

# English Education in Japan

## -From Kindergarten to University

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Reference data:

Ikegashira Atsuko, Matsumoto Yumi and Morita Yoshiko (2009) English Education in Japan – From Kindergarten to University. In: Reinelt, R. (Ed.) (2009) Into the Next Decade with (2<sup>nd</sup>) FL Teaching Rudolf Reinelt Research Laboratory EU Matsuyama, Japan, p. 16-40.

# English Education in Japan:

## From Kindergarten to University

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# Introduction

- ◇ Educational system in Japan
- ◇ The present situation of English education in Japanese schools
- ◇ A proposal:  
English should be introduced  
in much earlier stages of education

# The Educational System in Japan

- ◆ 6-3-3-4(2) year system
- ◆ Compulsory: 6yrs elementary school  
3yrs junior high school
- ◆ Optional : 3yrs senior high school  
4yrs university  
(2yrs junior college)

# Introduction to Elementary School

- ◆ ~2002: Most students started studying English in junior high school
- ◆ 2002 ~ Optional

Comprehensive learning :anything is OK

planting rice/ making rice cakes / listening to story tellers  
inviting English speaking guests and “communicate” with them.

- ◆ 2011 ~ Compulsory

A Subject

once a week (35 lessons in total in a year)  
in fifth and sixth grade.

most elementary schools have already started their original English programs.

# University and High School

## University

- ◆ The decrease in the number of children in Japan
- ◆ The decrease in students' academic abilities
- ◆ The need of remedial education
  - poor vocabulary: cannot read, write, communicate

## High School

- ◆ English is compulsory in most schools
- ◆ English for entrance examinations

# Problems

- ◆ Educational system of Japan  
6-3-3 (public schools)  
VS  
6-6 (private schools) junior+senior high schools
- ◆ Entrance examinations of universities
  - \*forced to study English
  - getting nothing after 6 years of study
  - motivation to study English

# Junior High School

- ◆ Teaching method: grammar based  
communicative etc.
- ◆ Great difference in the abilities of teachers and students



# Problems

- ◆ Introduction of English into elementary schools
- ◆ How and what to teach in junior high schools?
- ◆ Short of teachers

# Elementary School

- ◆ 2002 ~
- ◆ Introduction of letters
- ◆ Japanese Katakana/ Romaji  
and English words  
make [make] vs. [meik]

# Kindergarten

- ◆ Practice :Chiyodagaku Project
  - 6 times a year, picture books and CDs
  - Cultural awareness
  
  - “broom “ vs. “vroom”
- ◆ Acquisition of English sounds
  - the earlier the better

# Problems

- ◆ Too early?
- ◆ Introduction of letters

# Proposal

- ◆ English should be introduced much earlier than now:

in kindergarten or

in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of elementary school

# Summary

- ◇ Serious problems in Japanese educational system of English
- ◇ To make students enjoy English:  
English should be introduced  
in much earlier stages of education

**Thank you!**