

Must do better: Japan eyes AI robots in class to boost English

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Japan hopes to use tech to boost education

English-speaking AI robots will be helping out in some 500 Japanese classrooms from next year as the country seeks to improve its English

skills among both children and teachers.

The education ministry plans a [pilot project](#) costing around 250 million yen (\$227,000) to improve Japanese students' notoriously weak oral and written English, an official told AFP.

"AI robots already on the market have various functions. For example, they can check the pronunciation of each student's English, which is difficult for teachers to do," added the official in charge of international education, who asked not to be named.

AI robots "are just one example of the trial and we are planning other measures" such as using [tablet apps](#) and having online lessons with [native speakers](#), he said.

The move comes ahead of a change in the national curriculum in two years that will require children from the age of 10 to learn English.

Japanese schools struggle to find qualified teachers for English classes and generally lack the cash to hire trained language assistants.

Some primary and middle schools have already turned to technology to bolster English teaching, introducing English-speaking AI robots in the classroom.

English classes are currently compulsory for Japanese students aged between 12 and 15 but the starting age will be lowered to primary school children in 2020.

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