

# **Killing Two Birds with One Stone:**

an Experiment Using an English Homeroom  
to Develop Students' Communicative Abilities  
and Raise Their Test Scores

Hatsuko Itaya

## **Introduction**

In March 2015, a disappointing test result was announced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter, MEXT) on the English proficiency of 70,000 Japanese third-year high school students (MEXT 2014). The test was designed to measure English proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference or the CEFR, an international guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages. The result was that average proficiency of the Japanese students in reading and listening was revealed to be the equivalent of that of junior high school graduates or third to fifth grade of the EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency. The results were even worse in writing and speaking, in which 29.2% and 13.3% of the students respectively could not answer any questions at all. In writing, more than half of the students could answer less than 10% of the questions. In speaking, 87.2% of the students were categorized into the lowest

A1 level in the CEFR.

This outcome has brought to light that, in spite of the alleged introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) by MEXT more than twenty years ago, students' productive skills in writing and speaking have not seen much of an increase. There has been ample research probing into the cause of the difficulties of implementing CLT in Japanese classrooms: washback from university entrance examinations (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Kikuchi, 2006), classroom size, lack of teachers' training (Browne & Wada, 1998; Kizuka, 2006), pressures from colleagues, and insufficient resources (Underwood, 2012). In my 30 years' experience of teaching full time at junior high schools, high schools, cram schools and junior college, I felt the acute dilemma, especially at high school, of incorporating more CLT into my teaching to develop students' communicative skills or employing cram-school teaching techniques, which have been effective in raising students' scores in tests. As White (1987) demonstrated in his study, students' first priority is to pass entrance examinations; in addition, they want to acquire communicative skills. Therefore, I decided to attempt to find a way to "kill two birds with one stone" or to pursue both targets of the students: being able to communicate in English and getting high marks in entrance examinations.

The aim of this article is to share my personal teaching experience at high school so that Japanese teachers of English [hereafter JTEs] with similar problems may obtain some kind of hints about reforming their own teaching. After two years of the experimental attempt that I will detail in this paper, students felt less intimidated

about speaking and writing in English. On top of that, their scores in mock examinations for university entrance examinations rose, resulting in many students entering the universities of their first choice.

## Literature Review

### *Historical Background of English Language Education in Japan*

Japan has been secluded from the rest of the world for more than 200 years and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Japan finally realized the economic and technological superiority of the Western world. There was obviously a strong desire to catch up, and understanding English was imperative to Japan's progress (Weiner, 1994). During this time, it was even proposed that Japanese be abandoned and English adopted as the national language (Miller, 1982). Therefore, it is not surprising that English was regarded as the tool to gain, not to impart, information and it was primarily the ability to read and then to translate English into Japanese that was required for this purpose. Hence, *yakudoku* or the Grammar Translation method was the standard method in English classrooms in Japan (Gorsuch, 1998; Hino, 1988; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; Tahira, 2012).

During the economic boom of the 1970's, Japanese people began to regard English as a tool for interactive communication. This period, the 1970s, coincided with the emergence of the communicative teaching method in Western countries (Clapham, 2000; Shohamy, 1990). The Course of Study or curriculum guidelines released by MEXT a decade later in 1989 specified communicative ability in

English as the primary objective of English education in Japan (Yoshida, 2003) and introduced the use of aural/oral communication in high school English lessons. In reality, however, many high school teachers did not actually follow these guidelines for fear of losing precious class time to prepare students for written tests for university entrance examinations (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Nishino, 2011; Sakui, 2004; Tahira, 2012). Therefore, there was a wide discrepancy between what was supposed to be happening and what was actually happening in English classrooms in Japan.

In 2003, MEXT launched the Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities. In this action plan, MEXT tried to enhance students' motivation to communicate in English by providing them with more opportunities to speak English. One of the ideas was to hold English speech contests at schools. According to a telephone interview with the MEXT official in June 2015, MEXT has not ascertained the number of schools that actually conduct speech contests. What is known, instead, is that the goal of this action plan has not been attained yet. The goal was for high school graduates to be able to have daily conversation in English, and the average English proficiency should be the equivalent to pre-second or second grade of the EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency. The abovementioned results of the English proficiency examination indicated otherwise.

