Primary School English Teacher Training: How the Swiss
Introduced English Education into Primary Schools

HOOD Harumi
*Jin-ai University (part-time lecturer)*

Keywords: language proficiency, methodology training, administrative support

**Abstract**

To seek ways of improving training programmes for elementary school English teachers, the author looked at training programmes for practicing primary school teachers in Switzerland when English was introduced at primary school level. Interviews, email exchanges, primary school class observations and a survey were carried out.

The two in-service training programmes observed here, which required a high English language proficiency (C1 level), training in thorough language teaching methodology geared for primary pupils and several weeks of assistant teachership in English speaking countries, are showing favourable outcomes at schools. The implications for Japan will include the desirability of language proficiency training, teaching methodology training, continuity from elementary English to junior and senior high school, and financial and labour support from administration and the government.

**1. Introduction**

Why Switzerland? All this started at a mountain hut in Switzerland in summer 2014, where the author witnessed four young Swiss conversing in fluent English. Why were they speaking in English? Because all of them spoke different national languages of Switzerland, i.e. German, French, Italian and Romansch, and the only common language for them was English. Being curious about how these young people got to this level of fluency, the author visited primary and secondary schools in Switzerland and observed their English classes between September 2014 and May 2015.

In the class observations at primary and secondary schools, the author found that the teachers were successfully conducting their classes all in English, and that, as a result, the pupils and students were constantly exposed to high-quality comprehensible input and output in class (Hood, 2015). One of the key issues raised was that Swiss primary school teachers teaching English are
qualified English teachers who have passed the *Cambridge English: Advanced* exam (CAE), which is equivalent to the CEFR C1 Level, and have received specific language teaching methodology trainings, and that consistent language goals have been set from primary to secondary schools (ibid). As a follow-on study after the class observations, the author decided to look into the training programmes for practicing primary school teachers in Switzerland when English was introduced at primary school level.

The two in-service training programmes observed here are the programmes known as TEPS (Teaching English at Primary School), which was offered in Canton Aargau, and ZAEP (Zusatzausbildung Englisch Primarstufe, i.e. Additional Training for English Primary Schooling), which was offered in Canton Zürich. Both programmes required a high level of English language proficiency, training in thorough language teaching methodology geared for primary pupils and several weeks of assistant teachership in English speaking countries. Both are showing favourable outcomes at schools. The author will draw out the implications for Japanese teacher training programmes at the end of this report.

### 2. Early English in Switzerland

#### 2.1 The timeframe: Japan and Switzerland

Ten years before the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced its plan to implement English education from the third grade nationwide by Year 2020 (MEXT, 2013), a similar recommendation was made by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) – a body that plays a role similar to Japan’s MEXT in setting the country’s educational policy. In 2004, the EDK unanimously adopted *A Strategy of Language Teaching*, which stipulated that a first foreign language (national language or English) should be studied from the third grade of primary school onwards, and that a second foreign language (another national language or English) should be studied from the fifth grade of primary school onwards (Hutterli, 2012: 25). English is now being taught as the first foreign language in fourteen out of the seventeen German-speaking cantons in Switzerland (Fenazzi: 2012). As Japanese primary schools plan to introduce English from the third grade, roughly ten years after Switzerland’s move, it is possible that the Swiss experience could provide us with valuable insights into teacher training and other aspects of foreign language teaching.

#### 2.2 Introduction of Early English in Canton Zürich and Canton Aargau

Früh Englisch (Early English), the German terms for English teaching at primary schools, was implemented in Zürich in 2004 and in Aargau in 2008. Table 1 shows in which year the first generations of Early English were in the two Cantons. For the introduction of Early English, primary school teachers were required to attend courses administered by teacher training
universities in each canton and to obtain an English teaching certificate for primary schools. Since the implementation, the number of English teachers needed grew as the first generations moved up into the next grades. Thus, the teacher training programmes continued until 2011, when enough English teachers were available to teach all graders.

