

Will your children and grandchildren be able to find jobs without having English speaking skills?

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Introduction

I am seriously thinking that 'English should be the second official language in Japan. Writing this, you may think that I am a fluent English speaker just like someone who has returned from overseas, or who has a native English speaking parent.

I am not one of those. I am a mother who has a serious concern that Japanese have to have much better English communication in the future; otherwise it will be impossible to survive in this global world.

I have felt like this since I had 3 children in 2008, 2010 and 2012.

I graduated from a university in Sapporo and worked as a TV announcer for a few years and then, set up a NPO (non-profit Organization).

One of my works 'Ohitorisama-kai(Singles)' has been introduced at NHK news for several times.

I did not need to use English in my work or bringing up children, but I was very concern about English education for my children.

The truth is, 'There are more companies who are not to employing young people without English skill, but we can never bring up our children like native English speaker.'

I thought of all sort of way to make our children speak English, but I could not find out the best way.

That is until February 2014, when I was using the internet, there was an advertisement that caught my eye:

'Children and parents studying English together in Cebu Island.'

The program was about children studying English with their mother on Cebu Island for a few days or a few weeks. It was much cheaper than studying English in America, Australia or Europe, and because the island is close to Japan, some families kept repeating the experience.

But embarrassingly, when I was reading this advertisement, my knowledge was like,

'Umm... Cebu Island is in the Philippines? It is famous resort island'

'Why is English there? Is English the official language in the Philippines?'

Anyway, I thought this advertisement was unique, but I was sure that I would never apply. At that time, our children were 5, 3 and 1. I thought it would be too expensive to study English overseas, and my husband was too busy at work to help me. And it would be impossible for me to take the children by myself.

No, the biggest problem was me believing that small children cannot learn English in a few days or even in a few weeks of overseas study.

Then I thought children who study overseas can realize that there are other countries, and that there are new things to see and hear. There is also different food to taste and the opportunity to talk to people who do not speak Japanese. They may learn new English words.

Compare to travel to see the world, the children do not have to travel far and to be in a local overseas school and they will experience some enjoyable differences.

But, it would be useless to join the program thinking that their English is going to be improving in a short time. Of course, it would be different for a rich family who has plenty of time on their hands to understand and experience others!

Before all that I was chosen as a Government sponsored exchange student at age 20 and studied at an American university for 1 year, but I only learned everyday English conversation and my English disappeared after I came back to Japan.

However, I could not stop thinking of this advertisement and constantly imagined studying at Cebu with my 3 children.

How about migrating to Cebu? If there is no Japanese environment, and if they have non-Japanese friends, and they are going to a school taught by English, then a few years later, our children will have mastered language.

So, three months later, my husband and I, our 3 children were on a plane to Cebu Island.

My children names (fictitious) and the age when we migrated:

Eldest son Taro (5) born October 2008

Second son Jiro (3) born August 2010

Eldest daughter Hana (1) born October 2012

1peso= 2.5yen

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Chapter 1. A society where English will be necessary to keep your job.

The cost of welfare will be the biggest burden on the people of Japan.

Most of my friends are also concerned about English education for their children, but when I was thinking of this subject, I was worried for 24hours a day, 365days a year. It seemed to me I was the only one who was really worried.

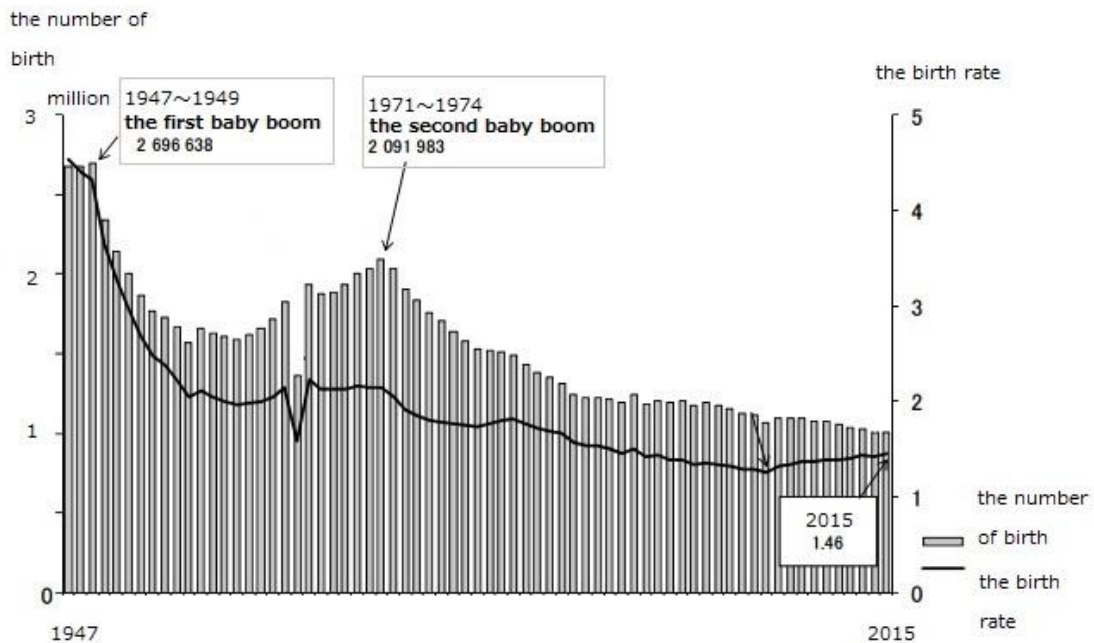
I felt like asking people walking on the street with small children, ‘What do you think about our children’s English education?’ ‘What should we do?’

Even if I met parents who were thinking of English education, they were only concerned about their children to get good scores at school.

I dreamed of having a big family since I was small, but I did not have the opportunity for a while, and finally I got married when I was 34.

I had Taro at 36 and Hana was born when I was 40. Because of such a big difference in age, I may not be able to watch over my children’s lives for as long as I wanted so I thought it is my duty and dearest wish to make them financially independent as early as possible.

Japanese birth number and birth rate
<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/jinkou/geppo/nengai15/dl/kekka.pdf>



The birth rate is becoming lower and the population is decreasing. The first baby boomers were born from 1947 to 1949. The reason of this baby boom is that the war finished in 1945, and many couples who could not marry because of the war, then got married and had babies. And then, those baby boomers brought a second boom from 1971 to 1974 when they themselves subsequently had babies. The number of children in a family has changed from 4.54 to 2.16, there were so many women having children, the number of birth was still high. After the baby boom, the birthrate fell off. Because of that, contrary to what you might think 'demographic bonus' happened. The 'demographic bonus' meant that while the number of babies were less, but more people entered the work force so the ratio of workers to children and elderly people was actually greater, which contributed to economic growth. For the Government social welfare expenses, education expenses, medical benefits and old age pensions were less, but on the other hand, there was more tax income, so the government could use the budget for infrastructure improvements and for special tax measures. As a result, the international competitiveness of industry increased and domestic demand was boosted.

After the 1960's in Japan, because of demographic bonus, the economy was expanding. People bought things and the value of houses and lands were much higher. Males become the mainstay of the family and supported their wives and children with only one income.

Time have changed from when the baby boomers were children, more money has been spent for each child and there are more high schools to choose from, universities, cramming schools and correspondence courses. In those days, Japanese companies were well off even if they only targeted domestic consumption. Most employees could not speak English, but many of them were paid more than 10 million yen per annum and were employed for life, and pay rises were guaranteed as well. Almost everyone had a family and could build a house with a loan.

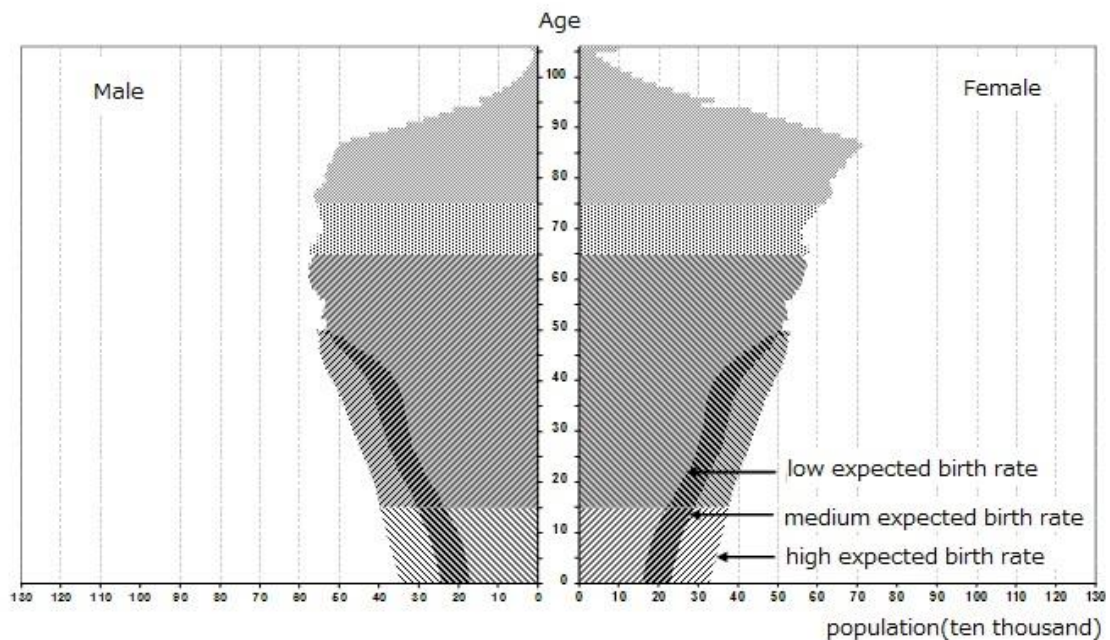
But it is different now. The Japanese birth rate is declining dramatically. When the baby boomer juniors were having their children, 'the third baby boom' did not happen. When you look at the graph, there are no big changes and it generally continues to be flat until now.

The reason for there not being a 'third boom' is easy to see. I am a baby boomer junior myself (born 1972) and had a baby in 2008. The published age of women having their first child in 2008 was 29.5 years but when I had my first baby, I felt most mothers were much younger like around 20 or over 36, like me. Many women are having children at a

wide age bracket due to advisements in health care, and women are thus able to choose different lifestyle as a result. Because of this trend, there are no big changes in the graph.

But this lack of change in birth numbers does not continue. There are fewer women who can be pregnant. The 2060's population pyramid is already estimated and is skewed towards the older age bracket. And am I the only person that sees this like Munch's 'Scream'? In 2060, when our children reach the 40's and 50's, I am concerned that they would be squeezed by so many old people.

The 2060's population pyramid in Japan
http://www.ipss.go.jp/syoushika/tohkei/newest04/z1_5.html



Generally speaking, the birth rate decrease is because of economic development. When education fees are up and parents have to save money to maintain their present living standard, then this declining birth rate trend will continue. As a result, the ratio of aged people to younger people is higher and in 2050, those over 65years old who are not working will be 40% of population. There are no other countries where the population is ageing as rapidly and also it is the first time for Japan to experience this trend. We have to support Japanese infrastructure and social security with a smaller number of working people. As well young people who were born 'Between 1970 to 1982' are called the lost generation. When they graduated from university, there was an employment ice age and many of them had to work as temporary workers. In the future, they may not

get enough age pensions for them to live well. People from this generation who did not or could not join a national Medicare or aged pension system, or who remained unmarried or had no children will have no one to support them. Imagining this is exactly Munch's 'Scream' for me.

The domestic market is shrinking

Can things be sold with fewer young people in Japan? The government had a policy that encouraged people to buy the houses or cars by 'allowing tax for a housing loan' or 'by having less tax on eco cars'. It seems strange that government is helping people to buy certain products, but actually this big purchase brings about an economic gain for the country. I heard that eco-car matters are not only to aid the environment but for its economic effect as well. For example, when a house is sold, home building companies, sub contract builders, furniture shops and insurance companies can make money. And these companies can pay more to their workers, so they in turn can afford to do a more shopping or spend more on their children's education. This will improve the economy. In economics, this is called the multiplier effect.

However, there are fewer people buying houses. Elderly people renovate houses but compared to the effects when baby boomers built houses, the multiplier effect is much reduced. Now the birthrate is only 1.42 (2014). If they inherit a house from each parents, one of these houses become unnecessary.

Living in an apartment is more convenient for single people, or for working couples with lower incomes. Therefore, fewer homes will be built in the future.

There are more things happening that will make this tendency stronger. In 2014, the average life expectancy for women was 86, the largest in the world for 3 consecutive years, and 80 for men. Both of these numbers were the largest in history. When parents die over the age of 80, children who are over 60 years old will inherit their property. Those children will hardly build a new house with the inherited money and most likely they will keep the money for eldercare services or medical cost needed in their future. The money would not go to improving domestic spending.

Kosuke Motani wrote in his book 'The Truth of Deflation', '(Because of the larger number of people working after the war) The productivity improved along with the demand for goods like cars, houses and electrical goods and along with the larger number of people in the working age. This led to a booming economy and also made production higher than necessary. But with the declining birth rate combined with

rapidly ageing population, the sale of such goods has fallen more than it should have.’ (* is postscript by writer)

The industries which target the elderly will almost only be successful in the future. Even if modern children have dreams and want to have all sorts of jobs, there will be not many choices in Japan. Jobs like ‘Caring for the elderly’ will be in demand but this is hard work with low pay that make it hard for earn a good living.

My second main point is that after a couple of years, the next generation after the baby boomers will not have babies because of their age and when baby boomers die, this will start a serious decline in Japan’s population. With this population, decrease the domestic market will be much smaller. Because there are not many people who can use English, it will not easy to increase the production of goods for the overseas market. I feel so terrified when I think about how the children of this generation will be able to make a living and I feel even worse for the generation after that.

English is the business language of the world, and more.

Enterprises strongly require English skill in their employees. Because there is less profit manufacturing domestically, enterprises are moving the production base in overseas. Now when the domestic market is shrinking, the overseas market will become even more attractive. The period when only handful of business operates overseas has ceased.

A stakeholder means a person who has an interest both direct and indirect in an enterprise. Japanese companies have to deal with business owners, shareholders, workers, financial institution, creditors, trade partners, rival companies, clients and local residents, and many of these stakeholders do not understand Japanese. If there are very important non-Japanese stakeholders, the company has to communicate in English. If there are only Chinese people, they can use Chinese, but in most cases, they have to deal with different nationalities and have to use the universal language which is English. However, it is impossible for Japanese to use good English when they only speak their own language every day.

In 2010, Rakuten’s chairman and president Hiroshi Mikitani announced a policy that English would be the official language of the company and he mentioned in one of his books ‘Just English’, ‘Probably 5 years or 10 years later, we will definitely think that it was a good decision about English. To make business as domestic only, or deal with the world, the result will be completely different’. Rakuten has to face strong players (* like

Google or Amazon). The timing for Rakuten to get into the overseas market was rather too late. (* is postscript by writer)

The First Retailing Company's UNIQLO also announced it was making English as the official language in 2010. The chairman and president Tadashi Yanai said 'Japan is no longer suitable for business. This could be an extreme opinion, but the domestic market is certainly smaller with fewer business opportunities. I meant this as a fact and I do not think there would be any field that you can only use Japanese. This is especially true for young people. They cannot survive if they cannot communicate in English. English becomes a minimum skill for business. In the near future, you will not be employed by anybody if you do not speak English.' ('PRESIDENT' January 17, 2011 issue)

Globalization is not going to stop. Even if you choose to work in a company which does not use English as the official language, we will not know when the company will change to English.

In 1999 when Nissan was in trouble, they had a capital tie up with Renault.S.A.S., in France and the Renault sent Carlos Ghosn as CEO and he helped Nissan's recovery. Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Limited., Kyoto University also decided to advertise for their top workers not only domestically but for all over the world. Softbank is going to give an incentive to workers who scored high in the TOEIC test to increase its global human resources. If a workers score over 900 out of 990, they will have 1million yen bonus and if the score is over 800, they get 3 hundred thousand yen.

I am talking about only big companies, but even if our children choose to work in smaller companies or start their own business, English will be necessary.

Whatever work they choose, their life choices will be greater if they have the necessary skill for the work and can speak English like a native speaker. They can also choose to work anywhere in the world. They can work either in Japan or overseas. Traveling between Japan and other countries, they will learn the good from each country and spread the news. They will be able to get an important position anywhere using both Japanese and English.

Diversity makes it easier to bring about social change and introduce new technology and thinking. It will be highly possible to find a job worth doing which helps innovation by inspiring others.

This generation of Japanese have to learn useable English. Even if they have high scores in Japanese tests, employers may see them as only useful in Japan's domestic market and so their opportunities will be severely limited.

When I say like this you may think, even if our children speak English, they may not succeed. There are many young people losing jobs these days in America, England or Australia even when they are native English speaker. Of course, I am not trying to say that all is fine if you can speak English.

Now in advanced countries, white collar work is not as plentiful as before, and the pay is lower. On the other hand, white collar work will be increasing in developing countries. There are several reasons for this. Because of IT, people can work without being in an office and also young people from East Asian countries who can speak fluent English and work with low pay. Even professional occupations that are revered in advanced countries are less, as consumers are collecting basic knowledge through the internet. Medical matters are no exception and as there are online programs in which you answer questions like 'Is this cough dry or wet?' and so on, then you can get a preliminary diagnosis.

Daniel H. Pink said in his book 'A whole new mind', that all sorts of white collars work, computer programmers, editors, lawyers who do judicial precedents, radiologists who reads a CAT scan, business accountants, financial analysts, or designers are moving to other countries. We can now communicate with the other side of the earth with almost zero cost, and now that developing countries keep producing more educated workers, the labor environment for North America, Europe and Japan will change even more. If there is less meaning of what is a national border, only workers who have the quality for cooperating and understanding from other countries are needed. At least English will be needed.

This is not only about works. It will affect life too, if you understand only Japanese.

The circulation of newspapers has become smaller in Japan. From 53,710,000 in 2000 to 44,250,000 in 2015. During this period, Japanese households changed. The percentage of single living household was over 30% in 2010. The times are changing from when a big family had a newspaper and was read by all members in the house to families with smaller numbers. For newspaper companies, this should be a chance to sell more copies.

