

Interview

★★★

The endless pursuit of knowledge to get to the top

伊藤奈緒さんはかつて通った塾・予備校 *eisu* で英語講師として人気を博し、現在はその最高執行責任者(COO)を務める。「受験英語」は字問の面白さに触れて人として成長する機会を与えてくれると話し、日々から時事問題など幅広い知識を蓄積して入試に備えることが大事だとアドバイスする。

Nao Ito has been in Japan's education industry for over two decades, working for *Eisu*, an entrance exams preparatory school with its headquarters in her home prefecture of Mie. After consistently being rated the most popular English teacher at the school, Ito is now its chief operating officer. She is a passionate exponent of the English taught in Japan's *juken* entrance exams system as a learning opportunity to nurture the individual.

"English is front and center in the *juken* system, with top universities demanding high levels of English ability. And I believe *juken* English equips you with the kind of methodology and capability that extends to all areas of study."

In other words, if you crack *juken* English, you're well on the way to cracking everything else. Unfortunately, though, *juken* English doesn't have a good reputation. Generations of students have suffered through it only to find they still have trouble ordering a hot dog when they go abroad.

Ito admits that this is a problem. "For students seeking to listen, speak and communicate with people abroad, the English education system here is ineffective, partly due to the lack of English pronunciation skills among native Japanese teachers. This is something that needs to be addressed."

A short stint abroad to foster

communication skills can be a wonderful learning experience, says Ito, "but the intense study involved in *juken* English, particularly in grammar and vocabulary, will ultimately take you where you want to go. And the more you study university *juken*-level English, the more you realize there are unscalped mountains you can climb." And the view from the top can be breathtaking, says Ito.

Ito explains that *juken* English is an academic genre all on its own, what she calls "meta-English." "The difficulties of university entrance exams are no joke. Reading comprehension sections require basic knowledge of current events, global affairs and political and social issues. Top-level institutions like Kyoto University or the University of Tokyo are looking for students with a well-balanced knowledge of the world, so you need to stockpile such knowledge, and study English as well." Studying one will fortify the other, says Ito, and make the study experience more enjoyable and effective.

Ito herself has never stopped studying. Last year, she completed a graduate program in education at Mie University and is now training to give a TED talk in English. "Education is the greatest weapon," she says. Clearly, she likes to keep hers sharp and polished.

(Kaori Shoji)

伊藤奈緒 (いとう なお)

三重県松阪市出身。関西学院大学卒業。2000年、自身も学生時代に通った塾・予備校 *eisu* に入社し、2014年にCOO(最高執行責任者)に就任。2022年、地元三重大学大学院地域イノベーション研究科前期博士課程。4月25日に香港「教育による日本再興論 教育は人と社会と国の未来を決する」(IBCパブリッシング)が発売された。



COURTESY OF EISU

Words to live by

Education unlocks human potential.

「教育は人間の可能性の解き放つ。この言葉は最初聞いたときからカッコいいな思いましたが、私自身、教育は最大の武器だと感じるので、いつも心にある言葉です。

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exponent 顕著者, equips ~ with ... ~に...を備える, methodology 方法論, crack ~を克服する, ineffective 効果的でない, be addressed 対処される, stint 期間, foster ~を育てる, ultimately 最終的には, unscalped 未剝の, all ... own それ自体で, current events 時事問題, stockpile ~を蓄える, fortify ~を強化する。

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thejapantimes alpha

発行 株式会社ジパントタイムズ
編集 株式会社ジパントタイムズ印刷
〒110-0002
東京都千代田区一橋町 2-2
一橋町第二ビル
発行人 末松浩吉
Alpha 編集長 高橋敏之
アートディレクター 朝子裕子
(03700)1111

毎週金曜日発行

購読料 (税込)

1か月 ¥1,450 (消費税別) / 1年 ¥16,800 (消費税別)
ご購読のお申し込みは当サイトのサブスクリプション

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