**Why Do we have to learn English?**

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 Why do we have to learn English? I think everyone should think about this question. Is it to speak with people from different countries? Is it to watch Hollywood movies? Or to listen to English songs? There are many reasons, but if you think, “I have no idea why I have to learn English,” then it will be hard to learn English. In the worst case, you may hate it. Today I would like to tell you some reasons why I’m studying English.

 In my opinion, the greatest reason to speak English is to have the ability to make friends worldwide. English is used globally. By knowing English, it will be easier not only to get friends but also to understand your friends and their opinions more deeply. I know it is true because I did just this.

 Last year I decided to leave my home country and to study in the United States of America for ten months. Of course I had a lot of reasons to become an exchange student; I wanted to learn English. I wanted to know other cultures. I wanted to eat junk food, and so on. Before I went to the United States, I had been thinking, “If I go there and live for one year, I will be able to speak English like a native person.” However, the reality was different. The first one month was a nightmare. I couldn’t understand anything. I went to a public high school in California and studied with American teenagers. Everyone spoke so fast and used a lot of slang. At that time my teachers helped me a lot, but still I couldn’t understand what we were doing in class. We had two more exchange students in my school, Lucy from Switzerland and Marvin from Norway, but I didn’t notice them for four months, because they spoke really good English like Americans.

I started thinking about the differences between the other exchange students and me. I started learning English at a junior high school. Technically I had already learned English for almost five or six years, which was not that bad. However, Marvin from Norway told me that he started learning English when he was really young, and that they need to know English even for watching movies which are not dubbed to Norwegian. In another case, Lucy from Switzerland studied English for only three years, but was already fluent in three other languages. Lucy’s experience shocked me, and I really wanted to know how she did that. Maybe the difference was how often we were using English every day. In my case, I was taking an English class once a week, which was OK. In her case, she had an English class at school just like me, but she was using English almost every single day. So I needed to practice more every day.

Five months later I was able to communicate not only with my American family but also with my American friends and other exchange students. Through this I noticed one important thing. English helped me learn about Japan as well. Learning English is a good way to get to know more about your home country because you have to communicate about yourself.

 Before I went to California, I had gone camping with other exchange students in New York City. That experience changed me a lot in a good way. It was difficult for me to imagine how much I could enjoy talking with people from different countries. English helped me connect with others who were students from 13 different countries, and the common thread connecting us was English. I was able to feel the differences every time I talked with them. I was surprised at that, because I thought, “If I go to different places, see different things and use many languages, finally I can feel and learn different cultures.” But that was wrong. In the NY camp, there were so many exchange students from all over the world; they were from Norway, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Taiwan, and Korea. What language do you think we spoke there? Of course people were speaking one language: ENGLISH. It was the lingua franca. You might think that I couldn’t feel the different cultures because we use the same language, but I did feel the diversity of cultures.

 If you don’t know how to speak English, you can still get friends, but the most important things are connecting with people and understanding each other from a global perspective. I learned English and can explain things in English. That is how I learned to understand other cultures. As there are many other languages besides English, if you learn other languages, you will be able to understand other cultures more deeply, too. I think that is why we have to learn other languages, and as a commonly used international language, English is a great choice.