

Purpose, Interest and REVIEW!!!

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Hello Niigata University student. If you have accessed this page then I guess you must be interested in ways to improve your English language study. Let me give you some of my ideas on ways that you can do just that.

Have a PURPOSE

The first thing I recommend is that you have some kind of personal purpose or reason for learning English. It can be a short-term or long-term purpose but it needs to connect with you in a real and personal way. When I was first learning Japanese (a process that I know will never end for me) I really wanted to be able to talk with the people around me. My purpose was communication. For you, as a student living in Japan you have fewer chances than I did to use the foreign language you have learned in everyday situations. However, if you have a real and clear purpose for studying and learning English then it is easier to find ways to create chances to use the language (read, write, listen or speak) in a way that is meaningful to you. Think about what you need English for in either your university life or for your future and this should help you to understand the best way for you to improve.

Use your INTERESTS

If finding a clear purpose doesn't really suit you then here is another idea for you to think about. Use the things that you are interested in to open the door to studying English. Hobbies or leisure activities are great for this. Say for example you like music and are interested in a Japanese pop group. You could try reading about that group on English websites. Learning new words and phrases can be difficult for anybody (especially if the words and phrases are about something you are not so interested in). However, if you start by learning a few words or phrases about something you like then it will (over time) become easier to learn words and phrases on a variety of topics. Some of the first words I learned in Japanese were the names of traditional snack foods (taiyaki, daikaguimo, popoyaki) as I loved trying these new foods. No matter what you are interested in from politics to motorbikes, from the environment to foreign movies, from health issues to fashion, take your area of interest and match it to your English language studies.

There is one more thing I want to tell you about.....Review

The Curve of Forgetting

Regardless of the subject you study, without some form of review you will forget what you have learned. This of course is also true for learning a foreign language. The following diagram outlines

how much and how quickly humans forget information and how much review is needed to remember the information.

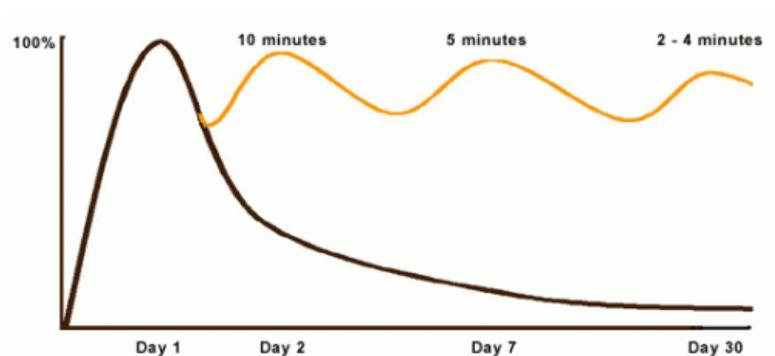


Illustration taken from <<http://uwaterloo.ca/counselling-services/curve-forgetting>>

When you start your English language class, let us imagine you have no new information on the subject. At the end of the class you have 100% of the new knowledge. By the next day (Day 2) if you do no review then what you will remember is only 50% of the information. By the 7th day (which is just when you are ready to take the next English language class) you only have about 10% of the information you learned the week before still in your head. However, if you spend approximately 10 minutes to review the new information on Day 2 and about 5 minutes on review on Day 7 then you can keep about 80% of the new information in your head. How cool is that!

So, if you want to be able to remember and more importantly use the information you learned in English language class, then review is a vital part of this process.

Good luck with your language learning in Niigata University.