

『英語上級者への道 ～英検1級合格を目指して』
第1回 効率よく、確実に英語力をあげるためのヒント

Sprict

■ Opening Dialogue

T: Hello Edward! I have some fine news for you! We are beginning a new series of broadcasts on our website. What do you think?

E: Simply sterling! I've always been pleased to be a part of the Eiken Times family! How many years have we been on the Net now?

T: Who's counting?! Time flies when you're having fun!

E: Or...as the frog says... Time's fun when you're having flies! Har!!

T: The first joke of the season! Well done! We really should, however, move along to a more serious topic, specifically the structure and goals of our new site.

E: I'm all ears! English language pedagogy is being more seriously researched now more than ever. We really should pass the fruits of that labor on to our students.

T: And so we shall! You know Edward, we Japanese are known around the world as a very busy people.

E: Yes...I've always respected the basic industriousness of Japanese society. That comes at a price though.

T: That's where we come in! Our new course of study will offer advice on how to engineer English language study into even the busiest of schedules. Along the way, we will introduce an exciting new approach to learning, top-notch materials and will even guide students to supplementary resources.

E: That sounds great! People in today's world face some stringent challenges. We can help them maximize their approach to time management and weave in some efficient study techniques on the way. Hey!! Time is money! What are we waiting for?!!

T+E: Let's Roll!

**Listen to Dialogue 1 and, in one minute, answer the question,
“What advice is offered by Edward and Tets?”**

■ Dialogue 1

T: Edward, I'm sure with your long experience teaching English here in Japan, you've noticed some quirks, which might be unique to Japanese learners of English.

E: Well, let me start by saying that I've honestly been very impressed with the strength of effort made by the many serious students I've met over my 12 years of teaching here. The answer is naturally, yes, because each language and culture carries its own unique linguistic mindset, which has a specific effect on how second language acquisition takes place.

T: Could you be more specific?

E: O.K. Let's consider a child in, say, elementary school in Japan. If memory serves, the kanji '勉強' (study in English), will be taught in their third year. I remember my son struggling with the correct stroke order, balancing the character correctly and so on, but he knew how to pronounce and use that particular word long before he could write it. The sound/sense was already well developed and the word meaning firmly internalized.

T: I see your point. As he had mastered the word 勉強 verbally, he could focus on memorizing the image of the two characters. But when students memorize English words...

E: Exactly. They should go through those initial steps of combining sound and meaning. The trouble is, they most often don't.

T: It's true that we Japanese often ignore the sound sense of words. We have a highly visual literary tradition. Even when audio material is a part of study, students often don't listen actively. As a result, their spoken English often falls short of good reproduction.

E: That's right! On a cultural note, teachers with broader international experience, note reluctance on the part of some Japanese students to practice oral repetition drills with a real sense of energy. Students from some other countries seem more outgoing in this type of drill.

T: As they don't focus on memorizing sound, they are slow in reading as well. When we read a passage in Japanese, we can usually finish reading it much faster than when we read it aloud. Japanese learners are often unable to visually track a passage being read by a native speaker. This clearly shows a connection between speaking skills and reading skills.

E: One must indeed practice both listening and speaking in order to become a fluent reader...and writer, for that matter. It's all related. While listening to a lecture, one doesn't have the luxury of asking the speaker to stop and repeat their on-going speech. One must listen and process the information quickly.

T: I quite agree. It happens many times that people can not understand a passage, even though it may consist of vocabulary well-known to the student. They just can't keep up the pace. I was fortunate to realize this in my university days. I purchased some good audio material, listened carefully and worked on my reproduction skills.

E: That was certainly to your benefit. Sound should come first, as it does in our natural development. In our method, you will begin and end with sound.

What advice is offered by Tets and Edward?

Please explain in English in one minute.

■ Please listen to the Model

Many Japanese English learners have difficulties in listening. Though a passage consists of only words that they know, they cannot hear well, because they haven't internalized the aural aspect of the words. Sound conveys meaning. The meaning and the pronunciation, the set of the sounds that

represent the word, should be memorized as a perfectly combined set. When you memorize example sentences, you should do the same. Japanese English learners seem to have been overly affected by the study methods they used for Kanji. When they memorized the Kanji '勉強', they already knew the meaning of the word 'Benkyo' and the meaning and the sound had already been combined. English learners here should be aware of this fact and focus more on memorizing sound and meaning together. Repetition and reading aloud is very important.

