

The Immediate and Long-Term Efficacy of Teaching English in Elementary Schools in Japan

日本における小学校英語教育の短期的・長期的効果の検証

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Abstract

The main objective of this research is the evaluation of English education during the elementary school age and how it affects the product at tertiary level. A questionnaire was given to the authors' junior college students. The results were then correlated with the students' TOEIC scores to see if significant differences in the scores could be explained by differences in English educational backgrounds during the participants' elementary school years.

The results showed the correlations between the educational styles in the elementary school age and the English abilities at the time of entering junior college as well as the students' perceived benefit. Even though the results had a research limitation of not having had a large number of subjects and was also limited to one school, it showed a clear tendency that supports the implementation of balanced skills-based education in elementary schools.

Keywords : teaching English, elementary schools, the immediate and long-term efficacy, TOEIC, Cambridge Young Learners English Test, questionnaires

アブストラクト

この研究の目的は日本の小学校の英語教育成果を長期的観点から検証しようとするものである。短大生にアンケートを実施し、学生の小学校時代の英語教育が大学での英語力にどのように影響を与えるのか TOEIC との相関から探った。結果では、遊び中心の教授法を受けた学生は小学校時代の英語教育は効果的ではなかったと感じており、TOEIC の点も四技能中心の教授法を受けた学生の得点よりも低かった。

1. Introduction and Background

This is a part of our research (Grant –in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) 19520537) supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). This

paper is based on our presentation made in the 15th Congress of Applied Linguistics, or AILA 2008 (Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée) entitled “What Fruit does Elementary School English Education in Japan Yield, Immediately and in the Long Term?”

The main motive of our research was to show objective proof of the fruit of elementary school English education by using a globally recognized testing standard, Starters level of Cambridge Young Learners English Tests (CYLE). It is this use of globally recog-

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nized standards which has been lacking in decision-making for English education in Japan for the past ten years. This can be seen by examining government documents¹.

We have been investigating if and in what way elementary school education can be effective in empowering Japanese to be able to cope with business or academic matters in an international setting by using English, the lingua franca of such fields.

It is felt that Japan's Asian neighbors have been outperforming it in terms of English education and economic growth, and Japan feels threatened that it cannot keep up with the economic and fast changes happening in the world. The Japanese government will start the new Course of Study in 2011 and classes called "Foreign Language Activities" will be started and held within the curriculum of the elementary schools. Similar to the education up to now, oral skills will be mainly focused on in these classes, most teachers will not have English specific teacher training, and no grade report will be given². This is in contrast to, for example, Taiwan, where the focus is on four skills education (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) with teacher training provided, and grade reports given to students/their parents³. In principal, homeroom teachers in Japan, who haven't taken English teaching method classes or related subjects in TEFL, are and will be teaching this class. Would that lead to Japanese students with high enough English ability to be able to compete with their peers worldwide?

Japan used to use a grammar syllabus and the Grammar Translation Method. A grammar syllabus is a syllabus based on grammatical order. The Grammar Translation Method is a method of foreign language teaching which makes use of translation and grammar study as the main teaching and learning activities. The method consists mainly of grammatical rules, study of vocabulary lists, and translation exercises. Because the method emphasizes reading rather than the ability to communicate in a language, a negative reaction to it began in the 19th century, and later a greater emphasis was put on the teaching of spoken language⁴. Japan continued to use the Grammar Translation Method,

partly due to the lack of trained native speaker teachers but due to the unsatisfactory results in enhancing oral communicative ability and the new movement in English teaching, Japan shifted to the Communicative Approach in the 1990's⁵. The Communicative Approach was developed in the 1980's as a reaction against grammar-based approaches such as Situational Language Teaching and the audiolingual method. This approach emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence and to seek to make meaningful communication⁶. The major principles of the Communicative Language Teaching include fluency and accuracy as important goals in language learning as well as learners using a language through communicative activities in class, with fluency being the more emphasized of the two. However, the results of Communicative Language Teaching did not produce good results. According to Butler⁷, students who were taught through this method scored lower in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) than those who were taught through grammar-based approaches. It turned out that Communicative Language Teaching did not make students with a solid communicative competence, which was its main goal.

Communicative competence may not have been understood by the teachers thoroughly. Communicative competence is "knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also the knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community" and it includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence⁸. Due to grammar knowledge being an essential component of communicative competence, a balanced approach to education should be followed, that is one which includes grammar yet also focuses on communication.

The authors have been teaching at a private elementary school in the north-west area of Japan. Based on textbooks that mainly incorporate a grammar-based approach and communicative language teaching, classes have been conducted to enhance children's four skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Our past research⁹ has proved that Japanese elementary school children can learn the basics of English in terms of four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, to the level of “Starters” in the Cambridge Young Learners English Tests (CYLE), which is correlated with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). The results of the CYLE showed that our students taught in a skills-based English course performed better than their peers in Japan.

However, this proof does not necessarily guarantee that those students are going to be able to tackle English effectively in their future studies, beyond elementary school. We needed to prove that the students with a skills-based elementary school education would develop to be more capable English users than those without such education.

This paper will address the problems we have in Japan and aim to find a solution:

1. Japan hasn’t established a good system for teaching English at the elementary school level¹⁰.
2. Even if we try to start good education in elementary schools, there is no consistent philosophy, teaching methods, and cooperation between different school levels, from primary through tertiary level, so efforts may be wasted.

From our previous research, we hypothesized that students who had skills-based education should perform better than those who had play-based education. What we mean by the terms “play-based” and “skills-based” education in this paper are defined as follows:

“Play-based” education, for the purpose of this paper and in the light of Japan’s English education to date, can be described as education which focuses mainly on getting the students to have fun and enjoy themselves with the presumed result that the students will learn and develop a general interest and ability in English naturally

and in a non-specific way. Its focus is on oral skills and is therefore a communication oriented approach. Card games, puppetry, songs, etc with a situational theme is often used and a foreign (native English speaker) teacher is often involved. The meaning in this paper should not be confused with the recent research into using computer games for education.

