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To Improve Our Practical English Skills

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It is said that most Japanese people are not so good at speaking English, or at least are not willing to communicate in English. I think the causes of this problem lie in Japan’s education system. In this essay, I will clarify these causes and suggest a solution to the issues.

I claim that there are two main causes for this. First, we have few practical uses of English. Especially, there are few chances to use English through school education. This is because they focus mainly on grammar and don’t try to speak with native speakers. For example, in junior high school classes, students are mainly required to learn how to make correct sentences perfectly, to listen to English clearly, and the like. However, native speakers prioritize communicating fluently instead of making grammatically perfect sentences. That is to say, Japan’s education system is not suitable for the practice of using English. This system must have deprived students of valuable and important opportunities to use English.

Second, they often emphasized reading and listening skills not speaking and writing skills. Most examinations including TOEIC tests, University Entrance Exams, “Eiken” tests, and so on, mainly intend to measure students’ reading and listening skills. Still, they have a few tests that measure their speaking and writing skills. For instance, in the common university entrance exam (“Kyotsu tests”) and most private university entrance exams, students are asked to solve long sentences, grammar questions, or listening tests. Therefore, in order to pass those exams, students study reading and listening problems hard. But even if the students master the English grammar, they may not be able to communicate with people in English because they may stick to speaking English perfectly. The important thing to communicate in English is to try to talk to English actively and receive feedback from teachers or native speakers. By doing so, they can correct their mistakes. On the other hand, if we study English alone, we cannot receive any feedback and lose the opportunities to notice our problems. Therefore, we need not make perfect sentences, but we should try to speak English actively and not be afraid of speaking English in public.

Listening to other members’ opinions, I noticed that we had the same awareness of the issues in common. Some members also raised the problem of having few opportunities to practice English. Thus, we students felt that the current education system was not enough to speak English fluently, while educational institutions did not. The current education system unnecessarily makes children afraid of speaking English in public by emphasizing the importance of grammatically perfect, accurate and correct answers. Therefore, the important role of educational institutions is to make students enjoy communicating with other people by using English. Grammatical importance will come after that. In conclusion, to make the Japanese improve their practical English skills, we first have to change our English education system and get rid of resistance to speaking English from our minds.

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