

# How English empowers your tomorrow

## JAPAN REPORT

The life-changing impact of learning English on your career and beyond



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# Mastering English is not just a business necessity, but a transformative investment that shapes both professional and personal lives.

## Executive summary

Almost 20% of the world's population speaks English as a first, second or additional language – with many using it in their jobs. It is, therefore, not surprising that today, English has solidified its status as the global language of business. This latest research provides an up-to-date snapshot of the evolving landscape of English in Japan and around the world, exploring the impact of language proficiency on career opportunities in 2024, the availability and importance of on-the-job language training, and employee confidence in using English in their work.

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# 63%

**of respondents believe they could earn up to 50% more if they had better English skills**

The findings contribute employee data to a growing body of global research that points to the financial and motivational benefits of increased proficiency in English whilst at the same time highlighting a skills gap that is holding employees and businesses back:

- 63% of respondents believe they could earn up to 50% more if they had better English skills
- 52% are learning English to have access to a wider range of jobs
- 40% of employees are not satisfied with their current role
- Employees are 3 times as likely to say they are satisfied with their role if their employer is offering language upskilling
- Only 1 in 4 employers is currently offering language training to their employees

Despite efforts by the Japanese government to change the school curriculum and raise English proficiency levels, formal education is still failing to prepare students adequately for the world of work.

- Only 19% of respondents believe they reached a good level of English by the end of formal education
- Only 14% of employees feel they can express themselves fully at work in English
- 70% are turning to self-service tools to improve their English

The benefits of speaking English are not limited to the workplace, and the research reveals how these benefits also spill over into other parts of Japanese citizens' lives, enabling access to English-speaking entertainment, social media, larger friendship groups and generally making people happier and more confident:

- 35% said they feel more confident in their personal lives as a result of learning English
- 66% of respondents with advanced English believe they have more friends because of learning English
- 42% of Gen Z are learning English to help them in their future studies
- 53% of respondents regularly watch English-speaking movies and videos, with or without subtitles
- 11% of people with intermediate or advanced proficiency say they have more social media followers because they can post in English

# Only 14%

**of employees feel they can express themselves fully at work**

This research underscores two key actions that need to happen: the need for changes in the way the English language is taught at schools, colleges and universities to develop those skills needed for the workplace and a call for employers to prioritize English language training as a way to future-proof their businesses in a globalized economy and to maximize, engage and retain their talent.

An investment in language training is an investment in the future of an organization, leading to better communication, improved collaboration and a richer working culture. Mastering English is not just a business necessity but a transformative investment that shapes both professional and personal lives.

# 35%

**said they feel more confident in their personal lives as a result of learning English**

“English is unquestionably the language of the international business community”

## Introduction

In 2024, there are more than 1.5 billion speakers of English and over half of those speakers are people who have learned English as a second or additional language. Many of those are using English for their work and today, more than ever, English is unquestionably the language of the international business community.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of new technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI), the globalization of countries' economies and the impact of the Covid pandemic have all combined to remove the traditional physical borders that once influenced business decisions, with many organizations now outsourcing to other countries, trading with overseas customers and recruiting from a global talent pool of employees who are now able to work remotely.



But as one set of barriers is removed, another set appears: barriers to effective communication.

As far back as 2014, the Harvard Business Review highlighted the importance of a common language in “every aspect of organizational life” but claimed “leaders of global organizations – where unrestricted multilingualism can create friction – often pay too little attention to it in their approach to talent management.”<sup>2</sup>

In this latest piece of research, carried out by Pearson in collaboration with PSB Insights, we wanted to see how, if at all, the situation has changed in 2023. Have employers started to take language training more seriously? Are employees feeling more confident about their day-to-day use of English in the workplace? Have they been better prepared at school and university for the language skills they need to perform their jobs? What impact does their level of English proficiency have on career opportunities, salary and overall job satisfaction? Are they feeling threatened by the introduction of AI? And if so, does English proficiency give them any additional job security?

Whilst the focus of our research is very much on English in the workplace, the findings also provide interesting insights into the impact that learning English has on people’s personal lives, the ways in which they have learned English and their key motivations for continuing on a language learning journey.