But less people read newspapers. Because of the internet, more of them can get free information and they do not have to buy newspapers. Also, companies prefer to have cheaper advertising on the internet and charge more for newspapers. The financial situation for newspaper companies is getting worse.

Because of the fewer numbers of workings, these newspaper companies are having difficulty finding high quality workers. There are many national and local papers still,

but it is unavoidable that many of them will publish less quality papers, or even disappear in the future. I can say the same about TV.

There are more examples that may affect life if you only understand Japanese. We can buy many English books which are translated into Japanese. When you watch English films, you can read subtitles in Japanese or dubbing into Japanese. But fewer working people will buy this stuff in the future. I strongly think this type of material will not be produced in the future.

For example, publishing books is costly. Publishers have to have a strict calculation of profit and decide if it is worth publishing. Let me say the population for those between 20 and 59 years old is 1000. Say, for example, there is a book with 40% interest and 10 % would buy the book. You can expect to have a profit of $1000 \times 40\% \times 10\% = 40$ books. But this targeted population is decreasing. The birth rate of 1.42 means 2 young people is being replaced by 1.42 people. People from the next generation = 71%. This is a little extreme, but assuming non full time worker do not spend much money on collecting information, the ratio of non-fulltime worker to all is 36.7%. Given this, the worst case scenario for publishers, with this declining population and fewer people reading is the publication of 18 books.

This calculation is mixed with current and future numerical values, but I am sure that this is the recent trend and then even some books which had potential to be published, would not be published in the future. With a lower budget, English films can be shown without sound dubbing or even subtitles. It is no exaggeration to say that for Japanese who do not understand English, it will be impossible to read English books or watch English films. In some developing countries, people enjoy English books or English films in English as you cannot always expect these to be translated, or subtitled into their language.

Even with the internet, the future is not bright if you try to gather or generate information only in Japanese. Japanese ranks 6th in the language people use with computers. This ranking is only because of the large 'Japanese population', but this percentage will be smaller as the Japanese population decreases after 2008. (On the other hand, world population is increasing).

Indeed, when you put a word 'Computer' in Katakana in the Japanese language and search with Google, you will get 30 million results but, if you do so in English, you will find 2.4 billion results. It is 80 times more. When you try to put the words 'Japan' in Japanese as 'Nippon', and in English 'Japan', the number of results are 1.5 billion to 22 billion. So you can get much more information in English.

The number of Chinese native speakers is much bigger than the number of English native speakers. But English is regarded as the common world language and used by huge number of people and the English speaking population spreads over all 5 continents. If the people in the world want to get various and plentiful information, have wider networking in an effective way, gather information or generate them using English will be unavoidable.

I would like tell you 2 sad examples.

One is about music. There are no worldwide famous popular musicians in Japan, like the Beatles or Michel Jackson. There are no wonderful Japanese songs which international people sing over a period, and am I the only one thinking the reason for this is because of 'language'?

You may hear the famous Japanese song, 'Itoshi no Ellie' by Southern All Stars overseas, but when you listen carefully, it is not 'Itoshi no Ellie', it is 'Ellie my love' translated into English and sung by Ray Charles. Most foreigners do not know this song is a Japanese origin, made by a Japanese artist. I feel sorry about it.

There are many talented singer and songwriters in Japan, but unless they make a wonderful song in English and can communicate with fans and media to promote sales in English, they will not succeed as a global musician.

Another example is about the internet business. Most successful internet business as Google, Yahoo, YouTube, Amazon, Facebook, Dropbox and others started in overseas. It is not easy to find popular and world famous internet businesses which started in Japan.

One of the reasons for this is most of the overseas system engineers target big marketed English users. If they have success, they can get a huge number of internet users and be a monopoly for a time. And also, IT programs are in English and international system engineers research and develop more easily in English.

On the other hand, the English barrier is wondered in 'Japanese Manga'. The word Manga is in the English dictionary. Animations from Studio Ghibli and manga like 'Doraemon' 'One-piece' are famous in the world. With Manga, it is easy to be the world market by only changing the character voices to English native speaker. I have mentioned that dabbling English films into Japanese is getting less, but it seems dabbling Japanese Manga into English is becoming more popular.

Meanwhile, we are having a hard time in education. In September 2014, the ministry of education chose 37 universities including Tokyo, Kyoto, Nagoya, Kyushu and Kanseigakuin Universities as 'Super Global Universities (SGU)'. SGU means to make universities have the ability to compete in the overseas market and the government will

give financial support to those universities. The criterion for universities to be selected are 'University reform' 'internationalization', specifically, a certain ratio of overseas students, or percentage of classes in English and so on. Because of the huge subsidy given, universities who receive less subsidy are desperately applying to be part of the SGU.

I need to ask, can Japanese students manage classes in English? It is impossible for them to follow subjects in English, when they have only studied that subject in Japanese for a long time. It may take years to restudy in English what they have learnt in Japanese classes since grade school.

There is a reason that the ministry of education has to have this change, knowing this will make confusion. The reason is that Japanese Universities are not really competitive in the world. According to "The world university's ranking of the top 50" in the 'Times' in England, Tokyo University came in 23rd in 2014, (and Kyoto University was 52nd). Ironically, after the SGU choice in 2015, Tokyo University became 43rd and Kyoto University was the 88th.

There was other sad news as well for the Tokyo University, the top in Japan. An English course mainly for overseas students had 70% of the successful candidates quit and entered more attractive overseas Universities. This is an example that Japanese universities do have a low reputation.

Of course, you can say that it does not matter what the world opinion is. What is study anyway?

I interpret studies as 'to learn predecessor's wisdom and so add more wisdom to current generation and so on to the next generation. Thus Japanese students in the future are being handicapped by the current generation.

Minae Mizumura wrote in her book 'The time for Japanese language is over – this is the century for English' as 'Learning is about asking questions of many people and recording the answers in a universal language that can be understood by everyone. That universal language is English. So, learning means leaving wisdom for next generation and this progress has to be English which is regarded as the universal or as the world language.'

People who did not use English were not given the proper recognition for their work. The Polish economist, Michal Kalecki had most of concepts which appeared in 'The General Theory' by John Maynard Keynes (1936) before him, but because Kalecki's work published in Polish and French, he did not receive much attention. The common language for economic study those days was already in English, so if a study was not written in English it was largely ignored. When Keynes (who was born in England)

published the 'General Theory' in English, Kalecki read all and realized almost everything that was written there was the same as his thought which was published before. And in the same year, he wrote an essay to explaining that he had already published those theories, but strangely he wrote this in Polish as well, so people did not respond to this.

I feel sorry for Kalecki, but most people do not know about him, but know Keynes. What I would like to say is, even if the study is wonderful, but not written in English, it will be forgotten or ignored.

However, it is not easy for Japanese to publish a study or a piece of research in English. A few university professors pay money to native English speakers to check their essay when he has to present it overseas. It would be so easy if you can confidently present your own English writing. However, writing in a foreign language is harder than reading it.

This is not only about study. I can say the same objects that all sorts of field like business, politics, hobbies, IT and so on. Today if you cannot use English to communicate effectively, you will end of a spectator and not a participant. The reason Japan did not feel much inconvenience using Japanese was only because Japanese economic power, and for a variety of incidents inside and outside of the country. We did not see the fault of it. The thought that we could get away only with our own language was an illusion that only we have had.

In the future, we can read books from all over the world because of the internet. The world's library is in English. If our children cannot access that library because of language, then it means they will be locked out from universal knowledge. Not only that, but communication through social media will also be extremely difficult.

Even when translating tools become more advanced in the future, if Japanese rely too much on it and still cannot use English, they will be definitely left out of the 'English century'. If young people from now on, only discuss things with Japanese speakers, they will not keep up with the times. It is too late to study with translated books. It is necessary to discuss or write in English. However, in Japanese education, from grade school to even universities, children cannot learn this sort of English.

In most countries English is not the mother language, but they study in English and argue in English. This is so especially in developing countries, because people cannot get enough information or education in their own language. Overseas, people cannot get a good job if they cannot speak in English and this trend started much earlier than in Japan. Because Japan was an advanced country, we did get a reasonable education and

had access to information and work all in Japanese. However, this situation will not last long and we will have to use English the same as other developing countries.

Chapter 2. You cannot be bilingual if your English is only used for study.

It is wasting time to make children 'study' English.

English is a tool. Even you study for long years; you cannot have a perfect command of English. Only when you become good at using the tool, you can achieve your purpose.

Think of the computer as an example of a tool. A lot of people feel good at writing and can write better with computers rather than hand writing which they have been doing since they were children. Probably, they have been using computers for work, study and privately so they have learned the skill to use it. If they only study computer and never actually use it, then it will be impossible to use 'Word' or 'Excels'.

And with frequent users, they concentrate on what they are writing without thinking of 'I am using computer'.

How about English? Overseas work researcher, Morizo explained 'When I speak English I use 80% of CPU in my brain for speaking in English'. CPU means Control Processing Unit for computers. If 80% of this was used for 'speaking English', then I can only use 20% on what I have to do.

You can say that talking in English which is not your mother tongue is like writing sentences with a bad computer that freezes often, or all data suddenly disappears. It is very difficult.

There are many Japanese people who think in Japanese and then translate that into English before they start talking in English, but it is like writing on a paper by hand first and then typing on a computer, looking sideways. It's too sad.

And, I do not want my children spending their important time 'studying English'. Studying English is booming in Japan and we can buy all sorts of study kits which say you can expect improvement in a short time. I am not saying if it is true or not, but these kits are time consuming as well.

It is frightening to think that these people who will be so important for Japanese in the future are spending a few thousand hours to learn to use a tool. They learn 'business English' from these kits. But they have to study seriously using stories that are not relevant. They do not learn real business. They only learn what to hear and say. When Japanese students are doing role-playing, they are almost like children practicing a play for a concert. At the same time, native English speakers are learning real business.

As well, overseas people may laugh at Japanese because we cannot speak English even when we study for years. They may think Japanese spend so much money to learn English, but have no idea what they are talking about.

However, we cannot stop studying English. If you do not have the 'English passport', you will limit your life.

In 2014, a soccer player, Keisuke Honda answered to interview in English and made a speech when he moved into SerieA and that made the news. I was impressed that Honda could speak English, but I felt sad too that he had to spend time learning English rather than concentrate on his profession. A native English speaker has more time, therefore. Later he said that he could have continued for 3 hours if he could have spoken in Japanese.

So called good Japanese 'English' is useless

- English level we expect

It is impossible for even excellent Japanese students to reach a fluent English speaker. You may say 'Japanese children do not have to speak English like a native speaker', but please imagine, like I said about computers and writing long hand. It is much easier writing with computers. If I was writing this book by hand, I would be so tired and could not finish writing.

I would like my children to use English without thinking of it as using a tool and which allow them to make this as start line and concentrate more on for contents. It is a fact that few children in Japan who speak English like a native speaker. When I was a student, there were 400 students in 10 classes all the same grade, but no one spoke English as a native speaker. The students who got high mark in English class were always 'Good at studying English, but could not speak English' and I was one of them.

- When you realize your English is not good enough when you are studying overseas, it is too late.

Because I was good at studying English, I was chosen as a Government sponsored exchange student at the age of 20, when I was a third year economics student at Hokkaido University, I then lived in America for 1 year and now I would like to talk about this experience.

In 1992, when I was the third year student at Hokkaido University, I found out about an advertisement for an exchange student program at the university. The program would pay for tuition fee, return air ticket and 135,000 yen per month to study in Oregon for a year. You would be credited as if you studied at Hokkaido University. I was not particularly interested in living overseas, but I thought it may help my future employment.

One of the application conditions was having the necessary TOEFL score. The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a world known English test and recognized by more than 9000 universities or organization in 130 countries. I did not know anything about it and this would be my first test.

The most important thing for this test is listening skill. My listening skill was almost nothing at that time. I bought a Walkman and listened to a tape for TOEFL preparation constantly even when I was eating.

It was just a luck that my TOEFL score was the third highest of all the students who applied for this program.

However, I had trouble at interview. It became clear that my English speaking skill was almost zero. I could not even say a proper 'hello' to a western interviewer and could not understand the meaning of questions and of course, could not answer. I remember that I could not stop crying when I saw the interviewer and teacher looking at each other with disappointment and I was so embarrassed.

Even if you get high scores in grammar, vocabulary and listening, it does not mean you can communicate with foreigners. I did not practice speaking and also did not have enough experience to have communication with foreigners. At that time, I had hardly ever seen westerners and was not good at being face to face, so I panicked in this important interview. While the teachers were worried, I got the position because of the TOEFL score.

I went to a private English conversation school every day before going to America. In this class, the teacher looked after students very well, even the students who could not speak English. I did not have any trouble to have English communication in this school. However, after I left Japan, it was different.

It was my first trip to overseas and I left Narita airport for Oregon all by myself, but when I was on the plane there was an announcement 'The plane had to land in California, because of some problem.' My face went to blue. It was worried not only because of the plane, but more than that, I was worried I could not get to Oregon airport on time. I was going to the university in Oregon after arriving at the airport and I had to get homestay information. At first, I had to tell the university I would be late. If I

could not arrive during office hours, I need to know what to do. It seemed impossible for me make that sort of conversation in English. I had never even made a phone call in English.

I asked an American man who was sitting next to me on the plain for a help by speaking and writing to him. Thankfully, he made a phone call to the university staff and told them to wait until I arrived. So I managed my first difficulty on this overseas study trip.

However, I was frightened that I could not do easy things like ‘make a phone call or explain my situation’. When I was in Japan, I was upset on the way home after the English conversation class when I did not speak well, but this was far serious. I felt as without speaking in English, I even cannot protect my life.

I was admired in Japan because I was the Hokkaido University’s student, but in America, even I was 20 years old, but for Americans, they have had me like a preschool child. I had so many experiences that I felt almost cry.

My TOEFL score was too high to take ESL, English as a Second Language course which was for foreign students who do not speak English. Because of this high score, I was chosen to study here, but I had to be in a class with all English native speakers. I was the only one nonnative.

That was an American university where you had to give a lot of presentations and make conversation. I could be a ‘Hikikomori (a person who stays at home all day).

However, my life as an overseas student became enjoyable. There was a program for student from Japan to teach American students Japanese once a week and I could earn a credit for that. In that class, both teachers and students can only use Japanese. I tried to be a friend with those students I was teaching.

Whenever I went to English lectures, I looked for my students and sat next to them even if they liked it or not. In that way I could copy professors’ handwriting and understand what homework we were assigned.

So I and the native English students exchanged position of teacher and student from time to time and support each other. Also we were interested in each other’s culture and language; I became closer to tens of American students. Later on, some Korean students like me joined with us and we became very friendly. Every day, we were together at the school cafeteria for lunch or break, and talked about each other’s culture, language and did homework together as well. We went out together on weekends too.

However, my English was not improving much even with my friends. The truth is you can make friends without a perfect understanding of the languages. If you like each

other, you never get bored being together, even if you have a language problem.

My true friend Mary was born in America, but her parents were both from Korea, so she could speak simple English slowly even she was the native English speaker. She and I kept talking for hours.

- You cannot be bilingual without necessary conditions

When I was in America, I met a 'bilingual speaker of English and Japanese' for the first time in my life. His parents were Japanese, but he was brought up in America.

He spoke perfect English and Japanese with proper pronunciation and with proper context. He could switch from one language to another so easily.

I always spoke to him in Japanese. I had perfect understanding of his answers about American culture and language because he explained in Japanese.

He spoke Japanese at home and English outside. That was the reason he became good at both languages. He did not 'study' languages. His mother tongue was Japanese when he was small, and later, it changed to English.

There is rumor that if children are surrounded by more than two languages when they are small, they get confused and this may have bad influence on their character or abilities. However, some countries only have people who speak more than two languages.

Of course, my friend did not have that sort of problem. He was intelligent, friendly and now he works as a manager in Asia in a large famous company.

I wished I could have spoken like him. Then I would have understood my friends much more and enjoyed the life in America.

During my oversea study quite often I gave up asking or talking in English, as I thought it could be a long and difficult conversation. I was not brought up bilingual, so even if I tried hard, there was nothing to be done.

There is a theory that after certain age, it becomes impossible to learn a second language. It is called 'critical period hypotheses'. There are different stories about the critical period. Some say until 8 years old after birth and others say until the age between 12 and 15. Because of individual differences or environmental differences, it is impossible to underline the particular age, but I do believe this thought that there is an age limit to learn a language. There are examples when a family moves overseas children often learn the language before the parents do.

To become bilingual, children have to listen to 2 languages a lot and continuously. There is an expression that 'You can do anything if you put your mind to it'. Nevertheless, children must start off when they are small if they are to be bilingual.

When I was studying in America, I really thought whatever I do now, I can never become an English native speaker. After I came back, and for 20 years, I had a life without English. However, after having 3 children and thinking of their English education, I remembered all sort of things about when I was in America.

Your children cannot speak English even you save money for their education

- 'Money' dose not solve the problem

I thought that without English, it is difficult to be economically independent but with the Japanese education system, you cannot learn English, but I could not think of anything we could do for our children.

If children are interested in learning English, we need money for English school, text books or going overseas to study. Because of this, I think many parents would start saving money. However, it is not good enough for children to learn real English. To be honest, it is completely the wrong idea. Studying overseas or giving them good teaching materials does not make our children speak perfect English.

If children can talk in English only with their English teacher, they will easily get bored. It has to be with people who do not understand Japanese and then children will definitely have to communicate, like with parents or close friends. Children from mixed marriages in Japan are quite often able to speak both Japanese and English, when they use English at home.

There are some Japanese parents who have brought up their children as bilingual even though they live in Japan.

Shoko Yukawa, the writer of a book called 'English Education from the age of 0 to become bilingual' and Kazuyoshi Kinoshita wrote that they talked only in English or read English book to their children and discussed what they thought about the book in English when they were home. However, there are fewer than 1% of parents who can bring up their children like those people.

Also, many adults and students spend tens of thousands yen for English study, most of them never become bilingual. They are just spending more money and more time.

