

The Importance of English

Shoto Kohashikawa

Chinen Senior High School

My friend often asks me "Why do you study English? You can live comfortably if you can speak Japanese." At the time, I wasn't able to say anything to challenge this idea because I thought he was right. Now I think differently. Speaking English is an important skill. Many people don't realize the importance of learning English. Today, I would like to share with you three reasons why learning English is so important.

First, English is known as the universal language. English is the language of science, information technology as well as international business and politics. In addition, English is spoken in many countries. Speaking English opens many doors. For instance, you can visit many countries such as the United States of America and England if you can speak English. You may think "C'mon, that's why we hire an interpreter." You aren't wrong but, it's not logical. Why would you pay so much money to go to a foreign country only to spend more of your vacation money to hire an interpreter? If you study English and become fluent, you don't have to spend that money. Also, if you are not fluent, communicating with local people will be impossible without this interpreter. The interpreter might not translate your thoughts clearly and so your conversation may be awkward. Talking through an interpreter would take a lot of time as well. As you can tell from this example, it is very important and very useful to learn English.

Second, did you know that, according to Wikipedia, out of all the websites in the world, only 5% are written in Japanese while 55% are written in English. In terms of the numbers, this simply means that over half of all the websites that exist are in English. In terms of the exchange of and search for information, this means that you can find out more about any topic, Japanese culture and society for example, by searching in English. However, the Internet isn't just used for the collection of information. You can make friends with people from many different countries online. Thanks to my English skills, I have met many people from countries such as England, Sweden and Colombia. By speaking English, we can exchange information

about our respective countries and cultures. Moreover, through my interactions with these people I have been exposed to ways of thinking that are different from my own. Sometimes the differences are minor and other times they are quite significant. For example, in every country the use of illegal drugs carries serious penalties. According to the 6 o'clock news program on OTV, in Japan a person will be jailed for using illegal drugs. In China, however, a person may be executed. This is a surprising difference but for the Chinese society it is acceptable to have a more severe punishment for this crime. Speaking English with people from different countries can show you the variety of ways countries deal with similar problems.

Third, more Japanese people speaking English will have a positive effect on tourism. Most tourists come to Japan to learn about Japanese culture and will visit a variety of famous places. Offering tourist information in English would greatly improve their sightseeing experience. This is especially important given that Japan will host the Olympics in 2020. Many athletes and tourists are expected to visit Japan at this time. I am sure that the event will have a positive effect on Japanese economy, especially on Japanese tourism. This increase in the number of foreigners in Japan will provide a good opportunity for cultural exchange. Furthermore, if foreigners find that Japanese people are good at speaking English, they are more likely to not only visit Japan again but also understand Japanese culture.

In conclusion, what I have outlined today are only three from a long list of the many benefits to be gained from learning English. You don't have to be as fluent as a native speaker. You can communicate even if you only use simple phrases. I hope that after listening to this speech you see how important it is to learn English.

Thank you for listening.