This report is divided into three sections, highlighting the key findings in each of the following areas:

- 1. How English empowers your work and career**
- 2. How English empowers your personal life**
- 3. Your language learning journey**

Before we delve into the findings of our research, let’s hear from three Pearson colleagues who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, are from different generations and have followed different career paths – but are united in their belief that English has been critical in getting them to where they are today.

1 2022 Power Skills Survey, Pearson (2022)

2 What’s Your Language Strategy?, Harvard Business Review (2014)



Foreword by

**Giovanni Giovannelli**

President, Pearson Languages

Nationality: Italian

**English changes lives and careers. It's a simple statement, but it's true. And why do I believe this? My lived experience – what I know about how my proficiency in English has changed my life.**

I am Italian and come from a small town and a tight-knit family where everyone spoke beautiful Italian at home, but no other languages. My curiosity about English was ignited when I was seven, when a British lady called Wendy moved to my hometown and started giving English lessons in group classes. Even at that age I was fascinated by the sounds and shapes of the unknown English words and wanted to know more.

I studied and I studied. At times it was really hard but I was determined to master English. I took every opportunity I could to practice with my classmates and Wendy was a marvellous first teacher.

Where did my English take me? First to the US, to study at Harvard Summer School when I was only 18; then for a semester at NYU, with an exchange program scholarship when I was attending Bocconi University. Then right after graduation, my English opened up the opportunity for me to migrate initially to the US, where I worked at a Bank for five years, then to Brazil where I led four different businesses

over the course of eighteen years. In Brazil, I learnt Portuguese, and I started to build my family and the next chapter in my life. My expertise in English facilitated my ongoing career in multi-national corporations where English was the language of the business and in time I was appointed to my current role, leading Pearson's English Language Learning division.

My career has enabled me to travel the world, experience a wide variety of cultures and build connections with new friends and colleagues in many different countries. English is the language that connects us all.

**However, the love of language that Wendy ignited was not just for English. Once I got going with learning one language, my passion for learning continued and I can now happily chat to people in Portuguese, Spanish and French as well.**

So Wendy, wherever you are now, thank you. Thank you for sparking my interest in English and my lifelong love of languages. Without my ability to speak English, my world could be very different. Every day I'm grateful for the breadth, depth and joy that English has brought to my life, well above and beyond the unique career opportunities that it opened up for me!



Foreword by

## Lauren Gomez Casadiego

Vice President Global Human Resources,  
Pearson Languages

Nationality: Colombian

**In the ever-changing world of work, dealing with English as a second language speaker is like navigating a complex maze.**

Picture this scenario: diverse accents, language backgrounds, and communication styles coming together in conversations that demand not just a simple understanding of the message but the grasp of every subtle nuance.

Welcome to my world! Today I hold a global VP role in a British company – but my first language is Spanish.

**Early on in my career, I struggled communicating in English and relied on others translating for me – until one fateful day when there was no one there to translate! It was scary, but a pivotal moment in my career when I realised that I needed to master this language to get ahead. Sure, I studied English at school – but that didn't prepare me for the real language demands of the professional world.**

The skills I need at work go beyond what is taught in textbooks. In HR, I need to understand discussions in detail, I need to listen actively and ask questions to check understanding of some difficult and personal issues, and I need to express my ideas clearly and precisely in both speaking and writing.

As my English improved, I was able to do my day-to-day job with greater confidence and ease. And it's not only my work life that has got better. English has enabled me to relocate to an English-speaking country, make new friends and give my son the educational and career opportunities that I didn't have growing up in Colombia.

To fellow English learners, I say: embrace the vulnerability of the learning journey. It won't be easy but you will reap benefits beyond what you can imagine today. Mastering English is not just about learning a language. It's about broadening your horizons and transforming your life.



Foreword by

**Mio Hidaka**

Senior Sales Administrator, Pearson Languages

**Nationality: Japanese**

**We read a lot in the news about the low levels of English proficiency in Japan, especially compared with other countries in the region. This can be depressing to hear for Japanese learners of English – but I think it can also be a source of great motivation.**

Yes, levels of English are low here, but for those who are able to master the language and communicate with ease in different situations, the opportunities are huge. Just look at me. English has enabled me to live and travel abroad, experience new cultures, attend international conferences and secure jobs with international organizations such as Pearson. None of that would have been possible without being able to use English.

