

The LLL SIG Newsletter

Learning English without the Guidance of Teachers

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There are a lot of English-learning groups all over Japan for beginners to advanced learners. Most of them are groups without the guidance of teachers. Their members regularly get together to chat on a variety of topics in English. The members include many people over 50 or 60 and those who don't speak English at all in their daily lives. Still they are very eager to continue their learning.

Why do such people, who do not need English in their daily lives, try to continue their learning? Many answered:

- They want to express their own ideas in English.
- They want to enjoy traveling abroad.
- They want to understand foreign dramas without reading captions.
- They want to communicate with people of other countries and exchange their views on various issues.

As for business people, advanced speaking ability is required at their workplace and speaking grammatical English is the first and basic step to be respected by other English speakers. However, natural and casual conversation skills are also very important for smooth communication in the business field.

Then why do they need other people to study English when there are a lot of good self-learning materials and programs these days? It is because most of them think English is just a tool to attain other purposes, so they are trying to:

1. Get information in English.
2. Think in English.
3. Express their ideas in English.

They have to do this very often and regularly. If they learn English together with others,

1. They can learn to speak English spontaneously.

When they talk with others they should not speak too slowly or take too much time before saying something. Pressure is a good stimulation for them.

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2. They can learn to speak English logically and persuasively.

If they can't do this, nobody will be willing to listen to their English.

In Japan, there are many English-learning groups and most of their members are adult learners and older learners. This means a lot of people eagerly continue to learn English even after graduating from their high schools or colleges. There are no teachers in charge of these groups, but, as a rule, speaking Japanese is not allowed whenever the members enter their meeting rooms. They regularly get together, usually once a week.

Why do many people join such English-learning groups without teacher's guidance?

Mainly because:

1. They want to continue their learning without paying expensive fees.
2. They want to learn English freely and actively, not in a passive way.
3. They want to use English as a tool to study some other subjects.
4. They want to make friends with other learners.

Of course a good teacher with good teaching skills is very important for learning English. However, learners need opportunities to use the language they have already learned. Friends are also very good teachers and group members can learn in a situation where all are equal and share the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities.