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Learning English

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In today's globalized world, it is no longer possible to live and work exclusively with Japanese people. Therefore, the ability to use English, the lingua franca, without difficulty, occupies a very important position. Also, if you want to work for a foreign company, or if you want to work internationally, you will need to be especially proficient in English.

I should have a certain level of English proficiency. I studied English well during my three years of high school and was admitted to Waseda University. However, I cannot speak English practically at all. When I was meeting a friend at Tokyo Station, a foreign tourist asked me where the coin lockers were, but I did not know what to say, so I could only say “Go officcer”. Of course, I simply did not know where the coin locker was, but even so, I think this reply was too poor. This is English for examinations to everyday conversation. This is one example of how English for entrance examinations is useless for everyday conversation. Not all people with higher education cannot speak English to this extent, but the current situation is that one can be admitted to Waseda University without being able to speak English as well as this. I also think this problem is related to the fact that the English questions on the Common Test are heavily weighted toward reading comprehension and information retrieval skills, and do not ask much about grammar skills.

In this respect, I think Waseda University's English education is excellent. Almost all students are required to take Tutorial English to develop practical English conversation skills for daily use. These classes allow students like me, whose English conversation skills are atrocious, to acquire a minimum level of English conversation skills by forcing them to speak English. There is one problem, however. I don't know if it is the same in other faculties, but in the Faculty of Law, students must pay an auditing fee in addition to the semester's tuition fee to take Tutorial English. This may be unavoidable, given the small class size and the large number of faculty members required, but I would rather see a reduction in tuition fees than the construction of an incomprehensible building or the installation of expensive chairs on the Toyama campus.

However, the ability to speak English as if it were one's native language may not be essential in the future, unless one speaks English constantly or engages in sophisticated business conversations. This is because as technology advances, so does translation technology, making it possible to instantly translate spoken language input. Although there are many translation errors and languages that are difficult to translate, this will continue to improve and become more convenient.

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