary. Through skillful referential and evaluative questioning, important vocabulary was gradually elicited from the students. All students appeared to participate actively in this 'discovery' process and all had something to say. In fact at one stage, the students were so boisterous that the teacher had to refocus their attention by instigating the following 10-second routine.

1. Clapping routine
2. 'Look at me'
3. 'Hands on your lap'

This 1st stage of the lesson engaged not only the LOTS-memory derived thinking skills but also the HOTS of analytical, evaluative and creative thinking. Students needed to analyze pictures for meaning, judge the feelings and expressions of the characters and predict what characters were saying and was going to occur in the upcoming pages.

Stage 2: Reading of the Book

After stage one, the book was opened at the start again and the NET took up a pointer to use as a reading prop. Each page was then read slowly with students joining in when they could. When difficult to read or pronounce words were met, either the NET or the LET would model them for the students who would then repeat them. About one third of the way through the book, the NET stopped the reading, and brought out a phonics card with 'it' on it. She then asked the students to identify 'it' on the page. In this case, 'it' appeared in the word 'hit'. The LET then

asked the students if they knew other words 'it'. Students then suggested various words such as 'fit' and 'sit' that ended in the 'it' blend. The reading of the story then continued.

Stage 3: After Reading (I want some....)

In this stage, the teachers then focused on one particular phrase that occurred multiple times during the story 'I want some (honey). Give me some (honey).' The scenes were roleplayed by the NET and the LET a couple of times and the intonation, vocal and facial expressions, and actions of the angry giant were mirrored and mimicked by the teachers and students: 'I want some bread...', 'I want some honey', 'or I'll hit you with my bommyknocker'. The LET then engaged their evaluative thinking when she asked the students if 'I want ...' with a strong voice and angry face was a good way to get things from others. When the students answered 'No', she asked them if they knew other ways to do it? Students answered with a number of options including 'Can you give me some honey?', 'Please give me some honey', 'Do you have honey? Can you give me some?'. When one student answered 'I want honey. Give me honey', the LET asked the other students what they thought rather than say to the student the answer was not correct. The NET then offered 'May I have some honey please?' and a dialogue was roleplayed with the LET.

NET: May I have some honey?
LET: Of course. Here you are.

This dialogue became the basis for the follow-up activities.

Stage 4: Follow-Up Activities

The screen was then activated and the following dialogue appeared.

Student A: What would you like to eat?
Student B: May I have a/an .... please.
Student A: Here you are.
Student B: Thank you.

The Net and LET demonstrated the activity by roleplaying the dialogue, each taking turns to be Student A. The students were then paired and each given four picture cards. They then moved to the center of the room and grouped themselves at the tables with their partners and roleplayed the dialogue for themselves. This substitution practice was clearly geared to the 'apply' level on the RBT. The lesson ended with the following song/chant which reinforced the letter of the week 'H' and its sound.

Hands on heads, ha ha ha,
Hands on heads, ha ha ha
Hands on heads, ha ha ha
That is the sound of 'h'

The second literacy lesson outlined here was Week 2 of a Big Book. The students had done 'Shared Reading' in Week 1 when the book was introduced. As noted above, Week 2 in the module moves towards 'Guided Reading' and a focus on phonics and vocabulary.

Lesson 2: 'The Pirate, the Parrot and Fun at the Bun Festival'

Level: P3 at a public-sector primary school.
Teachers: NET and LET
Location: English classroom
Course: PLP-R/W (primary literacy programme – reading/writing)
Physical characteristics of the room:

The students entered the classroom in groups of six and seated themselves close to their fellow group members. A projector screen had

been activated prior to the class and the Big Book was placed on an easel under this screen. A mobile whiteboard was placed to the side of the easel and on it was written 'kn', 'mb', There were 30 students in total divided into groups of 6. Each group had been assigned a colour such as Red or Green as a classroom management tool. It became obvious that this colour grouping system was used across all grades at the school. Similar to the classroom above, behind the students were 5 oval-shaped tables, not desks. The walls and were also covered in English vocabulary, brightly colored pictures, phonics charts, Bloom's Taxonomy charts, and student produced stories and pictures. And bookracks were arranged in at the back of the room. The flooring was carpeted with the beanbags and bookracks on the carpet. A desk, which served as the NETs workspace was in one corner. 'The Pirate, the Parrot and Fun at the Bun Festival' Big Book was produced by the NET division and obviously contextually located in Chinese culture. However, this lesson was different from the lesson described above, which had been Lesson 1 of a new Big Book. In this lesson, the story had been read by the students and it was week 2 in the use of this book. The NET told the author that it already been used in 3 previous lessons in week 1.

