English for me

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My first encounter with English was as follows: a five-year-old boy was taken by his parents into an English conversation class in a building. In a drab room with only a desk and chair and a few toys, the teacher struggled to get the boy interested in English, but to no avail. For the average Japanese five-year-old, English is a boring, difficult set of symbols with no relevance to everyday life. This did not change at all after they entered primary school. English lessons were just a time for people who looked a bit different to force them to sing, and their hostility towards English only increased.

As I moved into junior high school, English became a bit more difficult. We were expected to learn more grammar, and we started forming simple sentences. However, I still struggled to understand the rules of English. I found the grammar complicated and confusing, especially when we started learning tenses and word order. Even though the lessons became more challenging, my interest in English didn’t grow. I continued to avoid putting in extra effort and rarely used English outside of class. I didn’t see any real connection between the language and my daily life, so I didn’t feel motivated to improve.

By the time I entered high school, my feelings about English hadn’t changed much. I still found it difficult, and I continued to struggle with grammar and vocabulary. At this point, English became even more important because it was a required subject for graduation, but I still didn’t have much interest in it. I had a general sense of needing to study for exams, but I didn’t really engage with the language outside of school. I didn’t watch English movies or try to read books in English, and I certainly didn’t practice speaking. English felt like a subject I had to get through, not something I could use in real life.

Throughout high school, I continued to feel frustrated with English. I always managed to pass the tests, but I never felt confident in my abilities. I could recognize words and phrases, but I couldn’t understand or speak the language fluently. Even though I knew that English was important for my future, I didn’t feel like I had the skills to use it practically.

It wasn’t until I graduated from high school that I started to realize how important English could be. I began to understand that English wasn’t just something for school—it was a tool that could help me communicate with people from other countries and open doors to new opportunities. I started using English more, mostly by watching movies and reading things online, and I began to feel more comfortable with the language. Even though I still struggled at times, I began to see that learning English was worth the effort.

Looking back, I see that my relationship with English was shaped by a lack of motivation and confidence. I didn’t take English seriously for most of my school years, and that held me back. However, after finishing high school, I realized that learning English is not just about passing exams, but about connecting with the world. I still have a long way to go in improving my skills, but now I’m more determined to keep learning and using English in my everyday life.

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