

Advocacy of English Language Education

0. Introduction

As I have received English Language Education from the fourth grade of elementary school to today, I have felt various doubts about the English Language Education of Japan during junior-high school period. It is about the difference of purpose to English study between students and the nation, the method of English Language Education that should be performed at school, and the difference of English language skills requested in entrance exams and requested internationally. The purpose of this paper is to look more closely into these problems and to seek solutions.

1. The difference of consideration to English

The English Language Education of Japan is done based on the New Curriculum Guideline of study, where the same target was basically set as for the junior high school. The following is the target for all junior-high school students:

To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

[Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology-Japan, 2008, p.92]

Here, the answers for the question of “What class of English do you want to attend?” are shown in a survey conducted with the junior high school students (**Figure1**).

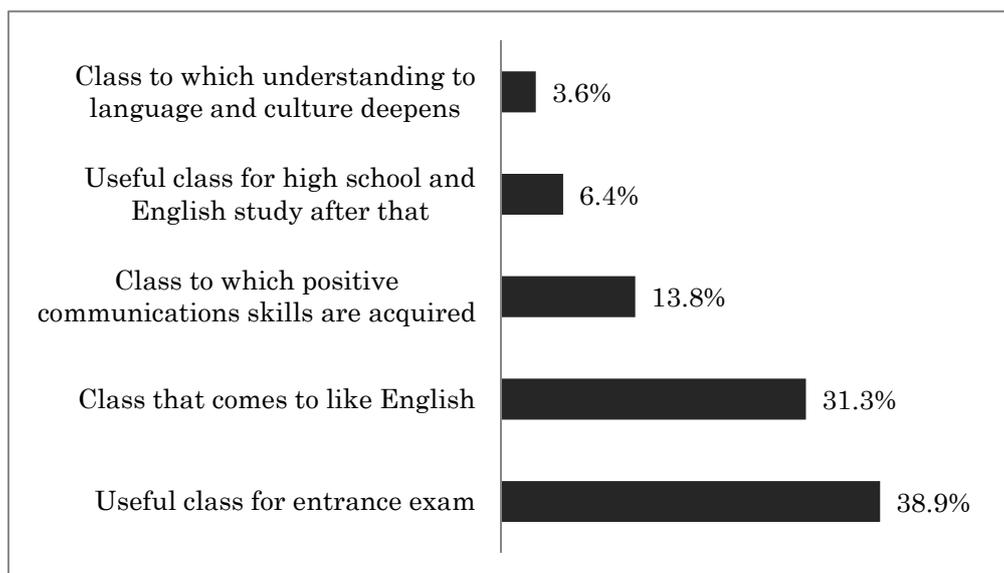


Figure1, The answer for the question of “What class of English do you want to attend?” [Benesse educational research and development center, 2009]

The students who take the class of English for the entrance exam has reached three times the students who take it as a means for communication. In a word, it can be said that there is a gap between students who see English Education as “Purpose” and the nation which sees it as a “Means”. Then, why are students so concerned with entrance exams? Here, Advancement rate to the number of students who stay in school until 18 after the compulsory education of the advanced country is shown (**Figure2**).

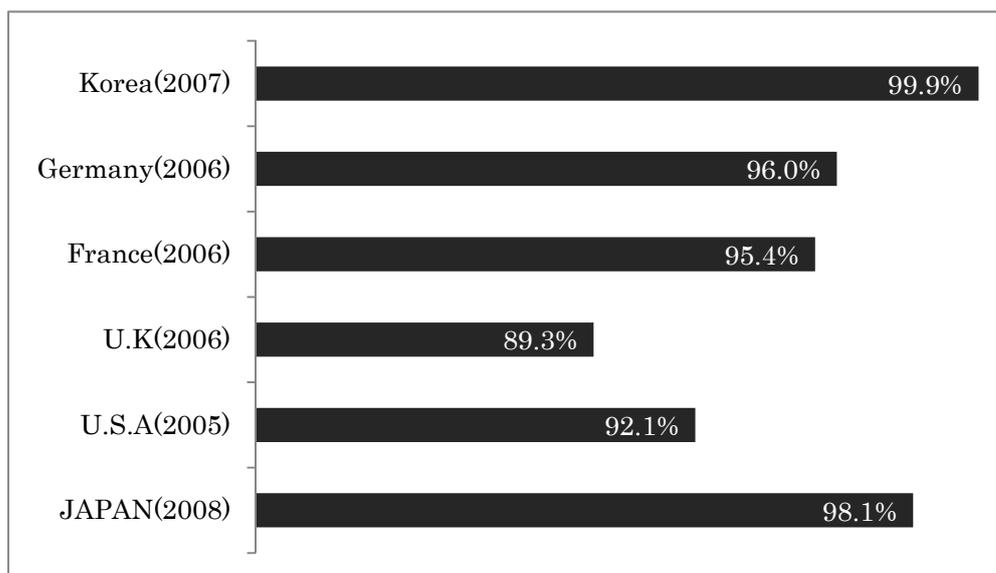


Figure2, Advancement rate to the number of students who stay in school until 18 after the compulsory education of the advanced country

[Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology-Japan, 2009]

The level of the advancement rate to the secondary education of Japan is high, and near almost 100%. In addition, it is high-level though there is basically an entrance exam in Japan. Incidentally, there is no entrance exam in the United States. It is an education-conscious society that still remains in the background now. It can be said that the number of entrance exam passes for university with a high deviation value is important standards in selecting a high school. Summarizing on the basis of these, going on to high school is indispensable in an education-conscious society, and the idea of the entrance exam of English is only a purpose. It might have a bad effect on education by putting too much emphasis on exam results.