Stage 1:

The high frequency words in the story were reviewed. Group leaders were required to read the words as they appeared on the screen and say the words to their group members who would repeat them. The LOTS category of remember was the main level of cognitive engagement.

Stage 2:

The action then moved to the whiteboard. The NET asked the students what sounds each of the blends made: 'kn', 'mb', 'gu' and 'h'. After this analysis, a brief English-medium youtube video, titled 'Silent

Letters' that explained the origin of the silent letters and their use, was shown. Interestingly, the video was captioned in English. The children learnt that the silent 'k' in 'kn' originated with the Vikings and when silent was always followed by an 'n', such as in 'knot', 'knee' and 'knife'. The Romans brought the silent 'b' in 'mb' (climb, comb, thumb), the French the 'gu' (guide, guard, tongue), and the Dutch the silent 'h' (ghost, honest, hour). After each silent letter, the NET paused the video and reviewed the pronunciation of each word. At the completion of the video, the teacher produced a mystery box. Selected children put their hands in the box and withdrew flashcards upon which the words form the video had been written. The child had to read the word and then put it on the whiteboard in the correct category. Remember, understand and analyze skills were engaged,

Stage 3:

The LET then took over the lead for a vocabulary review of words from the storybook. Pictures of objects in the book were projected onto the screen. Each picture had been labelled but the LET covered the words with her hands. They included 'bun tower', 'pirate junk', 'ferry', 'pier', 'yelling', and finally 'Bun Festival'. As the students recognized each picture and said the word in English, the LET exposed the word. Cognitive memory, that is, remember, was engaged.

Stage 4:

The NET then took the lead and the ending of the book was reread. As the NET pointed to particular characters, he selected students to take on roles and read the words that each character was saying. At the completion of the book, the NET then introduced the concept of 'speech bubble' to the students. He put up a picture of a scene from the book and focused on the characters. He asked the students to think about what

they might be saying. One of the students volunteered 'I'm hungry. I want to eat noodles' and so that was written into the speech bubble. Once the procedure had been established, the students moved to their groups desk' and each given a drawing of one of the pages of the storybook. Each page encapsulated an action scene from the book with multiple characters doing a variety of things such as storming a ship, falling overboard, rescuing swinging on a rope, among others. Beside each character was a speech bubble. The students were required to imagine what the characters were saying as they carried out the actions in the scene, and write the script in the speech bubbles. This activity engaged the students' analytical, evaluative and (particularly) creative cognition. They had to analyze the picture, make judgements about the characters' feelings, and then input what the characters were saying into the speech bubble. While the NET was supervising this activity, the LET was doing guided reading with one of the groups. In 'Guided reading', the students read the words and the teacher only assists if a student has difficulty reading.

Commentary on the 2 PLP-R/W lessons:

There were many striking differences about these lessons and an English lesson in Japan. Firstly, in regard to lesson 1, the key dialogic exchange was not in the book but derived from the dialogic phrases spoken by the giant in the story: 'I want some....' and 'Give me some... '. A second difference was the key role the native English teacher (NET) played in the lessons. Having experienced and qualified teachers well-versed in teaching reading and phonics as well as being skilled at questioning, resulted in the majority of the vocabulary and dialogue being elicited from the students. A third feature was the smoothness of the team-teaching between the NETs and the LETs. The pace of the lesson 1 in particular was brisk and left students little time to go off-task.