“Skills-based” education focuses on specific language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The focus is on building/developing the students’ abilities in each skill, and testing is included in the curriculum. Games can also be used but only as aids or support for the skills being taught. The games are referred to as activities and are classified in terms of the skills they teach, and at what level. Games for games sake only are not used. A foreign (native English speaker) teacher may also be involved.

A questionnaire was given to the authors’ junior college students to find out about the English education they received between the ages of 6 and 12 (elementary school age), and the effect it had on their further education (Appendix). All of the students also took a Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) upon entering the college and these marks were also compared to the English education received at elementary school age.

Apart from some local government policies, English education has not been compulsory for most elementary schools in Japan. Therefore, almost all students at college did not have any official English subjects at their elementary schools. Those who went to private elementary schools might have had English classes, depending on the individual school policy. For the majority of those who had English education, they went to outside language schools or cram schools.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, and by using our own college students’ TOEIC scores, we were able to see the correlation between the English abilities of those who had English education during

elementary school age and those who did not.

The results of the questionnaire and the statistical analyses will be shown in detail followed by discussions, research limitations and further research.

2. Research Aims

The aims of this research are:

1. Move away from emotions and beliefs, and start to collect and analyze data to objectively answer the question of what is gained by incorporating an English education component into the elementary school curricula in Japan.
2. Investigate which type of education produces the best results for Japanese students, either play-based or skills-based.
3. Provide some proof of the effect of these educational styles and possibly affect how people see English education in Japan.

3. Data Gathering

3.1. Sample Group and the Background of English Education in Elementary Schools in Japan

The sample group of this study consisted of 254 Japanese students attending a junior college in north-western Japan. A total of 245 usable data sets were obtained, representing a completion rate of 96.46%. The data was collected from students entering the college between the years 2005 and 2007. The students ranged from 18 to 20 years old, and all were female.

The participants attended elementary school between the years of 1991 and 2000, representing a span of 10 years of elementary school education as shown in Table 1.

During this period English education in elementary schools was in its infancy. The Ministry of Education (the former name of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT)) assigned 51 schools all over Japan from 1992 to 1996 as special English pilot schools¹¹. In 1998, the Course of Study announced that elementary schools could have “English Activities” as a part of their curriculum, but the main goal was to have students exposed to other languages and cultures in general. The Ministry of Education assigned three pilot schools in Japan to have English as a subject in 2000, and published a guideline for “English Activities” in 2001. In Kanazawa, Ishikawa, where most of our students are from, “English Activities” started in 1996 and English as a subject started in 2004¹². Kanazawa City started with play-based education but has gradually started to use a more skills-based style. They seem to be in a transitional phase toward skills-based education¹³. According to Butler¹⁴, since “English Activities” started, the number of students going to cram schools in an elementary school in Tokyo increased. This could have been a reflection of the parents’ beliefs about the importance of English and expectations of their children.

Although the entire sample group had graduated by 2000, a significant percentage still received English education of some kind during elementary school age. Landmark announcements and debates were held by the government related conferences from 1974 to 1989¹⁴ and other intermediate announcements and social changes affected the nation’s attitude toward English. Because of this, local boards of education in some areas were influenced and started English education¹⁵, as shown by the number of respondents who indicated having had English education at elementary

Table 1 Years when the sampled students were in elementary school

Year Sampled	18 years old	19 years old	20 years old
2005	1993-1998	1992-1997	<u>1991</u> -1996
2006	1994-1999	1993-1998	1992-1997
2007	1995- <u>2000</u>	1994-1999	1993-1998

school.

3.2. Questionnaire and TOEIC

The questionnaire, originally made by a special interest group, Bilingual SIG of JACET (Japan Association of College English Teachers) of which Yoneda is a member, was used to investigate the English education students received at the elementary school level. This information was to be correlated with the current language ability of the college students. Since this project was not completed, Yoneda, a member of the group, continued this research using her students.

The questionnaire, consisting of thirteen questions, was administered to students after entering the college (Appendix). The questions were designed to collect historical information about the English education that the participants received while of elementary school age, as well as their opinions about their English education. Their elementary school age education could have been either at elementary school, outside school (mainly cram school), or both. The questions take into account this possibility.

The very first question on the questionnaire was dichotomous, dividing the sample into two distinct groups: those who had English education of some kind during their elementary school years, and those who didn't have any English education. The first group then continued to work through the rest of the questionnaire, while the second group went immediately to the last two questions.

For participants who did have English education of some kind, they were asked to define to the best of their ability the kind of education that they received. They were asked questions relating to time studied, teachers, and the focus and structure of the classes. They were also asked for their personal opinion regarding the value of their elementary school age education in regards to their current perceived English ability.

The second last question of the survey asked all participants their opinion on which English programs had had an influence on their perceived current English ability. English education in Japan is compulsory at secondary level so all students taking the survey

would have had some experience of English at a Japanese school.

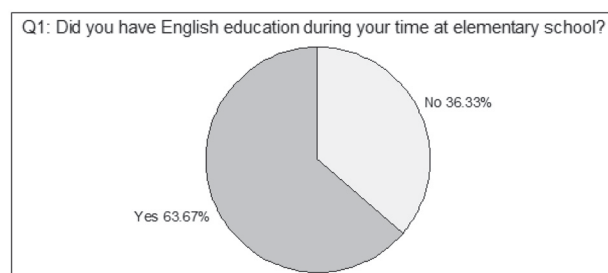
On entering the college, all students were required to take a TOEIC in order to place them in English classes appropriate to their level. These TOEIC scores were then correlated with data from the questionnaire to see if there were significant differences in the scores that could be explained by differences in English educational backgrounds during the participants' elementary school years. This is discussed at the end of the results section.

