

Don't fear them, embrace them

TERAZAWA Masako
President of Tokushima Prefectural Senior
High School English Teachers' Association

Allow me first to express my deep gratitude for your steady commitment to English education and for the invaluable support you continue to offer our association. It is through your dedication, both in daily classroom teaching and in professional collaboration, that our shared work keeps its vitality and importance.

Last year saw the full implementation of the current Course of Study in high schools. During the earlier phased period, teachers had been occupied each year with preparations for new subjects. From last year onward, however, all three grade levels have been able to engage fully with the revised curriculum. With syllabi and evaluation standards now firmly established, I believe teachers can approach their daily lessons with greater stability. Against this backdrop, in December 2024, the Central Council for Education issued a consultation entitled “On the Standards for Curricula in Elementary and Secondary Education.” Its aim is to open discussion on what the Course of Study should look like in the years ahead. When we have only recently adjusted to the current guidelines, the nation’s debate on the next revision is already beginning.

One passage in that consultation especially caught my attention:

Regarding foreign language education, given the significant changes from elementary through high school, such as the introduction of foreign language classes in upper elementary grades, how should we consider its future direction, including the use of generative AI? Furthermore, with high-quality translations now easily available, how should we view the meaning of learning foreign languages?

When I began my career as a teacher, translation applications did not exist. To understand English, one had to rely on one’s own effort or ask a teacher. I recall senior colleagues remarking even then, “In the future, translation machines will make English study unnecessary. When that time comes, English teachers will no longer be needed.” Fortunately, such predictions have not come true in my career. Yet discussion about them has now begun. National policies, though slow to take shape, inevitably affect our daily work. Soon, in schools and classrooms, teachers will be exchanging views on this topic—among themselves and with their students.

As English educators, we must take part in this discussion with a sense of responsibility, developing our own thoughtful perspectives. There is no single correct answer; our views may

change depending on the context. Still, this is something to keep close at hand, to reflect upon, and to refine. I believe that such ongoing reflection highlights the very purpose of our roles as English teachers. Rather than fearing replacement by convenient translation tools, we should think about how to use them while at the same time widening the scope of English communication.

As we move forward, let us approach this moment not with fear but with curiosity and determination. The path ahead will require both flexibility and conviction, yet I am certain that through mutual support and open exchange of ideas, we will find ways to reaffirm the lasting value of English education. May this journal serve as a place that deepens our shared wisdom and strengthens our mission in the years to come.