

A Study of English Education in Japanese Elementary Schools
~ How can English Education and International Understanding have a relevancy? ~

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The Outline

Education in Japanese public elementary schools has seemed to change dramatically especially since 2002. Foreign language education has been introduced in Japanese elementary schools although it was a quite an unusual way to introduce a foreign language compared with the other countries. According to the “New Courses of Study” (*shin gakusyu shidou youryou*) reprinted in 2002, it states a concise run down of the studies for “Education for International Understanding” (*kokusai rikai kyouiku*.) In the guidelines, there is nothing to indicate that “English” is going to be a compulsory subject. However, according to *Monbukagaku-syo*, 88.3% of Japanese elementary schools have introduced English Education somehow. In addition, almost half of Japanese elementary schools have introduced foreign language conversation in the “Period for Integrated Studies” (*Sougou gakushu no jikan*) as a part of International Understanding curriculum. A great deal of effort has been focused on creating enjoyable English activities such as singing songs, dancing, and playing games. What seem to be lacking, however, is the meaning of “International Understanding” and the relevancy of “International Understanding and English Education.”

This study focuses on English Education and International Understanding in Japanese public elementary schools, and addresses following questions: What would be the ideal English Education as a part of International Understanding? How can English Education and International Understanding be relevant to each other?

Because there was a contradiction between the status quo and the idea of the “New Courses of Study,” this presenter examined two solutions for it. The first solution was based on the idea that “English learning activities can promote International Understanding.” Using the same topics that teachers tend to pick, the presenter suggested two practical examples, a card game and a shopping game. The second solution was based on the idea that “ALTs who have different cultures can promote International Understanding,” using a practical example of “*Shyougakkou kokusai rikai kyoushitsu*” in *Yokohama* city.

In the end, all of the details are contributed in “*Gengobunka*,” vol.13.