I'm not saying that the journey was easy! We Japanese are naturally reserved and don't want to make mistakes. Also, at school, we have less experience of interactive learning and more focus on input or one direction classroom. This makes us worried about speaking out loud and joining conversations, but from my own experience I can say that the more you speak, the easier it becomes and the less worried you will be about making mistakes. The important thing, especially in a work environment, is to get your thoughts across. No one bothers about a

wrong tense or preposition as long as you can make yourself understood. I know this is easier said than done. The thought of phone calls in English used to fill me with dread! But the more I made, the less stressful they became.

I benefitted from studying a major in English, but even then, entry into the world of work was quite a shock. The language needed for business is so different to the English I was using for academic study and I had to learn – on the job – about the language, formality and cultural differences of communicating in a professional environment with people from around the world, many of whom also spoke English as a second language. Every day, I learn something new and get better at communicating in English.

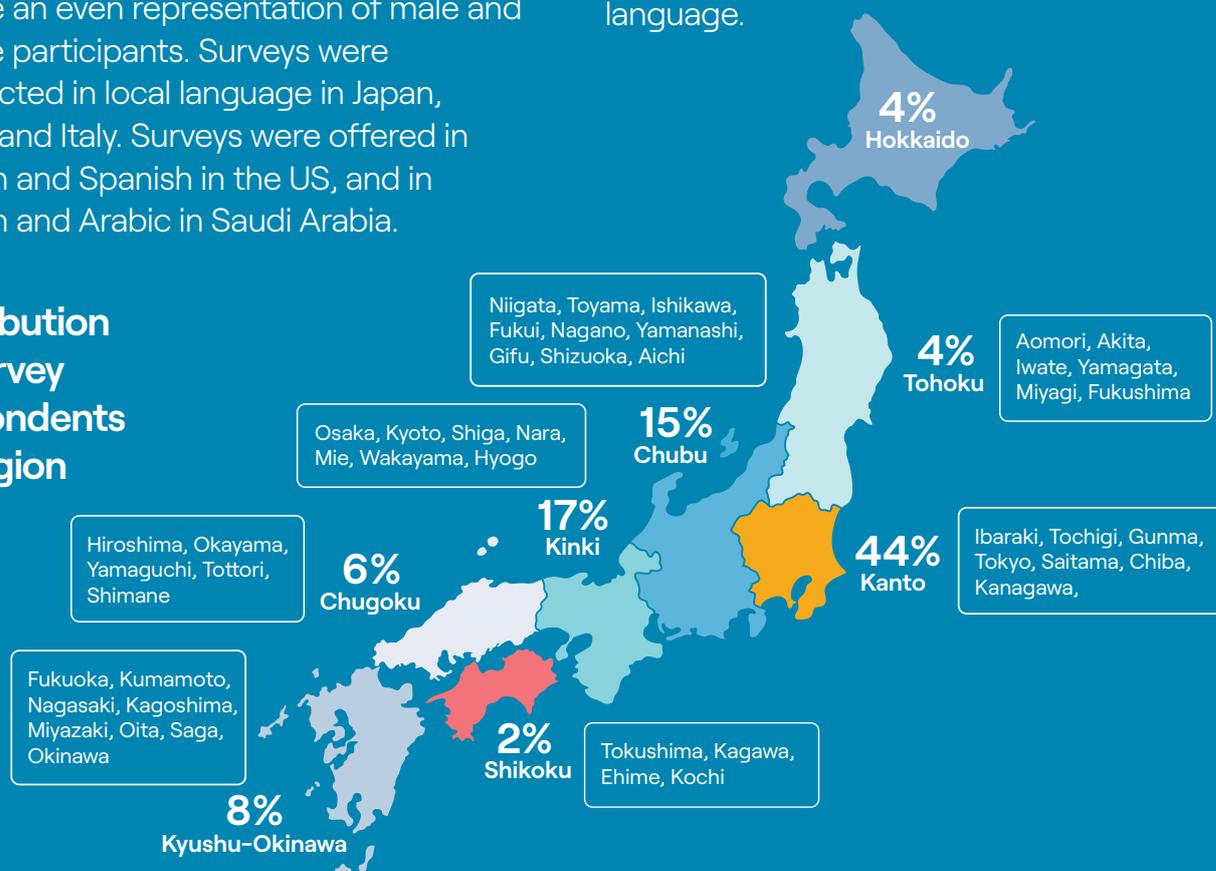
**To my fellow Japanese learners of English, I would say this: find the joy in the process of learning the language, even if you had bad experiences at school. Listen to English music, watch English movies, interact with English speakers on social media. Stop thinking of English as a school subject and start seeing it as a doorway to new opportunities. There's a big world outside of Japan and English will enable you to make the most of it.**

