

# Japanese English Education and Learning: A History of Adapting Foreign Cultures

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## Introduction

This essay is a history that relates the Japanese tradition of accepting and adapting aspects of foreign culture, especially as it applies to the learning of foreign languages. In particular, the essay describes the history of English education in Japan by investigating its developments after the Meiji era. Although I am not an English education expert, I will address the issues from the perspective of scholarship on the adoption of foreign cultures in modern Japanese history.

From ancient times to the present day, the Japanese people have made persistent efforts to learn other languages and become acquainted with foreign cultures. Prior to the study of English, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Dutch, and a number of other languages were actively studied in Japan. Thus, when they came to learn English, the Japanese approached the matter systematically according to the system that was already in place for learning Dutch, which had been established by Tekijyuku in Osaka, a famous privately owned cram school established in 1838 by Koan Ogata. Ogata specialized in the translation of works of Dutch medical science. This system was, in turn, based on earlier teaching methods for the study of the Chinese classics.

The Japanese began learning English when the British battleship “Phaeton” came to Japan in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. And after the ports were opened to foreign trade, it was English that replaced Dutch as the new international language. Japanese intellectuals quickly started to master the English tongue.

From the Meiji era up to the present, two broad purposes have motivated the Japanese resolve to learn English. The first has been to understand and absorb a different culture. The second has been to communicate with English speaking people. And in this era of rapidly intensifying globalization, it has become increasingly important to speak a common language like English in order to understand differences among cultures, and to learn respect for others.

The language sociologist, Takao Suzuki, has argued that the largest problem facing English education in Japan has been a lack of specific goals. His view is that the goals for learning any foreign language can be classified according to three aims: “language as an end,” “language as a means,” and “language for communication.” “Language as an end” implies the study of a language for its own sake. For example, one acquires Spanish because one is interested in Spanish language and culture. “Language as a means” is learning a language to fulfill another purpose, such as gaining some part of the accumulated knowledge that is written in the language. For example, one studies German and French to study German philosophy or French biology. “Language for communication” is for international exchange. In the present situation, English has a high status as the language of international exchange, so Suzuki argues that Japan’s English education program should conform to this type of purpose. His idea is also useful because it is sensitive to the ways that English education in Japan has changed, according to the fashion of the times.

## The History of the Study of Foreign Languages in Japan: Studying Dutch and the Methods of Teaching the Chinese Classics

Chinese and Korean were the two earliest foreign languages to be studied in Japan. Written Chinese characters were introduced to Japan through the Korean Peninsula around the fifth and sixth centuries. Since then, Japan has continued to make use of and adapt Chinese writing and the culture of China to its own purposes. At first, Japan established the writing systems of Kanji and Kanbun (Chinese classical writing). Japanese scholars created their own alphabets, Hiragana and Katakana, and expanded Japanese writing based on the original Chinese characters.

The study of Chinese and Korean constituted an important introduction to the two countries’ cultures and academic

disciplines. It was also invaluable in gaining information about them. Up to the Edo era, this process of employing language as a means of gaining knowledge from other cultures was regarded as very important. But at the same time, the learning of Chinese and Korean also fulfilled the other two other functions. Nevertheless, the stress was on learning language as a means, and the goal of learning language for the purposes of communication was not emphasized—unlike today. The conditions necessary to encourage learning foreign languages for international exchange were not present.

Westerners first came to Japan with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1543 in Tanegashima, an island to the south of Kyushu. At first, the principal European cultures and languages in Japan were Portuguese and Spanish. They introduced trade and Christian missionary work, and their presence had an abiding effect on Japanese language. This is evident in many Japanese words that exist to this day. Two examples are “castella,” a Japanese cake, which comes from the Portuguese “pao de Castela,” meaning “bread from Castile,” and Konpeito, a Japanese candy which comes from the Portuguese “confeito.” However, the inflow to Japan of Portuguese and Spanish culture and language stopped in 1639 when the Tokugawa Shogunate of the Edo period gave the order to close the door to foreigners.

After that, the Japanese took an interest in learning Dutch. It was studied throughout the entire Edo era, since Holland was the only Western country given permission to trade due to Japan’s adoption of a policy of seclusion from the outside world. Many words in Japanese come from Dutch—lamp, glass, gum, pump, cup, drop (a candy), cookie, beer, and coffee.

Two methods were employed in the learning of Dutch. One was to learn practical Dutch when interpreters needed to negotiate with the Holland trading spokesmen at the trading center on Dejima, an island in Nagasaki Bay. The other was to learn Dutch in order to study European academic disciplines like medical science. One interesting example of the positive academic outcome derived from this approach is a translated book called *Kaitai Shinsho* by Genpaku Sugita, a famous Japanese medical scholar, and Ryotaku Maeno in 1774. The book was based on *Ontleedkundige Tafelen*, which was originally translated from *Anatomische Kulmus* written by Johann Adam Kulmus in Germany.

During the Edo period, interest in learning Dutch did not just stay in Nagasaki or Edo, but spread to all parts of

the country. Genpaku Sugita’s pupil, Gentaku Otsuki, edited *Rangaku Kaitei*, a study of Dutch and of Western sciences written in 1783. In 1824, Philipp Franz von Siebold taught at Narutaki-juku in Nagasaki, a privately own school, and an environment that encouraged the learning of Dutch emerged. Edited Dutch dictionaries were published. Privately owned schools were open for the study of Dutch. Also, Hanko, schools located in each feudal domain, were established. Ogata Koan’s school, established in 1838, was considered a large scale Dutch language study center. Under these encouraging circumstances, teaching methods were established for the teaching of language that formed the basis for the future of English language education. In effect, the development of the study and methods of the teaching of Dutch became a preparation for the Japanese in the learning of other foreign languages such as English.

Tekijuku, the privately owned school of Ogata Koan, was based on three educational principles. First, the end of studying is not for oneself but for use in the service of others. Secondly, a student may receive advice from seniors, but he must study by himself. Thirdly, students would be tested six times a month, which suggests that competition was an important aspect of the educational methods of the period. Thus students were to learn Dutch so that they could read Dutch medical books in order to serve people in the field of medical science. The purpose of learning a language was clearly a means to other ends. Nearly one thousand people studied at the school. Yukichi Fukuzawa, who established Keio University, Masujiro Omura, who established the modern army of Japan, and Tsunetami Sano, who helped set up the Japanese Red Cross Society, are some of the famous graduates of the school.

As contact with Dutch people was extremely limited, and in the absence of Dutch speaking instructors, the study of Dutch aimed at the translation of Dutch scholarship and research. The study of Dutch began as the study of Dutch medical science; but as time went by, books in physics and astronomy were also translated into Japanese. The high degree of word-building capacity of Chinese characters had a formative influence on translations into Japanese. For example, the word for nerve (nerve means one of the thin parts like threads inside one’s body along which feelings and messages are sent to the brain) came from the translation using Chinese characters. Technical terms such as gravity, centripetal force, adjustment, spirit, mind, sense,

and perception are also Japanese words based on Chinese characters. Some of the words that Japanese commonly use today without being aware of where they came from were coined in this era. Yukichi Fukuzawa achieved his knowledge of Dutch based on the translation processes as it involved using Dutch and Chinese characters at the school of Koan Ogata. It is a famous story that on a trip to Yokohama, which had been opened up as a trading port after the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853, Fukuzawa first realized the importance of English as a language. The same circumstances and procedures regarding the translation of texts employed in the study of Dutch were used in the teaching of English. In fact, until 1887, studies of both Dutch and English were intermixed, and English was learned in the same way as Dutch.

The study of Dutch was also influenced by the teaching and learning methods employed in the learning of Chinese. Chinese classics and words were the first exposure of the Japanese to foreign languages. The methods used in understanding Chinese writing were developed many years before similar methods were used in the teaching and learning of Dutch. From the middle period of the Edo era, when students first began studying Chinese writing, they were required to learn *Sudoku*, a way to read Chinese writing that teaches that you do not think of the meanings of the writing but simply follow it with your eyes and read aloud. After students have mastered this method, they must learn *Kaidoku*, where a few people gather in one place and one person reads out the meaning of the Chinese writing and the listeners question him or her. This is a question-and-answer approach that takes place in a learning community—what we would now refer to as a reading circle or seminar. This *Sudoku*—from—*Kaidoku* way of studying gradually moved from the study of Chinese writing to the study of Dutch and eventually to the study of English. This method was used during the Shogunate in foreign language schools. At the beginning of the Meiji era, the same approach to language learning was followed at Keio University. The *Kaidoku* and *Yakudoku* (read and translate) procedures were followed in the first English conversation text called *Eibei Taiwa Shokei* (British and American Conversation Text) (1859), by Manjiro (John) Nakahama. Nakahama traveled to the United States and remained there studying English for ten years. In 1851 he returned to Japan. Notwithstanding the different languages, his text follows the traditional rules for the study of Chinese and Dutch writing.