The new Course of Study for high school was implemented in 2013 for first-year students. This guideline places language activities in the center of the lessons, with grammar playing a supporting role for communication; in other words, lengthy lectures on grammar

rules should be avoided. What is considered most prominent for this new guideline is “classes are to be conducted in English in principle so that the class experience itself becomes an actual communication experience” (MEXT, 2009, p.116). While much is expected of this new approach to bring out students’ latent abilities, some teachers hesitate or are not confident enough to conduct classes in English (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Underwood, 2012).

The most recent reform plan is reflected in the report entitled “On Integrated Reforms in High School and University Education and University Entrance Examination Aimed at Realizing a High School and University Articulation System Appropriate for a New Era” released by the Central Council for Education on December 22, 2014. In this report, the need to cultivate English communication skills, including writing and speaking, is emphasized. There is also a discussion on the abolishment of the present university entrance examination systems and the introduction of the Prospective University Entrance Scholastic Abilities Evaluation Test [provisional name], in which use of commercial qualifications and certification exams, such as TOEFL, is considered. It merits attention whether these programs will culminate in the successful production of English communicators in the near future.

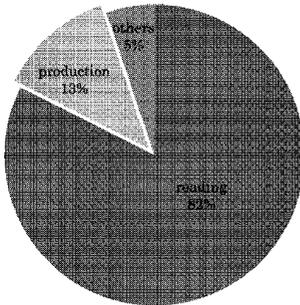
### ***Washback Effect***

Washback effect is the term used to describe the effect testing has on teaching and learning (Brindley, 2001; Chapelle & Brindley, 2002; Hughes, 2003) and it can be either positive or negative. A high stakes test such as the university entrance examination can dominate

the whole process of learning and teaching. In foreign language education, both students and teachers tend to focus on what is likely to be tested, irrespective of its effectiveness on the development of language ability (Leonard, 1998). Consequently, the washback effect can be beneficial when the contents of the examinations reflect the aim of a particular form of education, but it can be harmful when there is a wide discrepancy between the contents of the examinations and the classes.

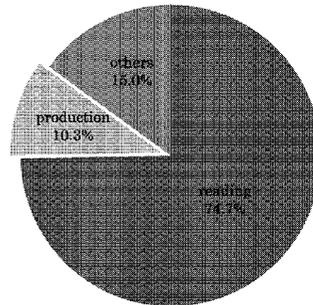
It has widely been believed that Japanese university entrance examinations have mostly had a negative washback effect on English language education (Brown, 1993, 1995; Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Leonard, 1998; Ryan, 1995; Sturman, 1989; Vanderfor, 1997). On the other hand, in recent years, there are some researches showing that Japanese tests have been improving towards the more communicative end of the spectrum (Guest, 2008; Seki et al., 2011), and some even go on to argue that washback from the recent National Center Test should be viewed as positive (Guest, 2008). I very much agree with Guest that studying for entrance examinations will help students develop a number of differing English skills. In addition, if it were not for entrance examinations, students would not spend as much time or energy on studying English. At the same time, however, it is not to be denied that writing and speaking, which are in the genres of *hyogenryoku* or production, cannot be easily tested in university entrance examinations because of the large number of examinees. This difficulty of testing students' abilities in production is demonstrated in the percentage of the types of questions in university entrance examinations. According to *Zenkoku Daigaku Nyushi*

*Mondai Seikai* [Compilation of Questions and Answers for University Entrance Examinations], for example, only 10.3% of the questions by leading national universities in 2015 are for production. Such questions ask students to fill in blanks with appropriate words or ask students to write short phrases or sentences. In the case of the leading private universities, the figure decreases to 5.7%. This gap between national and private universities is indicative of the burden of marking production within the time constraint. The number of examinees for some private universities is phenomenally large. Waseda University, for instance, is reported to have had 98,106 applicants in 2015 (Waseda Juku, 2015). Unlike objective tests, which can be marked with machines, answers for production are marked by humans. To make matters worse, no two answers are the same in the field of production. As demonstrated in Figure 2 through Figure 4, the percentage of production in entrance examinations even declined from 2000, when Obunsha started to provide the



