

**What do you identify as the major reasons for Japanese students achieving low levels of English communicative ability?**

I believe that the major reason is that students spend the majority of their English class time learning about grammar or translating from English text to Japanese text. This creates a twofold problem: 1) students are continuously pushed to learn new grammar points, which gives them little time to practice using the ones they already know, and 2) students spend most of their time taking in English input and putting out Japanese output, rather than practicing English output.

**What solutions have you seen attempted or attempted yourself to fix this problem? (Don't worry if you haven't seen any attempts or had opportunities yourself)**

**Why do you think these attempts were effective/ineffective?**

In classes at our school, we have attempted to create regular English speaking activities at the beginning of class which are designed to be very quick. For example, in our JHS 3rd-grade class, we have started a pair activity in which one student tries to speak as much as possible for one minute about a topic, while their partner counts how many words they have spoken. Students grow very comfortable with these types of activities over time. They are able to speak more and more during this activity as they get used to it, as they do it every single English class (four times a week). I think their comfort level increases because they are given time to get used to the activity over several weeks. However, I have not noticed this improving their overall communicative ability.

**Do you have any ideas about potential initiatives that could help resolve this problem?**

**What problems do you foresee being encountered if your suggestion were attempted?**

I think that more time speaking and more variety in speaking activities is needed in order to overcome barriers to effective communication. In a few minutes per week, students have very little chance to grow comfortable speaking English. Improvement requires time, and I believe this time can be taken away from grammar study. I think that basic grammar structures should be used more in speaking activities before students must move on to more advanced structures. If a student cannot speak using simple sentences, there is no reason to ask them to learn much more advanced structures before they are ready. If a student cannot speak simple sentences, asking them to read and translate more complex structures seems groundless.