## The History of English Learning before the Meiji Era

In February 1809, the year after the arrival of the British Royal Navy ship, HMS *Phaeton*, at the harbor in Nagasaki, the Edo Shogunate ordered interpreters who were able to speak Dutch to learn English as a matter of national defense. They were also required to learn Russian for the same reason. This was Japan's introduction to learning English. French began to be studied half a year before the *Phaeton* Incident; and German, from the 1860's. How English instruction was practiced is unknown, but the first English teacher of interpreters was the assistant of the Dutch office of the trading firm, a Dutch man named Jan Cock Blomhoff. He employed oral teaching methods without the use of a text book.

Shozaemon Motoki, the chief Dutch interpreter under Blomhoff's tutelage, edited *Angeria-kogaku-shosen* (1811), which provided lists of words, idiomatic phrases, and examples of English conversational usage. Motoki also edited a book about English vocabulary in 1814. It is assumed that the original text of the two books is Willem Sewel's *Korte Wegwyzer der Engelsche* (1724). In both books, Motoki wrote English words as they would have been pronounced by the Dutch. They were written in *Katakana*, one of the Japanese alphabets used to express words from foreign countries. This form of notation influenced many succeeding Japanese foreign language textbooks, but it did make foreign language learning more familiar to Japanese.

In June, 1848, an American named Ranald MacDonald, came ashore on Rishiri Island off Hokkaido in defiance of the Japanese policy of isolation. He was caught and sent to Nagasaki for questioning. Fourteen translators who were proficient in Dutch were chosen to learn English from him. Each day for six months in front of MacDonald's cell floor, they lined up on tatami mats to learn English from him, after which MacDonald was sent back. Dutch translator, Einosuke Moriyama (who would later act as translator for Perry and Harris) was in charge of this task. They also asked MacDonald to pronounce words in the *Angeriagorintaisei*, which was published thirty-five years previously in order to correct the pronunciations of many of the words. MacDonald was, therefore, the first native speaker and teacher of English in Japan.

During the final days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the first genuine English grammar book was published (1840—

41). This work, the *Eibunkan*, was translated by Hironao Shibukawa in the Department of Astronomy and revised by Tadashi Fujikawa. The *Eibunkan* was a translation of a Dutch translation (1822, 1829) of an English grammar entitled *English Grammar: Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners* (1795) by Lindley Murray, who is said to be the father of the study of English grammar. Later Manjiro Nakahama became one of the first Japanese to visit the United States. A fisherman whose boat was wrecked off the island of Torishima, he was rescued by an American whaling vessel and brought to the United States. He returned in 1851 after ten years, bringing home a copy of an English grammar (*The Elementary Catechisms: English Grammar* [1850, London]), which was translated into *Igirisu-bunten* (1857). It first appeared as a block-printed work, but it was later published, in 1862, as a lead-printed work. This was the first work of English grammar that was not based on an earlier Dutch translation.

Now that Japan was open to trade, the Tokugawa Shogunate had to deal with issues of foreign trade and diplomatic matters. Thus, in 1855 it established a school for the study of Western documents. This school was set up in the Department of Astronomy. In 1856, the school was renamed *Bansho Shirabesho*, the center for studying foreign books. This was the Shogunate's first foreign language school specializing in the translation of Western scholarship. Initially, the main focus was on the study of Dutch, and English was a minor area of interest. However, this soon changed and the center built an English department in 1860. French, German, and Russian departments followed in 1862. In the Meiji era, the center was called the Kaisei Gakko (Kaisei School). It finally became Tokyo Daigaku (the University of Tokyo) in 1877.