In a brief interview with the teachers after the lesson, they attributed the success of the lesson to successful planning. At least two co-planning sessions per month where NETs, LETs and HRTs meet together to discuss the upcoming literacy and general English lessons, construct lesson plans and resources, practice their teamwork delivery, and bounce ideas of each other, are built into the working schedules of all teachers. A fourth feature was the physical environment of both English classrooms. Having a dedicated English room which serves as not only a classroom but also a resource room and office for the NET allows him or her to stock the walls with key vocabulary, pictures and student-produced work. Both rooms were a sea of colour, and contrast strongly with typical Japanese elementary classrooms. Finally, and as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, perhaps the most striking features of the Shared Reading Lesson 1 in particular, were the elicitation skills of the teachers: that is, how the two teachers utilized various types of questions and various strategies of questioning so as to stimulate and prompt the students to engage with the visual content (the pictures in the storybook) at higher levels of cognition. Question types were not limited to the literal or factual that only engage a student's cognitive-memory (e.g., What is this?). While some questions asked for convergent (having one answer) answers, the majority were divergent (having a range of possible answers). Inferential, interpretive and evaluative questions that probed the analytical, evaluative and creative levels of thinking of the students were frequently used. For example, the teachers asked, 'Why?', 'What do you think?' and 'If...?' type questions in addition to 'What is this?' throughout the scanning of the storybook. Moreover, the teachers were skilled at the extend-lift questioning strategy (Taba, 1971). In this strategy, the teacher asks a series of questions at one cognitive level (for example, at the 'remember' level of the RBT with questions such as What is this? How do you spell that? What colour is this?) before 'lifting' the

questions to another cognitive level (How do you think the giant is feeling? What is his face telling you?). In contrast, the abundance of 'elicit' speech acts (i.e. questions) meant that 'inform' speech acts (i.e. statements) were infrequent. With the exception of the key phrase, 'May I...', teachers did not tell (i.e. inform) students the names of referential items in the pictures nor did they volunteer other possible phrases to be used in place of 'I want...' until the students had exhausted their 'supply' of possible expressions. The vast majority of vocabulary was skillfully elicited from the learners rather than told to them. Moreover, most of this vocabulary extraction occurred in the pre-reading stage when the students were looking through the story book and making observations from the pictures. Even though it is clear these students have a considerably larger vocabulary and could not only access stored memory but also process that information into coherent English, there is no reason why Japanese English teachers cannot use the same techniques to ask greater numbers of questions rather than resorting to informing and announcing to students at the onset of the lesson the key phrases that are to be learnt and practiced during a lesson. Moreover, given the low proficiency of Japanese learners of English, there is no reason why questions cannot be asked in Japanese.

5.2 The P4-P6 literacy programme

In the older grades, the same four-week module or unit model is followed as in P1-P3. However, instead of Big Books, the focus is on the exploration and production of more advanced text types such as poetry, factual descriptions, information reports, film reviews and newspaper articles, among others. Children in P4-P6 are expected to be able to read at an appropriate reading age for the class level. As work in advanced text types is both beyond the capabilities of Japanese elementary school

students and teachers, the two P5 lessons the group observed will not be outlined here in great detail other than the following brief summary.

Lesson 3

Level: P5 at a public-sector primary school
Teacher: LET (local English teacher)
Location: Regular P5 classroom.
Course: Keys2 (i.e. enhanced literacy)

The lesson started with a video recount of the LET teacher's family trip to Japan. The video, with a musical accompaniment, spanned approximately 3-minutes and particular scenes were captioned in English. The video captured scenery of Tokyo, what they did, where they went, and food they ate. It was immediately obvious that this teacher was well-versed in the use of ICT. Following the video, the LET quizzed the students for comprehension. However, it was remarkable how she did this and an example of the positive use of ICT in the language classroom. First, each student was handed a large laminated card upon which was what appeared to be a square shape much like a QR code but not as detailed. The four sides of the square were labelled A, B, C, and D. By turning the card, the students could select answer A, B, C or D. The teacher then asked a series of comprehension questions that were shown on the screen at the front of the classroom.
Question 1: 'When did Miss Y__ go to Tokyo?
Answer choices were:

(a) 21 July 2017
(b) 21 July 2018
(c) 24 July 2017
(d) 24 July 2018

The students made a selection by turning their card so that either A, B, C, or D was at the top. They held it up. The teacher then used her smart phone camera to scan each of the student's answers. As the student's card was scanned, the number of the card appeared on the screen at the front of the class. This allowed the teacher to see the number of cards (and students) she had scanned as she circled the room. Once all the students' cards had been scanned, the teacher advanced the program and the number of students that had selected each answer appeared in a bar graph beside each answer. In this fashion, the teacher was able to not only gauge each student's comprehension of the video, but also gather individual data on each student. Moreover, the students did not have to do anything other than turn the card a particular direction.

