

My English Learning Methods

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Introduction

I started learning English at a cram school when I was 11 years old. English lessons were more fun than other subjects and I had good English grades in three years of high school. I became an English major at Tsurumi University because I wanted to speak English more smoothly. I chose the English Communication Course and I have learned English for four years. Through various English classes, I have acquired communication skills in English. I also put effort into studying for the TOEIC and have taken the test 5 times.

In the *Lifelog English Seminar*, I tried various ways to learn English, such as media, literary works and games. I thought about the benefits, what I learned and how to use each topic effectively. I like using online materials. With a computer or smartphone, I can learn English anywhere, and quickly find out what I don't understand. I used streaming news apps, movies and e-readers to read and listen to as much English as possible. I often use SNS, so it was convenient to learn English on *Instagram* and *YouTube*. I practiced writing in English by blogging, and when I wrote sentences, I looked up words in a dictionary and chose the most suitable expressions.

I'm still not satisfied with my English skill. Sometimes it's hard to convey my opinion in English. I feel that my English needs further improvement. Although I won't use English for work, I still want to master English. When I become a member of society, if I can speak English as one of my abilities, it will lead to some possibilities. For that reason, it is necessary to continue learning English. Also, my current TOEIC score is 570 points, but my goal is 600 points, so I should continue to study TOEIC.

There are three important things about learning English for me. First is to touch English in some way every day. When I listen to English, I should immediately be able to understand words without translating them into Japanese. Second is to find my favorite way and continue doing it. If I

like it, I won't get bored. In particular, it is essential to practice speaking and listening English. If there is a time to use English in the future, I think most of it will be conversation. I want to continue learning English with the above in mind.

In this graduation report, I would like to divide the topics we covered into Authentic materials and ESL materials and think about the English learning methods that fit me best.

Authentic vs ESL Materials

Authentic and ESL materials are both useful for English learning. I compared how to use each of them. After graduating from university, I will choose Authentic materials when I study English. The most important thing in learning English for me is to find a way to enjoy myself and keep doing it. There are interesting contents and pop culture in radio, e-readers, movies, TV and *Reddit*. In particular, streaming news apps are very useful because I can learn about various incidents from around the world while studying English. It is also important to get in touch with the words and natural conversations of native speakers. In this way, I can choose the contents that suit my interests and hobbies, so it's easy to keep studying English.

On the other hand, ESL materials also have good points. First of all, I can choose what I want to learn, such as words, grammar and pronunciation. It is easy to understand the contents with pop pictures, photos and videos. Also, I can choose a learning method and level that suits my ability and try again and again. If you are just starting to learn English, I recommend ESL materials. However, it can be difficult to continue using them unless you have a strong desire to learn English.

Finally, both Authentic and ESL materials have good points, so the most effective and important way to learn English is to choose the method you like and will continue.

Authentic Materials

Streaming Radio

Streaming radio apps is an Authentic way to listen to music and native conversation. There are a lot of apps that allow us to listen to radio in the world. I installed two streaming radio apps on my smartphone. *TuneIn Radio* and *Radio.net*, but I mainly used *TuneIn Radio* because it was easy to use and had no ads. With this app, I chose two radio stations. I listened to “BBC Radio 1” and “90.7 WFUV.org”. “BBC Radio” is streamed from the UK and “90.7 WFUV.org” is streamed from New York City in the USA. I listened to them at home where I have Wi-Fi. I am spending most of my days at home now due to COVID-19.

The DJ’s talk was fast and difficult for me, but there was one song I knew. The song is “Stupid Love” by Lady Gaga. She has been my favorite artist since I was a high school student, and I know some of her songs. The most impressive lyric for me was “I would battle for you (Even if I break in two)”. I checked the meaning of the lyrics. I found this song sang a feeling of “you can fight with love.” I felt her strength from it.

I learned some words from the radio. The first word is “key worker.” It means “a worker who helps to coordinate a patient’s care and welfare, etc.” in English and 主要労働者 in Japanese. The second word is “dispassion,” it means “coolness” in English, and 冷静 in Japanese. DJs said this word when they talked about the Olympics.