In Canton Zürich, the ZAEP training programme was held at the Zürich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) between 2002 and 2011, during which period 2,619 practising teachers participated. The training programme in Canton Aargau, TEPS, was held at the Institute for Primary Education, University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) between 2006 and 2011, and over five hundred practising teachers participated in this programme. Both ZAEP and TEPS ended in 2011, when the required number of qualified primary school English teachers was met in all primary grades. Since 2011, similar programmes have continued in both PHZH and FHNW for additional primary school teachers who need or seek an English teaching qualification.

Table 1 First generations of Early English and the years when ZAEP and TEPS were provided

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zürich</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAEP</td>
<td>ZAEP 2002-2011 (2,619 participants)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aargau</td>
<td>(pilot study)</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEPS</td>
<td>TEPS 2006-2011 (over 500 participants)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(no data)</td>
<td>(teacher development course)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Class hours and their language goals

Swiss compulsory education lasts eleven years, two years in kindergarten, six years in primary school and three years in secondary school. Table 2 shows the class hours recommended by EDK-Ost in 2006 and the English class hours currently taught in Cantons Aargau and Zürich. As national intervention in the cantons’ educational arrangements is now possible, Canton Zürich might in a few years’ time start English from the third grade as in many other cantons, which was mentioned in the author’s interviews with the teaching staff at PHZH in May, 2015.

Language goals are shown according to the CEFR’s Common Reference Levels (See Table 3), which are used consistently across primary and secondary schools. In terms of listening, reading and speaking, pupils are expected to achieve the A 1.1 Level by the end of the third grade, the A2.1 Level by the end of the sixth grade, and A 2.2 Level by the end of the ninth grade. As for
writing, the A1.2 Level by the end of the sixth grade, and the A2.1 Level by the end of the ninth grade. The light colours of the boxes in Table 3 mean that those levels are aimed at by academically higher pupils and students.

Table 2: Class hours per week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Aargau</th>
<th>Zürich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school total</td>
<td>8–11</td>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory school</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14–16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Language goals at the end of the 3rd, 6th, and 9th grade

| Oral reception: Listen | 3rd grade | 6th grade | 9th grade |
| Oral production: | 3rd grade | 6th grade | 9th grade |
| Written reception: Read | 6th grade | 9th grade |
| Written production: Writing | 6th grade | 9th grade |

Source: EDK-Ost. (2009)
3. Programme in Canton Aargau

3.1 TEPS: Programme objectives and its content

In Canton Aargau, as in most of other cantons, three areas of training, “study abroad,” “language training,” and “methodology training” were required to get a primary school English teaching qualification (See Figure 1). In the study-abroad programme, the participants chose either an eight-week stay in an English speaking country or a three-week assistant teachership plus a three-week stay in an English speaking country. As to the language training, English courses for B2 and C1 levels and exam preparation for the CAE exam were offered at the university, and ultimately, the programme participants were required to pass the CAE C1 level of the English proficiency exam. Methodology training, which was scheduled for the participating teachers’ free afternoons and in the evenings, was held three hours per week for one year.

Figure 1 Structure of the supplementary studies “Teaching English at Primary School” at PH FHNW Adapted from Bader (2007) translation by the author

The objectives and the content of the methodology training were as follows:

The objectives

- To be able to plan teaching English at the primary level
- To become familiar with the communicative approach in language teaching
- To know how the speaking skills and the linguistic knowledge of children develop in a
foreign language
• To apply a story-based, content-and task-oriented approach to teaching
• To be familiar with adequate teaching materials and the evaluation of the teaching materials
• To be familiar with appropriate terminology and literature

Course contents 1
• Introduction & language learning in Europe and Switzerland
• First lessons, songs, rhymes and skills of the teachers
• Language acquisition
• From listening to speaking, methodology of story-telling
• Skills development (listening)
• Sequencing lessons, lesson planning and integrated skills
• Skills development (speaking)
• Communicative language teaching
• Language awareness and grammar
• Multiple intelligences and learning styles
• Vocabulary
• Games

Course contents 2
• Task-based learning / task-dependency
• Skills development (reading)
• material evaluation
• Skills development (writing)
• Content-based teaching I
• Content-based teaching II & language support
• Classroom language / arts & crafts
• Portfolio for primary students
• Assessment
• Intercultural learning
• Technology (computers)

cited from Yamada (2014: 68)

3.2 Financial and administrative support

The fees for the course, the CAE exam and methodology exam were refunded by the cantonal ministry of education when teachers passed them and started teaching in the canton. As to the “study-abroad programme,” the participating teachers paid CHF 1,800 (=approximately ¥221,728 as of 3/Sep/2015), and the ministry paid CHF 3,000 (=approximately ¥369,548 as of 3/Sep/2015), and the money went to the University Institute for Teacher Development at FHNW, who was the organiser of this programme. After all, the finance for the programme participation was almost all covered by the government.