In Stages 2 and 3, the teacher handed out a printed passage composed of 5 paragraphs that described her trip to Tokyo. The structure of the passage was then analyzed through a series of rapid fire questions that asked about the number of paragraphs, where she went, what she did, how she felt at each place. When an unknown word was encountered – 'scrumptious' – in tandem with the students the teacher phonically decoded the word for its pronunciation. She then asked what the meaning was and how we could understand the meaning if we didn't know what it was. A student volunteered that "We can get the meaning of a word by using another sentence", i.e., the context. In this case it described food that she enjoyed a lot. The key information - 'place', 'event', 'adjectives' - of each paragraph was then noted down in a table. The teacher kept up with rapid fire questions such as: 'Which words have similar meanings?', 'How do we know?', 'Why do I have to use so many adjectives in this passage?'. The analytical and evaluative level of the questions was astounding.

Lesson 4

Level: P5 at a public-sector primary school
Teacher: LET (local English teacher)
Location: Display classroom.
Course: Keys2 (i.e. enhanced literacy)

Lesson 4 also involved a text-type analysis. In this case however, the text type was a teacher-produced poem. In Stage 2, after reading the poem in Stage 1, the LET elicited various analyses from the students including: a generic structural analysis, metric analysis, and a lexical analysis. Particularly impressive was how the LET led the students to access the meaning of 'make a fuss' by looking at contextual cues. Rhyming words, nouns, adjectives and synonyms were identified. At no stage did the LET volunteer the answers, yet through her skillful questioning and instructional tasks challenged the students and 'forced' them to analyze the poem. Finally, the lesson entered the production phase with the students writing their own stanzas.

Like the other P5 lesson, my observations of this lesson reinforced the belief that methodologically speaking, the lessons also adhered to a PPP-structure. However, the middle 'P' in Hong Kong classrooms was 'Processing' instead of 'Practice'. The analytical instructional tasks implemented by both teachers, in conjunction with their excellent questioning skills and techniques, were designed to not only teach English, but also teach English in such a way that the students' higher order cognitive thinking skills were constantly being engaged.

6. Discussion

At this stage in the teaching of English in Japan, dual use of L1 and L2 is a necessary tool in the English language classroom. Contrary to the opinions of advocates of EMI, the dual use of L1 and L2 in language

classrooms is not as frowned upon as it once was. For example, Hornberger (2005) defends the use of heritage languages in L2 classrooms and argues that "the basic premise …is that bi/multilinguals' learning is maximized when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in two+ languages), rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices" (p. 607). Dual-language use, or 'Translanguaging' (Garcia, 2007) has since entered the nomenclature of contemporary language education, and is best understood as a situation in which a speaker uses dual languages in a pedagogic context to make meaning, transmit information, and perform identities using the linguistic signs at his or her disposal (adapted from Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 94). While the EDB and school principals in Hong Kong stipulate EMI for English lessons, principals concede that P1 English lessons allow use of the mother tongue for understanding and to save time (p.c. Principal of Hoi Pa St. Government Primary School, Feb. 2019). Even if the questions are in Japanese — given we are at the 'starting gate' of English education in Japan — such questions need to be asked in English lessons at elementary school. Skillful questioning can draw out the prior knowledge of students as well as stimulate them to analyze, speculate (guess), predict and evaluate – all higher level cognitive processes. According to Kachru's model of the three concentric circles of Englishes (1982), Hong Kong is located within the 'Outer Circle' while Japan is in the 'Expanding Circle'. The 'Inner Circle' represents the native English speaking countries, the 'Outer Circle' includes countries where English is not the native language but it plays an important role due to historical reasons in the nation's institutions as an official language or otherwise (for example, former colonial states such as India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, etc.), while the 'Expanding Circle' where English is used as a foreign language or a

lingua franca (for example, China, Russia, Japan, Korea etc., and European countries such as Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, etc.). Japan's 'position' in this model is unlikely to change in the future, nor should it, in the opinion of the author. As such, it is unfair to compare English education in Hong Kong and English education in Japan at this juncture in terms of many of the features noted in this paper including local teacher proficiency and number of hours available for English teaching per week, month and year. There is no denying that the 8 lessons per week exposure to English plays a key role in the proficiency of the students. With periods of 35 or 40 minutes in each school, this amounts to between 4 hours 40 minutes to 5 hours 20 minutes per week respectively, which contrasts markedly with MEXT's plan for 90 minutes per week for Years 5 and 6 (2 x 45 minute lessons) over 35 weeks.