I think that listening to the radio is good for getting used to English. I can do it anytime and anywhere and find music and artists I don’t know. I had never listened to the English radio before, so this was a fresh experience for me. I will keep listening to streaming radio from now on.

Streaming TV News

Using streaming news apps is an Authentic way to watch English news. I

installed two news apps on my smartphone. *NHK World TV* and *BBC News*. *NHK World TV* reports mainly Japanese news, so I could hear some words I knew. *BBC News* is streaming from the UK and reports foreign news. It was easy to use because the articles were divided by region and genre. I watched them in the morning and night each day.

I watched a lot of news on the two apps, but most of the news was about COVID-19. The article I was most interested in was “EU raises \$8 billion for coronavirus vaccine.” In summary, more than 30 countries promised a total of about \$8 billion for this fund-raising event, and Japan pledged about \$234 million. I hope that a vaccine is developed soon. The audio on English news is fast for me, but there are subtitles, so I managed to understand.

I learned some English expressions. The first is “gunfire,” it means “the act of shooting a gun” in English, and 銃撃 in Japanese. The second is “bilateral agreement.” It means 二国間条約 in Japanese. The adjective “bilateral” means “having two sides or parts” and “affecting or undertaken by two parties.” The case of “bilateral agreement” I found refers to the latter meaning. These expressions were used in an article about North Korea and South Korea.

I think that watching English news is very good for learning English. I can improve my English skills while learning about various incidents and getting more general knowledge from around the world. Also, the words and expressions used in the news are useful for learning TOEIC.

Reddit

Reddit is a kind of electronic notice board, and we can read native English on various topics. I always use SNS such as *Instagram* and *Twitter*, but I rarely look at notice boards on the Internet, so this is my first time to use one, and I tried the international site, *Reddit*. On *Instagram* and *Twitter*, I usually look at my favorite photos and videos to help me relax, but this time I looked at subreddits about food and

landscapes. I checked the “r/DessertPorn” and “r/JapanPlaces”. The theme of “r/DessertPorn” is “the stomach is a dream factory.” I was excited when I read that. I saw a lot of confectioneries on this subreddit. The post I was most interested in was about making a cake on Mother’s Day. It looked so delicious. I thought everyone who posts photos must be good cooks. The “r/JapanPlaces” has photos of various places in Japan. My favorite photo is “100 torii of Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine.” I wanted to visit the shrine because the torii were so beautiful.

I had a question when I saw some conversations. I wondered about the difference between “oh my god”, “oh my gosh” and “oh my goodness.” I found they had the same meaning. Some people can’t use “god” because of their religion, so they say “gosh” or “goodness” instead.

I learned two words. The first is “adorable.” It means “lovable, especially in a childlike or naive way” and いとoshii or かわいらしい in Japanese. Women especially use it. Next, I learned the phrase, “I’m salivating!” It means よだれがでそう ! in Japanese. The verb “salivate” means “produce saliva” and “be envious, desirous.” In this case, I think the phrase has both meanings. These words were used in a reply to a post about a cake. In this way, I could know various expressions.

Exploring *Reddit* is useful for learning native English. I checked topics that suit my interests, so I could get a lot of good information from around the world.

E-reading

E-reading is a way to improve reading skills. I always read with paper books, so this *Lifelong English* assignment is my first time to read a digital book. I used *iBooks* and *Xreading*. On *iBooks*, I could see a lot of books (novels, manga, magazines, etc.) in Japan and foreign countries. I think this service is useful because I can buy books that I want quickly and read them anytime and anywhere. On *Xreading*, the books are easy to

find because they are divided by level and genre, but I didn't fully understand all the functions of the website.

I decided to read from easy books. I read *Jack and the Beanstalk* by Joseph Jacobs and *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Andersen on *iBooks*. I have read them in Japanese version before, but I was interested in reading the English version. It was hard to understand the English in both books. Also, I didn't know that "so" and "as" were used as a conjunction. But there is the dictionary function on *iBooks*, so I could look up the unknown words soon. The book I like the most in *Xreading* is *The Invention of Writing*. This book features written characters from around the world and tells the history of writing, with examples from email, poems, reports and so on.