## Research overview

This research took the form of an online survey, carried out by PSB Insights, in five countries across different geographies: Japan, Brazil, Italy, Saudi Arabia, and the US (Florida). The survey was conducted between 4-26 October 2023 with 1000 respondents in each country. Respondents were all speakers of English as a second or additional language and were from a wide variety of industries, career levels and age groups. Quotas were also monitored to ensure an even representation of male and female participants. Surveys were conducted in local language in Japan, Brazil, and Italy. Surveys were offered in English and Spanish in the US, and in English and Arabic in Saudi Arabia.

This report focuses on the research carried out in Japan. In a number of cases, it is interesting to see how the Japan data compares with the data collected in the other countries. For the purposes of these comparisons, the US (Florida) has not been included in the "Global" figures. Given that the US is an English-speaking country, the experience of using English at work is quite different to that of using it in a country where English is not the first or official language.

### Distribution of survey respondents by region



**English proficiency** is based on self reported data, defined as follows:

- **Advanced**: Can easily participate in conversations on wide range of topics with few to no mistakes
- **Intermediate**: Can participate in conversations on a limited range of topics with some occasional/minor mistakes
- **Moderate**: Can carry out limited casual conversations/can only operate independently in basic conversations
- **Elementary**: Very basic knowledge or little to no English

The **generation** sub audiences are defined as follows:

- **Gen Z**: Aged 18-26\*
- **Millennials**: Aged 27-42
- **Gen X**: Aged 43-58
- **Boomers**: Aged 59+

\*Note this is a working age Gen Z definition – standard definitions of Gen Z include younger people (down to age 11) who are not included in this study.

# Demographics

## Industry sector

Industry	Overall*	Japan	Saudi Arabia	Brazil	Italy	US (Florida)
Accounting, Consulting, Financial Services, Insurance, Legal, Professional Services	513	110	139	115	149	139
Administrative and Support Services, Law Enforcement, Recruiting and Staffing Services	256	100	43	53	60	30
Advertising/Marketing, Public Relations	105	10	27	28	40	38
Agriculture, Mining	48	8	17	11	12	5
Architecture, Engineering and Related Services, Construction, Real Estate, Trade Services	376	75	164	60	77	107
Automotive, Manufacturing, Transportation/Logistics/Distribution	487	212	66	84	125	88
Communications, Journalism/News, Telecommunication	98	26	23	25	24	16
Creative/Arts/Design, Entertainment (Theater, Film, Music, etc.), Fashion/Beauty, Photography, Printing/Publishing	188	51	24	51	62	55
Education (Early Childhood and K-12), Education (University, Training and Others)	299	69	97	53	80	73
Energy or Utilities	52	8	26	9	9	6
Healthcare, Life Sciences, Pharmaceutical	275	57	106	36	76	94
Technology, IT	585	83	135	274	93	86
Food/Beverage Service, Hospitality, Retail (excl. Food Service)	423	110	83	124	106	162
Other	295	81	50	77	87	101

## Career level

Workplace seniority level	Overall*	Japan	Saudi Arabia	Brazil	Italy	US (Florida)
Individual Employee	1,821	650	298	345	528	543
Manager	996	154	344	232	266	182
Head Manager	433	41	166	142	84	76
Head of Department	424	93	139	137	55	75
Head of Company	326	62	53	144	67	124

## Generation

Generation	Overall*	Japan	Saudi Arabia	Brazil	Italy	US (Florida)
Gen Z: Aged 18-26	836	161	196	282	197	128
Millennials: Aged 27-42	1,963	450	603	479	431	444
Gen X: Aged 43-58	1,058	328	188	215	327	363
Boomers: Aged 59+	143	61	13	24	45	65

\*The overall data does not include the US

## Section 1

# How English empowers your work and career



## English is the language of the global workplace and will become increasingly important over the next five years

A number of studies have highlighted the importance of English in a globalized economy, concluding that it will remain the lingua franca of business for the foreseeable future.<sup>3</sup> We know from this research what employers and recruiters have said, but what do employees think about the role of English in the workplace?

