

# Terms of Reference – Research Consultant

## Purpose

**Role:** Future of English (FoE) East Asia Curriculum *Research Consultants*

**Location:** Japan (1), Korea (1), China (1)

*The British Council is currently seeking 3 specialist contractors to support the Future of English East Asia Curriculum Project as Research Consultants in relation to recent primary and junior high school curricular developments within English language teaching in China, Japan and Korea.*

## 1. Background and context about the project

### Who are the British Council?

The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We uniquely combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, our global presence and relationships in over 100 countries, our unparalleled access to young people and influencers and our creative sparkle.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2021–22 we reached 650 million people.

### Rationale

English language education in East Asia has developed at significant pace over recent decades with new curricula emerging across multiple basic education contexts, and significant developments being seen in English language learning and teaching. More recently, ministries in Korea, Japan and China have all released new guidance for English teachers within primary and secondary education systems offering holistic frameworks in addition to explicit language goals that may offer opportunities for future synergy and cross-contextual support.

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Considering these recent developments, this project seeks to better understand current directions and rationales for the curricula in each of China, Japan and Korea and any potential synergies or similarities between them in order to understand how English might continue to play a part in local education systems, and how this can be supported. This ToR document outlines the initial phase (phase 1 of 2) of the *East Asia Curriculum Project* which seeks Research Consultants in each of the 3 countries (China, Japan, and Korea) to carry out an initial in depth investigation that details the current English language learning landscape and curriculum rationales within those basic education contexts.

### The Future of English

The *East Asia Curriculum Project* is part of the [Future of English](#) programme research agenda. The impetus for the project is recent English language curriculum reform in three countries in the region: China, Korea, and Japan.

The Future of English is a multi-stage programme that aims to set a research agenda with global scope and local relevance. It takes a cross-disciplinary approach to reach diverse audiences. It draws on research experience and expertise from a range of disciplines: applied linguistics and assessment experts, practitioners with experience in the field, and experts employing Futures Methodology.

The future of English aims to:

- *Provide insights on trends that will define the role of English as a global language over the next decade*
- *Inform language policy and education reform interventions*
- *Lay out a research agenda capable of generating hard evidence and data to inform those policy decisions and evaluate their impact.*

### **Project overview and goals**

The *East Asia Curriculum Project* will focus on the China, Japan and Korea basic education contexts. The ultimate aim of the project, over 2 phases, is to develop a comparability study of English language curricula for primary and secondary education in these three countries. This comparison will identify areas of significant similarity and difference across the three curricula and offer examples of good practice and gaps that relate to them.

To develop a framework for the comparison, the study will use O'Sullivan's (2020) [Comprehensive Learning System](#) (CLS) as its foundation. The Comprehensive Learning System proposes that for learning programmes to function efficiently they should be seen as one comprehensive system. Within this system its three core elements (curriculum, delivery, assessment) are based on a single philosophy of learning supported by clearly defined models of language ability and progression and underpinned by a measurement model.

The comparability study will be completed over two phases:

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1. **Phase 1:** individual background and literature reviews will be created by Research Consultants in each country highlighting key areas within each context that will form the basis for comparison. (Nb. This task)
  2. **Phase 2:** a UK consultancy will be identified to bring together findings of the 3 reports created as part of phase 1 to develop a final comprehensive comparability study.

## 2. The role of the Research Consultant (Phase 1)

The primary output of the Research Consultant (s) are outlined in Section 3 below. In order to meet the outcomes and produce the required Phase 1 report, it is expected that the contractor will primarily undertake remote, desk research. To support this, it is expected that the contractor will already have a strong understanding of, or experience within, the relevant country's education system (See Section 7). Desk research may involve, for example, identifying, collating and analysing key documentation related to a specific English curriculum.

## 3. Deliverables & outputs

### Phase 1 – Background and literature review

#### Primary output

The Research Consultant will provide a **report of approximately 5,000 words** that answers the following key questions about the country curriculum they are reporting on.

