



José Cruz's blackboard from one of his writing classes.

ENGLISH IN JAPAN

August 16, 2017

Charlie and José were discussing the article below:

"20% of Japanese junior high school students score a zero on nationwide English writing test" (see URL below)

José Cruz: Sometimes I wonder if um the work that we do as English teachers is actually bringing any um fruition. (Yeah) Sometimes I read articles like this and I think, "Oh my, what the heck?"

Charlie Bell: But I mean, it de- depends on where you work. I mean obviously you work in a pretty decent university. (Rela- that's relative) Yeah **but I** mean, these kind of results, uh when I- when I worked at a junior high school as an **ALT** a couple of years ago, I was in **you know-** I was in a really rural area and seeing these kind of results, you know a zero on a writing test, that's not outside of you know, my my imagination. Like, I-I can understand in a class of 30 kids, there were like, five or six kids that were asleep or, (Yup) you know, stealing motorbikes or whate- whatever (Yeah yeah) it was they were doing. So at the school I was at, this makes sense. But I don't know exactly you know where these kids are from, (Mm) their their situation.

José: Mm mm, Uh well of course um **you know** you've got a whole plethora, the whole range of the types of junior high schools in Japan. (Yeah) But I think that's why it's important to look at this as a representation of the big picture. So even if you (Mm hmm) include the relatively higher level junior high schools, and the relatively you know, perhaps in your experience too, (lower level yeah) lower level, apparently this statistic works out, zero on the writing section.

Charlie: Uh It- (You know. Right?) But- but you know- there- there are, is it- is it better that they got a zero? Or is it- would you rather see, which I know happens from experience, teachers just giving them a good score, (Now you) for doing nothing.

José: Yeah now that opens up the entire other discussion about um because people, I-I especially I think, instructors who look at things like this coming out of Japan and don't appreciate the situation that we have to deal with as- as native speaker instructors here in Japan, of how twisted the education system is in Japan about English.

Charlie: Yeah it's screwed up. Yeah.

José: It is really screwed up. I mean, why did they score zero? And it's not because of you know, the ministry's emphasis on things like reading and writing. The ministry over-emphasizes reading and writing **it's just that** (Mm hmm) it instructs it- the instruction done (**Yeah**) in reading and writing is so bad.

Charlie: It's- But it's it's not- Oh it is bad. And it's boring. (Yeah) And the, you know the reason that these kids are getting zero is because they're just not focusing. And the reason they're not focusing is **because** the teaching's boring. And you know, they've got- and in Japan, I mean, I don't know any other country that

has, you know these ALTs, these lang- you know, native assistants (Mm hmm) Uh, I don't know any other country that has that system. There probably is. But you know they've got that really great resource and they're completely under- you know, underused. They're not they're not used properly at all.

Word count	Time	Words/Min.
539	2:59	180.67

Pointers:

but I: Charlie's accent drops the "t" before the next vowel (0:23)

ALT: an Assistant Language Teacher. See [Wikipedia](#), (0:29)

you know: note how Charlie uses, "you know" to help him reset in his mind the phrase he had already begun (0:31)

you know: said very quickly (1:06)

it's just that: said very quickly (2:17)

(Yeah): Charlie's timing for saying this is to indicate conversationally to José that despite his pronunciation mistake (instructs) a couple of seconds ago, Charlie still understands. (2:22)

because: pronounced, "KUHZ" (2:35)

Discussion:

Do you think you got a good education?

What do you think of English tests?

What are the best methods for teaching or learning language?

SORANEWS ARTICLE: "20% OF JAPANESE STUDENTS SCORE A ZERO ON NATIONWIDE ENGLISH TEST"
<https://bit.ly/2AY0QJt>

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