

# Why is Japan's English Proficiency So Low?

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Have you ever wondered why Japanese people spend so many years studying English, yet still struggle to communicate confidently? In terms of English proficiency, Japan is ranked 96 out of 123 countries. Can you believe it?

We Japanese people work very hard at school, especially memorizing vocabulary, taking grammar tests, and studying for examinations. So why is our English proficiency still so low? I think there are three main reasons: a big difference in the structure of languages, the quiet personality of the Japanese people, and the lack of importance or reading English aloud.

First of all, the structure of Japanese and English is very different. Japanese does not use the Roman alphabet, so the letters are unfamiliar, making it hard to read and write. The difference means it takes more time for Japanese learners to get used to English reading, pronunciation and grammar.

Secondly, many Japanese people tend to be shy and cautious. We worry a lot about making mistakes in public. Even when students know the answer, they often hesitate. In contrast, learners in many Western countries try to speak without worrying too much. This cultural difference affects how confident we feel when using English.

Finally, I believe that reading aloud in English is not emphasized enough in Japanese education. In my experience, I have taken many vocabulary and grammar tests, but I have never had a reading aloud test, even though, in my opinion, reading aloud is one of the most effective ways to improve not only reading skills but pronunciation, listening, and speaking. When I was in elementary school, I used to read English picture books aloud at home. It also helped me get used to English sounds naturally.

So what can we do to improve Japan's English proficiency rank? We can't change the language structure and shouldn't change our modest personality, but we can change our approach to English education. For example, teachers could include short daily speaking activities, more discussion time, and more opportunities for students to express their ideas.

Most importantly, I think reading aloud should be used more often in regular classes, not just as homework or a self-study method. If students speak English every day, even for a few minutes, their confidence can improve dramatically.

My dream is to be an English teacher in the future. When I go to university, I'd like to study and research English education methods. In particular, I want to promote the importance of reading aloud. Because I believe it can transform the way Japanese students learn English.

I hope that one day, Japan will be ranked much higher, maybe, even in the top20 in English proficiency.

I hope that future students will enjoy using English and not be afraid of it.

Together, we can build a future where English becomes a bridge, not a barrier.

Japan can grow, step by step, as long as we keep trying.