The Shogunate also established a school for the study of English in Nagasaki in 1858, and a Center for the Study of English (*Yokohama Eigaku Syo*) in 1861 in Yokohama for students who would become interpreters. The first group of eleven international scholars were sent to Holland in 1862. However, in the same year as many as sixty or seventy of the one hundred students at the center for studying foreign books in Yokohama were specializing in English. By 1866, that number had increased to three hundred—an indication of the popularity and importance of English at the time. Unfortunately, language instruction at the Center was

unchanged and the old methods employed in the study of Dutch and Chinese writing—Kaidoku (“questions and answers” learning) and Yakudoku (read and translate)—were routinely practiced.

The majority of students of foreign languages were now taking English instead of Dutch. Yukichi Fukuzawa, for example, one of the foremost scholars of Dutch, quickly shifted his attention to English when, on a visit to Yokohama immediately after the opening of the harbor to the world (1859), he was surprised to find that English was the principal language of the merchants and not Dutch. Fukuzawa recognized immediately that English would be an indispensable language for Japanese who wished to understand Western cultures. He immediately began to take up the study of English instead of Dutch. In 1868 his school became Keio Gijyuku, Keio University, which led to a golden age of the study of English in Japan.

Dictionaries also played an important part in the study of English. Some argue that the first English-Japanese dictionary was the above-mentioned *Angerigorintaisei*. However, the first dictionary is probably *Eiwa Taiyaku Shuchin Jisho*, published in 1862 and edited by Tatsunosuke Hori. Hori was the main translator for Perry and a scholar at Kaiseijyo, which was to become part of the University of Tokyo. His dictionary was based on H. Picard's *A New Pocket Dictionary of the English and Dutch Language* (1843, 1857). This is a nine hundred and fifty-three-page book made on Western paper with a cover of Moroccan leather. It was Japan's first Western-style, covered book. The demand for the book was high, and it was reprinted in 1866.

During the Meiji era, this pocket dictionary continued in print, although the title was changed and the contents were revised and enlarged. Other versions were created and issued until the twentieth year of the Meiji period (1887). Japan's first Japanese-English dictionary, *Waei Gorin Shusei* (1867) was written by an American missionary and doctor, James Curtis Hepburn, who went by the name of “Hebon.” Ginko Kishida, a pioneer journalist, helped Hebon edit the book. Hebon's contribution was to create a Japanese orthography of the English alphabet. Hepburn developed a Romanized system by transcribing the sounds of Japanese words into the Latin alphabet. This approach has, until recently, been quite influential.

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, a number of important adaptations were made to the approach

to the teaching of English during the last days of the Tokugawa regime, and these changes had a powerful impact on English education and studies in the Meiji era.

## English Learning from the Meiji era up to the End of the World War II (1868–1945)

The use of such methods as *Kaidoku* (question and answer learning community) and *Yakudoku* (read and translate) in learning Dutch provided an antecedent model of foreign language instruction that could be quickly and effectively turned to the teaching of English. Thus, when Japanese teachers taught English to Japanese students little attention was paid to pronunciation and, instead, focus was placed on the reading of English characters and on reading comprehension. This was called “irregular” English. In contrast, American teachers and missionaries put more focus on pronunciation and on practice in speech. This was called “regular” English. As a result, two distinct methods of teaching English evolved. Public and missionary schools followed the regular method, and private and cram schools followed the irregular method. In each case, methods were connected to the purpose of learning English, whether it was to teach a form of textual translation or to communicate with English speakers.

In the Meiji era, the Japanese government made a conscious effort to learn from Western cultures and enthusiastically employed foreigners and sent Japanese students overseas. There was a widespread interest in learning from people from other countries. English learning became popular and the peak of this trend occurred around 1871–72. Western languages and, in particular, “regular English” education were regarded as very important. A new generation, referred to as the “Generation of Masters of English,” appeared. Kanzo Uchimura, Tenshin Okakura, and Inazo Nitobe, the author of *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (1900), were three of the better-known representatives of this movement. At the same time, it was felt that this enthusiasm towards Western cultures made people neglect their own language and traditional values. People grew alarmed at the disparagement of Japanese language by young Japanese. For example, one foreign diplomat who resided in the United States in 1972 claimed that the Japanese language was “weak and incomplete (and) makes it impossible to realize civilization and enlightenment. Thus, English language should be our national language.” This remark illustrates the

extreme point in a range of sentiments among the Japanese of the time that made light of their language and culture. But another more pragmatic approach was also influential. Yukichi Fukuzawa, the founder of Keio University, considered the English language as the principle international language, referring to it as “the common language for trade.” He regarded English as an important tool to help Japan catch up with Western developed countries.

