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Comparison of English Learning in Japan

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In Japan, the approach to learning English has undergone significant changes over the past few decades. Historically, English education in Japan was very focused on grammar, reading, and translation, with little emphasis on speaking or listening skills. However, with the global importance of English and the rise of new technologies, the methods and tools for learning have evolved, leading to a more comprehensive and communicative approach in recent years.

Firstly, the past approach is like Grammar-Translation Method. Traditionally, English education in Japan was centered on the grammar-translation method. This method focused on memorizing grammatical rules, translating texts from English to Japanese and vice versa, and learning vocabulary in isolation. The emphasis was on reading comprehension, especially for entrance exams to universities, which required knowledge of complex texts. English was seen as a subject to be tested rather than a language to be used in real-life situations. As a result, many students could pass English exams with high marks but struggled to engage in real conversations or understand spoken English. The focus was more on written language and speaking and listening skills were neglected. This approach led to a gap between academic success in English and practical communication ability.

On the contrary, the modern approach is Communicative Language Teaching in recent years, there has been a shift towards a more communicative approach to language learning. The introduction of the communicative language teaching (CLT) method has emphasized interaction, fluency, and real-world application of language skills. Instead of merely focusing on grammar, teachers now encourage students to engage in conversations, role-plays, and debates, aiming to improve their speaking and listening abilities. English is increasingly seen as a tool for communication, not just an academic subject.

One of the key changes is the use of multimedia resources. With the advent of the internet, language learning apps, and online platforms, students now have access to a vast array of resources, including video lessons, interactive exercises, and language exchange programs. These tools have made it easier for students to practice English in a more dynamic and engaging way. The use of digital technologies has also made language learning more accessible, allowing students to study at their own pace and on their own time.

In conclusion, English education in Japan has evolved from a focus on grammar and translation to a more communicative and technology-driven approach. While there are still challenges, such as the persistence of test-based learning and limited exposure to real-world English, the current trend is towards a more practical and interactive method of language acquisition. With the continued development of digital tools and global communication, it is likely that the future of English learning in Japan will be more dynamic and inclusive, enabling students to become more confident and effective speakers.

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