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Dear high school English teacher in Japan

Yuka Igarashi

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Today, the world is rapidly globalizing, and many people work and live in different countries beyond their own. Then one problem that all people may encounter will happen, is the difference in language. However, in my home country, Japan, most Japanese speak only Japanese. When I think about the need for a second language other than Japanese in Japan, I do not come up with the ideas of the importance of learning a foreign language because Japan is one of the island countries. I mean on the island, there are not a lot of people who come from other countries. In fact, when I taught English to students from elementary to high school as a part time job in Japan before I came here, many of my students had an aversion to learning a foreign language. I feel that there are some big differences in foreign language education between Japan and other countries. Therefore, I would like to share my personal opinion about foreign language education in Japan based on my experiences for Japanese foreign language teachers.

Now I am studying in the U.S. as an international student, and it was a prerequisite for me to have passed the English test before I came here. In Japan, not only English, but all subjects are often regarded as "test score = knowledge of each subject." When it comes to English, it may be important to study to get higher test scores, but if you do not learn practical contents, you will not be able to use what you have learned when you actually need to use English. Students who are expected to score higher on tests feel a

great deal of pressure, and they reject the idea of learning. Therefore, they are unable to take action when faced with real situations in their personal lives. The way Japanese people learn is one of the most frequently discussed themes in educational debates, and I believe it is important to incorporate experiential learning methods into a “chair-sitting style” of Japanese education policy. It is not always true that getting a higher score – jumping into the real world is the closest way to be a master of speaking foreign languages. I am majoring in English education at a university in Japan in order to become an English teacher at a high school in the future. In my classes, we learned about the differences of educational policies between Japan and other countries, and my impression is that the laxity of the Japanese educational style is obvious. Of course, there may be many students who challenge themselves to learn at a higher level: go to a higher university, but I believe that schools are places that provide a good, higher quality education. Therefore, I think it is necessary to consider various ways to improve the Japanese educational contents and ways so that they can be as good as the rest of the world.

From the future English teacher, Yuka