In 1889, the Japanese Imperial or Meiji Constitution was enacted, and in the following year, the Imperial Diet was instituted with the aim of reforming Japan and making it a modern state on a par with other developed nations. Two victories in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05 raised the passion of nationalistic and linguistic pride, which resulted in a lessening of the popularity of English. At this time, there was a semi-English Master Generation who learned English from Japanese teachers in Japanese but mastered reading and written English, in contrast to the English Master Generation who learned English from foreign native teachers.

Soseki Natsume and Ogai Mori, who belonged to the semi-English Master Generation, argued that “learning by ‘regular English’ method is like (Japan being) an India, under British dependency, and it is one type of shame.” Admiration for and copying of Western cultures was at an end. In this period, a great many of those employed as foreign professors left, and the teaching language became Japanese and “irregular” instead of English and “regular.” Such changes have had a considerable impact on the future of English education and learning in Japan.

In 1912, as Japan entered the Taisho era, a new trend, called Taisho Democracy, called for democratic reforms of the Japanese political system, and again this brought about an increase in the number of Japanese students who wished to study in Western countries. Nevertheless, doubts were raised about whether English should be mandated or not. Publications such as *Kyoiku Jiron* (Contemporary Opinions in Education) published every ten days by Kaihatsu Sha in 1916–17, debated the pros and cons of foreign language learning.

Ikuzo Ooka, the former Ministry of Education and ex-Speaker of the House of Representatives, insisted that “English as a compulsory subject is an education for a dependency. To educate people to have a sense of independence, it should be removed (as a compulsory subject).”

Kazutami Ukita, a professor at Waseda University agreed that foreign languages should not be a mandatory part of the curriculum. On the other hand, Tomoyoshi Murai, a professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, argued that “the purpose of foreign language education is for Japanese overseas expansion and advancement worldwide. English education teaches people the spirit of the Japanese in English.”

The question of whether English should or should not be a compulsory subject aroused immense controversy. The two positions that emerged can be summarized as language nationalism, on the one hand, and English learning as a tool, on the other. Since the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was terminated in 1921 and anti-Japanese immigration laws were enacted in the US in June 1924, proposals to abolish English language study became popular among the Japanese people. Language nationalism significantly intensified. Newspapers and magazines rallied to the cause of abolishing English language and strengthening Japanese as a national language. In the early years of Showa era (1926–1989), Tsukuru Fujimura, a professor at Tokyo Imperial University (today’s University of Tokyo), argued that English learning at middle schools should be abolished completely as such study would hinder children in developing a sense of pride in Japanese. In rebuttal, Waseda University professor, Riichiro Hoashi, and former Tokyo College of Education professor, Yoshizaburo Okakura, argued that English learning had practical and educational benefits. However, as time went by, English began to be regarded in the popular mind as an enemy language, particularly as hostilities increased during the China-Japan War and ultimately with the Pacific War. As a consequence, English disappeared from streets and signs, and foreign adapted Katakana words were switched into odd Japanese equivalents. English was banned at secondary girls’ school and business schools.

## History of English Education and Learning after WWII (1945 to the Present)

In 1945, after Japan’s defeat, and with the American occupation, the practical value of English increased and English became extremely popular once more. English words became a familiar sight. They appeared on street signs, and many Japanese competed to learn the language. A Japanese-English communication booklet published by Seibundo Shinsha in 1945 became a best seller. *Come Come English*, a television

program by Nippon Hoso Kyokai, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, drew a large audience. American culture and the occupation force’s influence created a strong impression on the Japanese, who were struggling financially in the wake of the war and had a powerful effect on Japanese life. Japanese food, clothing, and housing became Americanized, and Katakana usage became prevalent.

The practice of borrowing heavily from Western cultures after the war parallels the situation at the beginning of the Meiji era. Arinori Mori had suggested in 1872 that English should be the national language of Japan. In the immediate aftermath of the WWII, Naoya Shiga, a famous writer, and Yukio Ozaki, known as the god of a constitutional government, similarly put the case for a national language other than Japanese. In 1946, Shiga modified Mori’s idea by insisting that French should become the national language. Ozaki favored the use of English. He also advocated in favor of banning Kanji and adopting the Roman alphabet in its place. A report, drawn up by the *American Education Mission* (1979), which laid down the lines of post-war-Japanese educational policies, also urged the abolition of *Kanji*, with the additional recommendation that orthography should conform more closely to spoken usage.