Most parents wisely save money for their children's education, but with English you have to start when they are very young.

- The problem of early English education

Parents make their children study English early these days as they are concerned about it. Early education of English from the age of between 0 and 12 seemed something that we could not mention before. However, since the government decided to teach English from grade school, many people have started thinking of early age learning and now there are English early age teaching schools.

But I believe that this early education of English does not make children speak English better. There is not enough time, substance and practice involved. Children are good at remembering English as a thing to use, but if they do not use it, they will easily forget it.

Tsutomu Ichikawa met more than 1,000 Japanese children when he was in America for over 10 years. He wrote a book 'Don't teach English to children' and said to make children bilingual, 'motivation', 'the proper environment' and 'a proper way' are all necessary. Without these conditions, children cannot learn English even if they start early.

- In Japan, it is impossible to have that environment to improve English

Is it possible to achieve these things from pre-school age in Japan?

- Family and friends who do not understand Japanese, but English only.
- Books written in English.
- Chances for think or express in English

There are many international schools all over Japan. According to the ministry of education, culture, sports, science and technology, 'International schools have no special legal regulations and they are mainly for foreign students, and most classes are taught in English'. 'Going to international school does not count as compulsory school attendance (However, there are some exceptions).

I don't think there is any family who would abandon compulsory education for their children and would make them speak English by entering them in those schools.

Some schools have what is immersion education. In these schools, children use English all the time inside and outside of the class. They have English classes and also learn other subjects in English. It depends on the school, but usually this starts from 1st grade or junior high school. I only found 10 of those schools on the internet and school fees are more than 100,000 yen per month for 1st grade student. However, most of these schools accept Japanese children.

There are many English cramming schools. Most of these schools teach English in Japanese, so when children try to speak English, the brain is often bothered by the Japanese language.

So what can we do to make our children to speak English?

I have thought of having some international people as homestay. When I was in high school, we had a young Finnish lady staying with us for 1 week because of my father's work. I liked her very much like my own sister. It is a good memory.

However, this experience did not make me study English harder. I just had a good culture shock when I understood there are people who do not understand Japanese, but we could communicate. So even if we have a native English speaker at home, this may not make my children be interested in studying English.

I wish there are more foreigners in Japan so my children could find a lot of chances talking to them. Once I sat next to a German on JR. He was on business visiting Japan and I asked him why there are not many foreigners in Japan and he said that Japan is not a kind country to people from overseas. He told me a story about when he was sending money overseas from one of the biggest bank in Japan but, it took 3 hours and their English was not good enough. He also said that he did a similar thing in Shanghai and it took only 30 minutes.

I have also spoken to a western family in Sapporo when I saw them at playground. I expected to become friendly with them because our children were of similar ages. But they were living in a dormitory for foreigners and also children were at preschool for foreign children, so we did not have anything in common.

It is impossible for me to surround my children with English.

■ **A Column I agree with Korean people for learning English hard.**

The population of Koreans is about 50 million and that is less than half of Japan. Still, the number of people who study English in Cebu is 6 times more than Japanese who studies over there.

It has become very popular with Japanese people as well, so more and more people study in Cebu but still not that many compared with Koreans. Actually, Korean was the one who started studying English in Cebu and most language school in Cebu are with Korean money. When I walk in the island, I meet more Koreans than Japanese. In Korea, many parents want their children to be successful in this global world, quite often mothers come to Cebu with children to study English and the fathers stay in their country and send money to their wives. These fathers are called 'Duck fathers'.

It is not only the individuals, but the Government thinks seriously about English education in Korea. In 1997, the government started English lessons from grade school students 14 years before Japan started to do so. In 2001, President Kim made a New Year speech 'It would be impossible for Korea to be in the global world without English'. After that, they have more English classes at school and more cramming schools for English.

There is an interesting project called 'English Village' and now they are spreading in Korea.

In the 'English Village', there are banks, restaurants, post offices and other buildings that are all western and also people work there are foreigners. English is the official language and children can experience a life like in the west. Most villages have accommodations, so parents send their children to these places for a week or a month and make them experience life with English only. The parents, who do not have enough money to send children overseas, use this 'village' a lot and now there are about 30 of them in the country.

And more, Korea has been building a new city in Cheju Island to become the best English educational state in Asia. They are going to build a branch school of a high school and university of one of the best schools in the West on 379 hectares and also employ English speaking people for a hospital and shops to make English as normal speaking language.

These experiments are definitely working in Korea. In 1995, the average of TOEIC score for Japanese was 541 and 457 for Koreans and in 2013, the score was 512 for Japanese and 632 for Koreans.

One of the reasons why Koreans want to study English hard is relate to their history. When the 'Asian currency crisis' happened in 1997, Korea was effected badly and dropped 8% from their GDP. The government had to ask financial help to IMF (International Monetary Fund). The companies had to change their policies such as life employment or getting promotions by length of service. Instead of this, they employ more part time workers and also people who have high skills.

Even now, only 55.6% of university graduates can find a job. University graduate's labor market is excess supply, but because of the university graduates have different hope for what they want to do and where to work, there are mismatches of employments. Only 32.3% of young people (15 to 29 years old) have a permanent job. The reason for this matter is because of influence of global business stagnation, the companies employ less people and moving offices to overseas. It'll be the recognition that you "can't survive" when you can't speak English, for a Korean. And also, the number of the overseas residents is more than 10 times larger than Japanese for the population ratio.

It is apparent that an English ability is supporting the achievement for Koreans and Korean companies in overseas. The British economic magazine 'Economist' said that 'In 2050, a Japanese person's income will be half of a Korean person's income'. Japanese have to find a way to live in the global world as well, but our English ability is not ready at all.

Chapter 3. Finally, my family agreed to migrate despite more problems

My family said “There is no way you can migrate overseas”

I was the only one in the family that was thinking of English education for our children. My husband who is six years older than I always listened about my thought, but he had no awareness of how serious this matter was. He said “The condition is the same for every Japanese child.” or “Even if we’re worried now, it's worthless.” So, of course, he did not agree with my idea of migrating to Cebu Island.

My parents, husband’s parents, our brothers were against me. When I brought up the topic about Cebu, they said “I don't want to hear!” and became cross with me. They told our children “The Philippines is a dangerous place. It's impossible.” And they made the children anxious. I was always wrong in their eyes. But in Cebu, the new school year starts in June, so we did not have much time to spend, because it was already February when I had this idea.

My family said “Those families who live overseas do so only because of their companies forcing them. I have never heard that someone wants to migrate for their children to make them bilingual. Because no one is doing such thing, why should you do?”

I myself had such thoughts too. However, moving overseas is not only these business people’s rights. The chance to be a bilingual is not only for children whose parents have an overseas assignment. When considering the necessity of English for the future, the decision of moving overseas is unavoidable. My husband and I are not native speakers and we are not going to have a chance to live in other country for our work but we have the freedom to choose where we want to live.

My family said “It is irresponsible to involve young children in such a gamble”.

I am moving overseas for our children’s sake. Grandparents think they have done a good job bringing up their children and think that it is safer to do what others are doing, but I am thinking of my children’s future prospects.

When you realize that your children can not speak English and because of that they cannot find a job years later, it is too late. I do not want to blame the Japanese environment and education. The victims are our children, not us or our parents.

We know how the Japanese population is going to change in the future. Isn't it irresponsible that each guardian doesn't think of their children? The time and the world situation is always changing.

Of course, the decision would be different in each family depending on various factors and the family situations.

I do not know whether the decision to move overseas is the best for our family, but if we find that it is not working, we can always change where we are going. If this challenge failed, we can find another thing to do with this experience we gained. I do not want to have regrets because of something I have not done. When you challenge something, you will certainly learn more and improve. We are not risking our life to move.

My family said “We are worried that our children will not learn about Japan”

It is impossible to teach children everything about Japanese life, custom, politics, economics, society, geography, and food with books and words.

However, when children live in foreign countries, they will be special because they are Japanese. People may ask them about Japan and they will have more chances to talk.

We should not only pay attention to something we lose. We may lose some things by leaving Japan, but we can gain more living in Cebu

My family said “How about the money?”

I wanted my husband to quit his job and move to Cebu with us. Our income would be from only two corporations I manage in Japan. I looked for jobs for my husband in Cebu, but there were very few jobs if you could not speak English. When I found a call center job on the internet which did not require English, I could not believe that the payment per month was only 100,000 yen, even you work full time. So it was not easy.

However, the population in Cebu is getting bigger; we may find some business opportunities. The founder of Softbank group, Masayoshi Son bought a lot of game machines, cheap after the boom was over, and sold them in America. He made a big profit. Of course, this is a too extreme example.

If you would like to have your own business not yet found in America, the chance is almost zero. However, in Cebu, we may find a business selling goods or services which are not available in Cebu. When we both acquire the English skill and how to live overseas, we may able to help Japanese companies who are moving to Cebu Island. There is a possibility that we may go back to Japan or another country to find a job. This

is another reason that I think living in an English speaking country is worth doing because it will link up with the next step in life.

I could borrow some money, too. When I started to work for a TV station as a freelance announcer, I was advised to establish a company and join a retirement plan for a small scale proprietor and I have been paying 70,000 yen every month. I contacted the office and found out that I could borrow 6 million yen. We would have enough money to live for a few years even without job.

My parents said “Do not separate us from our grandchildren”

At this I felt sorry for my parents. They live only 1-minute walking distance from us. My father looks after our children in the morning and my mother does the same in the evening. My husband’s parents also live near us, so we meet each other every month.

However, even if we move to Cebu, the connection between our children and their grandparents is not going to be cut off. We can use Skype and talk for hours. We can make arrangement about date and time to put Skype on.

It is also important for children to keep in contact with their grandparents for their Japanese language ability. Grandparents will be one of the few people our children can talk with in Japanese with the required affection and patience.

I said “Will life become wonderful when we keep to live in Japan?”

We often discussed this at midnight when the children were fast asleep. My husband said “I will look after the children with your mother’s help. You can go to Cebu and have a look. We will discuss this more after that.”

I thanked my husband. However, even if I spent a few days in Cebu, it would be impossible for me to judge whether it would be an appropriate place to migrate to.

The population of the Philippines is one hundred million and thousands of Japanese are living there, so it has to be livable. And also there would be so many things I have to do if we decide to move, so I did not want to waste time.

The truth was that I have already decided to move to Cebu in my mind and if my husband did not want to go, I was thinking of divorcing him and going there only with my children. However, I still loved him and my children needed to be with their father. I told my husband “The decision of moving to Cebu is not irreparable one. If it does not work, we can consider something else”.

Husband said “If we live in a foreign country, we would not be able to imagine 10 years

or 20 years later what we would be doing. Not even one year. Is that OK when we have small children to look after?”

What he said is true. We cannot imagine anything certain. Even I, insisting hard to move, have never been to Cebu or even the Philippines. I could not imagine what the streets would look like, the food, the house we are going to live. If we are employed by a Japanese company and connected by a thick rope, I am not afraid to plunge into a deep sea, but we are going to jump into the sea without a rope with 3 children. It is so natural for my husband to worry.

I said to him “Can you imagine our children’s future if we stay in Japan? They would be looking for a job, wouldn’t they?”

I told my husband about my concern that there are too many Japanese young people killing themselves after failing to find jobs. These are quotation of the suicide rate from the Cabinet Office.

Year 2013 edition

The main causes and motives for a suicide of people in their twenties are ‘failing to find a job’ and job related matters’. The number of these suicides is increasing.

This is a serious situation because the death rate by suicide for people in their twenties is bigger compared to the other generations, and it is almost half of all deaths for the same generation.

Year 2014-15 edition

The suicide rate for young people is a serious situation. The first cause of death between the age 15 and 39 is suicide. And with the age between 15 and 34, Japan is the number one country in which the top cause of death is suicide in the 7 developed countries.

Also the death rate is higher compare with other countries.

I said to my husband “Could you think what kind of young people commit suicide because of failing to get a job, please? Probably, most of them are serious and hard studying. How sad would it be for their parents to lose such precious children? It is painful to just imagine. I cannot think of this as someone else’s problem. We love our children and I think if they are brought up in Japan, their English skill will be almost zero. It would be impossible for them to have a job they want and be independent and have a happy family 20 years later, wouldn’t it? “

It was the first time my husband looked confused and said, “I will consider migrating”. That is because he knew getting a job was becoming severe matter in Japan.

My husband got a job in 1989 when he graduated from a university, but because he wanted to be a journalist, he quit the company and started working for the local newspaper. However, that company was bankrupt 7 years later. He had another job in a famous housing company in charge of public relations. Then we met and married. When I was pregnant with our first child, both of us were so delighted, but his company was bankrupt again.

He started looking for an administrative job in all sort of companies, but because of his age and the recession in the country, it was not easy. I was working, so when the child was born, it was necessary to apply to a nursery school immediately, but when my husband had no work, I could not apply. So he took a qualification course of nursing the elderly and we could apply to a nursery school for the child and he could continue to look for a job.

However, he could not get a job he wanted and he started working at nursing home as a helper for 1 year. He was caring for the elderly and even worked at night. It was hard work for him and we had to look after the baby as well. He kept sending his resume to companies, but there was no luck.

When I saw him getting so tired, I said “Have a rest looking for job”, but he said “Nursing is not what I wanted and if I stop looking for a job now, it will be more difficult to find one as I am getting older” and so he continued to find jobs and was refused by hundreds of companies. He remembers this time as the most painful for him and said he wanted to die.

Finally, a company which sympathized with his background employed him for a public relation work. This company managed hospitals, group homes and workshops for people who had mental problems as well as people who suffer with senile dementia or were depressed. My husband’s main job was publishing the company paper and renewing their homepages.

When I suggested moving to Cebu, he had been working for that company for 4 years. It was almost impossible for him to quit this company as he so appreciated what they had done for him after having such a hard time. However, I thought of his experience as Japan’s future.

*The bankruptcy of a newspaper company and a housing company.

*There is almost no recruitment of anything but nursing work.

*The only place which employed my husband was the company dealing with senile dementia or depressed people.

I asked my husband if our children could find a job in Japan twenty years later without any English. When our children are trying hard looking for a job, we will be old or dead. I do not think we would be able to support our children then.

I said I know when we move overseas, we will have trouble with our English. However, when we think of English, either we have trouble now or our children will have trouble in the future. No, they may not be able to have trouble, because if they are judged as being unable to speak English I think they will not even have a chance.

After that, my husband thought for some days. He changed his mind a lot about whether to go or not. Finally, because he knew that I was not going to change my mind and he did not want to be separated from our children, he agreed to live in Cebu to gain a bilingual education.

My children cannot become bilinguals even if we live in English Country?!

I was collecting information about bilingual education while preparing for our departure. And I found a book by Tsutomu Ichikawa called 'Don't teach English to children'. He wrote about children who went overseas because of their parent's work. When these children came back to Japan, not only did they not speak English that well, their Japanese was not good either.

I was shocked. Even if we live in an English speaking country, children may not grow up as bilingual and also they may have trouble to speak both languages. I did not know that living overseas did not guarantee that our children would grow up as bilinguals.

According to a mother's experience who lived overseas with her children, her children couldn't remember Kanji and they were not good with Hiragana or Katakana and soon, they had conversations mixing Japanese and English. When she made them study Japanese, they did not like it and if she made them try too hard, they would hate studying Japanese. However, if she does nothing about this, their Japanese skill keeps falling.

When children live in an English speaking country even from a young age, they are not always good at English and also not good with Japanese either, especially, if they do not read or speak enough Japanese. They may become semi lingual (double limited). Semi lingual means people who do not have sufficient skill in either Japanese or English, their ages taken into consideration.

I imagined our children becoming semi lingual. If they grow up as semi lingual, they would be adults who do not read or cannot read in both languages. When we Japanese get information or search for something, we use the internet or read books. However, it will be difficult to do so for our semi lingual children. Also, writing or speaking is harder than reading, so they will have trouble to express themselves in their own words. In other words, they would not be able to learn or get information by communicating in the other people's language and it will be impossible to share those things with others. I was worried about that "They may be frustrated not being able to say what they think and they may shut themselves from the world. It may be better off staying in Japan and bringing up our children to become perfect in Japanese.

Despite all that I made up my mind after I read the next description that Ichikawa wrote.

"(In Japan) When you teach English to your children from a young age, you have to have a high English ability and support them as much as you can. The cost will be high as well. If you are not able to complete what you started, it is better not doing this at all."

Those were severe words for those parents who were worried about their children's English education, but I am convinced that his words were true. We have to give up the idea to make our children bilingual when we are in Japan.

But I realized that if we live overseas and teach our children to become bilingual, we could change those severe words as follows.

"(In an English speaking country) When you teach 'Japanese' to your children from a young age, you have to have a high 'Japanese' ability and support them as much as you can. The cost will be high as well. If you are not able to complete what you started, it is better not doing this at all."

Even if I paraphrase, it does not change it from its severity. However, Japanese parents should have a high Japanese ability. When we are in Cebu, we will talk to our children in Japanese, let them to read books in Japanese and make them keep in touch with Japanese.

Of course, we should not think doing these things would be easy. I realize it is impossible for us to use English with our children as we do not have high English ability. I thought that the only way would be living overseas and exposing them to Japanese as much as we could.

There are also many stories of making children's bilingual education successful in English speaking countries. The important point is trying to make children keep and advance their Japanese ability. Their Japanese should be always better than their English.

English will be their everyday language as they use English at school and in society, but we are going to give them high quality Japanese education too.

The examples of making a child become bilingual.

- You make a rule at home to use Japanese only, and if children use English, let them say it again in Japanese.
- You have to explain things to children with logical Japanese, not using unnecessary pronouns or making words short.
- You give the children the chance to meet or speak with many other Japanese adults and let them use Japanese. When they talk to Japanese strangers, they need to explain things in Japanese and this practice will be good training for their Japanese.

(Reference "Don't teach English to a child." by Tsutomu Ichikawa)

When children become fluent in both Japanese and English, a crucial time comes. If you leave them as they are, they will be able to speak only conversational language. Their two languages have to reach an upper level, otherwise quite often, they will become semi lingual.