In regard to how much workload was added to the participating teachers, the methodology programme was scheduled three hours for the participating teachers’ free afternoon and in the evening, although those without the English proficiency qualification were expected to complete
the language course during their holidays at their own expense. In attending the three week training abroad, they were allowed a week with a paid substitute teacher.

3.3 What one of its organisers says

Interviews were carried out by emailing with Prof Bader at FHNW, one of the organisers, in October, 2014. According to Prof Bader, the participants were quite positive toward the programme, and they still show continued interest in teacher development courses at the university. The keys for success, as Prof Bader says, were the programme’s focus on action-oriented teaching at primary level, high motivation among participants, cooperation with school authorities, consideration for transition from primary to secondary school, and a ‘coherent curriculum’ where all stakeholders (teachers, teacher trainer, school authorities and parents) collaborate on different levels.

3.4 Interviews with a participant

The author interviewed a programme participant, who has now been teaching English as a subject teacher since completing the programme in 2008. According to her, the knowledge about linguistics, methodology and didactics were useful and exchanging experiences with other participants and sharing materials with them for practical use gave fruitful results. However, she found exercises similar to what they had already been doing at school somewhat tedious.

4. Programme in Canton Zürich

4.1 ZAEP: Programme objectives and its content

In Canton Zürich, primary school teachers were also required to get trainings in three areas to get English teaching certificate at primary schools; English language proficiency training, three weeks of assistant teachership in England or Scotland, and methodology training. During the three weeks of assistant teachership, they taught some content subjects such as geography or science in English at primary schools in England or Scotland. As to English language proficiency development, they attended the English classes offered at PHZH, if necessary, and had to pass the CAE exam, the C1 Level exam.

As to methodology training, they attended the ZAEP programme on three Fridays and three Saturdays. On each day, there were six and half hours of training. The methodology course totalled 39 hours in six days, which ended with an assessment. They also had to teach six lessons at school coached by supervisors. Table 4 shows the core topics of ZAEP methodology training.