English education drastically changed after the war. It became a compulsory part of the curriculum. In middle schools, English was an elective course, but for all practical purposes it was required, as entrance examinations required skill in English. It is from these times that English started along the path of English as a school subject required to pass entrance examinations.

The first debate on English education after the war centered on the question of whether English should be mandated or not. Shuichi Kato, the critic and author, was an outspoken critic of English education reforms. He wrote, in an article in *Sekai*, that making English a compulsory subject did more harm than good and that methods of teaching English were also inappropriate for acquiring practical English communications skills. Yoshimi Usui, another critic of the reforms, agreed. Others argued that English should be considered one of the liberal arts. The debate intensified once again when a boom in the demand for English instruction occurred between the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 and the Osaka International Exhibition in 1970. This debate focused most directly on the way that English was being taught in the schools as a subject that was required in order to pass

entrance examinations. Wataru Hiraizumi, a member of the House of Councilors, initiated this debate with the elitist proposal that the top 5 percent of students should be selected for English. In support of his suggestion he pointed out that many middle and high school students did not show any benefits from their foreign language education. He presented his proposal in April, 1974 in a draft plan that outlined “the present state of foreign language education and the direction of the reformation.” In response, in 1975, Shoichi Watabe, a professor at Sophia (Jochi) University, made the claim that teaching English at school and for entrance examinations was beneficial and should be considered as a worthwhile intellectual exercise. This debate extended to seven issues of the magazine *Shokun!*, (*Gentleman!*), published by Bungei Shunju. The difference in aims of each author was clear—Hiraizumi wanted English to be a tool for communication; Watabe wanted it to be considered part of the liberal arts.

When Japan began to experience a higher level of economic growth and an increase in the standard of living, a new set of attitudes about language began to appear, or rather re-emerge. There was a reawakening of the sentiment expressed in the statement “Speak Japanese if you come to Japan.”

In the present *Heisei* era, which began in 1989, the view that English should become an official language has reappeared, as a result of the burst of the economic bubble and the long recession that followed.

Japanese feel that the study of English is important in maintaining Japan’s competitiveness and status in the international community, especially given the importance of modern information technology. It wants to encourage young people to become familiar with the language, and to this end sees a role for information technology in language instruction. In January 2000, the former prime minister, the late Keizo Obuchi, established an advisory body, Nijuisseiki Nihon no Koso Kondankai, the Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century. The committee proposed to make English a second official language in order to encourage Japanese to use English daily. This proposal was a controversial one. Generally speaking, the objections were that Japanese students should master Japanese first because many young Japanese cannot speak

and write proper Japanese. It was also urged that English is a totally different language that would be unsuitable as a tool for the expression of Japanese culture.

Later, in 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced its proposal, *Eigo ga Tsukaeru Nihonjin no Ikusei notameno Senryaku Koso*, of a plan for communicative competence in English. In the following year, the plan was put into action. The plan aims to produce positive results in English education by providing schools with resources within the limits of the official curriculum guidelines: new goals set for people teaching English, for English to be taught in English, for improving the teaching skills of teachers, and for supporting English education at elementary schools. However, these ideas suggest that English education is only a matter of technical training. Little attention is paid to guiding principles—the purposes and goals of English education—in order to clarify how English should be taught.

## Conclusion

It is no exaggeration to say that Japanese culture has been shaped by a continuous effort to learn from other cultures and to adapt these things to the requirements of the Japanese situation. English language instruction in modern Japan is considerably influenced by this long tradition of borrowing from and adapting the languages and knowledge of other cultures to Japanese needs. Thus, it was inevitable that English education and learning should be considerably influenced by earlier experience in learning from *Kangaku* (Chinese learning), Chinese writing, and the study of Dutch. Since the Meiji era, English education and learning has continually changed with the times.

In these days of globalization in which daily international exchanges occur with increasing frequency, it is imperative that people should have the language skills necessary to function effectively as global citizens. Therefore, it is important to give priority to promoting communication skills in English as a common language. Secondly, it is important to practice cultural pluralism, which recognizes the value of every culture and of the value of learning about other cultures and ethnic groups, in terms of their own values and not simply from the perspective of one’s own group.

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