1. *What is the rationale behind recent curriculum reform?*
  - *How does the rationale differ from previous reforms?*
  - *How has the curriculum been received by different stakeholders?*
2. *What are the theoretical foundations of the curriculum?*
3. *What are the objectives of the current curriculum? What does it hope to achieve?*
4. *What has previous research reported about curriculum reform in your country?*
5. *What are the research gaps identified by your literature review?*
6. *What is the current curriculum implementation plan?*
7. *What challenges do you foresee for successful implementation?*

The purpose of the initial reports (Phase 1) is to provide detailed background on individual country curricula before the project launches into a comparability study between the different countries. The reports will provide useful background information for a UK research team to compile the latter Phase 2 outputs.

#### Secondary output

Upon completion of the initial report, the selected Research Consultants(s) will be expected to attend a two-day workshop in Beijing from 14-15 March 2024. The aim of this meeting will be to

share results of the desk research with the wider research team and to discuss next steps for the project.

## 4. Timeline

- An initial draft of the report will be shared by **1 March 2024** for final feedback.
- The deadline for the final draft of each report is **10 March 2024**.
- Reports will be disseminated and discussed at a regional meeting in Beijing on **14 & 15 March 2024**.

After selection the contractor will liaise with and submit drafts to Thein, Ei (English Programmes) **Ei.Thein@britishcouncil.org** in the first instance and Cc: Mina Patel (Head of Research, Future of English) **mina.patel@britishcouncil.org** Robin Skipsey (Academic Manager, Japan) **robin.skipsey@britishcouncil.or.jp**; Kathleen Zhong (Head of English Programmes, China) **Kathleen.zhong@britishcouncil.org.cn** , Fraser Bewick (Academic Consultant China and East Asia) **fraser.bewick@britishcouncil.org.cn** in related correspondence.

## 5. Fees & expenses

- The fee for the report is fixed at **£5,000 (five thousand pounds sterling)** payable on receipt of the completed report.
- The selected Research Consultant will be expected to attend a two-day workshop in Beijing from 14-15 March 2024 as part of the above fixed fee. The contractor will fly in on 13 March and depart on 15 March 2024. Economy flights and three nights' accommodation will be booked for the contractor by the British Council for this activity and any local transportation or visa fees will also be reimbursed on provision of receipts or at an agreed British Council subsistence rate, as appropriate.

## 6. Reporting and communication

Key contacts and support for the project are:

Primary contact:

Thein, Ei (**Project Manager, Myanmar**) [Ei.Thein@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Ei.Thein@britishcouncil.org)

Correspondence to include:

Kathleen Zhong, **Head of English Programmes, China**, [Kathleen.zhong@britishcouncil.org.cn](mailto:Kathleen.zhong@britishcouncil.org.cn)

Robin Skipsey, **Academic Manager, Japan**, [robin.skipsey@britishcouncil.or.jp](mailto:robin.skipsey@britishcouncil.or.jp)

Fraser Bewick **Academic Consultant, China and EA**, [fraser.bewick@britishcouncil.org.cn](mailto:fraser.bewick@britishcouncil.org.cn)

Mina Patel, **Head of Research, Future of English** [mina.patel@britishcouncil.org](mailto:mina.patel@britishcouncil.org)

## 7. Experience required

The following context-related experience is requested of specialist contractors (Research Consultants) for this project.

Experience working with the National English Curriculum in a development/designing/advisory capacity	Essential
Proven track record of research on the National English Curriculum or related area	Essential
Published work on the National English Curriculum or related area	Desirable

## 8. How to apply

Please complete the **application form** provided and return it along with a **resume** of relevant experience to Thein, Ei (English Programmes) [Ei.Thein@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Ei.Thein@britishcouncil.org) and Kathleen Zhong [Kathleen.zhong@britishcouncil.org.cn](mailto:Kathleen.zhong@britishcouncil.org.cn) by **4 February 2024**

## 9. Criteria for evaluation

Applications will be evaluated on the content provided in the application for covering:

- Relevant background and experience (50%)
- Motivation and rationale (50%)