This is the way to brush up not only your listening skills but also to better your reading speed and comprehension.

**Listen to Dialogue 2 and, in one minute, answer the question,
"What advice is offered by Edward and Tets?"**

■ Dialogue 2

E: Teachers here often note the passivity of most Japanese learners, especially in exercises demanding a high degree of independent participation. I taught in Europe for many years and did not find it to be true there. Why is this?

T: If you observe some classes at junior or senior high schools, the answer will be clear.

E: What do you mean?

T: Students in the Japanese school system are encouraged to take a very passive role. A high value is placed upon sitting quietly and responding only when directly asked by the teacher to do so. The answer is (more often than not) set and there will be little variation in student responses.

E: That sounds like the European school system in the 1800's! There was a proverb that went: "Children should be seen and not heard". Hardly conducive to good language skills!

T: Exactly! In the method you and I use, Edward, we try to remediate this by doing a lot of reproduction work.

E: Yes! That is why we enjoy Janken so often! "Winners, ask your partners: より多くの方が高等教育を受けるべきだと思いますか' in English. Losers, answer the question. You should continue talking about this topic in English for 2 minutes. Ready... Go!" It really is effective practice!

T: Right. In our method, we can vary this in many ways. For example, one of the pair can read the passage aloud, while the other prepares to restate the content. The permutations are almost limitless!

E: Finally we can say that English learners whose study includes efficient reading and listening practice, coupled with productive activities such as summarization, reading aloud, repetition and shadowing, are studying English comprehensively.

T: As the old circus barkers used to say: "Everything under one tent!"

E: That's it! Well then...Everybody...come into the show!!

What advice is offered by Tets and Edward?

Please explain in English in one minute.

■ Model

Japanese English learners seem to be passive in their study of English. This passive attitude has been developed in English classes that they took in their high school days.

They have been studying English in lecture type classes or if not, they have been affected by other classes that were given mostly in lecture style.

Reading and listening activities are considered passive activities. However, one can become a good reader and a good listener through a good combination of productive and receptive activities.

Listen to Dialogue 3 and, in one minute, answer the question,

“What advice is offered by Edward and Tets?”

■ Dialogue 3

E: There is perhaps one more point we should make related to our last conversation about students being more active in their studies. May I?

T: By all means!

E: I find that supply-type questions are often answered in an over-simplified way by many students here in Japan.

T: By “supply-type” you mean questions where only a part of the sentence is given and the students must use their imaginations to complete it. Correct?

E: Right! This type of activity can be very beneficial for the student as it offers both practical grammar exercise and a chance to simulate real-world situations.

T: I think I follow you! Our students often focus on only the grammar point, with very little thought given to giving a realistic or even interesting answer.

E: Imagination is important, and not just as a game! Language exists in the real world and is a living thing. We use a type of imagination every day whenever we speak! Conversation is a creative process, and that process can and should be practiced when approaching a second language. Consider the subjunctive mood. If a student is given the fragment: “If I were you I.....” and is asked to complete the sentence, a modicum of creativity as well as grammar awareness should be used. Consider these two examples:

1. If I were you I would go.
2. If I were you I might go to the lecture because the speaker is very good.

Which is better? Both are grammatically correct but only answer #2 shows any real depth.

T: That is so true! In our study here let's always keep the importance of living language in mind and encourage student creativity!

What advice is offered by Tets and Edward?

Please explain in English in one minute.

■ Model

One has to use his/her imaginative power when they learn new expressions, vocabulary or sentence patterns. One has to focus more on when, and on what occasion the structures being studied will be encountered in the real world. Imagine the situation and make a sentence using the new expression, vocabulary or sentence pattern. In one way of thinking, producing language always uses the imagination.

**Listen to Dialogue 4 and, in one minute, answer the question,
“What advice is offered by Edward and Tets?”**

■ Dialogue 4

E: You know Tets, you and I have been very fortunate to have been involved with a wide range of students.