I learned that the word "character" means "a letter, number, punctuation mark, or other symbol." I had only known the meaning of "all the qualities and features that make a person and place." I was also surprised that 漢字 (kanji) are called Chinese characters in English.

I learned two words. The first is "snore." It means "to breathe noisily while you are asleep" and いびきをかく in Japanese. The sound of snoring in comics is often represented by the letters "zzz." Second, I learned "forgetful." It means "be deficient in memory" and 忘れっぽい in Japanese.

I like reading very much, so this experience pleased me. I thought that reading is useful for improving vocabulary and grammar. On the topic of reading, Nation, I.S.P. (2008) said:

Reading is a source of learning and a source of enjoyment. It can be a goal in its own right and a way of reaching other goals. As a source of learning, reading can establish previously learned vocabulary and grammar, it can help learners learn new vocabulary and grammar, and through success in language use it can

encourage learners to learn more and continue with their language study. p. 69

I agree with this quotation, and his idea is like my opinion. I think reading can be a review of previously learned words and grammar, and I can also learn new words and grammar. Using learned expressions successfully will give me confidence in speaking English.

Movies, Videos, TV, Trailers

Movies, Videos, TV and Trailers are an Authentic way to listen to English and read English subtitles to improve my English skills. I usually watch movies on TV and in a movie theater. When I watch a foreign movie, I choose the English version with Japanese subtitles on. I like to read movie reviews after I watch a movie because I want to know the story's details and background. This time, I used *Netflix*. On *Netflix*, I can watch a lot of movies, dramas and animations from Japan and foreign countries. It's very nice because every time I use it, I can enjoy staying at home.

I watched the drama series *Friends* on *Netflix*. This drama is a famous American comedy about six men and women growing up through various events in Manhattan. It was very funny, but I couldn't hear all the lines because the English was so fast. There are 10 seasons, so I will keep watching it from now on.

The movie that I like the most is *Grand Illusion*. This movie is a story about four magicians who perform a magic show one after another based on information from an unidentified person. I was excited at all of the magic in this movie. I learned the word "freeze." It has various meanings in this movie. It means not only changing to ice and getting cold but also to stop moving and behave calmly and formally. This word was used by an FBI agent when he was chasing someone.

I learned some words. The first is “hypnotize.” It means “to induce hypnosis in” and 催眠術をかける in Japanese. Second, I learned “big applause!” It means 盛大な拍手を in Japanese. The verb “applause” means “a demonstration of approval by clapping the hands together.”

It is very hard to watch movies with only English subtitles on. I think it's more effective to watch it in English with Japanese subtitles twice in order to understand the English accurately.

Online Comics

Online Comics is another way to improve reading skills. I read several stories from *It's the Tie* on my phone and computer. The author of this comic is Kasper. He calls himself a comic monkey. He is very inspired by classic Belgian comics, as well as *Garfield* and *Beetle Bailey* among many others. He also posts on *Instagram* and *Facebook*.

This comic has an archive, so I can easily find the stories I'm interested in. I chose “Humor” from the archive. There are simple or complex stories there. The story I like the best is “Animal Planet” (<https://itsthetie.com/comic/animal-planet/>). This story is short and simple. A nature TV announcer is showing a lion parent and child. The child is learning basic survival skills from its mother. On the other hand, comparing the lion's mother and his mother, he laments that she put him in a boarding school. He tells the lions to enjoy themselves for now. Finally, the lion's mother hugs him while crying. It was interesting that the lion's mother could understand the feelings of the man and encourage him.

I found some unknown words from this story. “A lion cub” means a young lion, and ライオンの子 in Japanese. “A boarding school” means “a private school where students are lodged and fed as well as taught” and 全寮制の学校 in Japanese.

The illustrations of this comic are colorful and pretty. Difficult words and phrases appear, but once I understand the meaning, I can laugh and laugh, so I didn't get bored. Kasper releases a new comic every Wednesday. I'm looking forward to that day.

ESL Materials

ESL Online

ESL Online is an ESL learning way to acquire reading and listening skills. I have used free online English language learning sites several times in class when I was a first year student, but I haven't used them in a long time. This time I used *Learning Chocolate* and *Ello.org*.