2. The method of English Language Education

It turned out that in association with the entrance exam, the contents of the class that students are requesting is different from the idea of the nation. The English language skill that the junior high school students are requesting is the ability to solve entrance exam questions. The contents of the textbook are however, mainly conversation sentences and story sentences from the first grade of junior high-school basically, because the government wants them to be able to communicate with someone. Can the English ability to communicate with anyone be acquired by English Language Education to memorize the conversation sentence only? Even if the expression can be used in the conversation, it will be not versatile, because if I can say “It is a book”, I cannot understand what “It” means and when I have to use “a”. In addition to that, I have a doubt whether entrance exam questions can be solved by the use of that textbook. To look at the entrance exam, the questions are mostly of the long sentence comprehension, the grammar, and the vocabulary, even if there are listening questions. According to “New Curriculum Guideline of study” (2008), students had better to develop students’ basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. What we should pay attention is the order of the ability of English. “Writing” is the last content of all. It is not still so attached importance to “Writing”, that is, the grammar in the school, but why is English ability in the entrance exam requested to be able to be read and written? There is a contradiction between entrance exams with a lot

of grammatical questions and English Language Education to acquire communications skills.

Here, the education in the cram school is one of the bad effects of this contradiction. According to “2007 Annual Report on the National Life” (2007), a rate of the expert cram school in the first grade of junior high-school is 45.1%, the second grade is 50.9%, and the third grade of junior high-school is 65.1% in Japan. Recently as there is a word “examination war”, the people who have to go to the cram school to pass an entrance exam have increased. It can be read as dissatisfaction with the education done at the school. In English Language Education in most cram schools, the grammar of each unit is taught, and there is no concept of communications at all. By solving in the past of various entrance exams, they can learn the technique in the long sentence comprehension.

In a word, we have to solve the contradiction between an entrance exam and English Language Education to acquire communications skills. I certainly think that it is necessary to acquire communications skills, but I wonder whether it is a requirement to study the grammar before acquiring communications skills. With no knowledge of grammar, there is a limit to understanding sentences.

Therefore I move for some ideas. The First idea is to get the grammar to be taught chiefly in the junior-high school in order to solve an entrance exam and to get the communications skills to be entirely taught in the high school. This is my best idea to

solve any problems. The second idea is to make the junior-high school the place where communications skills are thoroughly acquired. To achieve it, it is necessary to make the class the place to which English is studied in English by the foreigner teacher. This is the method the first English Language Education of me, and I think it is effective if there is motivation. The third idea is to change entrance exam questions into the one to measure communications skills. It is expected to take much time because it needs interviewing, and it needs to make it to the content to which English Language Education improves communications skills more.

3. The difference of English language skill requested by the place

English Language Education is performed by the high school, and the vocabulary and the syntax, etc. get complicated. However, I doubt whether it is able to say that the English language skill acquired by the cram school that can be used to pass the entrance exam is true English language ability. There is a problem such a word “It is not possible to speak though it is possible to read and write.” It has been said by the Japanese for a long time in international society. It becomes a lot of English conversation cram schools came to be shown in the town, but they can learn oral communications ability only in the front, and it cannot be said true English language ability. I think, fundamentally, it is in Japanese that to understand English is a problem. It seems that the Japanese tends to translate each one of the word into Japanese faithfully when English sentences are

translated. The reason is that English is translated into Japanese like the Chinese writing Japanese read. In other words, the Japanese mechanically processes an English culture as grammatical knowledge by the habit of studying for exams. In a word, students are asked to do “Processing” English, how fast to do it, and whether to be able to do it exactly or not in an entrance exam, but asked to do “Practical English” in international society. However the idea that it is necessary to perform the grammatical education chiefly in English Language Education in the junior high school doesn't still have to be changed even if it says. To want to expect is to come to be able to use “Particle English” in the high school a lot. For that, the place where the student can remove the stereotypes of English, and can voluntarily work is necessary. It is a place where English can be understood from English. Expressing feelings and the desire without the hesitation within the known English range becomes important. Then, I think that students should not be compelled to write a written language expression by the teacher, and the system that teaches “Comprehensible English” to them is needed. It seems that it naturally approaches “Practical English” if the “comprehensible English” is found by them, understood and it comes to be expressible.

4. Conclusion

As we have seen, it has been understood that the system of the English Language Education of present Japan has many difficulties and contradictions. The reason why the

English language skill of Japan is low might have been caused by the difference between the policy of English in the nation and the student's consideration of English which is based on the background of an entrance exam. It was too early to request communications skills. It is necessary that the junior-high school students understand the structure from a grammatical education. Japan where the advancement rate to the high school is near 100% will only have to think about the curriculum by assuming the junior high school and the high school to be one span. If it comes true, the bad effects of English for the entrance exam can be reduced, and it is likely to people will be less embarrassed in international society by “Comprehensible English” or “Practical English”.

5. Bibliography

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