

My English Education

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Several people have asked me to tell how I learnt English. So I have decided to write down my story of how I learnt English. I will also write down here my ideas on English education.

The formal education of English I had at college was 8 units of English. They were 6 units of reading and 2 units of composition. I took them at the Faculty of General Education.

Besides, I took 3 classes by American and British teachers. One was a seminar on English Literature, and the other two were seminars on Philosophy. I took them at the Faculty of Arts and Letters and the Graduate School. They are equivalent to 6 classes at TTI, because they were two-semester courses in those days.

In addition to the above classes, I also had many classes to read English texts in Philosophy, Ethics, and Logic.

They were all. I never took any class of English Listening or Speaking (although I had a class of German Conversation by a German teacher, a summer intensive course of German all conducted in German by German and Japanese teachers, and a French class by a French teacher). Then what did I do when I went to the United States for the first time? Well, I could read well, and I could write. Thus I could say whatever I wanted to say, because I could construct English sentences in my brain to express myself. Certainly it took some time to accustom myself to the speed of spoken English. But, I assure you, nobody speaks fast in class. If a teacher spoke fast in class, no American student could follow the teacher. So it was merely a matter of time for me to speed up my English. Certainly Japanese people often speak English with Japanese accent. But that is OK. We do not need to become Americans or British or whatever.

To go back to the original question, how did I learn English? I made up a principle of

never reading Japanese when I entered college, and I followed my principle through my college days. That was a principle. There were exceptional occasions; nevertheless I followed my principle. I think that this principle is important. The more time you spend on Japanese, the less time you spend on English. You have only 24 hours a day. Every minute you spend using Japanese is a minute you lose in your English education. So in order to spend more time on English, you have to reduce your time on Japanese.

I spent 5 years at college, and I used most of my time for learning foreign languages. Besides English, I learnt Greek, German, French, Latin, and Russian. I certainly studied like crazy. I spent the most time on Greek, then after Greek on English, then on German, French, etc. In a sense, I learnt Greek, German, French etc, but I did not study English so much. It is better to say that I studied in English. For example, I learnt Greek in English. Similarly I learnt German, French, Latin, Philosophy, etc. in English, using German-English dictionary, reading English books, and so on. In a word, I tried to get any information I needed, in English instead of Japanese.

Thus I read a lot of English. When I read English, I always read it aloud. I think that it is important to read English aloud. It helps you to acquire the linguistic sense of English. Of course, you can do similar things, using cassette tapes instead of books: You can say English sentences by yourself, following your cassette tape. Whether you use tapes or books, you have to read a lot.

The sure way you do not improve your English is to study little, spending little time on English. For example, if you read 20-30 pages in 4 months, that is too slow. You will forget as much as you learn. That kind of English education I would call "rehabilitation program at nursing home". It aims only to stop the deterioration of English ability. But you are young people with bright future. There are very many things for you to learn. Keep in mind that you are going to grow intellectually for the coming 30-40 years. Since we human beings are forgetful animals, you have to learn much more than you forget, in order to improve your

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English. So I want my students to read at least 60-100 pages in a semester, studying for 3 hours every week.

In conclusion, there is no royal road to learning. The only sure way you can improve your English is to study hard and to study a lot. Good luck.