# 56%

**of respondents said English was important for their professional lives today**

The message coming from survey respondents in Japan suggests that the perceived value of English for work is much lower than in other countries around the world. Compared with a global average of 85% who thought English was important for their professional lives today, only 56% of Japanese respondents felt the same. The figure was particularly low among individual employees (49%) and highest among head managers (85%). Those who did not feel that learning English was necessary for their work cited the use of new technologies (such as AI and translation tools) as a way of dealing with situations in which English was needed. Over 40% of Japanese respondents told us that they never use English at work.

These results reflect a context in which many Japanese companies are still largely domestic, carrying out business activities within the country. The need for English within these organizations is therefore currently minimal but it begs the question of how long Japan can continue to turn its back on the global economy if it wants to continue to grow and compete.

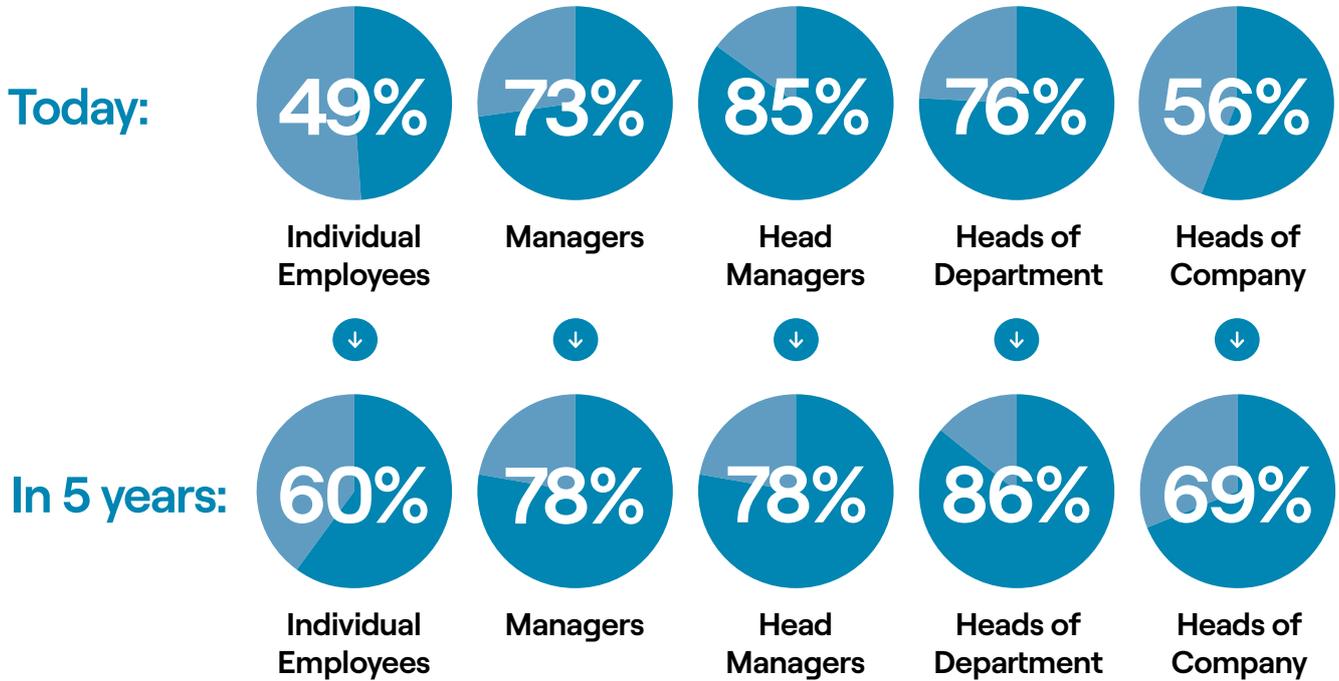
Japan used to account for 15% of the global economy. That figure is now under 4%. According to Tadashi Yanai, the founder of one of Japan's most successful international businesses, Uniqlo, significant change is needed within the Japanese economy. "Unless we tap into the rest of the world, and become more active, there will be no future for the Japanese people".<sup>4</sup>

67% of Japanese respondents felt that English would become increasingly important for their work over the next five years – an 11-point increase on the importance of English today, but again much lower than the global average of 88%. Those in higher positions were more likely to acknowledge the growing importance of English in the workplace (86% of department heads compared with 60% of individual employees). The youngest respondents (Gen Z) were three times as likely (39%) to say that English was somewhat unimportant or not important for their careers compared with Gen Z from the other survey countries (12%), again reflecting the more domestic nature of the Japanese business world.