A Japanese child, who has just come to an English speaking country, will strengthen the weaker language (English) with the stronger language (Japanese). We can express the stronger language as like a ladder and the weaker language as a vine which grows around the ladder. If the ladder which was extending its length in Japan suddenly stops because it is now overseas, what will happen to the vine? It will stop growing and become weak. The ladder also rusts.

So we decided to have a 'Japanese' extensive reading method to take care of their Japanese ability. Have you ever heard of 'English extensive reading method' written by Akio Furukawa? This method is that reading many easy English books and learning useable English. The three rules for this are,

- (1) Choose the books which you can enjoy to read without looking up words in a dictionary.
- (2) Read understandable parts and continue to read.
- (3) Choose and read books which are fascinating.

We changed this to "Japanese extensive reading method" and made our children read many Japanese books in Cebu. Consequently I bought 100 books for my children.

Chapter 4. Preparing to migrate to Cebu.

*** This section is not translated.

Chapter 5. 'Cebu' is where you do not feel an inferiority complex for being a nonnative English speaker.

Having arrived at Cebu.

I finally arrived at Cebu in May 2014. I had one week to prepare to migrate to Cebu, and to make plans for a preschool and homewares.

I arrived at midnight. I started feeling anxious looking at the outside from the car window on the way to the hotel. There were many tumble-down houses on the street. I saw children with torn clothes, walking outside in the dark. The drivers were dangerously driving close to the other cars. I could not believe it was the famous resort town. I thought "Was this the country which I really wanted to move, so dirty and dangerous?"

However, I had still had hope about Cebu. I was supposed to rent a room in a wonderful family home the next day.

Have you heard of an internet site called 'Airbnb'? It is an accommodation sight all over the world which enables you to stay at people's homes. I found this website and thought staying in a family house would be better for me as I could learn things about my new life. I had a reservation for a house owned by a lady called Christine.

When I found her house in the site, I loved it. There were pictures of her south European designed two stories house with cream and orange colored walls and a guest room with antique furniture. The house was built on a slope of a mountain, so we can see the city of Cebu through a beautiful wide garden with flowers in full bloom in front of the house. All the pictures were beautiful.

The cost for the accommodation was about 2600 yen per night including private kitchen, a toilet and a shower. I was surprised at how cheap it was. Even if you have more money to spend for an expensive hotel, staying at a local's house seems more useful and enjoyable. Also it is only 5 km northwest to a shopping mall in downtown and I will get pick-up service from a migration assistance company during that stay, so it is convenient location,

When I made reservation, Christine told me that there was a house for rent just next to her house. She sent me the pictures of a big three story house which had cream colored wall and a red roof and also a big carpark. I especially liked a picture showing a veranda with a couch. The veranda was designed to avoid the hot sun and looked relaxing. There was a view of Cebu city in green.

Christine has a business which she inherited from her father for managing this village.

The rent is about 90,000 yen (36,000peso). She said the size of the house was about 130 square meters. It would be more than double the size of my Japanese apartment. The ceiling looked high and the rooms looked wide enough. We could not use the third floor because of the owner put their stuff there.

So tomorrow, I am visiting a house where our family may live. I went to bed thinking of the beautiful house.

Next morning, I was picked up by a person from the migration assistance company. It took about 15minutes by car to 'Jardin de Busay' from the city following the mountain road. When we arrived, a security guard who knew we were coming opened the heavy gate.

Inside was a prestigious residential area. All houses were big and all of them were built on a slope without disturbing the view from each house. We stopped at a house where the guard told us to go and a young lady appeared with a big friendly smile. It was Christine. I was so nervous being in such a high class residential area which I only had ever seen in films and had to speak to this beautiful foreigner in English. However, the migration assistance company supported my English and we went to see the house she wanted to show me.

It was more than the pictures I saw. There was a maid room, a laundry and car park space on the first floor. The second floor had a huge dining kitchen, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, veranda and garden. The space was big enough and convenient to look after with 3 small children.

There were beds, closets, a table, chairs, curtains, and electric goods like a fridge and microwave, so we could start living there at any time. Also there were clean sheets, pillows, all cooking facilities including plates, cups and even tea towels or wraps. No one had been living there for months, but when I turned on the Wi-Fi modem, it connected to the internet straight way. I made a contract on the spot.

By the way, most rental places are with furniture in Cebu and I like this idea. It's good for the environment. And we do not have to spend too much money when we move in. When we rent a place in Japan, we have to buy the curtains and we cannot stay until a bed is brought in. We have to take in a refrigerator, pots and dishes before starting cooking there.

If I had to buy everything to start living soon after I arrived, and with my English, I would be so exhausted and so would my purse.

After this visit, I went back to Japan for only one day and entered Cebu with all my family and my parents. (My parents stay in Cebu for 2 weeks).

There are no native English speakers!

Just before leaving Japan, I took a TOEIC test for the first time out of curiosity. The score was 780 and this should be good enough for general conversation. However, my English seemed lower than it was supposed to be.

I visited a preschool by myself. It was good when we were greeting each other, but while a teacher was explaining about the school system in English, I could not concentrate for more than 5 minutes. Explanations in English were too difficult to me.

By the way, Cebu has an atmosphere like an English conversation school. When it is not necessary to speak in English, people speak the local language to each other. However, when foreigners like me start talking to them, they answer in English like in a classroom. If I ask how to get to downtown, they will answer in English with a beginner to intermediate level like “Oh, please go straight... And that corner, um... yes, the signal. You turn to the right there...” On the other hand, when I speak to a preschool teacher or a bank clerk, they will answer back with very good English like in the advanced class of an English school.

And the main reason that I think everybody here is like a student of an English school is I do not see many English native speakers. People in Cebu are native speakers of their local language, not English.

Since I heard that English is the official language in the Philippines, I thought all Philippians are native English speakers. I was surprised when I noticed that was a huge misunderstanding several days after I came to Cebu. Could you imagine no Japanese native speakers in Japan? In Cebu, when we are in a shop, in a bank or in a taxi, we speak in English, but we all are not native speakers. We are having conversation with minimum English. If we are worried about making mistakes in English, nothing can be done.

When I was studying in America, I was always tense that I had to communicate in English. I was always apologizing in my mind “I am sorry that I am not good at listening” “Sorry, my English is not good enough to make a speech”. Really it was not only my fault that we could not communicate. However, if we do not speak their official language which is ‘English’ in America, we cannot stop having an inferiority complex.

In Cebu, people speak by guessing the English proficiency of the other for the purpose of communication. I noticed that I was asking questions in shops without hesitation. That is because I did not have a complex that I am not a native English speaker. It was a surprise that there were almost no native English speakers, but because of this fact, it is easier place to live as a non-English native speaker.

Now, I will tell you more about when I was inspecting the preschool. There were pictures and introductions of all teachers on the hallway. Everyone had a cute face and a big smile. However, I looked all members' faces and I felt my face almost turning blue. They were all Philippines including the head master! That means there are no English native speakers in this school, even though they are supposed to use only English.

I thought "I came to here to make my children bilinguals, but..." and I nearly fainted. I am sure that they are good at English. However, it may be strange English to native English speakers (Sorry, teachers). I had no idea whether their English was natural and right.

Anyway, I had begun to like this preschool. I visited during the summer holidays in Cebu, but some children attended a summer school. There were mainly Asian children and a few Western children. They were talking to friends or teachers in English and drawing pictures and playing in the class room. When I looked at a senior kinder student writing a long English sentence on the paper, I was excited thinking that 'My children will be like him!'

Then I realized that my expectation for this preschool was not 'mixing with native speaker only' or 'being taught by native English teachers'. I expected that my children could interchange with children from all over the world. I want them to become friends with Philippines, Chinese, Koreans who are not English native speakers and also children who are native speakers. I thought if they can learn about each other, communicate and share memories by talking in English with no difficulty, it will be wonderful.

It could be good for my children that there were not many children who speak English as a native. I thought that when children play together in non-native English, they would be considerate to each other. The children with different nationalities and cultures learn and interchange through English. It is interesting to see how our children grow with those children who are individual already and how they will cooperate or assert themselves. Also it may not be necessary to worry about the Philippine teachers who are non-native speakers. It may be better suited because they could understand a non-native child as they are learners of English themselves.

I decided to send my children to this preschool.

Life with a housemaid

- Employing a housemaid.

There is a housemaid in most homes beyond the middle class in the Philippines. Most people believe that it is a good thing to employ people (housemaid) who do not have a job. I have heard that there are Philippine housemaids everywhere in the world, except in Japan. I know someone who used to work in Russia and he had a Philippine housemaid. I was surprised that a person from hot country working in such a cold area.

So, we decided to employ a housemaid, too. I could not imagine a life living with a housemaid, but when I was working and raising three small children at a foreign country, I would need help.

Christine introduced me a housemaid aged 22. Her name is Ann. Her mother and an aunt also worked as housemaids in this village and her uncle is a security guard here. Ann will work from 6 am to 7pm including 3 hours break and having a day off on Sundays. We pay her 1000 peso (about 2,500yen) per week with 3 meals a day.

The salary is an average in this village, but it is exceptionally inexpensive compared to Japan. When one of our children was sick in Japan, we asked for a baby sitter and that cost us more than 5,000 yen (500 yen per 30 minutes), although this sitter system was a subsidized project. From the employer's point of view, having a housemaid is really good in Cebu.

However, I do think the salary for a housemaid is too little even though the average pay for labor is cheap in the Philippines, but without university-graduate or some special connection, it is not easy to be employed by a corporation. It will be better than nothing for some women who have a trouble buying food, clothing or shelter and it is important for them to secure three meals a day and some money for expenses.

A day with a housemaid is like this. When we hear her foot steps from the maid room down stairs to the second floor where we live, it is the start of the day. Ann immediately starts making our breakfast. I and my husband split up into two groups and take a shower with three children. When children get out from the bathroom, Ann comes to dry them and put on their clothes. After I finish preparing my outfit, she is feeding the children. She fixes their mouths, and puts on their uniforms and shoes. When I start the car engine (I bought a car in Cebu), she brings the children to the car. After I come back from taking them to the preschool, the messy table and floor from breakfast are all clean. She also tidied the mess of children's toys and is washing dishes in the kitchen.

In the evening, I pick the children up from preschool and while I make them have a shower, dinner is ready. We start eating just after 5 o'clock and after we finish the meal, our family goes to bed and sleep at 8 o'clock while Ann stays in the kitchen and puts everything away, sets the timer for the rice cooker and returns to her room around 7pm.

My husband and I are freed from all domestic duties by employing a housemaid. How

can I explain about my feeling of liberation from all this housework? When we come home from outside with the children feeling exhausted or when I shut myself in a room using my PC without thinking of time, the housework is done quietly. I am still impressed when I see the clean clothes beautifully piled up in each other's closet.

Now we can have more time with our children. In Japan my husband and the children came back home at 7pm and we had to make the children take a bath, eat dinner, and brush their teeth. And we had to tidy up the kitchen and prepare for the next day. So many things we had to do. Sometimes we could not respond to the requests from children to read them a book or even to give them a cuddle. If the things were delayed, they had to go to bed late and that would make it hard in the morning, so we had to be strict with them. We had a big dish washer and auto vacuum cleaner, but with enormous domestic chores, it was like water on a hot stone.

But now, we both can respond to the children's voices. Of course, we have the pressure of making money to pay Ann, but I cannot think of our life without having a housemaid in Cebu.

- English ability for the house maids

All subjects except the Philippine language class were taught in English since grade school in this country. They learn in English and talk in English. In other words, every child is guaranteed to have the immersion education in English. I admire that all Philippine teachers have enough English ability to do it. The Philippines was an American colony from 1898 to 1946 and English is still the official language, so most people speak American English.

However, they have a terrible educational environment, because there are shortages of textbooks, teachers and teaching class rooms. It is called 'lack of 3 Ts'. The textbooks are free, but they have to return the books when they finish the year and because of the lack of class rooms, schools have a shift system and students can study either in the morning or in the afternoon.

Our house maid, Ann, had only the compulsory education and we talk in English. She has three times more vocabularies than I do and understands the meaning of songs in English. She speaks with perfect pronunciations. When she does not understand my English, I use electronic dictionary and pronounce the word and often I find out that my pronunciation is wrong.

But, when I received an e-mail from her, I was surprised that she made some grammar mistakes which were different from the usual impression I had about her. And another

day, my child brought back a paper with his drawing work from the preschool and on the back of that paper was an English exam similar to TOEIC. I and she tried to answer the questions; I could make it, but she couldn't. I said "It has to be a noun or an auxiliary verb after this preposition", she said "Mama, you can understand English!" with a big surprise. I gave her a wry smile for that comment.

If you do not use English, you will forget. There are working men in our village, between the age of 20 to 50, who do delivering water, collecting rubbish or carpentering. They do not have many chances to use English and when I asked them to do something they had to call Ann to interpret

I asked Ann how she can maintain her English ability, she said that she was working as a shop assistant after graduating from school, so she had to deal with the foreign customers in English. She also told me that when she was a junior high school student, her class made a rule to speak only in English in school. If they spoke the local language, they had to pay 1 peso (about 2.5 yen). They used that money for buying equipment for the class. Also, her father died when she was small, so she kept a high English ability to have the chance of a better job.

I admire her for her English skill as now I know how she grew up in a severe environment. Her home is in the middle of a forest where there are no street lights. Her house was hand built by her grandfather and she grew up there with 10 siblings. They can make a soccer team! It is quite normal in Cebu.

There is no tapped water and they have to wash themselves in a nearby creek. The women wash themselves with a big T-shirt on and the men wash hiding their front part. They have to use the next door's toilet where the grandfather lives, but only for the women, and the men have to go to the forest. However, this kind of living is not the lowest standard and is rather general in Cebu. There are many people living in the forest, even a shop assistant who works in a shopping mall in the town or a university student with a team T-shirt and their life style is similar.

I try to translate my family's daily Japanese conversation into English when we talk at home. It is for my English practice and we want our children to learn the expressions of both English and Japanese. And also, I want Ann to share our family's conversation. It might help her feel more comfortable knowing why we are laughing or being angry and what we are talking about.

■ A column We enjoy the beach in Cebu

We often go to a beach as we live in the summer resort. The beach is in Mactan Island near the international airport and connects to Cebu by bridges. It takes about one hour by car from my house. There are luxurious hotels on the coast line and if you pay 6,000 yen to 15,000 yen for 2 adults and 3 small children, we can use their beautiful beach and swimming pool with lunch. We payed less than 20,000yen (without lunch) and got an annual passport in one of these hotels, so we go to the beach almost every week.

When we decided to go to the beach for the first time, before my parents went back to Japan, we did not have swimming suits. We went to a shop in the hotel and bought them for my husband and the children. I did not like having sunburn, so I was going to watch them with my parents from the shade on the beach. However, when we arrived at the beach, we saw the wonderful scenery and felt comfortable sea breeze. Of course, my husband and children were excited and ran to the sea. I was over 40 years old, but thought “This would be a fun that I never experienced. If I hesitate, I will miss out!” So, I went back to the shop and bought a bikini (The bikini was the cheapest because it used a small amount of cloth.) and re-joined the family.

After that, we all became in love with the beaches and now we know how to enjoy it. We put the life jackets on all the children. We bought two balls for them and because of that, they play with children of different nationalities on the beach. One day, a Filipina girl let Taro to be on her beach boat, and he enjoyed that experience so much.

Jiro and Hana are happy to play with their toys for the sand, which include a bucket, a scoop, a rake and a sieve for hours. Sometimes, we charter a glass boat for about 3,000 yen and see the gorgeous tropical fish swimming in the sea from the bottom of the ship.

When our children grow up, we may be able to do diving. I do understand why the Cebu fans from all over the world repeat coming back to the beaches in Cebu.

Chapter 6. Our children are going to preschool. What shall we do?

The preschool which we chose for our children starts fiscal year from the middle of June and finishes the middle of March (This would change after 2016).

There are about 80 children in the preschool and I think ten of them including our three children are Japanese, about 10 western children and 60 Asian children excluding Japanese. I am not quite sure about these numbers, because I cannot judge some children from their appearance or their names and also there are some doubles too. I can only say that these children are from various nationalities.

Now, I am going to introduce our children.

Taro= 5 years old son, Jiro= 3 years old son, Hana = 1year old daughter.

June 2014 The first day for the preschool

The preschool started in June, about one month later after we moved in. The children put their new uniforms on and we left home at 8 am. They had been to the preschool, when they had to check the size of uniforms, but they never saw the school with other children who were mostly foreigners. I was worried my children would be shocked, but they had got used to living in Cebu by then and they looked quite fine. There were no ceremonies for the new school year, so they went into their class rooms straight away.

Taro was in a junior kinder class. He was in a senior kinder in Japan, but because of his English skill, the teacher decided to put him in the lower class. There were 2 classes and his class has 8 students. Most of them were from last year and Taro was the only one who did not understand English. I found a Japanese child and saw he was talking to his friend in English. His Japanese mother said that they came to Cebu only one year ago and it took about 6 months for him to learn enough English to communicate in the preschool.

Jiro also entered the class one year below (for two and half year olds). There are two teachers in his class with 14 children and three of them were Japanese.

Hana was in the suitable class for her age and there were no Japanese in the class. She was in a nursery school since she was 6 months old and never disliked going there in Japan, but it might be because she has been spending time with her family since we came to Cebu, she did not want to enter the classroom. However, time would fix that.

When we picked up Taro and Jiro in the evening, they jumped to us and said “It was great fun!” with a big smile. I asked if they had any trouble because of English, then they answered “The teacher told me what to do next by pointing the illustrations, so we

understood". The teachers are good at dealing children who do not understand English as they have to teach children of different nationalities. Taro also said "I like the class, because it is quiet". He seems to like the cozy atmosphere with the small number of children.

June 2014 (2) Was he only sleepy?

Taro did not want to go to school on the morning of the 6th day of school. That was the excursion day when all the children would go out together in a bus. I did understand that no one wants to go on a trip if he or she would be the only person who does not speak the language, even if they were adults. I thought of letting him having an off day. I said, "If you do not like the preschool, we can go back to Japan, but there would be no more playing at the beach". He said "I have changed my mind. I am going on the excursion".