4. Results

4.1. Results of the Questionnaire

First of all, the results from the questionnaire are presented. Following this, the correlations with TOEIC scores that were of significance are shown.

Question 1 of the questionnaire asked "Did you have English education of some kind at elementary school?" The students answered either Yes or No. Out of the total of 245 complete responses, 156 participants (63.7%) said that they studied English during the elementary school years whereas 89 participants (36.3%) said that they didn't study any English during this period of their education, as shown in Graph 1.



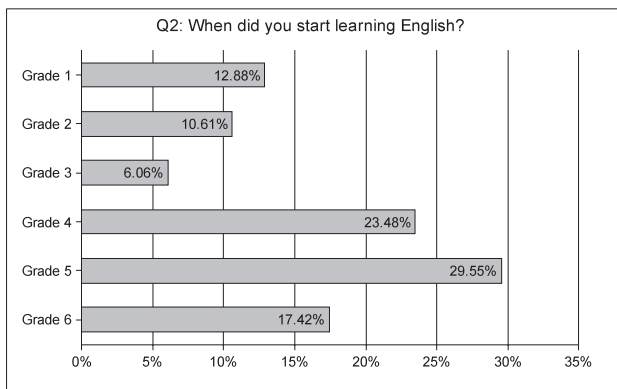
Graph 1

Only students who had English education during elementary school years answered Questions 2 to 11. These questions aimed to describe the kind of English education that students received during their elementary school years. Calculation of percentages was based on total valid responses.

Question 2 asked "When did you start learning English?" The question allowed students to mark

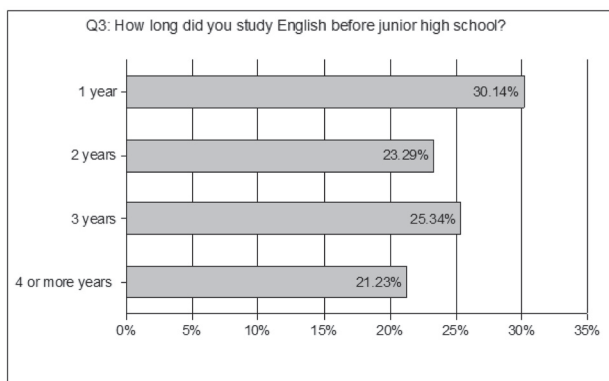
multiple answers if they stopped and started again. Only one student replied with such an answer. She started in grade 2 and again in grade 6. As this was of minimal use to the report, her answer was taken as having started in grade 2. Graph 2 shows the results of the calculation ignoring “no answers”, which totaled 15.39%.

As can be seen in Graph 2, a majority (93 out of 132, or 70.45%) of participants began English studies from grade 4 or older, 29.55% of participants started studying before grade 4.



Graph 2

Question 3 asked how many years the participants had studied English prior to entering secondary school. As can be seen in Graph 3, approximately 21% (31 out of 146 valid answers) studied for 4 or more years, and that the majority of participants (115 out of 146, or 79%) studied for 3 years or less.



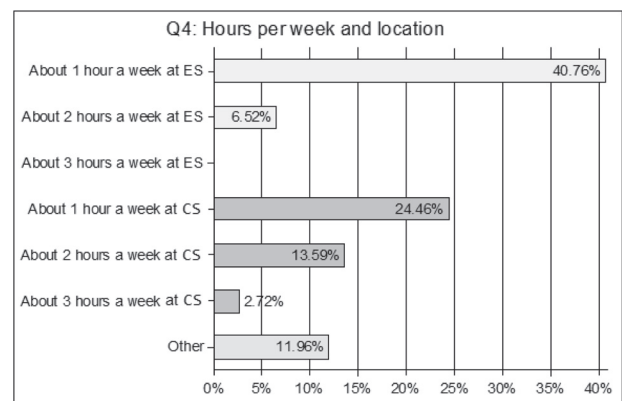
Graph 3

Question 4 asked "What was your education like?" Respondents were asked to choose one or more ap-

propriate answers. From 156 questionnaires 184 valid responses were collected, showing that some respondents studied English in more than one style and/or at more than one location.

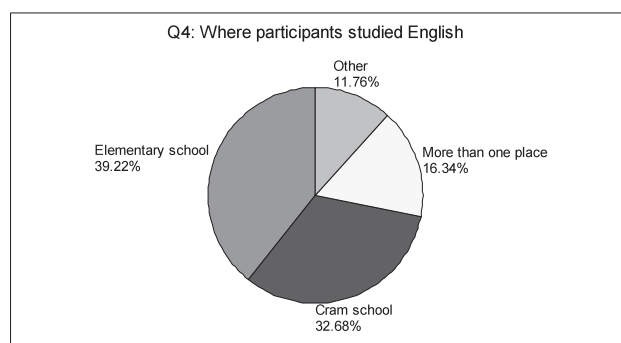
The results showed that 87 out of 156 participants studied at elementary school and 75 out of 156 at cram school. Also, 22 respondents answered that they studied at another location (4 of which also studied at elementary school or cram school). Students who answered "g. Other" were asked to go to Question 10 and write what kind of education it was. The answers included such things as taking lessons from a family friend, or correspondence material (see Question 10 results below).

As a result of being able to choose more than one answer, the total number of responses to this question exceeded the total number of participants (184 responses from 156 participants). Responses indicated that most participants (120 out of 184, or about 65%) studied one hour per week, regardless of location. Note that the graph uses the abbreviations “ES” for “elementary school” and “CS” for “cram school”.



