

Today I skipped my math class in cram school for this speech contest, although I'm having an entrance exam in a couple of weeks. In this speech, I would like to tell you "Why English is making the students suffer so much" based on my experiences.

In the very first English class in Junior high school, we sang the ABC song. At first everyone thought this was too easy and were all disappointed. However, when I flipped through a few pages of the new text book, I was surprised to see pictures and articles of Stevie Wonder already. The students are required to understand the text without enough vocabulary. When I was small, it took years to learn how to listen, read, write and speak English. On the other hand, this curriculum requires everyone to do all of this in a few weeks.

No matter how hard you try, improving your level in a new language won't happen overnight. Isn't the lack of basics the biggest difference between English and other subjects?

Some students may be pessimistic about the difficult situation and say that they don't like English. What I want everyone to understand is that they don't actually hate English, they just wish they could speak it more fluently. But many students can't do that. What caused this issue?

According to what my English teacher explained, the English classes in elementary school were to get used to English. After we did, we start learning grammar in junior high school. But hold on. Really? Are the children able to get used to English just with the classes in elementary school?

From my experience, to learn a new language, it's important to have the chance to speak at the right time. Furthermore it is said that it takes 2000 hours of input for a person to speak a language.

Therefore, I thought about the amount of time elementary school students actually spend time with English with the once a week English class. According to my calculation, when we subtract the time teachers demonstrate in Japanese, students spend about less than 20 hours every year. If we are going to learn English 2000 hours, we have to go to elementary school for 100 years.

When it comes to this topic, some people may think I'm talking about early English education, but that's not what I'm here to discuss about.

Let's now change our perspective from the domestic to the global scale.

There are many countries that are multilingual, so it's not so impossible to master multiple languages. By the time they graduate from elementary school, all of the children will be able to speak English.

What I want to convey is that rather than discussing domestic issues, we should first compare the current situation in Japan with the diversity of the world!!!

A lot of my friends feel anxiety and dread towards 'the subject English'.

Probably it's because they haven't spent enough time to get used to it. I believe they need more time to listen, read, and write to be confident in using English. The students are trying so hard to get their grammar right with only 20 hours of input experience instead of 2000 hours. The situation is also hard for the teachers as well. As I currently belong to a public junior high school, I believe that it is my mission to convey the current situation of students. I would like to acquire a wider range of knowledge in order to solve this problem.

I strongly hope that English curriculum will change so that the future children can enjoy speaking English as a communication tool. And I hope I can be a part of that.