In the assessment for this methodology training, the teachers were required to prepare a minimum of one detailed lesson plan and make an oral presentation of the rational, analysis and
Table 4 Core topics of ZAEP methodology training (excerpt from ZAEP 2007 Assessment Manual)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SD I</th>
<th>DAY 1 THEORIES &amp; APPROACH</th>
<th>DAY 2 CONTENT</th>
<th>DAY 3 INDIVIDUALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOPICS</td>
<td>• <strong>RECAP LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>ENGLISH + M &amp; U</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>COGNITIVE PROCESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A short overview, to illustrate change of paradigm (based on Fremdsprachen-Didaktik)</td>
<td>Inhaltsorientierung / Themenfelder: VGZ / NT / IG / HW</td>
<td>Thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>CONSTITUENTS OF CLIL</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>TASK BASED LEARNING</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>LANGUAGE SUPPORT</strong> (variety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLIL principles of communicative language teaching content and learning centred principles</td>
<td>Task cycle</td>
<td>Transfer: First choice / Explorers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample lesson</td>
<td>Task types</td>
<td>Individualization / differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>TEACHING MATERIAL IN THE ZH ENGLISH CLASSROOM</strong></td>
<td><strong>English +M/U+ TBL</strong></td>
<td>Example in Explorers; Practical planning activity in First Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short and basic introduction of the materials, philosophy and components of</td>
<td>Transfer TBL examples in First Choice / Explorers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Choice / Explorers</td>
<td>Link to task types</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range of topics and subtopics / Link to M/U</td>
<td>Identifying task types</td>
<td><strong>LEARNING TYPES &amp; NEUROLINGUISTICS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross curricular topics in the English classroom</td>
<td><strong>Transfer:</strong> First choice / Explorers</td>
<td>Article neurolinguistics about L2 learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>CLIL IN THE CANTON ZURICH</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOPIC WEB: PART I</strong></td>
<td>Brain research and foreign language learning, possible implications for the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>video: &lt;&lt; EXPLORING ENGLISH &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>(From the topic to the topic web)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>official version</td>
<td>topic + inner circle</td>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION ASSESSMENT</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOPIC WEB PART II :</strong></td>
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<td>inner + 2 outer boxes</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD II</td>
<td><strong>DAY 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>DAY 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>DAY 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOPICS</strong></td>
<td><strong>LANGUAGE 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>LANGUAGE 2 + ASSESS &amp; ANALYSE</strong></td>
<td><strong>LOOSE ENDS</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE IN THE CLIL CLASSROOM</strong></td>
<td><strong>INTERCULTURAL ASPECT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LANGUAGE AWARENESS</td>
<td><strong>GAMES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>First choice: One world, many people</td>
<td><strong>SONGS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VOCABULARY</td>
<td><strong>REVISION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SOUND &amp; SPELLING</td>
<td><strong>ASSESSMENT</strong> ½ class</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GRAMMAR</td>
<td>(2nd ½ class on the following Wednesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Examples from First Choice and Explorers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ASSESSING THE YOUNG LEARNER IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portfolios (Recap Fremdsprachendidaktik) assessing the CLIL classroom European portfolio JUNIOR)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ANALYSING ERRORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WORKING ON THE ASSESSMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Detailed description of one task which includes 1-3 lessons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reflection of the lesson(s) based on the background knowledge acquired during the methodology course. The assessment was focused on the following points:

• Choice of suitable content for the teaching of English
• Linkage of linguistic and non-linguistic objectives (CLIL must be implemented.)
• Integration and sensible balance of skills
• Documented language support (support of linguistic production and reception)
• Assessment (formative and possibly summative review of students’ achievement)
• Material (suitable worksheets, models, games etc. for the drafted lesson plan)
• Procedure (appropriate teaching structure, pace, social forms and activities in the lesson)

(excerpt from ZAEP 2007 Assessment Manual, translation by the author)

4.2 Financial and administrative support

The schools and the ministry gave a great deal of financial support to the participating teachers. Schools paid for the ZAEP course fees, and the CAE exam registration fee, CHF 360 (=approximately ¥44,346 as of 3/Sep/2015), was refunded when the teachers passed the exam. For the study-abroad programme, the Canton paid CHF 2,000 (=approximately ¥246,366 as of 3/Sep/2015) per teacher.

As for the school work, they were substituted for the Friday sessions and for one of the three weeks during the assistantship in England or Scotland. The participating teachers usually used their two-week school holiday and one school week substituted by other teachers for the three-week assistantship.

4.3 Interviews with trainers

Interviews were carried out with four trainers of the ZAEP programme in May, 2015. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Questions were asked mainly in four areas; positive points about the programme, challenges of the programme, areas that participants needed training most, and others they wanted to add.

The interviewees spoke of the positive points about the programme in a great deal. All the interviewees stated that most of the participants were enthusiastic, creative and hopeful of job enrichment. They saw that the three weeks assistant teachership abroad gave the teachers confidence and, as a by-product, it helped teachers establish contacts abroad and, later, exchange programmes at their own schools. The quantity of the methodology training was just right and it was good that it was intensive. The ideas for activities and tasks introduced in the course were practical, and they could use them back in their own schools, and the knowledge and skills they acquired in the course were transferable to teaching other subjects. Also, discussions among the participants themselves were useful, and they shared ideas and experiences together. Also, it was good that there was financial covering by the canton and schools and that school work was substituted.

On the other hand, there were also challenges. All the interviewees stated that it was difficult
to break down the pre-concept of language teaching the teachers had formed through their own learning of English. Many teachers had thought teaching English was teaching grammar and vocabulary. Passing the CAE exam was also a great challenge for some primary school teachers, so internal English exams were offered at PHZH for those who could not pass the CAE exam. Also, attending the course meant additional workload to the teachers. One interviewee stated that the programme being intensive was a challenge because the participants had little time to digest the materials and it was quite tiring. The expectancy of immediate results was also a challenge. The interviewees stated that it would be too early to see the results yet, and that it would take a few more years to see the results. One trainer said that you need at least 15 years until you get some results.