### Importance of English for work

	Today	In 5 years
Overall	85%	88%
Japan	56%	67%

In Japan, perceived importance of **English for work** is lowest amongst individual employees, but most levels expect importance to increase over the next five years



**Prof. Yukio Tono**  
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

“

Japanese society is, on the whole, rather inward-looking. People work for local Japanese companies and prefer Japanese media and entertainment and domestic travel within the country. This impacts their view on the importance of English. ”

## Better English brings access to better jobs, better career prospects and better pay

Our global research shows that employees at all levels view increased proficiency in English as a way of unlocking career opportunities. This supports one of the trends we are seeing around the use of English at work – that it is becoming a requirement at all levels, including entry-level positions, and is no longer the preserve of more senior roles.<sup>5</sup> How does the Japan data compare with the global view?

Despite relatively low numbers of Japanese respondents agreeing that English is important for their professional lives, 61% do believe that there is a connection

between English ability and earning potential, stating that proficiency in the language is very or somewhat important in determining how much they could earn. Whilst this is still lower than the global average of 80%, it does suggest an awareness that English proficiency could result in a higher salary and more job opportunities. 52% said they were learning English to have access to a wider range of roles – in line with global averages whereas salary was less of a factor than in other markets, with 43% saying they were learning English to find a job that offered a higher salary – compared with 50% globally. It is important to view this data

### Professional motivators for learning English

Motivator	Overall average	Japan average	Elementary	Moderate	Intermediate	Advanced
To enable me to access a wider range of job roles	51%	52%	49%	58%	49%	52%
To enable me to access jobs that are paid more	50%	43%	43%	45%	42%	48%
To help me keep my current job	28%	28%	17%	29%	37%	53%
To help me build stronger relationships with the people I work with	35%	26%	17%	29%	32%	48%
To enable me to advance to more senior positions within my current field of work	40%	21%	11%	27%	26%	32%
To help me be competitive in the marketplace as more jobs are lost to technology/AI automation	38%	20%	10%	25%	26%	31%
To be better prepared to find a new role in case I lose my job to technology/AI automation	36%	14%	10%	15%	17%	21%

within the context of Japanese recruitment processes. Japan has traditionally been a job market in which employees expected to stay with the same company for their entire career. Whilst this is starting to change, skills-based recruitment is still relatively new for Japanese organizations and the majority do not assess candidates, especially new graduates, on business or language skills.<sup>6</sup> There is also a feeling among Japanese employees that re-skilling and upskilling does not necessarily lead to a better-paid role. In a survey carried out by Mynavi, only 10% of employees reported an increase in salary as a result of reskilling efforts.<sup>7</sup>

Our research involved employees from all levels within organizations, and we can assume that the answers reflect the reality of the respondents' own experiences as well as the environment in which they are working. So how does their belief in the impact of English on career opportunities align with their current role?

The view that a higher proficiency in English opens doors to a greater number of better-paid roles correlates closely with the demographic data provided by the survey respondents themselves. Whilst 19% of those who identified as having

limited English were in manager roles, this number trebled to 60% for those with advanced English skills. So although when asked explicit questions about the value of English in securing more senior roles many Japanese respondents did not see it as a key requirement, the reality on the ground is that those with better English are currently in more senior roles – a message that clearly needs amplifying.