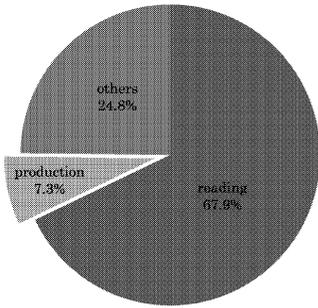
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Figure 1. Types of Questions for National and Public University Entrance Examinations in 2000



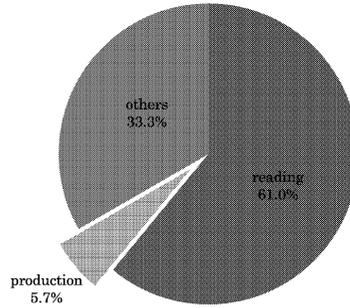
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Figure 2. Types of Questions for National and Public University Entrance Examinations in 2015



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Figure 3. Types of Questions for Private University Entrance Examinations in 2000



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Figure 4. Types of Questions for Private University Entrance Examinations in 2015

data, both in national and private universities.

The prospect of widespread inclusion of speaking tests in university entrance examinations is further bleaker due to limited time and resources. A solution to this problem with advanced technology is anxiously awaited.

As Obunsha started compiling data on types of questions as recently as 2000, it is not easy to grasp the situation from further back. Still, some intriguing comments were found in older *Zenkoku Daigaku Nyushi Mondai Seikai* [Compilation of Questions and Answers for University Entrance Examinations]. In 1957, for example, then professor Eitaro Sayama at Tokyo University, wrote in a review of the Tokyo University entrance examination that “the examinees’ ability of production is lower than that of comprehension.” In 1958 he wrote “the lack of basic grammar knowledge and the poor ability of production were revealed.” From these statements also, it is evident that “stress on reception and lack of stress

on production” is no new phenomena in English education in Japan.

Extensive research has shown that many teachers, who sincerely wish to help their students enter universities, cannot help but spend most of their class time on preparing students for entrance examinations, leaving less time for a communicative approaches (Cook, 2009; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Sakui, 2004). University entrance examination heavily concentrates on reading and it, in effect, is a de facto language policy and determines classroom practices (Cook, 2009; Glasgow, 2013; Gorsuch, 2000; Menken, 2008; Shohamy, 2006; Stewart, 2009). For the time being, it seems that broad positive washback is not to be expected in the genres of writing and speaking, or production. Consequently, poor results in writing and speaking in the CEFR are deemed to be expected.

### **What can be Done to Attain the Two Goals at the Same Time?**

“There must be some ways to help students obtain good scores in entrance examinations and help them acquire fluency in English,” was the thought I had, when I became a homeroom teacher for the first-year students at Sapporo Nihon University Senior High School in 2012. The idea I conceived in order to pursue these two goals was English Homeroom (hereafter, English HR), and I continued this practice for two years until I retired from teaching at the high school level.

## Method

### *English HR, English Speech and English Journal*

At Japanese high schools, there are morning and afternoon homeroom periods for 5 to 10 minutes every day. During these periods, homeroom teachers give students information about day-to-day events at school, or even counsel, when necessary, on ways for personal growth or ways to strengthen solidarity within the class. Homeroom teachers at Japanese schools play roles of “second parents” at school. I decided to utilize this period to communicate in English as follows:

1. During HR, I talk only in English.
2. One student a day gives a one-minute speech in the morning HR.
3. On Saturdays, different teachers (non-English teachers) come to the morning HR to conduct an HR in English and give one-minute speeches.
4. Classroom journals are to be written in English and as are teacher’s comments. No corrections are to be made on the students’ English in these journals.