As for the areas the participants needed training most, the interviewees listed the following points:

- Testing, assessment, grading, reporting
- Analysis of textbooks, language, how to teach a language
- Creating good, meaningful tasks with good task cycles
- How to support students’ language learning, scaffolding
- How to explain in English
- Teaching by demonstration
- To use body language
- To use classroom English

Among the things the interviewees added further, they said that a few participants were tired of change and then, it was very difficult for them to think positively about the training. Motivation for teachers was also necessary for the programme’s success. Also, the teachers really need on-going support after the programme. As for advice to future programmes, one trainer suggested that it is good to bring pupils’ works and recordings and analyse them, and that it was also good to watch good practices visiting schools and on DVDs. One trainer stated that as the trainers themselves pioneered this programme, they had a great time sharing ideas.

4.4 Questionnaire with participants

The ZAEP programme finished in 2011, but another programme called EREP (Ergänzungsstudium Primarstufe, i.e. Postgraduate Studies for English Primary Schooling) is still continuing with more or less a similar content for the primary teachers who do not have an English teaching qualification. A questionnaire was carried out among 16 EREP participants on May 20, 2015, on completing their course. They were asked to list up what were most useful and other good things about the course.

Most useful (The numbers in the parenthesis show the numbers of the participants who listed the item)

- A huge variety of games, fun activities, movement, use of media (13)
- Assessment methods (10)
Other good things about the course

- Acquiring new knowledge / deepening didactic knowledge (6)
- Acting out the activities (4)
- Working in groups/pairs/alone -> There was a good variety of activities. (1)
- Trainer’s positive energy (1)
- Listening & talking to/with a native speaker (1)

What we should note here is that among the things the participants found most useful were lesson planning, material developments and assessment. Considering how assessment reflects the course objectives and give pupils ideas as to what they are expected to learn, we need to think about how productive assessment is possible with young learners in Japan, too. Another thing to note is that the participants learned a great deal not only from the trainers but also from each other, and enjoyed sharing ideas with their colleagues.

5. Key Issues and their Implications for Japan

5.1 Programme organisers and programme content

In introducing English into primary schools, the Swiss cantons have required primary school teachers to obtain primary school English teaching certificates in order to teach English. Training is required for primary school teachers in three areas: ① English language proficiency, ② English language teaching methodology and ③ an assistant teachership in England or Scotland. As reported above, educational institutes such as PHZH and FHNW undertook to design, organise and manage the necessary training courses.

As for English language proficiency training, primary school teachers were invited to attend appropriate language courses at universities, and had to pass the CAE exam. English language teaching methodology courses were planned and organised by academic experts in foreign language didactics specialised in young learners, and the participants studied foreign language acquisition theories and teaching methods, especially focusing on action-oriented teaching for young learners, in which the participants also had to pass assessment tests. Assistant teacherships in English-speaking countries provided teachers with several benefits; they improved their English ability by teaching in English, honed their ability to speak an appropriate level of English for easy comprehension by primary school pupils, they learned about CLIL (content and language integrated learning) as well as the culture of the host country, and they made contacts with schools
and teachers there for future exchanges, and so on. What is worthy of note is that every teacher candidate was required to take this teaching placement abroad.

5.2 Financial and administrative support

If practising teachers are to take on long-term training of the type offered by TEPS and ZAEP, they need both a high level of commitment and strong support from their administrative bodies. In the Swiss case, there was almost a complete coverage of financial support for programme participants.

There was also support for the reduction of teachers’ workloads. Schools provided substitute teachers, although teachers were still required to give up some of their free time for training. In Canton Aargau, the methodology programme was scheduled over three hours a week during the participating teachers’ free afternoons and in the evening, and teachers without the English proficiency qualification were expected to complete the language course during their holidays. They were allowed an extra week with a paid substitute teacher to attend the three-week training abroad. In Canton Zürich, substitute teachers were provided for the Friday sessions and for one of the three weeks during the assistantship abroad. The participating teachers usually used their two-week school holiday and one school week substituted by other teachers for the three-week assistantship.

