

The Language Policy of English Education in Japanese Junior High School – A New Approach based on *Yakudoku* as Scaffolding –

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reevaluate the meaning of *Yakudoku* (Grammar-Translation Reading Method) and make a suggestion to conduct effective English education at the stage of junior high school.

Let us present a brief overview of this paper. It consists of three parts. First, we take up current conditions of Japanese English education policies in Chapter 2. The following chapters, i.e. Chapter 3 and 4, reevaluate translation and show new *Yakudoku* method to propose concrete policy. Finally, it will be proposed in Chapter 5 a new approach to English Education at the junior high school level.

2. The Actual Conditions of English Education in Japan

In this section, we describe the current conditions of English education. Let us look at the movements from 2002 to 2014. MEXT and LDP have released policies of English education. Examining these policies, we find that they are based on outputs such as speaking, and set high-level goals toward students and English teachers. However, we have problems with students' English learning.

2.1 The Movement on the Language Policy of English Education in Japan after 2003

Table 1. The Movement on the Language Policy of English Education from 2002 to 2014

Time of Year	Events
2002/2003	MEXT (2002, 2003) : “The Strategic Concept and The Action Plan for Training of ‘The Japanese Who Have a Good Command of English’ ”

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Time of Year	Events
2011	MEXT (2011) : “The Five Recommendations and the Priority Policies for Improvement of English-language Skills as the International Lingua Franca”
2013	The Liberal Democratic Party of JAPAN (2013) : The Recommendation of the Global Personnel Training Sectional Meeting Contributing a Strategy for Growth in Japan
2013	MEXT (2013) : Execution Plan for the Reform of English Education in Response to Globalization
2014	MEXT (2014) : The Council of Advisers about the Modality of English Education in Japan

2.2 The Debatable Issues of Foreign Language Policy in Japan

In acquisition of grammar competence defined as a main factor communicative competence, Benesse’s research (2009) said that there are many junior high school students who have not acquired English grammar.

- (1) a. Benesse (2009) research (The subjects are second-year-students in public junior high schools)
61.8% of respondents have an awareness that they are not good at English.
- b. Benesse (2009) : A Response to ‘What is The Most Difficult Part of Learning English?’
1st place: It is difficult for 78.6% of respondents to understand English grammar.
2nd place: It is difficult for 72.7% of respondents to make a high score.
3rd place: It is difficult for 72.0% of respondents to write English sentences.
- c. In short, Benesse’s research shows that it is difficult for many students to have a good command of English grammar, and this is a big problem not to overlook with the object of their motives in learning foreign languages.

To solve these problems, we refer to Kanatani’s proposals. Kanatani, Kosuge, Hidai, Ota and Kajiro (2012) introduces the proposal including ‘633 system’ conducted in the restricted number of 1st-year English classes at Setagaya Junior High School attached to Tokyo Gakugei University. He also serves as a principal of the English Language Education Council (ELEC) , and has proposed his recommendations of language policy. Let us begin with the contents of ‘633 system.’ We introduce the styles of class that Kanatani adopted in each school year in ‘633 system.’

- (2) a. The Stage of First Year in Junior High School (Six Classes in a Week)
 - 1) English teachers conducted their classes mainly in English.
 - 2) The English classes formed by team teaching with Japanese English teacher and ALT. (English classes were implemented for two consecutive hours (90

- minutes) on Thursday. Every other week.)
- 3) The implementation of 'Grammar + a' class. (This is two consecutive hours (90 minutes) class on Thursdays. Every other week.)
- b. The Stage of Second Year in Junior High School (Three Classes in a Week)
- 1) English teachers centrally conducted their classes to use English text book.
 - 2) The implementation of speaking activities with ALT and extensive reading or Listening activities in individual learning. (This class was conducted by the style of team teaching with ALT on every Friday.)
- c. The Stage of Third Year in Junior High School (Three Classes in a Week)
- 1) The introduction of the activity conflated extensive reading adopted 'Graded Readers' and the activity with 'intake' of contents in English text book.

Kanatani (et al.) made their students who attended '633' and '444' class take CASEC, and measured their English language skills.