Before introducing this attempt, I consulted with two teachers in managerial positions. One vice-principal, advised me to take my time to get to know students, and gradually introduce an English HR. Another vice-principal had a different view. He believed that strong leadership was necessary to achieve something for a class as a whole and what was beneficial for students should be put into practice immediately. He added that, if it didn’t go well, I could always

abandon it. Both pieces of advice made sense, but, in the end, I decided to follow the latter: starting an English HR on day one.

As for English classes, instructions were, in principle, given in English, whereas explanations of complex grammar rules were done in Japanese because I am among some JTEs that believe partial use of Japanese are more beneficial for students (Suzuki & Roger, 2014). Because students are used to listening to me speaking in English, they seemed relaxed about hearing me teach in English. It was when teaching was switched to Japanese that students became more attentive. Japanese was a signal for them that an important explanation related to examinations was to be given.

A similar air was created in the English HR. A few times a year, for serious matters, I chose to speak in Japanese. At my remark, “From now on, I will speak in Japanese”, students sensed that they should be all ears. It was, in fact, advantageous both as an English teacher and a homeroom teacher to be able to speak in two different languages. Code switching can be used as an attention getter. Being a high school teacher in Japan is extremely demanding, and teachers should make the most of whatever talents they possess.

## **Results**

### ***Scores of the Mock Exams Rose***

High school students in Japan often take mock examinations administered by private corporations or cram schools. One of the tests is called SHINKEN MOSHI by Benesse Corporation, taken by more than 100,000 students nationwide. Because of this large num-

ber of examinees, Benesse calculates deviation value for examinees to see how well they have done nationally. Figure 5 shows the number of students whose deviation value of the mock examination rose. One mock examination was taken in July 2012, another in the following January, 9 months after the English HR started. The dots above the line show the number of the students whose deviation value rose. Out of 27 students, the deviation value of 24 students increased, or 88 % of the students saw improvements. In comparison, out of 19 students in another class with regular HR in Japanese, 12 students or 63% of the students saw improvements, and in yet another class, 16 out of 28 students or 57% of the students had better results in January than in July.

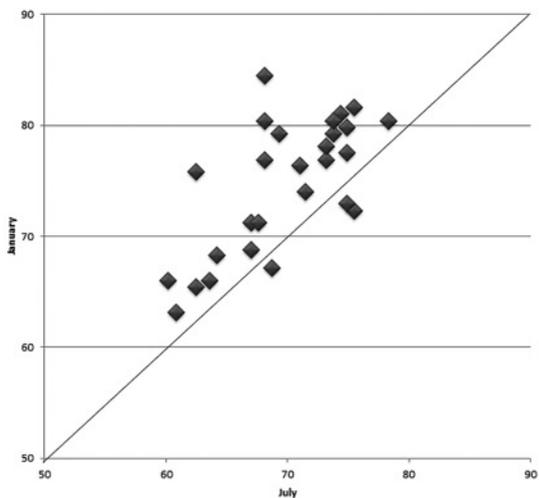


Figure 5. Results of two mock examinations for the university called *SHINKEN MOSHI* by Benesse Corporation.

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing the cause of this improve-

ment. That the increase of deviation of the targeted class was larger than those of the other two classes could have been construed as the direct effect of the English HR and the speeches, or it could have been only psychological effect or even just a coincidence. Some students commented later in the questionnaire that “the phrase I repeatedly heard in the English HR appeared in mock examinations and I felt happy to realize the effect of the English HR in examinations.” From this comment, the expectation of the positive psychological influence of the English HR seems valid. Other students wrote, “the English HR blew away my fear of English and I actually felt at home with it.” Thus, it is possible that students scored more because their phobias about English were dissipated. At least HR didn’t make them hate English but, rather, made them feel confident about using it.

