The English Language Challenge

According to statistics from ETS (the Educational Testing Service) which creates the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), in 2014 the average TOEIC score for Japanese test takers was 512 -- ranking it 35 out of 44 countries with more than 500 test takers in a year. This is well behind the average TOEIC scores for other Asian countries such as South Korea (646), China (671), and India (769). Japanese students often complain about the difficulties they experience trying to learn the English language. The question then is why after six years of mandatory English classes in junior high school and senior high school do students in Japan struggle so hard to acquire English. Japanese students have difficulty learning English for three reasons: its complex grammar, unusual spelling, and troublesome pronunciation.

First, English grammar is much more complex compared to many other languages. For example, English contains a great number of irregular verb forms. In particular, many of the most common verbs in English have irregular past tense forms, such as go/went, see/saw, think/thought, etc. These verbs must simply be memorized as there are no consistent rules that these verbs follow. In addition, plural forms of English nouns are often irregular as well. For instance, the plural form of man is men, of mouse is mice, and surprisingly, of deer is deer. These rules make no sense whatsoever, and complicate the learning process for Japanese students. Another difficulty Japanese students have is dealing with the unusual spellings of English words. While some words like cat and sit follow regular spelling rules, words like knight and though contain “silent letters” which are not pronounced when spoken. Furthermore, unlike Japanese, English vowels can be pronounced in several different ways. Although there are only five vowels in English, there are 15 different vowel sounds, making learning the pronunciation of these words very complicated. Finally, the English language


Model Three-paragraph Essay
Instructor: A. Del Vecchio
contains a great many sounds that do not exist in the Japanese language. For instance, Japanese learners must learn complex new sounds such as the two $th$ sounds, the $r$ and $l$ sounds, and the $v$ sound in order to properly speak the English language. Since these sounds do not exist in the Japanese language, learners have to train their mouth muscles to produce these new sounds in order to be understood by native speakers of English.

In conclusion, learning English presents several difficulties for the Japanese learner. First, learners must deal with the rather complex grammar of English. Many of the “rules” of English contain exceptions which are based on long-forgotten rules that existed long before modern English came into being. Second, English spelling is notoriously difficult, even for native speakers, which make it hard for students in Japan to learn how to spell English words correctly. Finally, English phonology, or pronunciation, makes learning English hard for Japanese students as English contains many sounds that do not exist in the Japanese language. Clearly, the task of acquiring English presents challenges for Japanese students that they must overcome if they hope to become proficient in the language.
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* = supporting points (three supporting points that explain the thesis)

* = details (gives more information about each supporting point)

(The Concluding Paragraph)

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• = restatement of thesis (to remind the reader of the main idea of the essay)
• = summarize the supporting points (summarize the three supporting points in the body)
• = final thought (leave a final thought to get the reader to think about the essay)