(3) Students' English Language Skills built by '633 System'

- a. The Students' English Language Skills at the end of Text Book for First-Year-Student
- The '633' students who finished an English text book in 8 months since the start of learning English from April acquired English language skills as same as the English language skills of The '444' students who finished an English text book in 12 months. Moreover, Kanatani et al could confirm that '633 system' does not have a negative influence that it is difficult for students to understand English in previous curriculum.
- b. The Students' English Language Skills at the end of Text Book for Second-Year-Student
- It was clear that '633' students marked high scores more than '444' students.
- c. The Students' English Language Skills at the end of Text Book for Third-Year-Student
- '633' students' average scores in CASEC was equal to '444' students', and it is not significantly different between groups. Kanatani was able to confirm that '633 system' was a good way to build their English language skills as same as '444 system.'
- d. '633 System' Gives Positive Effects to Students

Kanatani felt that '633' students have few mistakes and have a quantity of vocabulary, and they acquired abilities to speak English a lot and write basic English sentences. Moreover, they were not disinclined for the rhythm of English, listening English and reading English a lot.

That is why we will be able to consider that Kanatani's research result has a positive effect to English education in Japan. In chapter 3, we will take up English grammar that many students are not good at.

3. The Reevaluation of Using “Translation” for English-Learners

3.1 The Opinions presented by Supporters who agree to use Mother Tongue (Including Translation)

3.1.1 The Opinion presented by Yukio Otsu

Otsu’s suggestion organically associates education of mother tongue (Japanese education) mediated ‘Language Awareness’ with education of foreign language (English education) , and ‘Language Awareness’ fulfill to perform mother tongue and foreign language effectively.

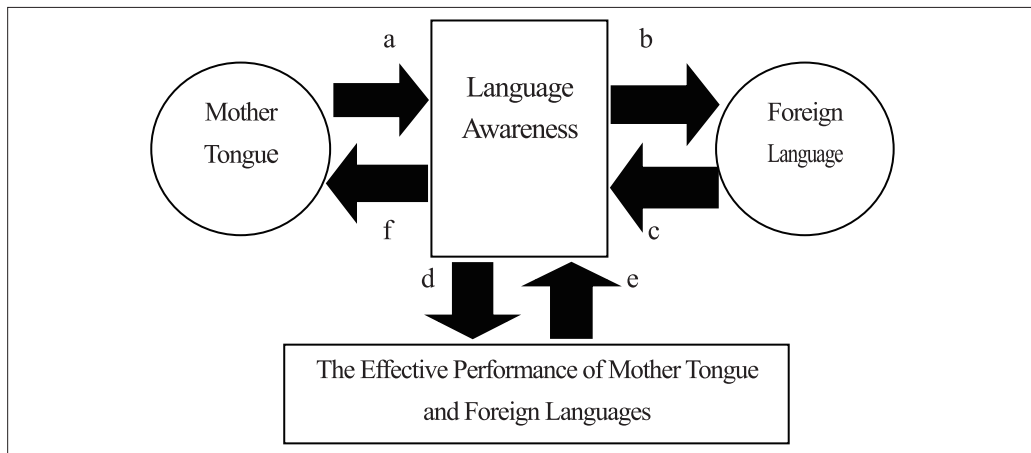


Figure 1. Otsu (2009) : The Framework of Language Education

- (4) a. The right arrow at the upper left shows to pull the trigger for cultivation of ‘Language Awareness’ as mother tongue.

We have a keen instinct toward our mother tongue. The instinct toward mother tongue is very important to bring ‘Language Awareness’ to an analytical approach.

- b. The right arrow at the upper right shows to build the important basis for studying a foreign language.
- c. The left arrow at the upper right shows to be available to capture the language through a number of ‘Windows’ of mother tongue and foreign languages sterically.
- d. The down-pointing arrow shows to be of help the effective performance of mother tongue and foreign languages.
- e. The up-pointing arrow shows to make ‘Language Awareness’ richer through the effective performance of mother tongue and foreign languages.
- f. The left arrow at the upper left shows to link to the enhancement for knowledge of mother tongue.

3.1.2 The Opinion presented by Yoshifumi Saito

Saito describes the meaning of translation in his paper (2012). We can collect up his opinions into four. The following is quotations of Saito (2012).

- (5) a. Translation is a proper way to make sure that students have understood target texts and discourse in especially classrooms. (Meaning that it should not be part of their self-learning activities)
- b. Translation is one of the most effective teaching strategies to ensure their students' understanding of what is being taught. (When students misunderstand structures of English and logic of it, teachers should use translation)
- c. Translation is just an extension of elementary L1 instruction, not a specialized skill. It should function as a scaffolding that the teacher puts up to build up his / her students' ability to use English and takes down when the solid framework of the building has been set up.
- d. Translation is not only a useful pedagogical tool but also an unavoidable communicative strategy if Japanese learners of English are to use the language in a more productive fashion in international communication.