### ***Students’ and Parents’ Opinions on English HR***

At the end of the first year, second year, and when they graduated from high school, students (and parents at the time of graduation) were asked to fill out questionnaires on the English HR. The questionnaires were filled out anonymously by all 27 students at the end of the first year, again anonymously by 28 students at the end of the second year (2 new students joined but 1 student was absent on the day of filling out the questionnaire), and all 29 students and 26 families at the time of graduation, this time with names, because at graduation, they could write anything freely without worrying about any consequences (see Appendix A, B, C and D for the English translation of the questionnaires and comments).

Table 1 shows the number of students who answered the first question, “How much do you think you understood what the teacher was saying?” (See Appendix A for all the other questions).

**Table 1. The Degree of Understanding of the Teacher’s Spoken English for the First Year**

	100%	90%	80%	70%	60%	50%	40%	30%
In April	0	0	4	9	8	3	2	1
In September	0	7	12	5	3	0	0	0
In March	5	15	5	2	0	0	0	0

*Note.* Numbers in the Table show the number of students. N=27

Overall, students had very positive attitudes towards the English HR. At the end of the first year, all except one student answered that their listening ability had improved, with 20 students understanding more than 90% of what the teacher was saying by March. In question 2, 5 students answered that they had had problems such as missing meetings or deadlines. In question 3, 6 students commented that they learned some phrases by heart effortlessly and actually used them in conversation with Australian host families. This reflection was encouraging since many students are always complaining about the difficulty of memorizing words and phrases. In answering question 4, 21 students found the others’ speeches interesting. Listening to classmates’ speeches gave them a chance to catch a glimpse of friends’ opinions that they wouldn’t have known otherwise. One-minute English speeches may have made them even closer. It came as a positive surprise that all 27 students expressed their will to continue the English HR the following year. It is a clear indication

that the students felt a solid sense of the effects of the English HR on their English study.

The same questionnaire, with additional questions, was addressed at the end of the second year (see Appendix B). Notice that a higher number of students thought they understood most of the teacher's announcements in English.

**Table 2.** The Degree of Understanding of the Teacher's Spoken English for the Second Year

	100%	90%	80%	70%
In April	9	11	4	4
In September	10	11	5	2
In March	10	15	1	1

*Note.* Numbers in the Table show the number of students. N=28

At the end of the second year, 25 out of 28 students said they could comprehend 90% of what the teacher said. The other two students reported 70% and 80% respectively. This remarkable sense of confidence in their listening comprehension is the culmination of two years of sitting in an English HR. As for the continuation of the English HR, 3 students were opposed to it. They cited becoming *Jukensei* [Exam Takers] as the reason. They considered preparing English speeches a distraction from studying for entrance examinations. Still, the majority of the 25 students were in favor of continuing the English HR. It can be said that most students regarded the English HR beneficial for them.

Students' responses for other questions were more or less consistent with those of the year before. Many students reported the

increased listening ability and interests in classmates' speeches.

Upon my retirement at the end of the second year, these students had a new homeroom teacher for the third year and the English HR ended. At graduation, the final questionnaires were given both to students and their parents (see Appendix C).

After one year of normal Japanese HR with a new teacher, 23 students considered it regrettable not having an English HR in the third year. Many stated either the decline of their English ability or a disadvantage on entrance examinations. Fourteen students still missed listening to speeches by classmates, while 6 students manifested relief to see the English HR ended as they looked upon preparing speeches as taking time from preparation for entrance examinations. From the answers to questions 4 and 5, it is construed that most students' first priority is entering universities. In the second-year questionnaire, some students wrote they could answer certain mock exam questions thanks to the repeated exposure to some expressions in the English HR. Therefore, if teachers can intentionally include those phrases in their HR talk, students will surely benefit not only in communication but also on examinations.

Questionnaires were also sent out to parents at graduation (See Appendix D). Each parent expressed deep appreciation for the implementation of the English HR. It can be inferred that parents themselves would have wanted to enjoy education on communicative English from such remarks as "I wish my homeroom teacher had done English HR for me at high school," "English HR for my daughter was a dream come true." These wishes of parents for communicative English education are reflected in the answers for question 1

and 2 (see Appendix D). In question 1, 35% of the parents, more than double the rate of the students, would opt for a communicative class over an examination oriented class. In question 2, parents think 42% of the class time should be reserved for communicative English, 10% higher than what the students answered. No generalization can be made from this data on the perspective of Japanese parents on English education. Still, it is worthwhile to note that some Japanese parents hope for more communicative English education.