When I picked him up from the preschool in the evening, he looked happy enough. "I did not want to go this morning, because I was sleepy" he said and smiled. I was not sure whether he was telling the truth, but relived as he also said that he would be OK from tomorrow.

July 2014 I was struck dumb, because it was terrible

One morning, when I went to the preschool to pick up Hana, I saw a basketball hoop in the wide hallway and found Taro and his class mates sitting in front of a teacher, Ms.Betty.

I decided to stay, and watched Taro with Hana in my arms. He saw me, but continued to listen to Ms.Betty. Basketball is popular in the Philippines. There are many baskets in the vacant lots and the young people play a lot. Ms.Betty asked "Do you like basketball?" or "Have you ever played with your farther?" and the children raised their hand and answers "Yes!" for all questions. On the other hand, Taro was not saying anything, but watching her without moving even one inch. She explained the rules.

"Are you ready?" she said.

"Yes, we are ready! ", the children said.

Then she said "Let's play basketball!"

At that time, every child was excited and stood up, but Taro rose because everybody else did.

Ms.Betty nominated 4 children and they were separated into two teams. The rule was a simple for the preschool children as they do not have to dribble, just get the ball and

shoot and the hoop was only a little taller than their height. When they were playing, some of them were good and some were not, but both players and the children who were watching the game were enjoying it very much.

Ms. Betty nominated the last 4 including Taro. She must have considered Taro understands, so she put him in the last group. When the game started, a ball rolled to his foot and he got the ball. "Taro, have a shot!" I gave my vocal support.

However, Taro went to Ms. Betty and handed over the ball to her. She was caught completely off-guard and said "Taro, play!" with some gestures. However, Taro was only looking at her face. Then other child took the ball and the play started again.

The game was 2 to 3 minutes and Taro only stood there confused until it was finished. I told him "Taro, get the ball and throw it into the hoop!" in Japanese a few times, but he looked frozen.

The class finished after this game and the children went back to the classroom after Ms. Betty. They were still excited about the game and laughing, talking loudly and making a gesture for throwing the ball. Some children were told off because of the noise they made. However, I felt sorry for Taro who was following Ms. Betty quietly and well behaved. It was lucky that the class mates were only 4 or 5 years old and no one had the desire to tease Taro.

– It should be OK, because Taro was only small and he did not seem that ashamed or in pain. When I studied in the U.S., I was the age of 20 and had so many embarrassing experiences in front of the class mates. It was almost unbearable. So, moving to an English speaking country this time was the right decision.

The problem is in Japan, Taro could easily enjoy playing games with his friends, but here he can't. I have taken away his opportunity to play. Oh, I wish I can instantly make his English better so he can understand what his teacher and friends are talking about.

I almost forgot that I had Hana in my arms while thinking for a while in the hallway when everyone was gone.

July 2014 (2) With Japanese friends

One month has passed and now I could exchange a greeting to all 4 Japanese mothers who I have been meeting at the preschool when I was sending off or picking up my children. It is one of the good things when you live overseas; you can be friends easily with other Japanese, only because you have the same nationality. They knew about the preschool and Cebu well, so it was a great help that they could answer all sorts of my questions. I talk to some of them almost every day.

On the other hand, my children have not spoken to any Japanese friends since they quit the Japanese nursery 2 months ago. They have not had any foreign friends yet, so they could not play with any friends. The Japanese children in the preschool were always talking to their friends in English, so it was hard to talk to them, especially, for Taro.

So one weekend, I invited these Japanese parents and their children to our home. I did not invite any one to our home in Japan as our place was small and in a mess. It was impossible for me to do preparations and entertaining while looking after children. However, it is easy having Ann at home.

The 3 families came on that day and there were 9 children including our children. It was almost funny looking at the excitement of our children. They were so delighted and started running inside of the house from end to end. All the other children got excited as well, so they were running after Taro and Jiro shouting with joy, and the house fell into chaos. We, the parents told them “Don’t run in the house! It is dangerous!” and put swimming suits on these frantic children and let them play in a plastic pool.

Usually, the other children were talking in English with friends, but today, they were chattering in Japanese. They got on well with Taro and Jiro and enjoyed themselves. This made me happy as well.

There were 2 grade school children I have never met before and they played well with the smaller children which was good too. Taro and Jiro did not have a chance to play with any grade school children, so they were calling their names with respect in Japanese.

We still invite Japanese families to come over. We sometimes play a card game ‘Uno’ together and both the adults and the children chat in Japanese and enjoy ourselves.

August 2014 We cried together on the stage

There was a culmination (report) day in August, just before the first term finished. In Taro’s class, the teachers divided the classroom into two, and made a half into a stage to make announcements to parents. They were addressing a theme of ‘me and community’. Taro was going to be on stage to announce that he wanted to be a police officer in the future, so my husband put a picture of the Philippine police’s emblem, which was downloaded from the internet, on his bluish clothes and he was delighted.

However, he said “I do not want to go”, and broke into tears that morning. He said that he did not want to announce his name and what he wanted to be in the future on the stage, but he could come to the preschool.

I spoke to his teacher, Ms. Cathy about what happened, then she said “Taro, you did well. You would be fine!” According to her, he was fine to say “My name is Taro Morita. I want to be a police man”. However, he wanted to go home. We spent the time looking at what the children made during the term or joining the people taking pictures until the opening time came.

The music started and the children begun to line up on the stage. Then Taro went up on the stage holding my hand. Oh, no! I was like a giant in the middle of small children. It was embarrassing, but I did not care. Could Taro do this until the end?

I had to sit and wait holding his hand while the others were dancing and singing on the stage. Taro kept murmuring “I want to go home” “I want to go home” in Japanese but, strangely he did not get off from there. And now, each child started to make a speech. The small children’s English was so cute and I thought that I could be watching and enjoying this with the audience...

It was time for Taro. He stepped forward to the microphone without releasing my hand. However, the words that came out from his mouth were not English. He said “I do not want to talk...” in Japanese and started to cry. Wow... The audience seemed to have understood what was going on, and they said “OK, OK” or “Good job!” to Taro and clapped loudly even though they did not know what Taro had said in Japanese.

The warm clapping from the people was unexpected and I was relieved at the same time. Those feeling made me cry although I was still on the stage. The small Taro could not speak after all, but I was impressed that he tried and could overcome this hard time. I was thinking no parents would understand this sort of happening unless they had experience of dealing with a different language, but that was wrong. Any parent knows that all children have their strong or weak points and everybody is an individual. When they see any child not doing well, they will encourage them. I appreciated this.

By the way, I could not go to school when I was in the first and the second grades of grade school. Before that time, I went to a preschool in Osaka, but we moved to Sapporo because of my parent’s work and entered in the local grade school. I noticed much later, one of the reasons that I could not go to school was because I was talking in Kansai dialect and felt uneasy about that. I thought “I have to go to school” and then, I also thought “I cannot go”, every morning. It was a difficult time for me that I wanted to disappear and I still remember those days clearly even after more than 30 years. My mother did not force me to go to school and instead of that, she took me to a park for a change. At that time, I needed time to forget about my problem and a warm family who acknowledged me. (Later my father bought a house in a different town and I changed school after that. I made many friends and became fond of school.)

Our children's difficulty in the preschool ought to be much bigger compared to my problem that I had when I was a child. They cannot understand even what other people are talking about! Though they do not dislike going to preschool every morning. They even seemed to be enjoying it. I sincerely think 'They are great'. They are learning things they did not know before with looking, listening and feeling in a foreign preschool. It is clear that they are keeping the various things inside of themselves as an 'experience'. I promised myself that I would accompany them and never force them even if they do not want to go to the preschool from then on.

Jiro and Hana were fine on that day, as the main things they did were drawing pictures.

August 2014 (2)

An evaluation list and an interview with the teachers

The second term started a day after the first term finished.

When I was at the preschool picking up the children, the teachers in charge of our 3 children handed over the evaluation lists for the first term. They were rated from excellent to poor for socialization, practicality, embodiment and cognitive development. For example, Taro got excellent for table setting and food and drink preparation and for going to the toilet by himself, but for accepting leadership and for understanding appropriate language he received a 'poor' as I imagined. I did agree what was written there.

I was interested in the long comment which was made by teachers. Jiro's teacher wrote "He understands and follows the rules. If there is a child who does not follow the rules like cleaning up or not running in the class room, he informs on that child to the teacher". I was surprised because Jiro had been appointed to do exactly the same thing in Japan. At that time, I and my husband laughed "He would be disliked in the class". Now I could not believe he was doing the same thing here! The teacher also wrote "He tries hard to use English for what he wants to say and when he does not understand English words, he points to the objects or uses a motion". This is so Jiro, who is fearless and does not compromise easily. So, the special qualities that a child has do not seem to change even if the place and the environment changes.

We had a 20 minutes' PTC (parent and teacher conference) about the results of the evaluation list several days later. Hana's teacher said that we would be better to read English books at home for her to improve her English. I explained that we only read Japanese books for Hana, because we want her to learn Japanese as well. The teacher said "I see. It is understandable" and accepted our thinking. Then I asked how many

students in her class do not speak in English at home. There are Philippines, Chinese and Europeans in her class, a total of 12. I was surprised to know that Hana was the only one who does not use English at home. I asked some parents about this matter and found out the teacher was right.

A French mother said “I and my Swiss husband only talk to our children in English, because we want them to learn English perfectly. It is pity that they do not know French, but we have given that up.”

A Philippine mother said “We are both Philippines and grew up talking the local language, but we only use English at home. We decided to do so for the children’s education. We put our children in this private school, because they can make foreign friends and talk to them in English”.

There are mothers who think English education is important even here. I feel close to them as they are seriously thinking about ‘the language the children speak’ and making strenuous efforts.

September 2014

How Taro spends his days

Taro briskly enters his classroom after I send him to the preschool, every morning. I always follow him to say ‘Good morning’ to his classmates or to his teacher. I want them to feel close to me as Taro’s mother and also I always want to grasp the atmosphere of Taro and his classroom.

One day, I remembered something that I had to ask the teacher and went back to the classroom. I did not want to see if Taro was feeling lonely and he might not want me to see him if he was lonely, so I looked at the inside from the window first. He was watching a computer screen by himself as I expected (There were computers in each class in this preschool, and children were allowed to touch them.) I saw the other children were talking to the teacher or to their friends and seemed to be enjoying themselves. Some of them were enthusiastically building blocks and their eyes were bright even if they were playing by themselves. Somehow Taro looked bored.

However, Taro always says he enjoys the school. He sometimes talks about an episode with his classmates, like “My friends envied the chocolate I had in my lunch box today, so I shared it with three of them.”

At home, Taro has been reading a lot of Japanese books. He always liked books and we used to borrow many books from a library in Japan. We brought 100 Japanese books to Cebu, but because he reads one or two books a day, it was not enough at all and we have just decided to get more books from Japan. He misses the library in Japan as he

could read so many different books, but here, he repeats reading the same books. When I tell him to take a shower, he begins to move reluctantly while keeping his eyes on a page of a book in his hands like what he did in Japan.

He plays with his younger brother Jiro at home. They sometimes play a board game together. And Taro is always the gentle brother to his sister Hana. He reads a book for her. Taro laughs a lot at home, but I am worried about him in the preschool. In Japan, when I went to a nursery school to pick him up, he sometimes did not want to go home because he was playing with friends, but I cannot see any close friends of his here.

However, I cannot make his preschool life happy. I will keep watching him, showing love, support and always acknowledge him. I hope he will make a lot of friends beyond the wall of language.

October 2014 English and Math

Taro and Jiro have been taking personal tuition for 1 hour per day from Monday to Thursday evening at this preschool.

They learn English and math. You may think that having a tutor for such small children is too much, but it was necessary for them to confront a teacher who only spoke English, because I wanted them to be able to speak advanced English to their friends as soon as possible. My children had never learnt English in Japan.

I made a visit to look at them in the tuition class. Taro was studying the CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words (for example, Big, Hat, Cat, etc.). He was reading words after the teacher, spelling those words, answering the teacher's questions by using the alphabet blocks. Jiro was practicing the words for colors in English. I was worried that Jiro could be still at the desk as he was just 4 years old, but he seemed to be having fun and did concentrate for one hour of study.

They understood that the teacher did not speak Japanese, so they did not use Japanese at all. I was very impressed with that.

My children used to misunderstand our housemaid, Ann, thinking she was teasing them that she did not know what they were talking about even in simple Japanese. Now, they found out that there were people who do not understand the Japanese language.

Taro was also working on adding, subtracting and filling the missing numbers on a work sheet and Jiro was practicing the numbers up to 20.

In English, You have to read '12' as twelve and be able to spell 'twelve' with math study. I often write a check in English, but to be honest, I do not like it. For example, when I make a check for 86,583 pesos, I have to write 'Peso eighty-six thousand five hundred

eighty-three only', but it is difficult and I have no confidence doing it.

When you think of numbers in English, you need to have a change in concept. The number of '12' is '10 x 1 and 2' in Japanese, but the English word 'twelve' does not have such an explanation. Another example is '12,000'. We say this number as 'twelve thousand' in English, but in Japanese, we understand this number as '10,000 x 1 and 1000 x 2'. It is not easy for me to imagine how big the number is in English. '120,000 (one hundred and twenty thousand)' is the worse. Am I the only person who gets confused and annoyed to see the word 'thousand' after the 'hundred'?

It could be possible that our children will not be able to read numbers in Japanese in the future.

October 2014 (2) Taro's promotion

We had a Halloween party on the 24th of October in the preschool, just before the Halloween Holiday. All children and the teachers dressed up for the party and whole preschool was in a festival mood. However, I was having a meeting with the vice principal of the school. I have asked the school if they could move Taro to a higher class a few days ago and they were supposed give me an answer.

As I mentioned before, he entered a one-year lower class for his age at the beginning. He is still quiet in the class and answers yes or no by nodding or shaking his head, so this request was reckless, but I wanted to move him into a class with the same age as himself. I was thinking his English ability is going to be much better, but if he enters the grade school a year later, he will never have a chance to be in a class for his age.

The vice-principal estimated Taro as follows,

* He started understanding English as he does well with a paper test even though he does not speak.

* He is very good at math.

* He is mature mentally.

And so she agreed to putting him in a higher class from November. Taro was glad about this. He did not like taking a nap in preschool since he was in Japan, so he was shocked that if he stayed in the preschool next year he would have the same problem. He may be able to go to a grade school next year if he passes an entrance examination.

November 2014 The children who accept a difference

Taro moved to an older class after 10 days' holiday in November and one week later, he

had to participate in a culmination (report) event for the class to show their parents the learning achievements of the second term.

It was held in a park in a middle of a natural mountain in a suburb. The children introduce themselves and said what they achieved in the last term, one by one. And then every child danced together.

However, Taro could have hardly done that. I couldn't hear when he was introducing himself. The teacher talked about study achievements instead of him as he did not study in this class, and he could not dance like the others even though he was trying hard.

But, he did not refuse to go to the venue this morning, and could appear on the stage without holding my hand, so it was better than before. He could not do the task well, but he joined this class only one week before so he could not help it. I did understand this, but I was upset thinking "For how long do I have to experience such regrettable situations?" The only help for my low feeling was looking at Taro innocently eating food the parents made for the day, like pasta or donuts.

By the way, there is a Philippine boy with light autism in this class and a special teacher (shadow teacher) is looking after him. I must have seen him before, but I did notice neither his obstacle nor the relationship between him and the teacher for a while. He did introduce himself on the stage and no one gave him special treatment when they were playing or studying together.

All 13 children in this class have different nationalities, languages, body shapes and color of hair, eyes, skin, and so on. Some adults may have a wrong idea about these different people, but the children accept that with a pure eye and open heart for any friends.

They seem to see other children's situation and help or look after them. They always say "Hi, Taro" to Taro. However, he ignores them pretending that he did not hear. I got into a panic with his impolite behavior, but recently, he can answer them with high five. He is still so stubborn that he does not talk or say even his friend's names. I appreciate those good classmates that they greet my strange son the next morning again.

I have read about a Japanese child who was living overseas and he kept silent for a long time, so I was not worried about Taro's English. It is because he would certainly start to talk, some day. In fact, I am looking forward to seeing that he remembers that he had such a difficult time, and at the same time received many kindnesses from everyone, and then using this experience to grow into a fine person. I want him to grow up as a person who can take care and consider other children when they cannot be with others and feel lonely. He should be able to understand their painful feelings.

Children learn from each other, and parents have to realize this and need not worry too much about the difficulties of children adjusting to each other.

February 2015 Taro's test

I could not see Taro's development in English and the relationship with friends in the new class. Now it is February and time for the oldest children in the preschool to take a graduation test. This test is very strict. If they do not pass, they cannot receive the preschool graduation certificate and have to have extra lessons. We want Taro to enter the grade school that the same organizations as this preschool, so the test is almost like an entrance examination for that school for Taro.

There will be the test for math, English and science and it lasts for 3 days. Taro did not study at home and we did not push him before the test.

On the math test day, Ms. Debbie, his homeroom teacher, spoke to me when I was at the school to pick up Taro. She told me that Taro was the second person in the class to finish and submit the test. So she asked "Taro, how was the test?" and he answered "Easy". I thought that was insolent and felt ashamed, but she said that it is the tendency of all students to want to finish the test quickly, like a race. We talked that we were hoping he did well with this math test and could cover the other 2 tests which Taro was not good at.

I was called to the school the week after the test and was told that everyone including Taro passed the test. Good! Ms. Debbie put Taro's test paper between us and explained to me about mistakes he made, one by one.

Surprisingly, his English test was almost perfect. He did draw pictures correctly according to sentences like 'Peter has a bird as a pet. The pet is in a cage' and 'An animal in the water'. He also made correct answers looking at a picture and make a sentence choosing a right preposition from 'in, out, beside'. The only mistake he made was 'Write your age under the square'. That question was easy to misunderstand and he wrote a big '6' inside the square and got a 0.5 minus point. He only made a small number of mistakes with the science, too.

On the other hand, the math test was terrible. He made easy mistakes with plus or minus and he almost failed because of the math. This would be a good learning experience about quitting the race.

