

The Influence of English Language Education in South Korea

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Abstract

In this paper, the English language education in East Asia, especially South Korea and Japan is described. We Japanese must learn from the strong sense of awareness and commitment of our neighboring countries toward English language education, copy the positive aspects of their attitude, and then create a system of our own.

Keywords

English language Education, TOEIC, Japan, Korea, China, East-Asia, management, political relationships, economic conditions

Introduction

For many years now, great emphasis has been placed on English language education in China, South Korea, and Japan. The results differ depending on the economic conditions and the interest level for overall education in each country. In the cases of China and South Korea, English learning and the employment rate are closely linked. Particularly in China, since the salaries of management personnel at foreign-owned corporations can be approximately ten times those for state-owned corporations, working at a foreign-capital company is a shortcut to securing a stable future. In other words, the Chinese and South Koreans are more motivated to learn English than the Japanese due to greater salary disparities. In Japan, by contrast, the reason for people to study English is almost solely to pass school entrance exams. It is accepted that language learning is not something one is forced to do, and because it requires an enormous amount of rote memorization, the general notion is that only those who with a strong sense of purpose and passion will start early in acquiring English.

1 Present condition in China

In China, English education normally starts in the third grade of elementary school and continues for ten years until the third year of high school; primary, secondary and higher education of English learning is conducted in an integrated manner. However, as a result of granting the right to organize their own curricula to local educational administrative agencies and schools in the 1990s, there exist curricula that local administrations have organized as well as that which local schools have designed. Elementary schools in Beijing and Shanghai, where English education is actively promoted, have spent longer class hours than the Chinese government had prescribed and also set higher goals than the attainment target stipulated by the government. For instance, at one Beijing school that is very English-education-oriented, students begin English education in the first grade, and will learn 1,600 English words by the time of their graduation.

2 Present condition in Korea

In South Korea, a country sometimes dubbed the "TOEIC Kingdom," it is said that the average command of English is a TOEIC score between 700 and 800, and 60% of elementary school students between the third and sixth grades commute to English cram schools. Since 2010, English classes have been conducted in English in all high schools. Since 80% of the GNP of South Korea is dependent on foreign trade, job applicants are automatically eliminated if they don't have the required TOEIC score. In addition, as reflected by the fact that South Korea's college enrollment rate is 82%, every family makes an enormous investment in education.

3 The future prospects

Perhaps we Japanese must learn from the strong sense of awareness and commitment of our neighboring countries toward English language education, copy the positive aspects of their attitude, and then create a system of our own. If we can utilize the English language as fluently as the native language in each country of Japan, China and South Korea, political relationships between the three will also progress in a better direction.

4 References and appendices

References

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