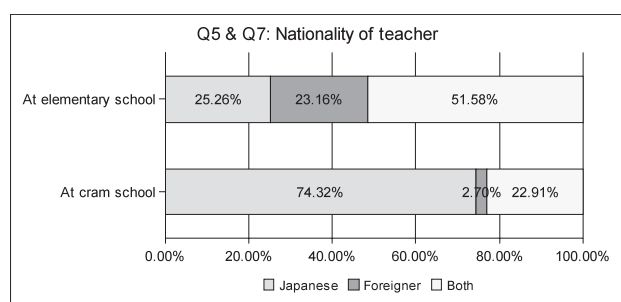
Graph 4

Graph 5, below, uses the information gained from Question 4 as to where students studied English. It can be observed that 39.22% of the participants (60 out of 153 responses) studied only at elementary school, 32.68% (50 out of 153) only at cram school, and 16.34% (25 out of 153) at more than one place.



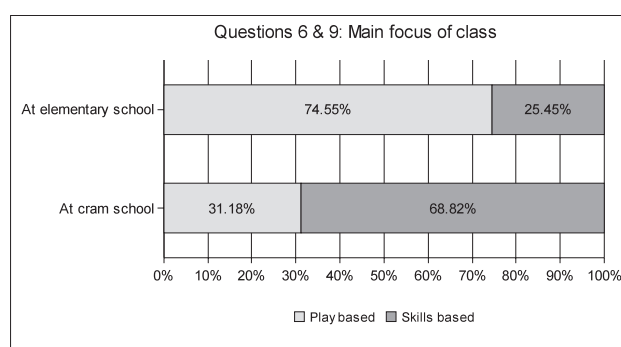
Graph 5

Questions 5 and 7 asked for the nationality of the participants' English teachers. Ignoring the participants to whom the question was not applicable as well as the non-responses (39.10% for Question 5 and 52.26% for Question 7), the results were calculated and are shown together in Graph 6. It can be seen that the teacher was usually a Japanese national in cram school whereas the presence of both a foreign and a Japanese teacher was more common at elementary school.



Graph 6

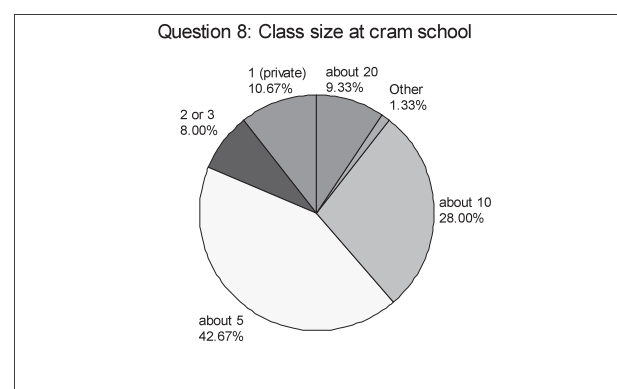
Questions 6 and 9 asked participants to recall the focus of their English classes. Question 6 was for students who studied English at elementary school, and question 9 was for those who studied at cram school. The results are shown in graph 7.



Graph 7

Question 6 received 110 responses. Question 9 received 93 responses. For Question 6, the 110 responses included several multiple answers. Looking at the results in terms of only two groupings, those of play-based versus skills-based, Graph 7 shows the difference in focus of classes between the two main locations where English was studied.

Question 8 asked students who studied at cram school about their class size, in terms of numbers of students. Of the 75 participants who studied at cram school, 75 valid responses were collected for this question. The majority (70.67%, or 53 out of 75 responses) replied that class sizes were about 5 to 10 students.



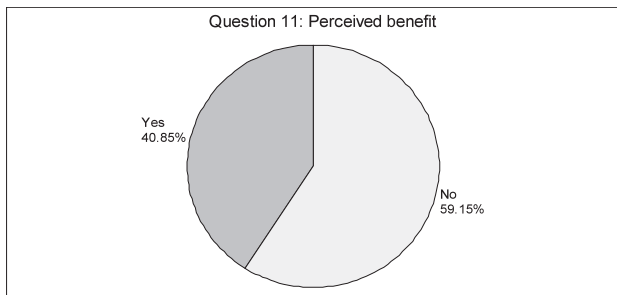
Graph 8

Question 10 was an open-ended question asking what kind of English education they had if it wasn't at elementary school or cram school. The answers were varied and the following are some examples of the education undertaken outside of the above:

- had lessons from a parent's friend
- correspondence learning material including CDs
- read English books
- a teacher (Japanese or foreign) came to the house to teach simple vocabulary
- international festivals held at their city/school gave an opportunity to meet foreigners (and come in contact with English)

Looking at these results seems to indicate to us that children had access to varied resources and opportunities to be exposed to English outside school.

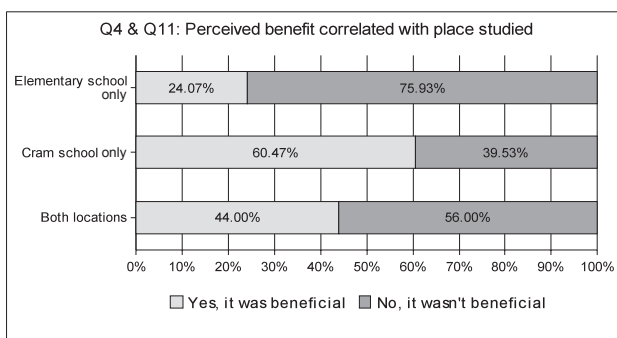
Question 11 asked students if they believe that the English education they received during their elementary school years helped with their English ability now. A majority (84 out of 142, or about 59.15%) of participants replied that they believed their English education during their elementary school years was not of any benefit. The results are shown in Graph 9.



Graph 9

Correlation analysis of perceived benefit with the place where students studied, and the focus of the classes, revealed some points of interest.