T: Indeed we have! We have taught elementary school kids, university students and professional people. All very busy in their own ways. I sometimes wonder how they find time to study.

E: True. Some say they are very busy but they never fail to prepare for classes. I've learned some of their secrets over the years.

T: Me too, and I strongly feel that we should share some of these jewels with our students today.

E: Would you like to start?

T: Sure! I think you know I personally spend a great deal of my time driving from workplace to workplace.

E: Oh yes! Your car is your second office!

T: It is! Do you know the concept of “Before Departure, While Driving and On Arrival, Three-Step Learning?”

E: Sounds interesting. What is it?

T: When you get into your car, you spend some time considering what you are going to listen to on your audio system. Before driving...

E: Yes!! Safety first!!

T: Naturally! Before driving, you should have prepared some written materials related to the recording you will be listening to during your commute. Peruse it briefly, then listen as you drive. This is a very efficient method of listening practice. The passage really doesn't have to be very long as the point here is repetition. You may practice shadowing, reproduction, and memorization. Just be sure to drive safely. When you arrive at your workplace, don't leave the car immediately. Look at the printed material and visually confirm the passage you practiced while driving.

E: Two birds with one stone!!

T: Exactly! You have added some extra hours of study without changing your schedule. Planning, strategy and time management...they are very important.

E: Finally, let's discuss the importance of the Internet in language learning. You know Tets, each period in Western history has been given a sort of nick-name. The Middle Ages, for example, is "The Age of Faith" because everyone believed absolutely in God.

T: I remember! The Renaissance was "The Age of Exploration" and so on.

E: That's it. The 21st Century is being called "The Information Age", and the World Wide Web is the key element! It is a fabulous learning resource as well as a great way to put your English to practical, day-to-day use. Tets, how do you use the Net?

T: I enjoy listening to Radio Australia and some internet radio channels that broadcast music programs.

E: Good choices there!

T: When I was a college student, it was difficult to get a copy of an English language newspaper. Now, not only the articles but also sound and video clips are only a click away. Edward, could you recommend some websites that might be of interest to our students?

E: With pleasure, and I will start with OURS!!! I really love our broadcast! Having succeeded in plugging us, I will recommend some great sites.

T: I guess many of our listeners enjoy listening to or watching programs for English learners on NHK. What else is good?

E: One idea is to join Facebook. It is free of charge and you can join interest groups with a truly international membership. You can be chatting in English, in real-time right away. It is great fun! Let me also recommend TED TALKS. (LINK) This is a site where you can access lectures from some of the most influential people on the planet. Playing these superb speeches in your car, for example, on a day-to-day basis is a super learning opportunity.

T: Thanks Edward! Those are fine tips!

What advice is offered by Tets and Edward?

Please explain in English in one minute.

■ Model

We really should not say, 'I don't have time to study.' Efficient English learners make a study plan and have effective learning strategies as well. A good idea is to decide what to do in order to brush up your English, with the daily schedule you have now. As you repeat the materials you choose everyday, you will make steady progress.

It is also a good idea to access your favorite website regularly. You should make English study, related websites and listening to online materials, a part of your life.

T: Now, here are websites recommended by Edward!

E: Why not visit them? We hope you will make it a part of your daily routine to visit some English websites and make your English study a part of your life. I would recommend Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/>. That's <http://www.facebook.com/>.

Also, TED TALKS: Ideas Worth Spreading. The web address is <http://www.ted.com/>. That's <http://www.ted.com/>. And finally, a wonderful site, English Stories on Line. The address is <http://www.rong-chang.com/>. That's <http://www.rong-chang.com/>.

T: Thank you, Edward.

■ Closing Dialogue

E: How did your study and practice go today?

T: We hope some of our hints have inspired you.

E: Tets! What's coming next month?

T: We will show you how to make more effective use of listening materials.

E: Apart from that, I think we should keep you in suspense!

T: That's right. Tune in next time to find out!

E: We will always do our best!!

T: You should never say, 'I don't have time to study.'

T&E: Keep on Keeping ON!!!