An Interim Report on Teaching English in Primary Schools
For the Advancement of Initial English Education
With International Standard

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Under the revised National Curriculum Standards, periods for integrated study was instituted in 2002 school year. As one aspect of this scheme, The Ministry of Education and Science eagerly takes an initiative of introducing Communicative English Conversation class into public primary schools nationwide. Recent newspaper reports that about 80% of all schools already started this kind of class.

Present author was assigned to a part-time teacher by a municipal Educational Board in Koya-cho in Wakayama Prefecture to teach English in five public primary schools in the area.

The following is an interim report based on the author’s three-year experience. It consists of three parts. The first part is the present author’s opinion on what the initial English education in primary schools should be. In the author’s opinion, establishment of foreign language sounds serves the foundation for whole language faculties and it can be achieved through intentional and intensive listening and mimicking process. English native teachers’ classes could often end up in merely cheerful passing memory among students that is seldom effective to the fundamental cause of sound making. Present author adopted phonics method arranged for non-English natives for sound making.

The second part is a practical report from an educational site.

The present author was astounded when he heard that the junior high’s English curriculum does not include the teaching of International Phonetic Symbols and rules of accents, the lack of which leads to a common practice among students of writing Katakana under English words to read. It means studying English with the Japanese phonemic system. In current system, the vocabulary students accumulate does not serve for actual conversation, whereas listening and conversation are heavily emphasized by educational authorities these days.

The last part is a present author’s urgent proposal for progress of initial English education in Japan.