I heard that some parents with students in other classes were envious of the English HR. Therefore, I asked parents whether they would have felt jealous in the reverse circumstances. All parents except one answered they would have felt it was unfair. In a sense, this response demonstrates how much the English HR was appreciated. At the same time, however, this feeling of unfairness could be a major obstacle to the implementation of English HR. Yet I decided to push through the plan of an English HR in spite of the anticipation of this unfairness from other classes, partly because teachers in managerial positions encouraged me to do so. They said no two teachers were the same, and they wanted each teacher to demonstrate his or her own unique skills and to stimulate each other. Another reason was that the other two teachers in the same grade were truly talented in their fields of expertise and very popular with both students and parents. They had their own styles and strengths, and would not be bothered by what other teachers did. In the questionnaires given at graduation, those teachers expressed no major worries except that one of them wrote “the English HR made me reflect on whether I could do something unique in my HR as well.”

I was very fortunate to be surrounded by supervisors and colleagues with a progressive mindset. I have worked at three different high schools and recognize what is easily accepted in one place may be considered outrageous in another.

### ***Senior Teachers' Views on High School English Education***

Questionnaires were filled out by three vice principals who shared a staff room with all the other teachers and closely monitored the whole school. In their responses, they recognized the importance of an education in communicative English. Therefore, the English HR was favorably perceived by all the vice principals. All three of them expressed the hope that other English teachers would conduct an English HR too. One vice principal wrote:

I walked into Ms. Itaya's English HR quite often. The purpose of the visit was to observe how students handled the English HR. What struck me most was the way students concentrated their attention on the teacher's words in order not to miss any information. It was evident that a few minutes' of concentration everyday would definitely improve students' listening abilities. I also felt both listening to and making speeches was instrumental in improving students' overall skills of English. "If I had had such an opportunity in school, my English skills would be much higher now" was my thought and I truly envied the students.

I don't think many people would argue against the idea that gaining support and approval from superiors, as well as from students and

their parents, is crucial to successful education. I was very fortunate in having the full support from all groups of people.

It can be interpreted from the observation of the vice principals that students are focused on meaning rather than the English, which is the true purpose of a language. Using English outside the classroom situation makes its use more authentic.

## Discussion

### *What Can Actually be Done at Other Schools?*

The purpose of this essay is not to persuade JTEs to do an English HR. Rather, I hope this article will provide an opportunity for teachers to think of what they can do within their own framework. Feelings of inequality among students, parents, and teachers in the same grade have a potential to be a serious hindrance to an English HR. If that is the case, is it possible at all to have English teachers, native and non-native, take turns visiting different classes. In Sapporo Nihon University Senior High School, for example, there used to be three native speakers of English as full-time teachers who didn't have either a morning or an afternoon HR. There were also a few JTEs who did not have their own homeroom classes. If they all visited classes of non-English teachers in turn to conduct a HR in English, then every class could have an English HR at least a few times a week. A one-minute English speech a day is possible without English teachers in the HR. Even if a homeroom teacher doesn't understand English fully, students can understand their classmates' speeches and, according to my former students and parents, they really derived great pleasure from it.

Some non-English teachers were willing to speak in English at Sapporo Nihon University Senior High School. Initially, I asked my sub-homeroom teacher to come to my class every Saturday to speak in English. Later, I had some volunteer teachers. They were fun-loving, motivated teachers, and the students loved their speeches. The majority of the students wrote in the questionnaires something to the effect that they were entertained and encouraged by those teachers. They also wrote that they could really see that, even without proper grammar or adequate vocabulary, it is possible to convey messages. Thus, if it is possible to involve non-English teachers and the whole school, English HRs and speeches can become the norm.