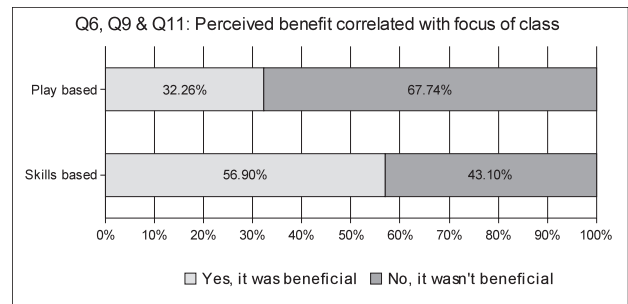
Graph 10 below shows that of the students who studied only at elementary school, about 24% (13 out of 54 participants) believed it was of benefit. Students who studied at cram school were much more likely to perceive their English education as beneficial (about 60%, or 26 out of 43 participants), and 44% of students who studied both at elementary school and at cram school (11 out of 25 participants) believed it was of benefit.



Graph 10

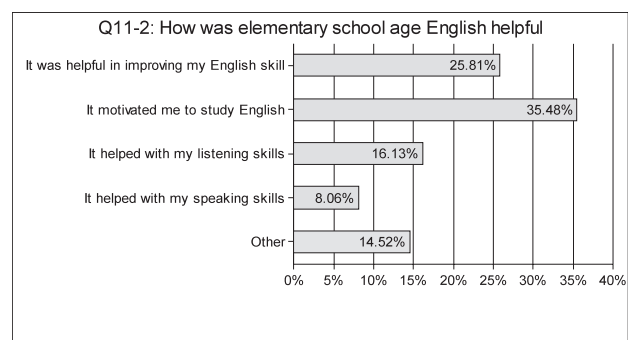
The perceived benefit was also correlated with the focus of the class. Any respondents that replied that they received both styles of education were removed from the correlation. Graph 11, below, shows that

about 57% of the students who received skills-based education (33 out of 58 participants) believed it was of benefit to their future English ability, and about 32% of the students who received play-based education (20 out of 62 participants), believed that it was of benefit. These results show that skills-based education gave students a stronger impression of benefit.



Graph 11

Question 11-2 was asked to students who answered Yes to Question 11, and asked them to classify how they thought the education they received during elementary school age was helpful. This question received 62 responses and the results are shown in Graph 12 below. It can be seen that the largest number (35.48%) were students who answered that the education they received improved their motivation, followed by those who indicated it was helpful in improving their English skill (25.81%).



Graph 12

Participants who replied "Other" wrote the following comments:

- It was good preparation for junior high school.
- Nothing changed at all.

- It was fun. I learned how to write the alphabet.
- I began to dislike English.
- I still remember the songs we sang.
- I could learn simple vocabulary.

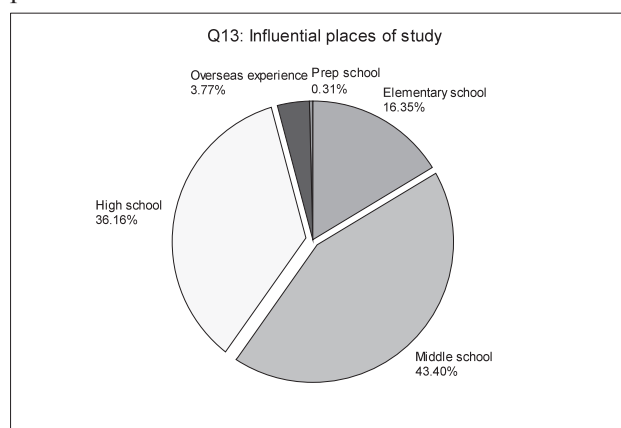
While Questions 2 to 11 were asked only to students who answered “Yes” to Question 1, the following questions, 12 and 13, were asked to all participants.

Question 12 asked students if they had lived abroad for over 6 months. Students who answered “Yes” were asked to expand on their answers with information about their age when they had such experience and about the name(s) of the foreign countries.

The students who answered that they had lived abroad for over 6 months numbered 5 out of 237 valid responses (2.11%). This was a very small proportion of the overall group and therefore it was not analyzed further. However, it does indicate that the number of students who have experience of education in a foreign country is very small, meaning that almost all students experience English education in Japan only.

Question 13 asked all participants for their opinion on the places where they studied English that influenced their English ability. Multiple responses were acceptable.

Graph 13 shows that the places that had the greatest effect on the participants’ English ability were middle school and high school. Elementary school took third place.



Graph 13

4.2. Correlation of Questionnaire Results with CTOEIC Scores

On entering the college, all students were required to take a TOEIC in order to place them in English classes appropriate to their level. These TOEIC scores were then correlated with data from the questionnaire to see if there were significant differences in the scores that could be explained by differences in English educational backgrounds during the participants' elementary school years.

4.2.1. Test 1: Questionnaire Question 1 (English Education during Elementary School Years) and TOEIC Scores

Of the 245 students who participated in the questionnaire and gave usable data, 231 had completed a TOEIC. Therefore, the following analysis was based on those 231 data sets.

Question 1 asked participants if they had English education of some kind during their years at elementary school. As mentioned earlier, 156 of the participants said they did have English education and of these 144 had TOEIC scores available. Out of 89 participants who said they didn't have any English education at that time, 87 had TOEIC scores available.

It was hypothesized that the average TOEIC score of the group of participants that did have English education of some kind, group ‘a’ (the Yes group), would be higher than the average TOEIC score of the group that didn't, group ‘b’ (the No group). According to the statistics of the two groups, the group that received some English education during their elementary school years had a mean TOEIC score of 299.27 and a standard deviation of 103.81, while the group that didn't have any English education had a mean of 266.32 and a standard deviation of 81.677.

As we expected the average of group 'a' to be higher than group 'b', we did a one-tailed test (right-tailed test). An analysis of the TOEIC scores for the two groups was carried out as below. The TOEIC scores are interval-ratio data that should be normally distributed, or have a sample size larger than 50¹⁷.

