

What does English mean to you? For junior high school students, English is a subject we study in class. But what are we studying it for? The reason is different for every person. Recently advances in AI have made automatic translation and interpretation possible. With AI, is it necessary for us to learn English? From my personal experience, I realized that learning English is important and has great value and meaning.

When I was in the first grade of elementary school, my homeroom teacher used integrated study classes to teach English. The teacher thought students should hear English at an early age because it is easier for young people to imitate words. In that class, I watched an English musical movie called “The Sound of Music”. I enjoyed the movie so much and wanted to watch it again, so I rented the DVD video. I asked my mother to rent it again and again. I watched the musical many times and remembered all the songs in the movie. I could sing them even though I couldn’t understand the words and phrases. One day, I had a chance to sing in front of the entire school. I chose to sing the song called “My Favorite Things”.

“Raindrops on roses And whiskers on kittens”

When I listen to and sing English songs, I feel like I connect to them differently than when I listen to Japanese songs. Musicals in English have been “my favorite thing”. After that, I started taking English musical classes. The classes inspired me to act and sing on stage. So I told my mother my dream and she recommended that I try auditioning for musicals. I ended up auditioning for the Lion King and got the role of Young Nala. I played the role of Young Nala for two years. This experience opened my eyes to a larger world and now my future goal is to help create new Japanese musicals and show them to people all over the world.

Not only has English influenced my interests, it has also influenced my personality. I am usually pretty shy and cautious. It is challenging for me to actively raise my hand in class or express my opinion among my friends. Somehow when I speak in English, I feel more comfortable to speak in front of people. It seems that English has a magical power that changes my personality. It gives me confidence. Some of my friends even asked, “why are you so positive and active when you speak in English?” The reason why English can help me express my opinions clearly is because the language has words to help me directly say what I am thinking and feeling.

Recently I read an online article that talked about how speaking a new language can influence someone’s personality. Every country’s culture and history are reflected in its language. So, when we learn a language, we also learn a country’s culture and history. If we use AI translation, we will lose the opportunities to understand ourselves and other people and cultures at a deeper level.

Thanks to English, I discovered the world of English musicals and discovered a more confident side of myself. English helped me access an unknown world. I don't have an actual passport yet. But for now, English is my passport. I am excited about using this passport to discover the unknown world more and connect with people different from myself. Through the experience, I can grow more as a person and find moments that will move my heart. I believe this is the meaning and value of learning English.

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A Passport to an Unknown World