3.1.3 The Opinion presented by Kumiko Torikai

- (6) The Meaning of 'Translation' in Language Learning
- a. The reproduction activity with mother tongue (i.e. Japanese) has positive effects to comprehend meaning deeply.
- b. We can cognize our mother tongue and critically analyze to sort out our ideas we want to tell by conducting the activity to reproduce to translate mother tongue into foreign languages.
- c. The meaning of 'Translation' should be rediscovered from viewpoint to cultivate language awareness and improve understand languages and cultures.

We can estimate that her opinions have an amazing similarity to Otsu's opinions. Using translation has a positive effect to enrich our mother tongue and foreign languages. In light of pros and cons above, we will organize what kind of situations we can use translation in 3.3.

4. The Utility of Translation

4.1 The Place of 'Translation' in Cook (2010) and the Usage of Translation in Language Teaching

Guy Cook is a grand person in British Association of Applied Linguistics and takes a positive stand in using translation in education. He explains the importance of translation in his book.

- (7) The Purpose of using 'Translation'

Cook (2010) describes the element of 'Translation' as follow.

"Learning to translate... (skp) ... should be an integral part of a major aim of language learning"
(Cook (2010:55) , Saito & Kita (2012:87))

In short, 'Translation' is an essential element to understand contents or structures and has positive effects to check whether students can understand the contents of English text book or not. Moreover, Cook refers how to use translation in education. For example, he takes up communicative activities based on translation.

4.2 The Significance of *Bumpo -Yakudoku shiki kyojyuhō*

In 4.2, we will take up the significance of *Bumpo - Yakudoku shiki kyojyuhō* presented by Yuko Hiraga. She uncovered the difference of Grammar-Translation Method in Western Europe and *Yakudoku* in Japan. She describes the difference of Grammar-Translation Method and *Bumpo - Yakudoku shiki kyojyuhō* as follow.

(8) a. Grammar-Translation Method in Western Europe

People adopted the way of translating and reading original languages' texts with using grammatical knowledge. It is called 'Classical Method' in Western Europe, and the 'meaning' of texts had entirely been emphasized in the G-TM framework.

b. *Bumpo-Yakudoku shiki kyojyuhō* in Japan

Bumpo-Yakudoku shiki kyojyuhō in Japan has inherited its reading method from the tradition of Sinology. It is Japanese-original method, not only based on grammar as form, but also based on meaning. *Yakudoku* is also based on Japanese word order too. So *Yakudoku* is better suited for Japanese people.

Her research definitely shows the difference of Grammar-Translation Method and *Bumpo - Yakudoku shiki kyojyuhō*. Especially, we have to take notice that *Yakudoku* in Japan is based on grammar or meaning.

4.3 The Study of New *Yakudoku* in Real-World Classroom Situation

I refer to the previous studies presented by Takizawa and Tajino and present the existence of new *Yakudoku* in 4.5. To present a new approach, I would like to apply the process of English lesson presented by Takizawa (2005) and the merit of preventable mistakes presented by Tajino's imi-jyun (2011). In addition, to build a new *Yakudoku*, I take up the contents of Narita (2013) and Saito (2003). The proposed *Yakudoku* in this time is not used as simple task of Japanese translations. We should use it as one of steps. The goal of *Yakudoku* is to enable students to aware the differences between the structures of Japanese and those of English and to exercise comprehend contents accurately by using *Yakudoku*.

(9) Characteristics of New *Yakudoku*

- a. Introduction: The review of previous class. By using prints based on word order, teachers have their students understand the framework of English.
- b. Body 1: When teachers are reading aloud, they conduct translation
 - 1) Students repeat sentences after teacher conduct model reading. (Twice)
 - First: Reading sentences slash by slash. Second: Reading a sentence
 - 2) Reading faster than before.

3) After reading sentences, teachers say Japanese translations.

