



“You create your life, and you can recreate it, too”. (K. Robinson)

# ENGLISH IN JAPAN 2

**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”*

José Cruz: And and I-I don't know when it's **going to** change. Uh (Mm) I-I hope it changes a little bit because even though I-I get really cynical and say, “Maybe it's good that Japan can't speak English because it guarantees that I'll always have a job.” (Yeah) It it does make you a little bit tired as an instructor to see almost no progress, I'll be honest with you.

Charlie Bell: I've been here a short time so the the the progress thing, you know in terms of like overall progress it's it's difficult for me to measure. But for you, you know, you've been here for, a hundred years?

José: A hundred and eight. (108 years) Um and it's actually gone down Charlie. (Oh) It- When I started teaching at university in 1997 the level was better. (Yeah) And it went down shockingly per year for the first five years after that. It plateaued a bit. Now it's slowly approaching- but- ***I doubt it will ever get back to the way it was in 1997 while I'm still in my career. If it does I'd be very happy. It's possible that it could, but I doubt that it would.***

Charlie: Uh it's uh, you know. Well how would you remedy; as a- as a teacher, you can't. On your own? You know, (Mm) You can only hope.

José: Mm. You can start spreading the word. And you try your best to like, make your classroom good-

Charlie: But everybody knows- this stuff is, this isn't new- this is- these things If you read any journals, this same stuff is written down in articles from you know, the mid-eighties. The same stuff you know, (Mm hmm) exams and testing and kids not you know, kids not performing because they're just you know, demoralized and shattered from English and what have you.

José: It's a top down society, so any changes will have to begin I think simultaneously with uh (The Emperor) Uh it would be nice if the Emperor just did that. Like um, there's a lot of- there's a lot of um stuff happening within the Imperial family right now and if one imperial family member went you know, went rogue and started saying stuff like that, that might (Yeah) actually be a good catalyst. But it'll have to be top-down. It'll have to be at the top-level universities, like Osaka or Tokyo and maybe a couple of private universities in Tokyo, like Keio or Meiji. All of them saying that we're not going to be using these entrance exams as our entrance standards for English communicative ability but instead we'll be doing university interviews.

Charlie: Yeah. Interview tests. Which is what you get at you know every UK university.

José: You know right? (All my Japanese friends) Do you really speak Spanish? (Yeah) Well let's hear it.

Charlie: All my Japanese friends before they came to the UK they were in- of course they were interviewed. (Mm) And they had to- they had

to pass tests, but **they also had to pass interviews.**

José: Right. Yeah. (And that's) Go ahead keep the test. There's nothing wrong with keeping the tests as they are, but if- you must pass that interview test (Yeah) and it is more important than the test. If you- you can get full points on the paper test, (Mm hmm) but if you can't speak, doesn't matter.

Charlie: And what happens if you have a bad day? You know you have a bad day on the test and you know you're screwed, and then you- and you know, you're two and a half to ¥25,000 down the drain and...

José: Well what if you have a bad day when it's time for your presentation during your career? Right? (Ah OK OK) We could- we can like. Bone up. You know.

Charlie: But if that happens, you're not going to lose your job, are you? It's...

José: Are you sure? (Oh I don't know) If you really screw something up- (Yeah) It could happen, and you- you have to learn about these

things. And that's part of the process, because nobody ever said that to you and me in- (Yeah) in the West. **They said**, "Well, remember José, if you have a bad day, you can do it over again." Nobody ever said that. They said, "Get it done." (Yeah. And you) And if you did have a bad day, then they said to you, OK, well here here are your consolation avenues. Here's what you can do. (Mm) You can come back next year. But I'm not going to hold anyone's hand anymore with this stuff

Charlie: No, but you know I hope it improves.

José: Yeah. Me too.

Word count	Time	Words/Min.
781	3:39	213.97

Pointers:

**going to:** pronounced, "**GONNA**" (0:02)

**I doubt it:** for the range shown in italics, José was speaking at **253.33 words per minute**, (0:49)

**they also had to pass interviews:** Soon after this conversation, the Japanese government announced they would be incorporating speaking tests into standardized university entrance exams (2:31)

Discussion:

Do you enjoy studying English?

Are you better at writing English or speaking it?

Do you think there's something wrong with Japanese language education methods?

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

IMAGE COURTESY PEXELS  
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/adolescent-adult-beauty-blur-459971/>