According to the results of an independent-sample z-test to compare the TOEIC scores for students who received English education of some kind and those

Table 2 The summary statistics for TOEIC scores of those who studied and those who didn't (Test 1)

Studied English during elementary school age	Mean TOEIC score	Standard deviation	Sample size
Yes	299.27	103.81	144
No	266.32	81.68	87
Test statistic: $z = 2.67672$; two-tailed p -value = 0.007435($p < 0.05$)			

Table 3 The summary statistics for TOEIC scores based on location studied (Test 2)

Location English was studied	Mean TOEIC score	Standard deviation	Sample size
Elementary school	282.23	96.61	56
Cram school	326.63	112.54	46
Test statistic: $t(100) = -2.14375$; two-tailed p -value = 0.03448($p < 0.05$)			

who did not receive English education of any kind during their elementary school years, there was a significant difference at the 95% confidence level in the TOEIC scores for students who did ($M=299.271$, $SD=103.81$) and those who didn't ($M=266.322$, $SD=81.68$), $z=2.68$, $p<.05$. In other words, students who received English education of some kind during their elementary school age were more likely to have higher TOEIC scores than students who didn't.

4.2.2. Test 2: Questionnaire Question 4 (Location of Study) and TOEIC scores

The questionnaire results for Question 4 provided information on where the participants studied English during their elementary school years. The data was grouped into two groups: those who studied only at elementary school (TOEIC average: 282.23, S.D.: 96.610) and those who studied only at cram school (TOEIC average: 326.63, S.D.: 112.54)

This test was carried out on the two groups using the same approach as in Test 1. The TOEIC scores were observed to be normally distributed and the variances were equal.

The results show an independent-samples t-test to compare the TOEIC scores for students who received English education at elementary school and students who received English education at cram school. There was a significant difference in the TOEIC scores

for students who studied only at elementary school ($M=282.232$, $SD=96.61$) and those who studied outside ($M=326.63$, $SD=112.537$), $t(100) = -2.14375$, $p<.05$. From this analysis, it can be said that education taken in cram school was more effective in terms of long term English education.

4.2.3. Test 3: Questionnaire Questions 6 and 9 (Focus of Classes) and TOEIC scores

The survey results for Questions 6 and 9 provided information on the focus of the classes that the participants had when studying English during their elementary school years, no matter what the location was. The data was grouped into two groups: play-based study (TOEIC average: 282.50, S.D.: 100.63) and skills-based study (TOEIC average: 314.33, S.D.: 102.24).

This test was performed because it was expected that we could identify the reason for the above. The results showed differences in TOEIC scores based on location. Elementary schools are known to use games and songs often to teach English, and cram schools often use a more academic approach in their instruction. The expectation was that the style of education could go some way to explain the difference in TOEIC scores for the two locations. However, for this data set we could not reject the hypothesis that posited no significant difference between the averages of the two

Table 4 The summary statistics for the TOEIC scores based on method of study (Test 3)

Method English was studied	Mean TOEIC score	Standard deviation	Sample size
Play-based	282.50	100.63	64
Skills-based	314.33	102.24	60
Test statistic: $t(122) = -1.7469$; two-tailed p -value = 0.08317 ($p < 0.1$)			

groups at the 95% confidence interval, as the p -value was 0.08317. We may only go as far as to say that there seemed to be an indication that students who received their English education at cram schools performed better in the TOEIC than those who received it at elementary school and that this requires further investigation with a different or larger data set to confirm it or otherwise.

5. Discussions and Findings

The results of the questionnaire gave us an overview of elementary schools' English education in Japan: 64% had some English education in elementary school when English was not a subject like math and science. This number is a reflection that English education was available only in some schools, but not all.

Among the Yes group students, 71% began English studies from grade 4 or older. This coincides with the starting grade that the Japanese government has decided on, which is grade 5. It might be an indication that upper grades are when Japan would agree to start English education in elementary school.

Regarding the teacher, both a foreign and a Japanese teacher were more common at elementary school while a Japanese national only was the norm in cram school. This tendency may be reflecting that local governments were following the national government's policy of using foreigners as assistant language teachers, or cram school teachers were confident teaching English by themselves.

In terms of the focus of the class, we can see that most of the students, 75%, had play-based English education at elementary schools. Cram schools were the opposite, mainly skills-based. This shows a general basic difference.

Correlating perceived benefit with location, the numbers indicate that 24% of those who had English education only in elementary school perceived their education was beneficial. In other words, most students who had English education only in elementary school did not think that education to be beneficial. However, the majority or 60% of those who had English education only in a cram school thought that it was beneficial.

Correlating perceived benefit with focus of class showed that play-based education resulted in students with a non-positive perception of that education, and may have been detrimental in some cases. However, skills-based education produced students with a mostly positive feeling toward it. These results correlated with the statistical analyses: 1. Students who learned at cram schools tended to have better perceived benefit than their peers; 2. Students who had skills-based education showed better perceived benefit; and 3. Students who had skills-based education appeared to score better in TOEIC.

As for the most beneficial place, junior high school and high school had the greatest effect on the participants' English ability. Elementary school took third place. These results are likely to be obtained since a solid education system had not been established in the participants' elementary school years or due to its play-based education style.

Regarding the current elementary school English curriculum in Japan, it has been comprised mostly of play-based education, occasionally with some skills added¹⁸. We may conclude that the current elementary school curriculum is not beneficial in terms of the students' perceptions towards education. Therefore, we may infer from this that the current English cur-

riculum in elementary school in Japan should have its methods and focus changed to a skills-based teaching style.