However, we can compare the teaching methodology. It is fair to say that Japan is only just now emerging from behaviorist methodologies of education that foster teacher-centered classrooms, not only in English but across all subjects. Indeed, there are clear signs in many subjects that Japan is slowly but surely adopting a child-centered approach to education. In fact, the current popularity of the phrase 'Active Learning' (アクティブ・ラーニング), is indicative of this shift towards a learner-centered classroom. However, to conclude that the PPP-methodology, so prevalent in junior high school English lessons and appearing in the MEXT-produced lesson plans for 'Let's Try!' And 'We Can!', aligns with active learning just because the students are talking more and perhaps even being more physically active walking around the room doing dialogic substitution drills, is to make a grave error.

The dominance of the PPP-methodology in English language teaching here in Japan is hard to break down. Of course, language proficiency constrains what can be achieved, and a large amount of time when initially learning a language must be devoted to lower level thinking

though drills and memorization. However, the over-reliance and over-emphasis on 'practice' (the 2nd stage of the methodology) while taking up ample chunks of lesson time in the short-term, is ineffective in the long term because by then students have lost all motivation for the language through constant drilling. Yoshida (2011), cited in Yamano (2012), notes that activities need to be enhanced between the students' very low levels of foreign language competence and their comparatively higher cognitive levels. That is, the cognitive level of the activity (i.e. what it demands cognitively of the students) and the cognitive capabilities of the students are misaligned. Constant repetition of words or phrases and repetitive practice of short dialogues, while a common feature of English lessons in elementary school and junior high school, require cognitive-memory skills for internalization and automaticity. However, this kind of practice rarely challenges higher order thinking skills. If, on the other hand, the learners have been stimulated by teacher questioning and instructional tasks that challenged them cognitively (much like the reading lesson above), analyzed and investigated the context of situation, created their own vocabulary lists and constructed their own dialogues or modified a model dialogue to suit the situation for themselves, they have been cognitively challenged.

And therein lies the implementation challenge for current in-service teachers. The lack of confidence of current in-service teachers in their own English abilities and teaching methodologies, coupled with MEXT's response to address these factors by publishing entire syllabuses and step-by-step teaching plans aimed at the lowest common denominator (i.e. the least proficient and least confident teacher), has meant that teachers find it easier and markedly less time-consuming to go straight to what is prepared for them. Questions and activities are all there. This is not a bad idea and perfectly understandable if, but only IF, the content and methodology are not flawed from the outset. I am worried that the new

curriculum and published teaching resources will amount to little more than a sliding down of the junior high school English curriculum and its PPP methodology into the elementary school. And anyone with any interest in English education knows the limitations of this curriculum.

7. A final word

Were I to be magically whisked away to the MEXT headquarters in Tokyo and placed in charge of English education in elementary schools, I would immediately start working towards implementing the following over a 10-year period.

(a) The release of English teachers from homeroom duties. As universities of education graduate more and more qualified elementary school teachers, they should become specialist teachers in schools (i.e. LETs), just like the PE, music and art teachers.

(b) The designation of an empty classroom at each school as an 'English classroom'. With student numbers falling in Japan, it is clear that schools are to have more empty classrooms on their hands. What a perfect space.

(c) The development of dual instruction system encompassing a 'literacy programme' and 'a general English programme' for years 5 and 6. Do away with 'Let's Try!' and teach children through reading in years 3 and 4. In years 5 and 6, ontinue with a 'We Can!'-type fixed linguistic syllabus for one lesson per week, but use the 2nd lesson for an enhanced literacy programme focusing on text types.

(d) The development of English language storybooks set in the Japanese context for the above literacy programme..

(e) The phasing out of the ALT system and its replacement with a NET programme, and finally and most importantly,

(f) The establishment of national English proficiency benchmarks for English teachers.

So while it is true that at the present time Japan cannot replicate the hours Hong Kong schools devote to English per week, cannot afford to import hundreds of fully qualified native English teachers for every one of its elementary schools, and cannot overnight develop the English proficiency of the local English teachers, there are some things that HRTs and LETs can do right now, from tomorrow. They can: 1. Look at a lesson plan or unit in the textbook and ask themselves 'How can I structure this lesson so as to engage as many levels of cognition as possible?, and 2. Start asking some of those cognitively demanding questions that teachers ask in *kokugo*, maths, science and moral education lessons, in English lessons. Ask them in Japanese!

