

英文コラムです。文意をつかみましょう。

Some people try to learn a second language (like English) just by going to classes at school, studying hard in class, and doing the homework that the teacher tells them to do. This could be an effective approach for a subject like mathematics or chemistry, but it does not usually make you a strong, confident speaker and writer of a second language. To become really confident at using English, or any second language, you need to find opportunities to use the language “beyond the classroom” — that means outside the classroom, in the real world, in a way that has meaning for you.

Language Learning Beyond the Classroom

There are so many ways to make English part of your life. Overseas travel is obviously a wonderful opportunity to use your English beyond the classroom, but even when travel is difficult, such as during the current pandemic, the Internet makes it possible to listen to, read, and use “real” English.

Every learner can find something that is meaningful for them. It might be watching movies or TV dramas or YouTube clips, using captions. It might be reading books or online newspapers. It might be keeping a blog or vlog (video blog) in English, or connecting with friends who use English on social media. It might be doing karaoke with English pop songs, or r&b songs, or any genre of music you love. It might be writing fan fiction. It might be online gaming with players from other countries around the world, who often use English as the common language. It might be doing a language exchange (using Zoom or LINE) with a partner in another country who is learning your first language — they teach you, and you teach them! It might be cooking dishes using recipes written in English that you find online. Or it might just be using study apps that let you study in a way that is fun and powerful for you, and at your own pace.

Researchers now study people who supplement their language classes with independent learning and use, finding out what strategies they use, how they keep motivated, and how they build the second language into their lives. Key points are “ownership” (you choose the activity yourself, for yourself) and “intent” (you do the activity to help your English grow). Community is also important — either online or face-to-face. Support from others makes it easier to keep going!

Sometimes even a simple change can work well. For example, some learners try switching the language on their smartphone to English, so they read a little English every time they use their phone. How are you going to make English a bigger part of your life?