On *Learning Chocolate*, there were many topic categories, so I could choose the topics I like. I tried the topics "Shopping Trip" and "Season-Summer." First, I listened to an audio of the words while looking at the pictures, then I typed the words myself. I studied specialized words, so I could expand my vocabulary. The exercise was also a review of words I already knew.

On *Ello.org*, I listened to the audio about a topic. Next, I checked the script and grammar and answered some online questions. There were many categories, such as life, food, travel and so on. I tried the topic "SixPix Listening Game #74 Vietnam," which was for beginners and introduced culture and landscape of Vietnam. In this topic, I chose the picture that best matches the audio, so it was easy.

I found some new words. First is "popsicle". It means ice cream or frozen flavored juice on a small wooden stick, and 棒付きアイスクャンデー in Japanese. Second is "saucer." It means a small shallow dish for holding a cup at the table and 受け皿 in Japanese.

When I was using these sites, I was happy. Using online English sites are good for learning simply and quickly. I could practice listening, words and grammar at once, so it was useful and I will try it again.

ESL on Instagram and YouTube

With *Instagram* and *YouTube*, we can also learn English. I often use *Instagram* and *YouTube* to kill time, but I have never watched English lesson videos.

On *Instagram*, I found many English accounts. I chose three watchable accounts. They were “english_grammar_vocabulary”, “quick english fluency” and “three english lovers”. There were grammar, words and pronunciation with pop illustrations. My favorite topic is the difference between American English and British English. For example, “cell phone” is called “mobile phone” in British English. Also, how to count the floors of a building is different. In American English, they count from the first floor, second floor, etc., but in British English, they start with the ground floor, then first floor, second floor, etc. I was surprised when I heard that. We should be careful if we visit Britain.

On *YouTube*, I watched “Learn English with English Class 101.com”. Miss. Alisha teaches speaking, reading and listening English through various topics. The video I like is “English in 3 minutes- asking about hobbies”. I was taught from the video how to ask what someone’s hobbies are without using the word “hobbies”. For example, “What do you do for fun?” or “What do you do in your free time?”. Also, there were many other ways to say a word. In the case of the word “unique”, there were “one-of-a-kind”, “spectacular” and “matchless.”

I learned some new words. First, I learned “confess.” It means “to admit to a wrongdoing”, and 白状する・認める in Japanese. The second word I learned is "caring". It means “feeling or exhibiting concern and empathy for other people”, and 思いやりのある in Japanese.

Instagram and *YouTube* are a part of the important tools for learning English now available on various devices. The content is organized so that it fits on a small screen. The videos are easy to understand because there are subtitles. When I was watching the videos, I felt as if I was taught directly by an English teacher at school.

LyricsTraining

LyricsTraining is a way to learn English while listening to music. I practiced four songs on *LyricsTraining*. One of them was “Rain On Me” by Lady GAGA and Ariana Grande. I have listened to their songs many times so I chose it. I selected the beginner mode. It was hard to hear the words clearly because the singers are native speakers. However, I could learn many new phrases on it, and above all, I enjoyed learning English with music.

Blogging

Blogging is a good way to practice writing English. I made a blog titled *My Bakeries*, which introduces my favorite bakeries in English. I wrote 10 blog posts in two years in my two seminars. I went to many bakeries in the Kanto area of Japan. It was fun to write my blog in English because I like bread and going to various bakeries is one of my hobbies.

I have two things I learned by blogging. First, I learned how to convey non-English words in English. It was difficult to explain the taste, texture and shapes of the bread in English. In particular, it was hard to express clearly the various ingredients in a sweet bread and stuffed bread. I looked up words that fit those Japanese words in dictionaries and the Internet many times. As a result, I could write English so it was easy to imagine the taste of bread and the atmosphere of shops.

Next, I learned about photo editing. I was particular about the photos in my blog. When I took pictures, I paid attention to the angle so that the shop and food looked beautiful. After doing that, I adjusted the size and

brightness of the photos. When people and shadows appeared in the photo, I could make the object look clearer by shading off dishes, tables and walls, and my photos were improved. When the photos looked good, I made a collage.