If, for some reason, it is impossible to conduct an English HR, is it worth considering one-minute speeches in every English class with every English teacher at school? At high school, students usually have at least one English class a day or sometimes even two. MEXT once advocated English speech contests at each school. Such contests are often only for selected students, and they speak eloquently on high level topics, in which the rest of the students show no interest. In one-minute speeches, however, everyone gets to speak on everyday matters, without being judged.

In the questionnaire, one mother proposed an English Month when all the students and teachers communicate in English. Maybe we could start with an occasional English Day or even English Hour. At Sapporo Nihon University Senior High School, we tried an English Hour, event during which students cooked and ate dinner in the school kitchen, all in English. Of course, not all the students

were fluent, but they seemed to have a good time, using such phrases as “delicious” or “too hot.” Likewise, when some English teachers asked students to pass bowls, for example, they paid particular attention and attempted to respond in English.

### ***Study Limitations and Future Research***

I did not conduct English HR for the research purpose. Rather, it was an experimental effort of one English teacher to kill two birds with one stone or to satisfy two of the students’ needs: improving examination scores and becoming more fluent in English. Questionnaires were given for the sole purpose of knowing students’ and parents’ attitudes towards the English HR for the purpose of improving it, not to prove the effectiveness of this method. Therefore, although the students reported the efficacy of the English HR on their overall English ability, and the result of mock examinations, which I happened to keep at hand after retirement, showed improvements, those do not statistically prove that the English HR was the cause for those improvements in the examination. As for daily communication in English, although some students wrote about the improvement they felt in speaking and listening (See Appedix A, B, and C), and the reported degree of understanding the English HR rose in two years, no objective data was taken to prove this point. In order to prove its effectiveness, careful design and implementation of the English HR is needed by other JTEs who take an interest in trying this method.

### **Conclusion**

Some parents have commented that “current English education

has advanced greatly from ours.” Today’s young people have definitely become more relaxed and willing, with regard to communication in English. I have high expectations for MEXT to lay out a plan to further improve English education in Japan. It is noteworthy, for example, that MEXT is considering the introduction of commercial qualifications and certification examinations such as TOEFL as entrance examinations in order to evaluate holistically the four areas of English skills.

Unfortunately, however, national reforms always take a long time to be administered. Our students are here now and they are depending on our expertise to bring out the best in them today. For that purpose, schools and educators across Japan should collaborate to carry out their own unique reform plans for students both to acquire communicative English and to pass entrance examinations. I hope this article has given JTEs some food for thought.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank my former students, their parents and teachers at Sapporo Nihon University Senior High School for their total support for this research even after students’ graduation and my retirement.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire for First Year Students, and Students' Comments for the Question 3 & 4.

*Note.* The total number of students was 27. Numbers in parentheses show the number of the students who wrote similar comments.

1. How much do you think you understood what the teacher was saying?
2. Have you had any trouble in school life, such as “missing a committee meeting’ or ‘missing a deadline” resulting from poor understanding of teacher’s English?
3. What did you think of the English HR? Write your opinions freely.
  - My listening ability increased. (26)
  - My fear toward listening to English lessened. (12)
  - I learned some of the daily phrases naturally or without struggles and actually used them in talking to Australians hosts during the school trip. (6)
  - Scores of the listening tests rose dramatically. (1)
  - I could familiarize myself with correct pronunciation of many

words. (1)

I became accustomed to phrases and grammar in everyday spoken English. (1)

I didn't feel any progress in my overall English ability. (1)

4. What did you think of the one-minute English speech? Write your opinions freely.

Classmates' speeches were unique and interesting. (21)

It was hard at first but gradually I got used to it. (16)

I couldn't understand classmates' speeches. (3)

I didn't feel any progress at all. (1)

5. Would you like to continue English HR in the second year?

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire for Second Year Students, and Students' Comments for the Question 3 & 4 & 6.

*Note.* The total number of the respondents was 28. Numbers in parentheses show the number of the students who wrote similar comments.