I and Ms. Debbie laughed at the unexpected result as Taro passed the test thanks to his English. It may be not that strange. Most of his class mates do not have personal tuition as it is not necessary for them. Taro could be good at the test because he was

used to answering these questions.

This is a superfluous story, but when Taro was having the test, I was asked to make a speech about 'Life in a snow country' in Hana's class. The children were learning about a different life style according to the season and the weather. I knew about snow, so the teacher asked me to talk about it in front of the children. I said "no" at the beginning thinking it would be impossible for me to make a speech in English. However, what I had to do is talking in front of 8 children including my daughter who are only the age of 2 and no parents would be there. This would be perfect conditions to make my first English speech. I have been watching our three children working hard with English, so I should not escape. My English had also improved at that time and I had no trouble chatting with the teachers in the preschool.

I think I did well. I showed many family photos when we were in Sapporo to explain about necessary dress or how to play in the snow country, so when the children found Hana on the screen, they pointed and said "It's Hana!" and it helped them to concentrate on my speech. I also mentioned the 'Sapporo snow festival' and when I explained about a big snow sculpture which is 15m tall, the same as a four storied building, the teacher shouted with joy.

However, I got a shock when one of the children saw a photo of a snow sculpture of Star Wars, he said, "The wallpaper on mum's PC is a picture of Star Wars". I said "Oh, is that so?", but I was astonished that 2 years old can say that in English! There would be no way for Japanese children to say that if they were studying English in Japan.

March 2015 Taro's study presentation and the gradation

There was another study culmination (report) day in March for Taro's class just before the long summer holiday. Each child had to talk about 'The solar system' that they learnt that term. They appeared on the stage while the parents were watching, and had to answer or explain the teacher's questions. It seemed that which children got which question or when they had to be on the stage was decided already, but I did not think Taro could do it, so my heart was jumping while I was watching the other class mates. A girl had to repeat herself because her voice was too small and a boy said "I forgot what to say" and became perverse, so did not speak at all for 5 minutes. I thought this project was too hard even for children who do not have a problem speaking in English. The awful memory of two presentations in the past crossed my mind.

Taro's name was called, at last. My heart had almost stopped. Taro appeared in the

middle of the stage, by himself, confronted by the watching parents. Ms. Debbie, the teacher, said “Taro, explain about Jupiter”. Taro nodded to the teacher and looked at one point in the air with a tense expression, but he began to speak with loud and clear voice.

“Jupiter is the biggest planet in the solar system. Many planets can fit into it.”

Taro spoke in English in front of everyone! He returned to a line of classmates in the side of stage while receiving loud applause. I was so surprised and kept looking at him with wide open eyes. Taro noticed my reaction and returned a nice smile because he was now relaxed. He was certainly growing up. He has done such a serious presentation without telling anyone in the family and this also seemed a proof of growing up.

A few days later after that presentation day, a graduation ceremony was hold in a neighborhood university hall. The children were wearing white togas. They were called one by one to go to the stage and boys bowed to the audience like a gentleman and the girls picked up their skirts with both hands to bow like a lady. Then they left the stage and waited to receive their graduation certificates. When they went back to the stage to get the certificate from the principal, parents had to be on the stage as well. I and my husband did not know about this and when we were told what to do, we were not prepared to be in front of other parents, so we panicked.

The other children including Jiro and Hana performed some dancing and after that it was the turn of the graduating children. The boys wore the tie and the girls changed to fancy dress and danced as a pair. We also watched the photographic slides of the children when they were babies, or other private moments. There was a surprise for parents. Each child held a mike and thanked their parents. The whole ceremony was fun and impressive. I was proud of Taro on the stage and could not take my eyes off him.

However, Taro finished this fiscal year without having enough communication with his friends. His expression stiffened up when someone tried to talk to him in English. He always walks one step behind the friends who are chatting and having fun. He just watched them looking lonely. Even this morning, I felt sorry that he was murmuring “How can I make a friend...” on the way to the ceremony.

Before leaving Japan, I thought that because he was still in a preschool, he would have fun even in another country, but it did not work with Taro. Hana matches with her class. Jiro, who was also promoted to the class suitable for his age, enjoys the class very much. Jiro’s English is not always right, but his teacher often congratulates him for his study. It was also lucky for him that there were new Japanese students in the class who entered just after Jiro did.

On the other hand, Taro’s position for the least talkative person in the class did not

change from the beginning to the end. Taro does not want to talk English which he has neither the vocabulary nor the expressions compared with his Japanese. It would be hard for him as children of his age play together and communicate with each other and have to talk a lot when they are working on a project in class.

Surprisingly, Taro keeps reading Japanese books even in Cebu and his Japanese vocabulary has been increasing. He says “Hana, if you made yourself so pretty, everybody would be fascinated by you” or “Jiro, you should cool down a little bit” that he never used this sort of expression in Japan.

We do not know what kind of growth and difficulty he may have in the second year in Cebu. We only hope that will be a fun year for Taro.

March to June 2015 Taro goes to a Japanese school

We returned to Sapporo the next day. We were going to stay with my parents during the summer holidays and Taro was going to go to a local school. There were less than 30 children per grade in this school, so the city was thinking of a merger with another school.

Actually, this school is also my old school. When I was in that school, many houses were built around the area including ours and many children were transferred to the school. The city established 2 more schools nearby, but still did not catch up to the number of the children which keeps increasing, so they also built a prefabrication class room. However, because of the low birthrate, the number of children became fewer and many classrooms are not used for students any more. Now one floor of this school is used by the local community.

Taro enjoyed Japanese grade school. He attended the school from the entrance ceremony day, so he did not stand out that ‘he is from Cebu’. He became friendly with his classmates immediately and talked to boys and girls and played together. He went to the school library and borrowed a few books every day. His teacher congratulates him as ‘He is the student who reads books the most in the class’. He also participated in a sport event in the school and made good memories even it was only a short stay.

Taro burst into tears in the evening, a day before we were going back to Cebu, because he was feeling the pain of saying good-bye to his Japanese friends. I was afraid he was going to say he did not want to return to Cebu but he said that he was looking forward to entering the grade school in Cebu. I said “We will come back in March next year and meet your Japanese friends again”, then he calmed down.

June 2015 Taro enters a grade school in Cebu.

We returned to Cebu and Taro entered a grade school which is located next to the preschool. Again there is no Japanese student in his class. The number of students is 17 and most of them were his classmates in the preschool.

They study 6 subjects; English, math, science, social studies, computer and Philippine language. The students in Cebu put all their text books in a big bag with casters and carry them every day. The students have to carry textbooks for all subjects from Monday to Thursday, so they need much bigger bags than the corresponding Japanese students. (They learn music, physical education and art on Friday)

Taro's school starts early morning, 7.30 AM, to avoid the crowding in the car park which is shared by the next door preschool. The school finishes at 4pm, the same time as the private lessons in the preschool finishes. So from this year, we decided that 2year old Hana would also have a private teacher as Jiro did. This allows me to pick up all three children at the same time.

We gave up on Taro having a tutor, because of the time. Still I was concerned about his every day homework, especially the Philippine language class's, but Ann was going to help him with that.

June 2015 (2) Japanese supplementary school

Taro also entered the Cebu Japanese supplementary school which opens every Saturdays. The students in the school learn Japanese and math with Japanese teachers. The teacher gives a lot of homework, so Taro starts studying Kanji at home.

This year, about 10 students are in the first grade. Taro was happy to have Japanese classmates for the first time since we moved to Cebu. There are many students who were born in Cebu and who are not good at speaking Japanese. I was thankful that there is a place that appreciates Taro's Japanese skill in Cebu.

Also, there is a library space with many Japanese books for children and we can borrow many books. Taro found a thick book of 'Harry Potter' and finished it in a few weeks, sometimes asking me the difficult Kanji or meaning of words he did not understand.

September 2015 Taro got a commendation for excellent study result?!

I often ask Taro if he can understand all of the subjects and the teachers because

everything is in English, but he always answers that everything is OK, but I could not believe that.

The day that proves whether his word is true came soon after. The students were having the middle of first term test in July.

The test period is for 3 days and they have to have tests of two subjects in the morning and go home. There was the same tension as there is for Japanese high schools or junior high schools.

Taro's test results were all good. He only had minus 0.5 point for the English test. The mistake was with a question for using an article 'a' and he wrote as "a dog is barking" instead of "A dog is barking". I was astonished that he answered correctly all other questions and also that he had known words like "barking".

Taro did very well for all subjects at the end of the first term test which he had in September. I thought he might be studying so well in English. I praised him, and a few days later, he brought home a certificate of achievement. He said that he got scores of more than 90 percent (straight A) for all subjects, so he was commended in front of all the students in the school. I was so surprised that grade schools commend high achievers and my Taro was chosen for that!

I have read and known several stories of the personal experience of Japanese children who were living in English speaking countries, but there are no such stories that children study well before achieving communication skills. In most cases, when children moved overseas, they learn talking and playing with other children first, and after that they will be able to write and read. It is because having everyday conversation is easy to follow, or they copy each other and use limited words which often involve movements. On the other hand, when you are studying unknown contents through text books, you have to read and understand them in a different language. You have to know more vocabulary and more difficult grammar than simply talking every day English. So why could Taro achieve his study results before making friends?

I can think of one thing. We did not move to an English speaking native country like America or England, but to a country in which English is not the native language. When I asked Taro "Wouldn't you know the meaning of some words in the textbook?". He answered "Yes, it is OK. My teacher explains very difficult words very well during the lesson." There are less than one third of children who have been brought up by native English speaking parents. Also, I cannot say that bookshops have a wide variety of books, in Cebu. Therefore, the children, besides Taro, do not have a high language ability for understanding text books. The children in Cebu may not know the adjective or expression that children from America or England know, so it seems that teachers

have to explain English words properly in Cebu.

Taro's teachers praised his prize at the PTC. They said "Taro always concentrates in the class and listens very carefully. We can see that looking at the paper tests. A problem is that Taro does not give his opinions, but he is mentally cool and will be able to deal with that".

9 out of 17 in his class got a prize. A bilingual child has an intelligence level that matches to the stronger language. Then the child uses the stronger language to analyze the weaker language and strengthens it. It is easy for others to misunderstand Taro because of his poor spoken English. But as he reads so many books in Japanese he may have a high level of thinking. My thinking is he may be able to acquire considerable English in the future.

The people around us were really astonished that Taro was commended. The principal, who is in charge of both preschool and the grade school, the vice principals for each schools and all teachers of the preschool who know Taro congratulated us one after another. They asked "What kind of study does he do at home?". When I answered "He is always reading Japanese books", they looked at me strangely, but I think that is an important thing to keep increasing the skill of the mother language.

October 2015 Taro has changed

I noticed that Taro has been becoming a little more active towards friends since he was commended. When I go to the school to pick him up, he says to his friends "Tom, bye-bye" or "George, see you" without hesitation. Once I was there, he said "Mom, please wait a little longer as I am going to find my friend" and he went somewhere. He was playing hide and seek with friends. The rule was a little different from the Japanese one. They do 'rock-paper-scissors' and the winner will be a demon. The next demon is the child who was found at the end.

In the past, when I saw some children playing at school, I asked Taro "What are they doing?" and he answered "I do not know," with a sad face. So, Taro finally might have crossed a language barrier and the feeling which had existed between him and his friends. It took one and half a year since we moved to Cebu which was longer than we had thought but the day that we were waiting for has come, at last.

November 2015 Jiro and Hana's Japanese

There is an internet site that Taro has access to for English and math and this is part of his homework. So, after he comes home, he starts the computer and does some homework. This site also has games for study and Jiro envies what his brother is doing. Jiro always puts his hand on the computer from the side and bothers Taro, so Taro scolds Jiro all the time.

Jiro likes the Japanese animation songs I play in the car when I take him and bring him home from school. So when Taro is studying, I turn on another computer in the separate room and make song cards for Jiro. Jiro was pleased about that. Taro has been studying how to use the software, so he learnt how to make the cards quickly and taught Jiro the way. Jiro can now make the cards and sings with these cards in the house and in the car. I was worried that Jiro does not read as many Japanese books as Taro, but even with this kind of thing, he is committed to Japanese and I was relieved.

In the meantime, my husband has been reading Japanese picture books for Hana. Taro and Jiro love playing board games, so we often play together after dinner, but Hana does not leave my husband alone and enjoys the books we borrow from the Japanese school for her.

March 2016 Our children have finished the second fiscal year.

The graduation ceremonies were finished and our 3 children's second year of school ended.

The first grader, Taro had straight A's for all three terms and he had much fun playing with his friends during the last half of the year. When I go to school to pick him up, he is sweating from running with his friends in the small ground. He seemed to not want his parents to see him talking in English before, but I have been seeing him talking to his classmates in English.

However, when I asked him to give a small message to his teacher, he said "I do not know how to say in English", so I tell him exactly what to say and encourage him, but he says "No, I do not understand" and breaks into tears. This may be because of his character rather than his English...

Jiro who is 5 years old and in the middle class in the preschool, also speaks much better in Japanese. He can read Japanese books with hiragana and also with kanji with furigana by himself. He does not chat in English at home.

However, when he tells us what he learnt at school, he explains things in Japanese and using some English words. He says in Japanese "We are studying about continents in the world, like Antarctica. The animals which live there are..." He says some words

like 'continent', 'world' or 'Antarctica', in English and sometimes I do not know the meanings of some words, but because he does not know the spelling, I cannot look them up in a dictionary, making it difficult to understand.

3 years old Hana also uses Japanese at home, but she recognizes more in English about basic nouns compared to Taro and Jiro. One day, she said 'I like Yarrow better'. I was surprised she used the word 'Yarrow' because it is a slang word to Japanese. However, she meant 'Yellow'. Her English accent is so good and when she uses English words with Japanese, the meaning of what she is saying becomes unclear. "OK, Kiro (yellow, in Japanese). So you like Kiro" I emphasized the expression in Japanese, but I feel that such effort is a waste of time while we are in Cebu.

Anyway, a long summer holiday starts from tomorrow. We are leaving Cebu tonight and live with my parents again. We can spend our time like this while my parents (grandparents for my children) are fine while we have our savings or we earn some money, but I would like to keep doing this as long as possible.

How about the Parent's job?

I would like to talk about our work here. We have been living here for 2 years and we can see our direction. We have been preparing to start a business, 'share house with meals' in Cebu. When I looked up the starting businesses in Cebu, We found that many examples of Japanese restaurants, so my husband started to cook our dinners instead of leaving that to Ann. He makes Nikujaga (pork and potato), Chicken Nanban (Marinated fried- chicken with tartar sauce), dried curry, Miso soup with pork, cooked Hijiki (sea weed) ... all Japanese food. In Japan, he used to cook dinner on the weekends and prepare breakfast every morning. He cut vegetables in perfect shape and I have noticed that he was particular with the way to cook fish or meat. He has been checking recipes on the Internet and improving his skill.

When we were in Japan last year, he got a food handling certificate and also attended a Japanese cooking seminar for how to make 'Onigirazu (Rice ball without making them as a ball)'.

He buys the seasonings for Japanese cooking at a Japanese grocery in Cebu and goes to the local market or a supermarket for fresh food. Most shops vary in their quality so he has to go to two or three shops. Moreover, there is no general 'sliced meat' in any supermarkets, so he goes to a butcher run by Koreans. This is hard to believe, but supermarkets do not have a machine for slicing meat, they only sell block meat.

There are more Japanese living in Cebu, but I do not think many of them would be as

particular about buying food like my husband is. He goes shopping once or twice a week, but because he visits so many shops, he has to put a cooler box in the car and spend at least 4 hours on the task. So, we thought that if we run a share house with 3 Japanese meals, it would be useful here.

By the way, it was fortunate for us that he started to cook Japanese food. We had trouble with Taro and Jiro's eating habits. At that time, they did not eat any Philippine food Ann cooked but a bowl of rice with Japanese seasonings. Taro and Jiro were only 5 and 3 years of the age, so I was surprised that they were rejecting the different taste of food so much and only wanted to eat what they ate in Japan. Hana, who was 1, ate Philippine food very well. Ann cooks delicious local food and when she cooks for our Japanese guests, they enjoy the food very much. However, because we have been eating her food every day, we started to feel less enjoyment at dinner time. We looked forward to going to Japanese restaurants on Sundays when Ann was not working for us and we always ate too much. It seems Japanese people can never be separated from their own food.

We put one of our rooms on the Airbnb list as 'An inn with Japanese food and pick up and drop off service' for the experience in November, 2015. We were anxiously waiting for some response to come for one month. However, nothing happened. We introduced ourselves in Japanese only, but it seemed that the Airbnb was not known enough by Japanese people.

To break this situation, we made a portal site that is called 'Abroad Airbnb in Japanese'. We picked about 150 places as follows,

*Overseas listing sites which caught our eyes,

*Those being introduced by natural Japanese language speakers. Because it's managed by Japanese.

*Those available to make a reservation in Japanese.

We thought this site would be useful for Japanese business people and travelers who could get local information in Japanese. So, after that, there were more access to the site and as the site owner, our place seemed noticeable. We had some inquiries from Japanese. We also introduced our place in English, so we had people from Denmark, Estonia and Japan even it was only for 2 months before our temporary return to Japan. We supported their stay in Cebu with Japanese meals that my husband cooked and I provided pick up and drop off service for them from the airport. We are thinking of renting a house as a share house and starting a business. I am also exerting myself with my staff for my NPO Company called 'Ohitorisamakai (Singles)'. It is a place for singles

to meet other singles, either the same or different sex, and has different concept from a matrimonial agency or a dating site. It has been introduced on TV and in newspapers, because of this difference.

We do not know how much longer we can continue to live in Cebu because of the necessary expenses. However, when we watch each of our children in Cebu and their growth, we get the energy to try hard.

Chapter 7. Why is Cebu a good place to migrate to?

*** This chapter is not translated

Chapter 8. Family interviews

I have interviewed Japanese families who have been bringing up their children in Cebu for more than 10 years.