First: Reading sentences slash by slash. Second: Reading a sentence

c. Body 2: teachers write important parts of English structures on black board, they have their students copy these parts. Teachers give their students hints toward challenging parts of Japanese translation.

d. Body 3: Translation Activities

Students conduct translation activities. After teacher finish checking, students who complete translation write the translation on black board. Teachers use prints based on translation with 'Chunk.' By having students write translations on black board, students who are not good at English use the translations as a reference.

e. Body 4: Reading Activities

Teachers conduct various reading activities such as Four-directions Reading, Backward Reading and Memory Reading presented by Yasuki (2010).

In light of above, I have presented 'New *Yakudoku*' as a way to improve language awareness. In 4.4, we will take up results of the search based on my *Yakudoku* plan.

4.4 The Practical Consequence

I taught English based on my plan in Kogarumai junior high school in Karumai town in Iwate Prefecture on February 24th and 25th in 2014, and got positive results. In this practical lessons, I conducted the pretesting to students at Kogarumai junior high school on first day. Furthermore, after conducting English classes based on new *Yakudoku* to them, I conducted post testing to them, which is same test on first day. That is why I considered the difference of pretesting and post testing. We could get positive results.

(10) Results and Brief Overview of the Classes based on New *Yakudoku*.

a. The Number of Students

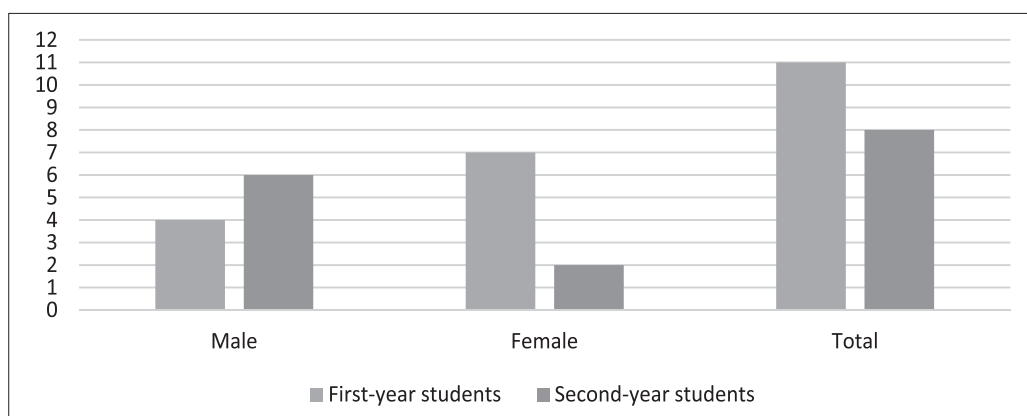


Figure 2. The Number of Students (1st-year and 2nd-year) in Kogarumai Junior High School

b. The Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test

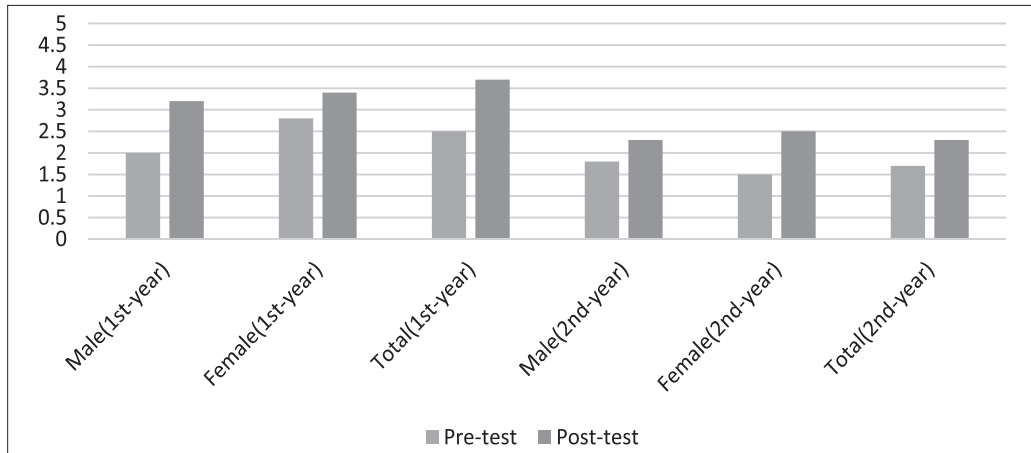


Figure 3. The Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test

5. A New Approach to build Effective English Education in Japanese Junior High School

In this chapter, we will present the ideal situation of English education in Japanese junior high school in light of the importance of *Yakudoku*. We will propose the whole image of English education at the stage of junior high school in 5.1.