1. How much do you think you understood what the teacher was saying?
2. Have you had any trouble in school life, such as "missing a committee meeting" or "missing a deadline" resulting from poor understanding of teacher's English?
3. What did you think of the English HR? Write your opinions freely.  
My listening ability increased. (20)  
My fear toward listening to English lessened. (15)  
My fear toward listening to English lessened. (1)
4. What did you think of the one-minute English speech? Write your opinions freely.  
Classmates' speeches were unique and interesting. (24)  
It was hard at first but gradually I got used to it. (9)

I couldn't understand classmates' speeches. (2)

I actually felt some progress in my speaking ability. (1)

I didn't feel any progress at all. (1)

5. Would you like to continue English HR in the second year?

6. Write anything freely on the two years of English HR and English speeches.

Classmates' speeches were unique and interesting. (21)

The English HR was hard at first but gradually I got used to it. (16)

I felt happy when I found many expressions from English HR in mock exams when in mock exams. English HR is actually helpful for entering university. (4)

My listening score has improved thanks to English HR. (3)

I think both English HR and speech were beneficial in improving my English. (2)

I like to continue English HR but next year as I want to concentrate on studying for university entrance examinations, I don't want to spend time on preparing speech. (2)

Making a speech was hard but I actually had fun when pondering upon what to talk about. (1)

Preparing a speech became easier and easier. It was a good opportunity to use phrases I had learned. (1)

I felt closer to English and felt less intimidated by listening test. I am glad that we did English HR and speech. (1)

When I first heard the plan for English HR, I thought my teacher was crazy. Now, when I hear my teacher talk in Japanese, I feel uneasy. (1)

Thanks to English HR, I had no trouble communicating in English when hosting Australian students. (1)

I think my classmates do not understand much of what I talked about.

I don't know whether it is because of my poor English ability or

because my voice is too quiet. Next time, I will speak in a louder voice.

(1)

I can understand English much better now and listening to others' speech is fun. (1)

I was surprised to find myself trying to listen to English without looking at subtitles on movies. It is now my source of joy to find out how much I understand English movies and news without subtitles. (1)

### Appendix C

#### Questionnaire for Students at the Time of Graduation and Their Answers.

*Note.* The total number of respondents was 29. Numbers in parentheses show the number of the students who wrote similar comments.

1. What was your reaction to the termination of the English HR and speeches?

I was sad. (23)

I was happy. (6)

2. What do you think was the outcome of the cessation of English HR and speech?

My listening ability has declined. (18)

My speaking ability has declined. (18)

It was regrettable that I could not listen to interesting speeches of my classmates. (14)

My ability to understand English without translating has declined. (10)

I think it had an adverse effect on university entrance examinations. (9)

I don't detect any decline of my English ability. (4)

3. How did you like the English HR and speeches by non-English teachers? Write your opinions freely.

It was fun. (22)

Their English was quite rusty, and I felt English will only be polished by keeping using it. (1)

4. If you were obliged to choose only one thing to expect from high school English education, which would that be?

(A): To equip students with enough English ability to pass entrance examinations. (24) (82%)

(B): To equip students with enough English ability to communicate in English. (5) (17%)

5. How much of the English class time would you like your teachers to spend on (A) and (B) in question 4 respectively?

(A) : (B) = (68% of class time) : (32% of class time)

#### Appendix D

##### Questionnaire for Parents at the Time of Graduation and Their Answers.

*Note.* The total number of the respondents was 26. Numbers in parentheses show the number of the students who wrote similar comments.

1. If you were obliged to choose only one thing to expect from high school English education, which would that be?

(A): To equip students with enough English ability to pass entrance examinations. (17) (65%)

(B): To equip students with enough English ability to communicate in English. (9) (35%)

2. How much of English class time would you like your teachers to spend on A and B in the question above respectively?

(A) : (B) = (58% of class time) : (42% of class time)

3. Were you for or against an English HR?

For. (25) Against. (1)

4. If your children had been in a different class with a normal HR, whereas some other students were in a class with an English HR, would

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you have felt it unfair?

Yes. (25) No. (1)