(The names of the children are fictions)

I. Ochiai's family

Tadashi (43, born 1971)

Matsumi (43, born 1971)

Ichiro (10, born 2014 Grade 5)

Jiro (6, born 2018 Grade 1)

Tadashi and Matsumi were from Yamanashi prefecture and went to the same high school. Tadashi's father had a business in Cebu. When Tadashi decided to be independent from a restaurant he was working for and his father suggested to him to open a restaurant in Cebu. He moved to Cebu in 1998 and he opened a Japanese restaurant 'Kanyo-en' in the city.

When they were getting married, Matsumi told her parents that they would be back in Japan after four or five years, but their business was doing so well it did not happen.

Matsumi's story.

Bringing up the children in Cebu

I never thought that I would live overseas before got married. I was not good at English, but now I live in Cebu and keep practicing English, so I do not have problems having everyday conversations.

I wanted to go back to Japan, before we had Ichiro. I was going to give birth to the baby in Japan, but a Japanese hospital I went to was so big that I had to see different doctors every time I visited there. It seemed like a cold treatment to me. So I went back to Cebu when I was eight months pregnant and had Ichiro in a friendly local hospital. I had Jiro in Cebu as well.

I did not have trouble giving birth to a child here. I had a help from a mid-wife who came to our house every day, as well as a housemaid. When Ichiro was 6 months old, my mother in-law was visiting us and I realized "I had never given a bath to Ichiro!" and started to practice before she arrived.

A bilingual education

Ichiro went to a private preschool since he was 2 years old. He has not had any trouble with English since then. We talk in Japanese to each other at home, but there are many chances for him to use English in Cebu. He is now in the grade 5. There are 8 children in his class and he is the only Japanese. Now he speaks very fast to his friends and also more complicated things. I often have to ask him what they are talking about.

He says that speaking in English is easier than Japanese. Probably his English is not good enough compared to native English speakers, but I have heard that if children have grown up in an English speaking country until junior high school, their English will catch up to native speakers, so I am not worried. I am much more worried about his Japanese. I have been teaching Japanese to him using some prints since he was small.

I also tried to make him write a diary in Japanese. However, I might have pushed him too hard, he became to dislike Japanese at one stage. I panicked and pushed him even harder. One day, my husband told me that of course, Ichiro does not want to study when he sees my angry face all the time, then I had to rethink about his education.

The way of studying at home should be different according to the children's character. Ichiro gets very angry even when I only say "No, that is not good" So, now I try to please him when I teach. Both children study Japanese for 15 minutes every night. When Ichiro was 3years old, Jiro was born. We had a baby sitter for Jiro, but one day, I noticed that he was using the local language. I had to tell the baby sitter to use English only with Jiro.

Jiro is now in grade 2. He says that he likes English because he can speak to people from different countries. He likes study in general, so he likes studying Japanese as well. I hope he will continue Japanese study.

During the summer holidays, my children have been going to Japanese school in Japan. Jiro enjoys it, but Ichiro is finding it difficult to continue as the study is becoming harder. The text book and what the teacher says are harder to understand as he is older and now he says that he does not want to go to the Japanese school.

When he was in grade 4, we had a parent's visiting day at the school. A teacher was asking about what they think about a Japanese haiku poem, ' a shining rice field in autumn'. Ichiro answered "It is shining because there are lots of needles in the rice field". I was shocked as no Japanese students would answer like that. The teacher and all parents knew he has grown up in Cebu, so they did not laugh or tease at him so I was

relieved. The homework became difficult for him as well, so there could be a limit to what he can study at the Japanese school.

Ichiro was fine about studying Japanese until he was in grade 2. Then he had a trouble learning Kanji. When he practices many Kanji, he forgets hiragana or Katakana, even with such simple characters.

Their speaking Japanese is almost perfect. However, compared to children in Japan, they sometimes speak like the language is translated from English. Even they are pure Japanese and brought up by Japanese parents, because they live in an English speaking country, English is the stronger language for them. I let Ichiro to read a Japanese manga and he seems to enjoy it, but he still prefers to watch 'Cartoon network' in English.

I think Ichiro is good at talking and socializing as suitable for living overseas, but Jiro seems opposite.

A summary of bringing up children

When we are bringing up children overseas, sometimes we get surprised by culture difference. Ichiro started 'Facebook' at the age of 9. His teacher was in the same group. When the teacher put a photo of her and her boyfriend, the students clicked 'good!' for that page.

Another example is, they made a short play for their Chinese class. The story was about 2 boys asking a girl for a date, but she broke one boy's heart. Everyone enjoyed it, but children do not give that sort of play in Japan and also Ichiro was the one who had a broken heart, so my feeling was mixed even more.

The labor fee is cheap in Cebu, so our children go to a soccer club, a golf club, have a tutor, lean 'Kumon' and they do other things. They enjoy all of them and Ichiro has been saying that he wanted to be a professional golfer. He trains himself at the gym of my condo when he does not have a golf lesson.

It is not easy for parents to teach Japanese. However, we do not want to confuse them because of our thinking too much about language. What parents can do is finding out what the child is good at and help them to achieve it. We want to bring them up in the Philippines where people do not worry about small things.

Ichiro's story

The 10 years old Ichiro talks properly in Japanese as a big brother. He knows a lot of Japanese words and speaks with a perfect accent, so he does not seem to be brought up overseas. However, he sometimes cannot find the right word in Japanese and asks mother “Mum, how do you say it in Japanese?” He uses 2 languages separately.

He said,

“English is easier for me. I do not have any trouble speaking in English to teachers or to friends.

I speak English all the time at school. I do not have Japanese friends in Cebu, so I speak Japanese only with my family.

I do not know enough Japanese, so I repeat using the same expression when I talk. I do not like practicing Kanji. It is not easy to remember the order of how to write. I only use Kanji when I have written a good-bye letter to Japanese friends when I leave Japanese school. I will (looking at mother) study a little bit harder...

I like the math’s class in Japan. It is easy. The math’s class is not easy in Cebu as we have to study more advanced questions. (It could be because Ichiro goes to a Singaporean school in Cebu)

In Japan, English class is easy, too. Everyone said “Ichiro, your English is as good as we thought!” I spoke to a western teacher and of course, he understood my English. The other subjects in Japanese school are difficult and not interesting. In a Japanese class, only the teacher speaks and I get lost. I like the Cebu’s school.

I like playing in parks in Japan. There are so many parks in Japan and they are peaceful. Cebu’s parks are crowded and there are not enough, so I do not go.

I do not have any trouble in Japan. I got lost once, but I went to a shop and asked the way. Yes, I can talk to adults in Japanese as well.

There is a problem when I play Japanese TV games with friends. I cannot finish reading about the game on the screen as it disappears too fast.

I would like to be a professional golfer in the future. I like the putting at the end. I will practice more.

Jiro’s story

The 6 years old Jiro is a boy with a pretty face. He answered my questions with nodding or shaking his head. He spoke a little Japanese, but I am not quite sure if he is shy or does not know how to say things in Japanese.

He said,

“I like studying Kanji. Hiragana and katakana are just OK. I like English better.

When my teacher says what I do not understand, I can ask the meaning.

I like the school in Japan as well. I do not like the school lunch though. We have to eat everything but the quantity is too much for me and sometimes it smells odd.

I like playing hide and seek with my Japanese friends. I do not have Cebu friends who play that.

I like Japanese soccer animations, ‘Inazuma Eleven’. I play soccer at school.

I would like to be a policeman in the future because I want to get rid of all bad people. In where? May be, in Japan.”

II. Nagai’s family

Yukihiro(57, born 1956)

Ryoko(52, born 1962)

Kazuo(17,born 1997, Grade 3 at high school)

Kazuko(14,born2000, Grade 1 at high school)

Yukihiro and Ryoko were running an estate agency in Yokohama. They closed their business and moved to Cebu in 2000, when their children were aged 3 years and 6 months.

They were doing well with the business in Yokohama, but Yukihiro who had experience studying in England, wanted to make their children speak English, so they decided to move to Cebu. Yukihiro’s uncle was married to a Filipina and they were living in Cebu, so Cebu was not a strange place for them.

Now, they have a Japanese restaurant ‘Ichirikichaya’, a hotel and a massage shop in Cebu.

Ryoko’s story

Bringing up the children in Cebu

I agreed with my husband that we let our children learn English although we are not going to leave money to them. I also felt bringing up children in Japan is not relaxing. The nursery schools were always full and it took long time for Kazuo to enter. Even after that, we were so busy sending him to school, picking him up, cooking dinner and

when he got sick, I had to take off time from work. I think most mothers in Japan have similar experiences. I imagined when Kazuo grows up, he has to study so hard for school exams and would be bullied at school.

After my husband decided to move to Cebu, we went to Cebu as a short stay 4 times in that year. People we met in Cebu were mostly kind and thoughtful. I liked the way children greet their parents in Cebu. I also felt living in Cebu is not that dangerous as Japanese generally think.

After we moved here, we both did not work for a while. The bank interest was very high at that time, so we were living on the interest. We liked eating at restaurants in Japan, but we could not find any good restaurants here, so we opened our restaurant two and half years later. Two years after, we moved to make our restaurant bigger.

We employed a baby sitter who had a teacher license. She was living with us and slept with the children in the same room. So we did not need to employ a tutor like other Japanese family do. We only paid about 15,000 yen per month. We also employed a house maid and our own driver.

A bilingual education

When we moved to Cebu, Kazuo was three years old and we put him in a preschool. I was worried about his English, so I sometimes watched him in the class room, from the corridor and near the entrance. He learnt English quickly and could communicate with his teacher and friends.

However, his class was with children who were one year younger than him. That was normal for schools in Cebu, when they have a new student who has trouble with English, they put the student in a class one grade below.

I felt unconformable that my son was playing with children one year younger than him. That situation could affect all his life as everything including a higher education and being employed would be one year behind compared to the children the same age as his. I asked the school saying “His English will catch up soon or later. Please let him be in the class the same as his age.”, but they did not listen. So we changed that preschool to an international school where he studied with same aged children. Kazuko was only 6 months old when we moved, so we were not worried about her English ability.

They went to the Japanese Saturday school for 6 to 12 years old. They used the same text book as the children in Japan used and they also experienced Japanese customs and events. The school was run by Japanese people who live in Cebu and students’ parents. I taught there for one year as well.

We taught children Japanese manners and other good things about Japan. The basic point of Japanese language education here is talking to children in Japanese at home. I and my husband talk to them in Japanese only and we told them to do the same. When they were small, we read Japanese books for them, played Japanese card game 'Karuta' and watched NHK news or children's programs on TV. I tried to have them study a Japanese drill, but when they got older, they were busy at school, playing with friends and other things, so they did not want to do it.

Kazuo is good at playing golf, so he is going to a university in America as a scholarship student next year. He only speaks Japanese with us. So he may lose the chance to speak Japanese in America.

What if he marries a woman who does not speak Japanese? Well, in that case, I and my future daughter in-law will not have a fight or argue over small issues, which will be good, I think.

Kazuko has many Japanese friends and she helps new Japanese students a lot. She also kept contacts with Japanese friends even after they left Cebu, so her Japanese is rather good. Our children also have chances to speak proper Japanese to our customers, so they are lucky.

I know many Japanese parents in Cebu put their children in Japanese school in Japan during the summer holidays. However, our children said "Summer holidays are the time we should have time off from study" and they enjoyed playing golf or having trips. I have been working as well, so I could have only two weeks' holiday and it was impossible for me to go to Japan for months.

A summary of bringing up children

I have been busy at work since they were small, so I left them with a baby sitter almost too much. I regret that I should have let them study more Japanese, especially reading and writing.

However, one of good things about living in Cebu is it is easy to know where the children are and what they are doing. There is not a good transport system here, not like Japan, so children do not go out by themselves. They always go with me or our driver so I was less worried and so we were brought up with more freedom.

There are not many universities in Cebu, so they may leave home when they become 18. Their life here is comfortable and they do not experience the hard study to pass the school entry exams, so I am worried they may not be strong enough to face difficult situations in the future.

They might have learnt a lot of things through golf. If we are still living in Japan, they may not have enough chances to practice golf. Golf is not a main sport in Cebu, but compared with Japan, the conditions on the golf courses are much better. If you are a family member, it only cost about 1200 yen to play. It was a right thing to do that we brought up our children in Cebu.

We traveled to America last year for Kazuo's golf competition. When we were at Santiago, our plane was cancelled. We did not know what to do, so I let the children find out at the counter. They were so good and I was pleased to know their English and communication skill were good enough and thought they would be all right anywhere they go in the world.

Kazuo's story

The 17 years old Kazuo seemed a little bit nervous talking to me, a stranger in Japanese. He spoke natural Japanese and his accent was beautiful, but sometimes he did not know the right word in Japanese. After this interview he was talking a lot with his South Korean friend in English.

He said,

"I don't remember when we moved here as I was only three. No, I do not think that I had any problems with English in the preschool.

I was lucky being brought up here. One of the reasons is I am able to speak English as a native speaker and can have communication with people from different countries. I speak English every day and think in English all the time. I was not worried about choosing a university in America. I have been America many times for golf tournaments and do not have any communication problems in English.

The second reason is that I can practice playing golf a lot. If I lived in Japan, I do not think I would have had this opportunity.

Most of my friends who play golf are between 20 and 39. We often go out for dinner together after a practice. I like talking with older friends because I learn many things from them, not only golf.

I know many Japanese people cannot speak English. I think it is impossible for Japanese people to speak English, which they study only at schools. I have studied a local language, Chinese and Spanish at school, but I do not think people would understand my Spanish if I go to Spain and talk to the local people. I sometimes meet Japanese golfers in America and they seemed to be having a difficult with English.

My Japanese is fine with speaking, but I cannot read well. I regret that I cannot read a Japanese golf magazine and I can only look at pictures. It almost all I feel bad about my Japanese.

I also cannot write well, but when I write something on the computer, it easy to change into kanji. So it is not a big problem. I stopped practicing Japanese by drills when I was in grade 5, being busy playing golf.

I do not have a problem when I go to Japan. I can read station names with roman characters. I like buying golf wear in Japan as I do not have many choices in Cebu.

About marriage? Most likely, I am going to marry a woman who does not understand Japanese and she has to speak English. Nearly all my friends don't speak Japanese. Now I'm really looking forward to American school life.

Kazuko's story

The 14 years old Kazuko's Japanese is very natural and clear. She looks mature for her age. Her Japanese accent is also beautiful like she was brought up in Japan. I asked if she can write Japanese without looking up any dictionary. She was shy, but showed me her hand writing.

She said,

“When I was pushed to write, I made mistakes with kanji. It was a right decision that I studied Chinese at school thinking it may help my Japanese study. I am good at remembering kanji characters and my friends think that is because I am Japanese. I do not think I will work in Japan in the future. I can communicate with my Japanese friends by e-mails, Facebook and using Line. I think that will be enough for my Japanese. I sometimes ask my friends if my English is correct.

I feel like going to Japanese school as I would like to eat the school lunch. We had to take our own lunch here, so I am interested in it. It is the biggest reason I want to go there.

One of the good reasons about living in Cebu is I can meet many people from different countries. Even after they leave here, I can visit them in all over the world.

There is no bullying at school and we mix quite well with different age students. We do not call seniors in a polite way, not like in Japan, we call them by name.

Also, there are many adults interested in supporting children like in my golf club. It has an excellent program for juniors.

When I go to Japan, train lines are quite complicated, but I can read station names with Roman characters and I use a ticket machine in Japanese only for practice.

When I finish high school, I would like to go to a university in America or Japan with a scholarship and I want to be a golfer in the future. It may be good to work in the parent's restaurant as well.

■ **A column Schools in Cebu are popular with children.**

Many children from Japan say that they enjoy school in Cebu more than one in Japan. Even when they have a hard time with English, most of them say that they wish all their friends in Japan could move to Cebu. Of course, I have not asked every Japanese child in Cebu, but I do understand why they like schools in Cebu.

The reasons children like schools in Cebu better than Japanese schools.

- * Everything is easy going
- * There are many different nationalities in the class, so the students are not required to be the same.
- * They are taught to speak out, not only the passive way.
- * The teachers and the parents of students have a good feeling towards Japanese children, only because they are Japanese.
- * Only a small number of children are in a class and there is no bullying. Children's individuality is recognized.

(Most Japanese children go to a private school with small classes)

The example of 'easy going' is a good way to describe things. It may sometimes seem irresponsible from a Japanese point of view. Children are allowed to bring some snacks to school as well as lunch. There are many small sized snacks you can buy at supermarkets. Children eat them at a break time or after class. So there is mess in the class room or in a corridor which cleaners have to clean up. The children do not have to clean the school.

When a student has a birthday, the parents provide food for all class mates. Some parents provide a Mac hamburger set for all students. I was amazed that parents do those things and also they prepare unhealthy fast food for this occasion.

I bought a Pokemon cake for Jiro's 4th birthday for all classmates. It cost about 2,500 yen and was so big and heavy (33cm long and 3kg!) The Pikachu on the top of the cake was 30cm tall. I order that cake from a catalog, but I did not realize the size.

Japan is very strict with copyright, so we do not find often cakes with popular characters. However, you can find all sort of character cakes, in Cebu, like Pokemon, Frozen, Spiderman, Superman, Thomas, kikirara, Hello Kitty and others. They are illegal, but I try not thinking about that too much and calling this as 'easy going' only. Anyway, everybody enjoyed that big cake including Jiro and we had a pleasant day.

Chapter 9. Japanese language skill which we request for bilingual children.

The things which were good and regrettable because we have migrated to Cebu.

The good things

- My anxiety about English education has disappeared.
- I can have more time with our children thanks to our housemaid.
- I like the climate and people of Cebu.
- There are many young people in Cebu and the city has been developing economically and I enjoy thinking of a business opportunity.
- Because of the internet, I maintain a working network and relationship with friends in Japan.

The regrettable things

- We connect with my parents (Grandparents for the children) mostly by internet.
- I worry about Japanese language education for the children.

The reasons why it is difficult to learn reading and writing in Japanese.

It was far more difficult than I had imagined in Japan to bring up the children to become 'bilinguals' who are able to speak, read, and write in English and in Japanese. Any mother and father have to discuss 'How much Japanese we want our children to learn' and take this matter seriously, 'Why do we want our children to learn Japanese?' You can make targets for your children's Japanese trying to match that of children in Japan but I felt it would be very difficult.