5.1 A Perspective of English Education in Junior High School

To build the framework of English education at the stage of junior high school, I espoused three view points as follow.

(11) The Espoused View Points to build New Plan

- a. I referred Kanatani's plan. Especially, intensive curriculum.
- b. 633 system has a positive effect toward students' English learning. However, there is not much the differences between students attended 633 system and students attended 444 system in their test results. So I would rather not adopt the time allocation of '633.'
- c. I adopt the class of Grammar, and *Yakudoku* should be conducted in the class too.

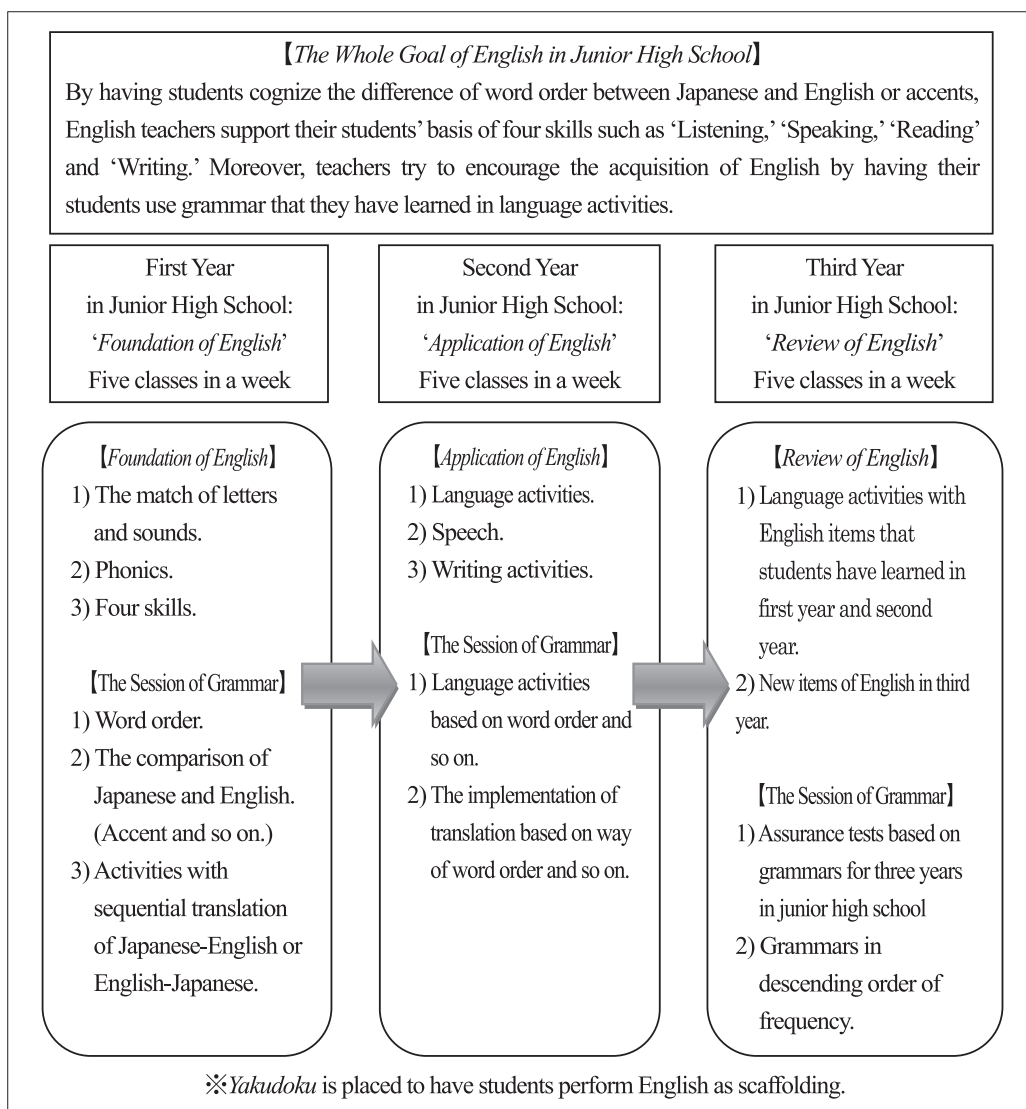


Figure 4. The Ideal Curriculum of English Education at the stage of Junior High School

- (12) The Goal of First Year in Junior High School is to establish 'Foundation of English'
- a. Teachers carefully teach the match of letters and sounds or phonics.
 - b. Teachers teach lessons on four skills such as Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
 - c. In the session of grammar, teachers have their students recognize the difference of structures of Japanese and English by conducting the instruction of word order.
 - d. Teachers conduct activities to translate words into Japanese or English. Moreover, they contrive activities of *Yakudoku*.