5.3 Implications for Japan

Before any attempt is made to compare the Swiss and Japanese approaches to early English education, it has to be noted that the starting conditions are very different in the respective countries. Whereas Switzerland has opted for teachers with primary school English teaching certificates, Japan has started with homeroom class teachers assisted by native-speaker ALTs (assistant language teachers). In Japan, although elementary school teachers are not required to hold an English teaching license, some teachers have sought to hone their expertise through training courses and self-study since around 2002, when English was introduced as a part of the study for “international understanding” in the Period for the Integrated Studies in the fifth and sixth grades. Then, under the 2013 English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalisation, the MEXT established a new teacher training system for elementary school English, in which “English Education Promotion Leaders” receive ten days of training, totalling 48 hours, organised by the MEXT. The aim is that these English Education Promotion Leaders in turn provide the same training to teachers in their local schools in the form of cascade training (MEXT, 2014a). Indeed, Japan is making an effort to accelerate its process of training English teachers throughout the elementary, junior, and senior high school system. Although numbers are still small, at 94, the budget to hire extra teachers to support this project has been allocated as of 2014. The Foreign Ministry has also allocated ¥149,427,000 to send young English teachers to the
Is it realistic to require Japan’s elementary school English teachers to undergo a similar type of training to that of their Swiss counterparts? One step in this direction would be to intensify the existing training efforts. As the Expert Panel at the MEXT suggests (MEXT, 2014c), we should make good use of the teachers who have English teaching certificates, ALTs with teaching experience at elementary schools and teachers who have developed a certain degree of expertise through the training seminars that have been provided so far and through their own English teaching experience at elementary schools. By giving financial and administrative support to these teachers, especially by reducing the workloads, we could help them further develop their expertise as elementary school English teachers. In terms of methodology training, the involvement of university experts could be further encouraged. We could re-examine the content of training, especially in regard to areas that the trainers and the participants of TEPS and ZAEP identified as the most useful (See Sections 3 and 4). As for language training, it would be optimal if local universities could accommodate teachers in their existing language courses and ALTs with teaching backgrounds could also be utilised more for these training programmes. As to providing teachers with experience abroad, the efforts of the government and educational boards should also be promoted.

6. Conclusion

This report described two training programmes for practising teachers organised in Switzerland to introduce English tuition into elementary schools from the third grade. These programmes may allow us to review our training approach in Japan in terms of three key issues; ① training in English language proficiency, methodology and assistant teachership abroad and the involvement of university academics for such training, ② administrative support in terms of financing the training and provision of substitute teachers while teachers are undergoing training, and ③ ways in which every elementary school English teacher could develop their English teaching expertise. It should also be noted that, in Zürich, when preparing secondary school teachers for incoming students with a Früh Englisch background, PHZH offered training for secondary school teachers so that they could efficiently teach students who had previously been taught with a communicative approach, using action-oriented activities. In this way, the all-important continuity from primary to secondary English was assured.

The Swiss experience shows that the thoroughgoing approach to introducing Früh Englisch has paid dividends in terms of the job satisfaction of the teachers who participated in the training programmes and in their classroom practice. However, the long-term educational effectiveness of Früh Englisch in regard to developing the actual English abilities of Swiss school graduates has yet to be measured. As a follow-on study, the author would like to look further into what is now
happening in Swiss classrooms, the pros and cons of Früh Englisch, and university-level training of English-language teachers in Switzerland.

Notes

1. Section 2 overlaps what the author has reported in her previous report on Swiss class observations for CELES (2015).

2. “In Switzerland, the main responsibility for education and culture lies with the cantons. They coordinate their work at the national level. The 26 cantonal ministers of education together form a political body to carry out this work: the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK).” (cited from http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11553.php)

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her deep gratitude to the Head of Primary English at PHZH Mr Christoph Suter, the lecturers at PHZH, Professor Ursula Bader at FHNW, and the former teacher training programme participants, who kindly offered their valuable information and ideas about Swiss primary education and their teacher training programmes.

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