6. Limitations of This Research

There were some limitations for this research:

1. The data represents the population of a geographical area rather than populations of Japan.
2. There were possible inaccuracies in the participants' recollection about English classes that they attended more than six years in the past. To avoid this problem, we need a portfolio for each student all the way from the primary school level to the tertiary school level with objective evaluations provided.
3. Each cram school has its own style, so we cannot say that all the cram schools have a solid four skills program.
4. TOEIC given to the students did not evaluate their oral skills. At the same time, we have observed that those scores do tend to show their oral communicative abilities in speaking classes.

7. Conclusion

The main objective of this research was the evaluation of English education during the elementary school age and how it would affect the product at tertiary level. This research also aimed to investigate more effective teaching principles in English education in Japanese elementary schools, where people need to move away from emotions and beliefs and instead focus on the results of the research into such education to establish an efficient and effective system. At the same time, it aimed to show the value of implementing skills-based education in the elementary school.

To grasp the reality of English education at elementary school (ages 6 to 12) from the point of view of the ability students have reached upon entering tertiary education, a questionnaire was conducted using junior college students in the authors' work place, and the results were compared with their TOEIC scores.

The results showed the following:

1. More than half of the students had some English education during their elementary school years, which coincided with the Japanese national movement regarding English education.
2. Elementary schools' English education tended to be more play-based while that of cram schools tended to be more skills-based.
3. Students who learned at cram schools tended to perceive the benefit of their English education during their elementary school years to be better.
4. The students who had skills-based English education during their elementary school years tended to score better in TOEIC than those who had play-based education.

The results of our research support the authors' claim regarding the benefit of implementing skills-based education beginning at elementary school. Skills-based education could incorporate a grammar based syllabus, which in the past was believed not to be effective in producing students capable of English communication. However, the change to a communicative style resulted in students scoring worse in the TOEIC test than those who were taught based on the previous grammar based style¹⁹. The skills-based education we advocate includes elements of the previous grammar syllabus but teaches a balance of four skills.

Based on the results of this research, we could conclude that skills-based education should be incorporated in the public education because it is more effective than communication oriented (play-based) education, which we have shown using tests. In addition to the test scores, students' perceived benefit of the education they received was better for those who had skills-based education.

The research had limitations due to not having a large number of students at our junior college in north-west Japan, and also the questionnaire was based on the students' recollection of their experiences. Based on this research, follow-up research with more objectivity will be done in the future. Our future research

will also investigate the necessity of creating a continuing educational system from the primary level all the way to the tertiary level including communication between levels. This will include researching the secondary level of Japanese school English education.

<注>

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- 2 MEXT 2008
- 3 Butler 2005: 92
- 4 Richards & Schmidt 2002: 231
- 5 Butler 2005: 28
- 6 Richards & Schmidt 2002: 90
- 7 Butler 2005: 19
- 8 Richards & Schmidt 2002: 90-91
- 9 Yoneda, et al. 2006; Yoneda & Lynch 2007
- 10 Butler 2005: 33, 99
- 11 Higuchi 1999: 127
- 12 Higuchi 1999: 15; Kanazawa Board of Education 2004
- 13 Kanazawa Board of Education 2004
- 14 Butler 2005: 15
- 15 MEXT 2001; Butler 2005 : 25-31
- 16 Higuchi 1999:14-15
- 17 Frankfort-Nachmias 2006 : 405
- 18 Butler 2005: 30-33
- 19 Butler 2005: 19

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Appendix

Questionnaire (bilingual)

小学校英語についてのアンケート調査のお願い

Questionnaire Regarding English Education at the Elementary School Level

このたび米田・リンチ・ウッズの研究で、中学校入学以前の英語教育に関する研究を行うことにしました。そこで、以下のアンケートにお答えいただけますようお願いいたします。プライバシーに係るデータを無断で使用する一切ありません。

Yoneda, Lynch and Woods are doing research about the English education before junior high school. We appreciate your replies to the following questions. We won't disclose your personal information without your permission.

直接アンケート用紙の記号に○で囲み、必要なところは言葉で記入してください。

Please circle the closest choice(s) or write your comments/opinions where necessary.

学科名(Dept.) _____ 学年(Year) _____ 出席番号(Student Number) _____ 氏名(name) _____

1.あなたは小学校で何らかの英語教育を受けましたか。

Did you have any English education during your time in elementary school?

a. はい b. いいえ

a Yes b No

「a. はい」と回答した人は以下の質問に答えてください。「b. いいえ」と回答した人は12番以下の質問に答えてください。

If you answered [a. Yes] to the above, please continue to question 2. If you answered [b. No], then please go to question 12.

2.それは何歳から受けはじめましたか。

When did you start learning English?

*継続せず数年でやめ、またははじめた場合は、再開した年齢をその回数だけマークしてください。 If you stopped sometime during the six years and started again, please circle all the grades in which you studied English.

a. 小学校1年生 b. 小学校2年生 c. 小学校3年生

d. 小学校4年生 e. 小学校5年生 f. 小学校6年生

Elementary school: a. 1st grade b. 2nd grade c. 3rd grade

d. 4th grade e. 5th grade f. 6th grade

3.中学校入学前に何年間英語の学習をしましたか。

How long did you study English before junior high school?

*継続せず数年でやめ、またははじめた場合は、合計の年数を1つだけマークしてください。

If you stopped sometime during the six years and started again, please mark the total length of time you had lessons.

a. 1年間 b. 2年間 c. 3年間 d. 4年間 e. 5年間 f. 6年間 g. 7年間 h. 8年間

i. 9年間 j. 10年以上

a. 1 year b. 2 years c. 3 years d. 4 years e. 5 years f. 6 years g. 7 years h. 8 years

i. 9 years j. 10 years or more

4.どのような形態の教育を受けましたか。

What was your education like?

