

What if I told you there is a key that can take you to an amusement park, the best school, or even to space? Would you take it? This key is neither magical nor imaginary. It is English.

I am sure there are people who find studying English an interesting subject. Still, also, I hear many of my friends saying, “Living in Japan, why do we need English?” or “We are in a technology era, why can’t we just use a translating machine or Apps? It’s much easier and smarter.” Actually, until recently, I used to think the same way. As I am making a speech in front of you, I understand that English as a subject is not easy. Today, I would like to share how my thoughts changed during my recent experience.

Born and raised in Japan, I still struggle with my English. However, my journey never started from studying the subject “English”. For me, English has been a fun experience. My friends know me as a Disney lover, which is true, but to be honest, it is more than this. I have been going to Disney parks since I was 2 years old. Since then, I have been obsessed with Disney books and programs. This has nothing to do with early English education but just my preference. Whenever I met a prince or princess at the parks, we always had a little chat, danced, and even walked around holding hands, talking in English. It was my love for all things Disney that motivated me to keep learning English. This was nothing more than the saying “What one likes, one will do well.” It isn’t just going to Disney that sparked my deep interest in English.

When I was about 10, I read an article on a Disney Imagineer in a Japanese magazine with a small photo. "Imagineer" is a word made by Walt Disney, combining "imagination" and "engineering," and refers to those who design everything from Disney attractions to entire parks worldwide. This struck me, but at the same time, I faced a problem. There was only limited information in Japanese. Did you know? According to Visual Capitalist, over 60 percent of websites are written in English, while under 3 percent are in Japanese. Only 3 percent! Maybe this is one of the reasons that we need to understand English in this AI age. Later, when I knew how to look things up in English, I was able to find so much information and details of the work. And now, becoming a Disney Imagineer is my dream job for the future.

As a junior high school student, in May, we visited Hiroshima on a school trip. We looked back at Japan’s history and rethought what peace means to us. In advance, we researched and deepened our knowledge and understanding. My teacher said my report was interesting for including both Japanese and American perspectives at that time. It made me realize that what I have been doing naturally was something unique. When I saw many people from all around the world visiting the Peace Museum, reading the English captions with serious expressions on their faces, I noticed something I did not know before. Being familiar with the language is not only for communicating or for exams, but can also enhance understanding and let us see things from a different angle.

Language will lead you to a wide range of possibilities and give you the strength to challenge. So, let’s not limit and underestimate ourselves because of little mistakes. We don’t learn English to impress. We learn how to express ourselves. It’s about expressing who you are and opening doors to a new world with your uniqueness. If you are a little scared to communicate in English, just type in your fave’s name or anything you are interested in knowing. English is one of the tools to connect and expand your horizons. And this is why I believe English is a key to a New World.

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The Key to a New World