- (13) The Goal of Second Year in Junior High School is to conduct 'Application of English'
- a . In light of the contents of first year in junior high school, teachers set language activities to use the basis of English that students have learned.
 - b . Teachers have their students acquire the basis of 'Speaking.'
 - c . By conducting activities of speech and writing, it is important to increase the opportunity of output.
 - d . In the session of grammar, teachers conduct language activities based on word order and training of translation based on word order.
 - e . Teachers contrive to change *Yakudoku* into various forms and conduct them.
- (14) The Goal of Third Year in Junior High School is to conduct 'Review of English'
- a . The implementation of language activities based on contents in first and second year in junior high school.
 - b . The implementation of new items of English in third year.
 - c . In the session of grammar, teachers conduct assurance tests based on grammars for three years in junior high school toward their students. By checking their embeddedness of English, teachers try to improve their students' English.
 - d . Teachers conduct review tests based on grammars in descending order of frequency.
 - e . Teachers contrive to change *Yakudoku* into various forms and conduct them.
- (15) The Desirable Number of Hours of English Lesson
- a . I set 'Five English classes in a week' in each grades as the desirable number of hours of English lessons.
 - b . To conduct the enhancement of English education at the stage of junior high school, to set 'Five English classes in a week' will be recommended.
 - c . As a reason of (54b) , I adopted the plan based on the resources of time and human resource in first year presented by Kanatani. So English education in senior high school and university will be improved by getting five hours of English in a week and enhancing the fullness of English.
 - d . Teaching contents are identical with the current English education.
 - e . To fulfill 'Five English classes in a week,' we can suggest two ideas as follow.
 - 1) To reduce the time of other subjects.
 - 2) MEXT sets six hours classes from Mondays to Fridays.

To acquire foreign languages means to spend much time. By setting an English class of fifty minutes five times a week, it becomes a key factor to have students improve their English language skills within the time, and we need to fatten out English education in junior high school more than before by putting the required manpower and time into the period of junior high school.

- (16) The Meaning of *Yakudoku*
- a . In five English classes in a week, we devote an English class to 'The Session of Grammar.'

- b. Teachers carefully teach English grammars and conduct language activities based on using them that students have learned.
- c. When teachers use *Yakudoku*, they should not 'finish up by translating English into Japanese' such as 'Grammar-Translation Method.'
- d. For example, when teachers explain difficult parts of English structures, they should use *Yakudoku*. Moreover, it is possible to conduct activities integrated *Yakudoku* and reading.
- e. The purpose of *Yakudoku* aims that 'students become a person who has good command of English without mother tongue in the future.'
- f. To succeed the purpose in (55e), teachers have their students do tasks of translation based on way of word order and make lesson plans to decrease frequency of usage of mother tongue.
- g. By passing through the stage of grapple with mother tongue (Japanese), teachers support that students recognize pleasantness, fun, difficulty and fear of language and comprehend the importance of using language.
- h. The ways in (33a) to (33e) might have positive effects.

In my opinion, teachers have to pay attention to instruct English grammars and have their students understand and use them that they have learned in the days ahead.

6. Conclusion

As for conclusion, I will tell you three desirable positive effects of my proposal. First, it will be possible to stand a chance to improve students' English skills in high school and university more than before. Second, Teachers conduct activities to cultivate advanced English skills set by MEXT. Last, by enhancing the resources of number of lessons, teachers and learning grammar at junior high school, it will have a great chance of improving English education. In light of this proposal, I will tell you future researches. Also, I have three future researches. First, I study the collaboration between Japanese education and English education. Second, polish my ideal plan in light of educational guideline and so on. Last, search positive methods to build students' English. In this time, I presented the meaning of *Yakudoku* and my policy based on it in Japanese version. Japanese English education has been faced crisis. So I wish brisk arguments occurs, and MEXT or researchers should release well-balanced policy based on translation and various activities or teaching.

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