*継続せず数年でやめ、またははじめた場合、もしくは複数の教育を受けていた場合は、当てはまるものの全てにマークしてください。

If you stopped sometime during the six years and started again, or if you had multiple types of education, mark all the choices that fit your case.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| a. 小学校で平均週 1 時間 | b. 小学校で平均週 2 時間 | c. 小学校で平均週 3 時間 |
| d. 塾で平均週 1 時間 | e. 塾で週 2 時間 | f. 塾で週 3 時間 |
| | | g. その他 |
| a. Elementary school, ~1 hour/week | b. Elementary school, ~2 hours/week | |
| c. Elementary school, ~3 hours/week | d. Cram school, ~1 hour/week | |
| e. Cram school, ~2 hours/week | f. Cram school, ~3 hours/week | g. Other |

上記 4 番で a~c と回答した人は 5 と 6 の質問に答えてください。d~f の人は 7~9 番の質問に答えてください。g と答えた人は 10 番の質問に答えてください。

If you chose answers a., b. or c. for question 4, please answer Questions 5 and 6.

If you answered d., e. or f., please answer Questions 7~9.

If you answered g., please answer Question 10.

5.小学校では誰が教えましたか。

Describe your elementary school English teacher(s).

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------|
| a. 日本人教師 | b. 外国人教師 | この場合、どこの国の人でしたか () |
| c. 日本人教師と外国人教師 | この場合、どこの国の人でしたか | () |
| a. Japanese | b. Foreigner (please write their nationality) | () |
| c. Japanese and foreigner (please write the foreigner's nationality) | | () |

6.小学校での英語教育はどのような活動が中心でしたか。1つだけマークをつけてください。

What was the main focus of English education at elementary school? Mark one answer only.

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| a. 歌やゲーム | b. 読むこと | c. 話すこと | d. 聞くこと |
| e. 書くこと | f. 読むことと書くこと | g. 聞くことと話すこと | |
| h. 聞くこと、話すこと、読むこと、書くこと | | | |
| i. その他 () | | | |
| a. Songs and games | b. Reading | c. Speaking | d. Listening |
| e. Writing | f. Reading and writing | g. Listening and speaking | |
| h. Listening, speaking, reading and writing | i. Other () | | |

上記 4 番で d~f と回答した人は 7~9 の質問に答えてください。

If you answered d., e. or f. to question 4, please answer Questions 7~9.

7.塾では誰が教えましたか。1つだけマークをつけてください。

Please describe your teacher in cram school. Mark one answer only.

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------|
| a. 日本人教師 | b. 外国人教師 | この場合、どこの国の人でしたか () |
| c. 日本人教師と外国人教師 | この場合、どこの国の人でしたか | () |
| a. Japanese | b. Foreigner (please write their nationality) | () |
| c. Japanese and foreigner (please write the foreigner's nationality) | | () |

8.塾ではどれ位の人数で学習しましたか。1つだけマークをつけてください。

How many students were in your class in cram school? Mark one answer only.

- | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| a. 20人程度 | b. 10人程度 | c. 5人程度 | d. 2、3人 | e. 1人 |
| f. その他 () | | | | |
| a. About 20 | b. About 10 | c. About 5 | d. 2 or 3 | e. 1 |
| f. Other () | | | | |

9.塾ではどのような活動が中心でしたか。1つだけマークをつけてください。

What was the main focus of English education at cram school? Mark one answer only.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| a. 歌やゲーム | b. 読むこと | c. 話すこと | d. 聞くこと |
| e. 書くこと | f. 読むことと書くこと | g. 聞くことと話すこと | |
| h. その他 () | | | |
| a. Songs and games | b. Reading | c. Speaking | d. Listening |
| f. Reading and writing | g. Listening and speaking | e. Writing | |
| h. Other () | | | |

4番でg. と回答した人は次の質問に答えてください。

If you answered g. to Question 4, please answer Question 10.

10. それはどのような教育でしたか。

Please describe the education you received.

()

11.小学校時代に受けた英語教育（海外滞在経験も含む）は今のあなたの英語力に役に立っていますか。
In your opinion, has the English education you received at Elementary school (including living and attending school abroad) had a positive effect on your current your English ability?

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| a. はい | b. いいえ |
| a. Yes | b. No |

11-2. 「a はい」 と回答した人は以下の質問に答えてください。

If you answered “a. Yes,” please expand by answer the following.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. 英語力向上に役立った。 | b. 英語を勉強する動機になった（英語が好きである）。 |
| c. 聞くことに抵抗が少なくなった。 | d. 話すことに抵抗が少なくなった。 |
| e. その他 () | |
| a. It has increased my general English ability. | |
| b. It gave me an incentive to study English (I came to like English). | |
| c. It reduced my resistance to listening. | d. It reduced my resistance to speaking. |
| e. Other () | |

全員の方にお聞きします。

The following questions are to all participants

12. 海外滞在経験(6ヶ月以上)はありますか。

Have you lived in a foreign country for more than 6 months?

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| a. はい | b. いいえ |
| a. Yes | b. No |

12-2. 「a はい」 と回答した人は以下の質問に答えてください。

If you answered a. Yes, please expand by answer the following.

あなたが何歳のときから何歳のときまでの経験ですか。

How old were you when you arrived in and left the foreign country?

()

滞在国はどこですか。(複数あればすべて書いてください)

What foreign country did you live in? (In the case of multiple countries, please write them all).

()

13. 小学校・中学校・高校・予備校・海外経験時代 での英語教育で今の自分の英語に影響を与えていると思うものすべてにマークをしてください。

Which of the following times in your life had the greatest affect on your current English level, in your opinion? (You may choose multiple answers).

a. 小学校時代 b. 中学校時代 c. 高校時代 d. 予備校時代 e. 海外経験時代

- a. When you were of elementary school age
b. When you were of junior high school age
c. When you were of high school age
d. When you attending college preparation school
e. When you were living abroad

小学校英語教育について考えていることがあれば自由に書いてください。

If you have an opinion regarding English education at elementary school that you would like to express, please write it here.

ご協力ありがとうございました。

Thank you for your cooperation.