The reasons why it is difficult to learn reading and writing in Japanese.

- It is difficult to make children have the motivation to learn Japanese and keep it.
There are not many chances for use Japanese in reading or writing, so children lose interest. The influence of the parents who wish for their children to learn and write Japanese will become less when the children get older and the children's interests spread to outside of the house (English world).
- There are a lot of characters in Japanese and the letters are unique.

There are Hiragana, Katakana, kanji characters in Japanese, so a lot of study is necessary to learn the language. When people do not know the meaning of English words, they can look them up in a dictionary, but they except Japanese people cannot do the same thing with Kanji. Japanese children, who grow up overseas, will most likely have this problem.

I have explained the difficulty of learning English in Japan in this book, but 'learning Japanese away from Japan' would be difficult as well.

Things that are hard for Japanese children.

- To have 'listening, speaking, writing, communicating skill' of English in Japan.
- To have 'reading and writing skills' of Japanese overseas.

Parents can keep using Japanese by reading Japanese news on the internet, e-mails and using 'Facebook' while overseas, but children have no chance to read or write Japanese sentences.

There are no computers without the English alphabets, but it is usual that computers overseas do not have a Japanese keyboard. It will be impossible to keep a long term connection with Japanese people without typing Japanese sentences on computers in this internet communication world.

It will be easier if you do not push the children to learn 'Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji' and just keep speaking while they are very young. However, if they do not have the skill and the habit of reading and writing in Japanese, they will rapidly lose their ability in Japanese.

My ideas to bring up children as Japanese natives overseas are as follows,

- Japanese books or Manga can encourage children to read and learn.
- Friends or family that children can only use Japanese to communicate with.
- The chances to talk to adults who children do not see often, and have to explain things logically to them in Japanese.

These things are not easy to do and must match the children's interest and their desire to learn Japanese. When children get the skill and habit of using Japanese, it will be useful for them to improve and maintain the language including conversations, and also it will make them have deeper relationship with Japanese people and

Japanese language content. However, it will be a herculean task to set up these conditions when you are overseas.

The way to make children bilinguals

I have heard that to make children bilingual, you give them a chance to live overseas, but give them Japanese education in Japan longer. Because remembering Japanese is harder than English and when they are not in Japan, they have little chance to use Japanese. I think this view has a point.

There are some strong-arm methods to make the children good at reading and writing as the perfect bilinguals.

- (1) Parents are giving the opportunity to children to be educated both in an English speaking country and in Japan from a critical age.
- (2) If parents feel the child's language ability is too partial to one language, they should move into a country with the weaker linguistic and learn the language naturally, not only by studying in front of a desk.

These are ideal thinking. However, these are bizarre ideas for most families. There are economic reasons and parent's work to consider, and if there are more than two children, parents would not be able to choose the best place to live for each child.

This is based on perfect language acquisition only. It will be very hard for children when they move to a country without enough language and to study math, social studies and other subjects in that language and also to have them being cut off from vital social contacts.

Why we want our children to learn Japanese.

We may have to remind ourselves why we want our children to learn Japanese, before we start thinking of how much Japanese we want them to achieve and maintain. I and my husband are Japanese, so it was natural to think our children should learn Japanese and we did not have to think of the reasons when we lived in Japan.

If someone asked me about English, I could easily answer that we want our children to be native English speakers so as to make sure that they will not have trouble with their life or work in the future, but if I was asked about Japanese, I would not know how to response exactly.

- The reasons why I want our children to have and maintain the Japanese language

skill.

1. If my children cannot communicate with us, because of we are not native English speakers, it will be sad for both ourselves and our children. Also there would be problems for us living together. While their grandparents and relatives are living in Japan, there will also be problems if they cannot communicate with each other.
2. There are many people who can speak English or Japanese, but the number of bilinguals is fewer. So if my children are bilinguals, they will have more choices for future jobs and how they want to live, and they will have more ways to improve their life.
3. If they become native English speakers only, there would be a greater possibility that they may marry an English native speaker and then, I will have a problem to communicate with their wives or a husband and my grandchildren.

It is embarrassing to write here about my worrying about my children's marriage as a doting parent. Be that as it may this is necessary for me and my husband to imagine so many things and talk about things with each other.

I have thought about a situation where we do not force our children to study Japanese in the first place. My children have only one cousin who is of the same generation as them. The fear that my children will have a communication problem with their relative may not be so big even if they do not understand Japanese in the long run. And also, that will be my egoism that I do not want our children to have an international marriage, and I should not think like that. It will be impossible to prevent that from happening anyway.

However, if you lose the possibility that I wrote in '2', the children will have even more opportunities in the future if they have both languages as Japan is an advanced country and the world will need employees with a knowledge and cultural understanding of Japan

My children are lucky to learn Japanese. They live overseas, but there are many Japanese including their parents, grandparents and others who talk to them in Japanese.

They have a chance to live in Japan as residents. Therefore, they have a greater opportunity to learn Japanese compared to foreigners who do not have that sort of environment and have to start from zero. I can say that giving up leaning Japanese

will be a loss for them. It is better for children to have expanded choices for the future.

Because of these words 'To expand children's choices', I feel like concluding that we will keep our children learning Japanese. It will be far harder for them to learn Japanese when they are older. The most fearful thing about learning languages is to practice and continue to study them from a small age.

However, there is a possibility that Japan cannot maintain their economic position in the world. There will be definitely fewer Japanese people of the same generation as my children and the next generation will be even less. This means Japanese will have less importance as a language. My children may become more interested in English because they can talk to people from different countries and I do not think they will spend a lot of time learning Japanese when they can talk to only a limited number of people and most of them will be of an elderly generation. If they dislike studying Japanese someday, I do not have the confidence to push them to continue.

We do not have to worry about semi-lingual.

We do not know how much improvement there will be in our children's Japanese in the future. Although I was worried they may become semi-lingual (insufficient in both languages) before, I realized that the problem was not only for people living overseas. There are many Japanese of all generations who do not like reading Japanese and do not have enough Japanese vocabulary even though they live in Japan. They are insufficient in one language. They can become sufficient in language if they study hard. Maybe it will be still right if they are happy to stay less efficient in Japanese. It is possible our children will not master either language. What we can do as parents is to give them an environment so that they can spend a good time with native speakers of both languages before they get to the critical period.

When children become old enough to make their own decisions, we can ask them their intention, but until then, parents have to decide, taking in mind their character and also the world situation. And after all, most of these parents' decisions would affect what children may decide in the future very much. I feel all the more keenly that educating children is really difficult.

We will keep thinking if we will stay in an English speaking country, or go back to Japan, or do something else in the future.

Our way to bring up children

TV makes children passive, and not use their imagination so you have to be careful using TV for language acquisition. We have not had a TV since before we left Japan. We had one until Taro was four years old and Jiro was two, but because they were spending so much time in front of the TV, we got rid of it. TV must be bad for Hana as well who was just born.

When I look back on our life before, the king at home was 'Mr.TV'.

- We were interrupting each other and said "Be quiet. (I cannot hear 'Mr.TV')"
- Everybody was watching 'Mr.TV' during meals.
- "Do not behave wildly in front of the TV (because 'Mr.TV' breaks)" We said to them.
- Everybody liked 'Mr.TV', so we were always fighting (to watch the news or children's programs).

TV does nothing but harm us. So finally I and my husband decided to banish 'Mr.TV'. When we told the children that the TV was broken and we threw it away, Taro seemed lost and Jiro cried. However, after that, our life changed from days that we had to tell them off all the time like "You are too close to the TV" or "You should turn it off, now!" and so on.

We started to have gentle conversations and more time to spend for other things. Taro started reading books and he borrowed various books from a library. He was especially fond of Pokemon illustrated book. He could answer any questions about all Pokemon characters, he was known as Dr. Pokemon at the nursery school.

I did not expect he would be promoted as a 'doctor' of TV animations, after we got rid of the TV, but he was reading that illustrated book repeatedly in his own pace and because of that he could remember lots of information. Jiro could not read then, but just turning over pages on books and looking at them. When he was looking at what Taro was reading, Taro read that for Jiro and enjoyed it.

We borrowed a lot of Kamishibai (paper picture show) and watched two of them a night. And this became the family fun. They were old pictures and also the stories were old and no sound effect, but interesting enough even for adults, so we got engrossed watching them. Each time, when we finished a story, we discussed our impression of the story, watched the pictures again and were satisfied. One day, I was surprised that Taro read a story after me, and he read almost the same as I, who was an announcer, with speed and smoothness.

However, we could not give up TV once and for all. The children visited their grandparents every Sundays and watched an animation program which the children

asked the grandparents to record.

It was funny that they did not notice that the TV they were watching was indeed from their house. We moved it to my parent's house from ours. The children believed they were watching on a new TV set their grandparents just bought.

So, it was not a big issue we were not able to watch Japanese TV programs after we moved to Cebu. We enjoy playing card games, board games and reading Japanese books after dinner. It has the effect of improving the children's language skill. When the children read or play games in Japanese, they do not think of it as 'a study of language' but as a game. And their Japanese improves unconsciously.

We moved to Cebu to make our children become bilinguals to help them to be more independent in the future. That target has not changed. I was worriedly thinking of this matter for a long time, but these bad feelings have gone.

I am now so excited thinking about our future with my husband and small children, where we are going and what is going to happen.

I can say from the bottom of my heart that 'It was good that we moved to Cebu'.

■ A column Job offer and bringing up children in Cebu

If we look for a job in Cebu, most of them only pay about 100,000 yen a month even we have an advantage of being Japanese. Also, it will not be easy to start a business unless you know about the country's laws and their market. I have interviewed Ms. Hiroko Sato who knows well about the current condition of Cebu and is the founder of the company which publishes 'Cebu pot', free paper in Japanese. (Interviewed in 2015)

□ The employment situation in Cebu

The people who are employed by Japanese companies and are working here or who have their own business can succeed; they get enough income in most cases. However, if you were employed locally here, I am sorry to say, you would only get small pay and it might not cover the cost of bringing up a child. It is changing dramatically for the good and I think it will be much better in the future. I only saw a few Japanese people aged between 20 and 39 living here some years ago, but now more Japanese people are studying English or working in Cebu. There are more Japanese companies in Cebu, too. Many areas have been being developed and our feeling of actual living here is definitely going up.

□ To bring up children as bilinguals

I gave a birth to a now 6 years old daughter and 4 years old son in Cebu. They speak Japanese at home.

I knew that we were going to live in Cebu for the long term, and I have been trying hard to make them study Japanese since they were babies. My daughter does not have a problem using Japanese at the moment. However, when they start learning Kanji and Kanji idioms, they may forget what they learnt easily, as they do not use Kanji here. So there is the problem how I continue Japanese education in the future. I do not teach English at home, but they study at school in English and have communications with friends and teachers in English, so they do not have any problems using English.

The Philippine people in Cebu can speak the local language, the Philippine language and English, and maybe because they were in touch with different languages since they were children, they can use these languages. This sort of things does not happen in Japan.

There are many different nationalities living in Cebu so when you bring up children

here, they learn to communicate with other country's people in English naturally.

I was worried at the beginning that if our children remember different languages, their first language (Japanese) may not be established. But they could separate each language without a problem. I have been careful too, for not mixing languages when I speak to them.

I would like to establish an environment that they can use both languages without them working too hard.

Chapter 10. Proposal to 'Japan' to be a country where children grow up as bilinguals.

The way to change Japan to the country where children grow up to be able to speak English.

Unfortunately, Japan is not a country where children grow up to be able to speak English. What do you think if Japan can change like the Philippines? A country where children would be able to speak English even if they were brought up by Japanese parents in Japan, even the parents were not interested in English at all. The country where all children can speak English without studying or migrating to an English speaking country and without having a special education which costs a lot of money. It would be wonderful!

There are many organizations and individuals who are concerning about English and they are spending a lot of money for English education, but Japan is still not a high English level country. Japan is the lowest for English ability in the developed countries, even when we study English for years. Japanese spends much more money to learn English compared with the Philippines, but the results do not compare.

Is there any way to change Japan into an English speaking country? I think the first step is to make English as the second official language and teach all subjects in English except for Japanese in all schools.

You may think that it is not necessary to do such a thing when Japanese education is not low. However, there are many people having a hard time at work because they can only speak Japanese. I think because of that; workers have less sales figures.

I must say that people who only speak Japanese are of less value in business. The world would ignore young people who studied in Japan. Japanese young people do not see themselves working overseas because of English and they will get lost.

My idea could be too much for many people and they would disagree. They may be worried about costs and the Japanese language, but if I ask if you can move overseas to gain market share and if your children or grandchildren who only speak Japanese can get a job in the future, what would you say? I think most people do not know how to answer.

I have mentioned about Taro in chapter 6. He was only 5 years old when we moved. But he had a difficult time. I would like you to think that if your children become much older and suddenly they have to study or work in English, they will have a harder time.

When Taro made a presentation about 'Jupiter' and 'the solar system', I did not know

what he was talking about and actually, I thought it was about solar power. I used the electric dictionary and then I understood.

If someone asked in English “How much can Japanese children study about solar system?” I could not answer. I can answer in Japanese about the names of planets and their order, but I did not know how to say even ‘Mercury’ or ‘Venus’ in English and they may misunderstand me as ‘a person who does not know anything about the solar system’.

There are more examples like this as when Taro was studying odd and even numbers, I did not know the meaning of odd and even until I looked them up in a dictionary.

When I was talking to a family from Malta, I wanted to ask them if the island was in the Mediterranean, but I did not know the word Mediterranean in English, so I could not ask. I was good at English and geography at school in Japan, but because of my limited English vocabulary, I could not tell them what I knew. I will never forget ‘Mediterranean’ in Japanese, but I do not think I can remember that word in English for long.

My English was so awful when I was talking to Ann about an election system. I have graduated from a national university in Japan, but I did not know the English words for candidate, election campaign, member of Diet, Congress or Parliament, so I could not talk about the Japanese politics system to her. While Ann was not fully educated, but because she studied social studies in English, she did explain things to me very well.

How many Japanese people have experienced this sort of frustration because they could not answer a simple question in English? People in the world study similar things like the solar system, odd number, even number, the world map, the national election system at school, but Japanese people only can exchange this kind of information to Japanese.

If we keep learning all subjects in Japanese, it is impossible or wasting time to memorize them in English as well. It is next to impossible to use them in correct sentences.

The task to make English as the second official language.

What sort of argument would it be when I suggest making English as the second official language?

If you think that it seems like making Japan into another country’s colony, you may feel against it. However, I am not saying that we should study what an American or English or an Australian study in their language. I think we should learn the subjects

which Japanese should study, but in English.

As a first step, how about we study Japanese history, culture and social studies in English? It is very important to learn how to explain and talk about Japan in English.

There will be many Japanese thinking that English is important for education, but it is not necessary to make it an official language. However, we have to wait for at least one generation to educate Japanese teachers to teach in English and we would have to accept more English speaking people. More money will be needed in the short term, but when you look at it in the long term, if the young people cannot find jobs or cannot be independent, the social cost would be much bigger.

English is the world language. Japan needs a big reformation to make English an official language, otherwise most people will not speak English and that means the second generation of Japanese people would not be able to survive in this world.

Japanese English ability is behind South Korea. If Japanese parents cannot make their children bilingual in Japan and the children cannot find a job, there will be more Japanese people going overseas to study or live like South Koreans already do. It is possible that Japan would have the same problem which South Korea has, like the collapse of the family and suicide for fathers. If the family is rich, then their children have a better opportunity to learn English, and if the family is poor, there is less opportunity.

South Korean people also do not have many opportunities to use English, so people find jobs overseas and the country suffer from a brain drain. Because we are after South Korea, English wise, we should learn the good things from them and correct the wrong things of their system.

It is worth to bring this issue as a national debate.

Of course, it could not be done smoothly. The ex-Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi organized a meeting called 'The concept of Japan in the 21 century' and there is a plan for language. There was an idea to make English the official language, but it has not been working. The countries which use English as their official language are the former colonials of America or England including the Philippines. Japan never has been colonized by other countries, so I do not think Japan will voluntarily make English as the official language. There are many local languages in the Philippines, so there is merit making English as the official language, but Japan does not have this kind of problem. So, many people would disagree about what I have been saying.

However, you cannot compare people, like the ones who have experience studying, understanding, and arguing in English and the other ones who have to study or work overseas after growing up without a proper English education. We should change this

sad situation that forces people to study English at a mature age when they should concentrate more on their specialty.

The necessary things to have a perfect command of English is neither studying overseas nor having excellent English study materials, but having an environment for children to study when they are small and providing chances to talk in English.

People in the Philippines can speak and understand English, although they were brought up surrounded by local language speakers and they had a limited education. It's because English is a presence in school and in society.

English is not the native language of Japan or the Philippines, but the difference is that the Philippine people are the 'teachers' and they get money from Japanese 'students' at English schools.

It is impossible for the older generation to be bilingual, but with effort I hope people will argue more to make English the second major language in Japan. It makes it possible for the next generation to be given the opportunity to be part of the global world, and to advance themselves and Japan.

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Excerpt from homepage of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

“The concept of Japan in the 21 century”

The Japanese frontier is in Japan.

The new century which will be built by independence and governance

Meeting of “The concept of Japan in the 21 century”

While globalization and information are progressing rapidly, Japan has to keep up with the world. It's necessary that Japanese learn practical English as well as managing information technology.

English is not just a foreign language, but is as a universal language. It is the minimum tool to get information globally, to express thought, have trade, and to work together. Of course, Japanese is our mother tongue and the root of Japanese culture and tradition but that should not prevent us from learning other languages. However, to learn English as a universal language is to learn the most basic ability to understand and access the world.

*Author's profile

Mamiko Morita

She was born in Sapporo, Japan, in 1972. She attended Hokkaido University and studied economics, and studied at Portland State University in the U.S. as an exchange student for 1 year. She worked at NHK as an announcer. She is a CEO of a Non Profit Organization, 'Volunavi'. One of its social businesses is called 'Ohitorisama-kai (Singles)' and was introduced by NHK and others. She is a mother of three children.

*Translators' profile

Mayumi Powell

She was born in Kobe and lived in Australia for 15 years.

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