Through blogging, I was able to think how to choose words and how to edit photos from the perspective of people who will view it. This experience will have a positive effect when speaking English, talking to someone and working in the future.

“My Bakeries - Oshiage” is the best post in my blog. The two shops in this post are the most impressive bakeries to me. I was able to write the shops’ information and the tastes of bread in easy to understand English.

My Bakeries - Oshiage

I found two bakeries near Tokyo Sky Tree. First, I went to *Cafe Cocona*. It's located 2 minutes from the B1 exit of Oshiage Station. This shop opened in June 2018. It sells fruit sandwiches, original hamburgers and other deli items. It is aiming to be a cafe that will become everyone’s kitchen while deepening interchange with customers.

Please look at the left picture. The cross section of them are beautiful! I bought a hamburger and two fruit sandwiches. The hamburger has yakisoba, ham cutlet and plain omelet. It has so much volume. The price is 450 yen. I like the fruit sandwich very much. I often buy one. The strawberry sandwiches are 450 yen, and the banana ones are 350 yen. The deli menu is different everyday because they use seasonal and fresh ingredients. When I go there again, I want to try some deli items.

Second, I went to *Pain Maison*. It is just one minute from the A3 exit of Honjo-Azumabashi Station. In this shop, “shio pan” (a bread with salt) is very popular. This opened for the first time in Yawatahama-shi, Ehime Prefecture, 20 years ago. “Shio pan” was

developed with a wish to make bread eaten deliciously even in summer. This bread became popular by local fishermen who came to buy many times. Then *Pain Maison* opened in Tokyo in February 2018.

I bought “shio pan” (100 yen) and “shio melon pan” (150 yen). They were delicious! The dough is rolled directly around butter, so while baking them, the butter melts and the inside becomes hollow. The bottom of the bread becomes crispy from the melted butter. This is the secret for why it’s tasty and light. The “shio melon pan” is crispy and is covered with lots of sweet cookie dough. The combination of sweet and salty is so impressive! This shop sells many variations of bread that use “shio pan”.

All bread is popular, so there are restrictions on purchases. The bread is baked every 10 minutes, so you can always eat fresh bread. There is a long table there, and the coffee they sell goes well with the bread (50 yen). Some people eat the bread while walking outside.

I recommend taking a walk near Tokyo Sky Tree. You will find something interesting there.

Cafe Cocona

Address: 4-7-14, Narihira, Sumida-ku, Tokyo

Phone: 03-5809-7333

Hours: Tue-Fri 11:00-21:00 Holidays 08:30- 18:00

Regular Holiday: Mon

Pain Maison

Address: 2-4-1, Azumabashi, Sumida-ku, Tokyo

Phone: 03-6240-4777

Hours: Wed-Mon 7:30-19:00

Regular Holiday: Tue

Collocations

Collocations are combinations of words that are often used together. If we can master collocations, we will be able to express ourselves like a native speaker. I chose the collocation on the *EnglishClub* site; “keep away.” I looked up “keep away” on the *JTW* website. I found two sample collocations on the website. One of them was, “I must try to keep away from the area of preparation.” Next, I looked up “keep away” on *ALC.co.jp*. One of the results was “keep away 避ける”. Finally, my original sentence is, “I keep away from the dog because it barks frequently.” Now I understand the collocation “keep away.”

Conclusion

I have learned English in various ways in the *Lifelong English Seminar*. Most of them were a fresh experience. In particular, listening and reading English using online materials were useful. I also acquired the skill to write clearly what I want to convey by blogging.

I found several English learning methods that fit me. Streaming news apps, movies and e-readers are effective. I often read books and watch movies and TV news, so these resources are very suitable for me. I want to use these ways for at least 5 minutes every day during my commute and free time even if I’m busy with work. Also, by studying many collocations, I will increase my vocabulary and expand my range of expressions. If I continue these learning methods every day, I will be able to understand English faster and more accurately and speak English like a native speaker.

I have been learning English at school and cram school since I was 11 years old, so it’s strange for me to graduate from university and lose English classes. I will continue learning English with a strong desire to have good conversations in English.

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