# 52%

said they were learning English to access a wider range of roles

We also found **those with higher levels of English proficiency are more likely to be in more senior or leadership roles** – 19% of those with limited English proficiency are in a Management role vs 60% of those with advanced English skills



**Yuichiro Watanabe**  
Executive Officer,  
Life and Career Business  
Division, Nikkei Inc

“

We regularly face the issue that employees with strong business and communication skills in their first language are unable to demonstrate this expertise in English. At the same time, those with high English proficiency do not necessarily have the necessary business skills and experience to respond confidently in direct communication with customers. ”

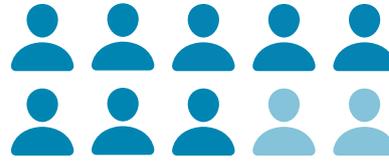
<sup>6</sup> The need for a skill-based approach to jobs, The Japan Times (2018)

<sup>7</sup> Major Japan firms promote reskilling amid shift to “job-based” employment, The Japan Times (2023)

## Mastering English is a lucrative investment in your earning potential

Against a backdrop of political instability and economic uncertainty, it comes as no surprise to learn that concerns around finances are key for many of our survey respondents, particularly those belonging to the younger generations.<sup>8</sup> Our research findings indicate that many around the world are looking to upskill in English language proficiency as a way to find a better paid job and ensure financial security.

Globally, 8 in 10 respondents believe that English proficiency is directly linked to earning potential, and whilst this figure is only 6 in 10 in Japan, 63% believe that those who can communicate effectively in English can earn up to 50% more, with a further 15% believing this increase could be as high as 100%.

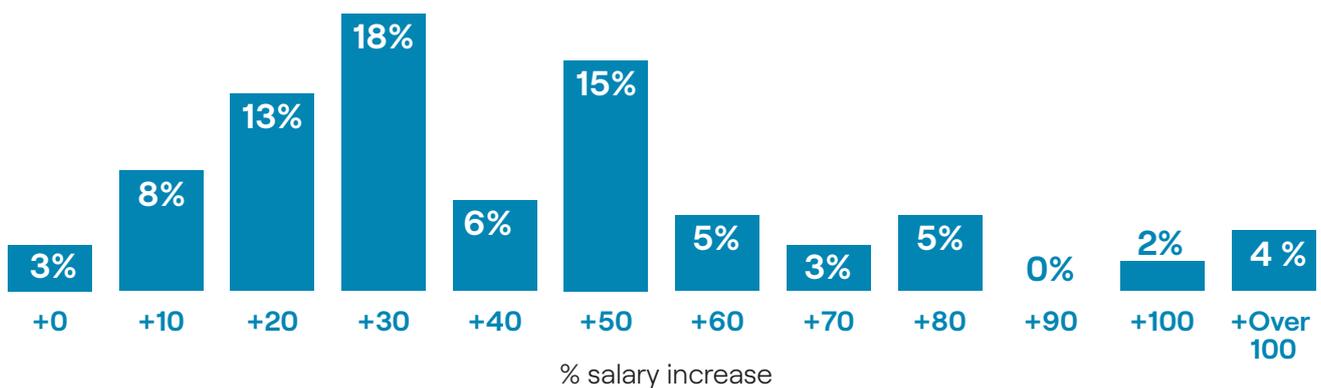


8 in 10 respondents believe that English proficiency is directly linked to earning potential

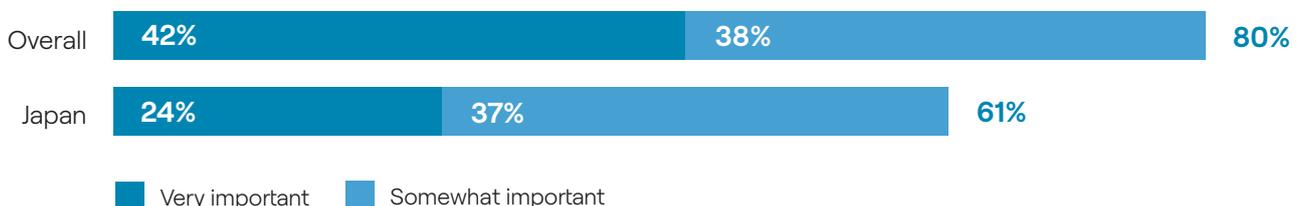
# 63%

of all respondents believe that those who can communicate effectively in English can earn up to 50% more

### Perceived salary impact (% increase as a result of better English)



### Impact of English proficiency on earning potential



When asked how satisfied they were with their current salary, respondents with higher levels of English proficiency expressed greater satisfaction than those with lower levels of English proficiency. 52% of those with advanced English said they were satisfied as opposed to 28% who had limited English.