'Let's Try!' that. 'We Can!' do it!

List of Abbreviations

AT	Advisory Teacher
CMI	Chinese as Medium of Instruction (i.e. Cantonese)
EDB	Education Bureau (Hong Kong SAR)
EMI	English as Medium of Instruction
GE	General English
HRT	Home Room Teacher
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills
KIP	Key (Stage 2) Integration Programme
Keys2	Keys 2 Literacy Development Programme
KS1	Key Stage 1 (Primary 1 - Primary 3)
KS2	Key Stage 2 (Primary 4 - Primary 6)
KS3	Key Stage 3 (Secondary 7 - Secondary 9)

LET	Local English Teacher (native Chinese teacher of English)
LOTS	Lower Order Thinking Skills (alt. Cognitive-Memory Skills)
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MOI	Medium Of Instruction
NET	Native English Teacher
P1, P2, …	Primary 1, Primary 2, Primary 3 etc. (小学校 1 年生~)
PLP-R	Primary Literacy Programme - Reading
PLP-R/W	Primary Literacy Programme - Reading & Writing
PMI	Putonghua as Medium of Instruction (i.e. Mandarin)
PPP	Presentation Practice Production
RBT	Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

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Appendix A

RBT Level	English Verbs*	日本語
HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS (HOTS) 高次思考力		
CREATE/DESIGN	create	創造する

創造する: 発明者のように行動し, 要素や情報を改善し、設計し、計画し、まとめて新しいものを創造する The student acts like an inventor improving, designing, planning and putting elements together to create something new.	improve/modify	適応する
	invent	発明する
	plan	計画する
	predict	予測する
	propose	提案する
	rewrite	書き直す
	synthesize	総合する
EVALUATE 評価する: 裁判所の裁判官のように行動し: 批判的に情報を調べ、証拠、基準、基準に基づいて判断します. The student acts like a judge & critically examines information and makes judgments based on evidence, criteria and standards.	argue / justify	議論する・正当化する
	evaluate / assess	評価する
	critique	判断する
	decide	決める
	judge	判定する
	conclude	結論づける
	prioritize	優先順位をつける
	recommend	勧める
ANALYZE 分析する：研究者のように行動し, 情報をパーツに分割し、パーツ同士の関係や全体的な構造や目的を探る The student acts like a scientist & breaks information into its parts and explores how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose	organize	組織する
	examine	調査する
	distinguish	見分ける
	parse / separate	解析する・分ける
	attribute	起因している
	analyze	分析する
	categorize / classify	分類する
	infer	推察する
LOWER ORDER THINKING SKILLS (LOTS) 低次思考力		
APPLY 応用する：指導案・説明書 のように行動し, 以前に学習した手順や情報を選択して使用します.The student acts like an instruction manual, and selects and uses a previously learned procedure or information in a new but similar situation.	demonstrate	実証する
	solve	解く
	substitute	代わり
	apply	返事する
	implement	実装する
	calculate	計算する
	use	使う
	practice	練習する
UNDERSTAND 理解する：専門家のように行動し、口頭、書込み、グラフィックコミュニケーションなどの情報の意味を理解し理解する.The student acts like an expert and interprets the meaning of information including oral, written & graphic communication	clarify	明らかにする
	express	表現する
	paraphrase	言い換える
	restate	言い直す
	explain	説明する
	infer	推察する
	discuss	話し合う・議論する
	distinguish	区別する
REMEMBER 記憶する：辞書	match	致させる

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="7">やネットデータベースのように行動し，情報、事実、データを検索します。The student acts like a dictionary to find information, facts, & data. He/she also recognizes and recalls relevant knowledge from textual information or long-term memory.</td><td>define</td><td>定義する</td></tr>
<tr><td>label</td><td>ラベルを貼る</td></tr>
<tr><td>memorize</td><td>記憶する</td></tr>
<tr><td>list</td><td>列挙する</td></tr>
<tr><td>recognize</td><td>認識する</td></tr>
<tr><td>recall</td><td>思い出す</td></tr>
<tr><td>repeat</td><td>繰り返す</td></tr>
</table>

* This is only a brief listing of the main verbs within each category. Some verbs vary across categories. The list is non-exclusive and more can be added.