

## Let's Play "English"

Yusei Sameshima

Kano Middle School

What is your English teacher's favorite phrase?

"Oh, my dear students, you look so cute today." ?

"You don't have to study English so hard, my sweet heart." ? No! Never!

"Don't forget your homework! Don't sleep during the class. Don't do this! Don't do that!" Right?

My English teacher does the same thing. But she has another phrase. "English is like a sport. If you practice it every day, you will be good at it." When I heard this phrase for the first time, I didn't understand the true meaning. Today I want to share the secret of this phrase with you.

Two years ago I entered my junior high school with high hopes. Most of all I was looking forward to English class and baseball club. I wanted to be a baseball player like Ichiro and speak English in America someday. The first day of class my English teacher looked very kind and she said, "English is like a sport, if you practice it every day, you will be good at it." Even though I was in the baseball club I didn't catch her meaning.

After a week she began to give us homework every day. And she gave us a test in every English class. If we forgot our homework or didn't get good test results, we had to study after school and we would miss our club activities. We always screamed "Oh no! You are too strict." And then she would say with a grin, "English is like a sport. If you practice it every day, you will be good at it."

After a month she added reading and speaking tests. Every time we screamed, "No way! Are you serious?" But she didn't give up. She said with a devilish look, "English is like a sport. If you practice it every day, you will be good at it." I didn't understand the reason why we should practice the same sentences like a parrot.

Then last summer I joined a homestay program in America. My host family was warm-hearted. But it was very hard for me to communicate with them in English. For example one day my host brother and I wanted to watch different TV programs. But I couldn't tell him what I wanted to say. I gave up trying to watch it. I noticed that only English grammar and words were not enough to speak English. You can't play baseball if you only know the baseball rules. Finally I understood the true meaning of my English teacher's phrase. After I came back to Japan, I started speaking English not only in English classes but also at home. I even tried to translate what I wanted to say into English. Instead of using Japanese I talked to my parents in English.

Well, now I think studying English grammar is like knowing the baseball rules and reading and speaking are like muscle training, playing catch or batting. Communicating with ALTs and English teachers is like a baseball game. Today I'm standing on the English mound. I say to myself like my English teacher, "English is like a sport. If you practice it every day, you will be good at it. Let's play baseball and "English".

*(3rd Prize of the 65th Contest, 2013)*