# 52%

**of those with advanced English said they were satisfied with their current salary as opposed to 28% who had limited English**

These findings once again correlate with the demographic information provided by survey respondents. The average annual salary of people with a low level of English was reported as 4.3 million yen as opposed to 8.73 million yen for those with an advanced level of proficiency. Only 10% of those with limited English reported earning over 8 million yen per year, but for those with a higher level of English proficiency, this figure rises to 41% (intermediate) and 39% (advanced).

## Satisfaction with current salary by proficiency level

28%

Elementary

48%

Moderate

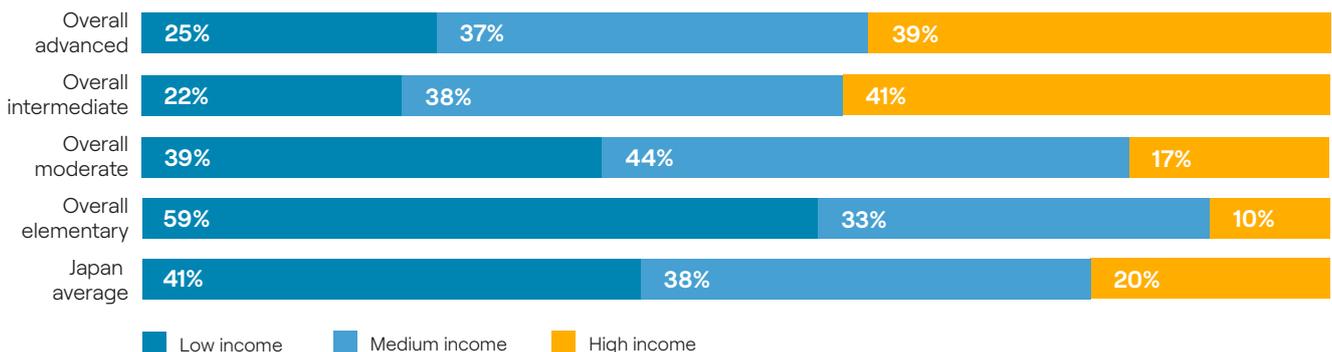
49%

Intermediate

52%

Advanced

## 2022 personal salary/income by proficiency level



# Job satisfaction is closely linked to better English and the provision of language training at work

A key concern for employers is staff engagement and retention. According to Gallup, only 23% of employees worldwide are actively engaged at work, whilst 6 in 10 are “quietly quitting” (meaning they have psychologically disengaged from work).<sup>9</sup> Gallup estimates that the cost of this to the global economy is around \$8.8 trillion each year. So how satisfied with their jobs were our survey respondents?

Overall, 59% of Japanese respondents said they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their current role – much lower than the global average of 77%. There is a clear correlation, however, between job satisfaction and level of English proficiency, with a 32-point difference between those with the lowest and highest levels of English.

Learning and development is a priority for many in the workforce and of particular importance to younger generations (Gen Z and Millennials). 94% of employees say that they would stay at their company longer if employers invested in training and development.<sup>10</sup>

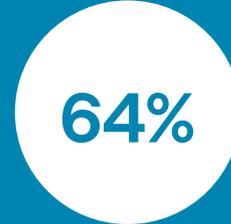
This message does not seem to have been heard by employers. We see from our data that only one in four Japanese companies (24%) is currently providing language upskilling to their employees. Companies not currently offering language training should take note: our survey results show that those employees who work for a company that offers language training are more than three times as likely to say that they are very satisfied with their job (22%) than those working for companies that do not offer any language training (7%).

The message to employers is clear – particularly in Japan where 40% of employees are not satisfied with their current role: seriously consider language training for employees as part of your retention and engagement strategy. Language skills serve not only as a workplace asset for employers, but they are a key factor in your employees’ professional fulfillment.

## Job satisfaction by proficiency level



Elementary



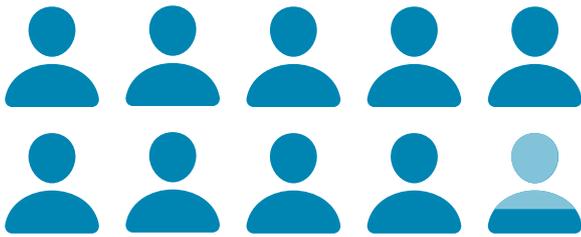
Moderate



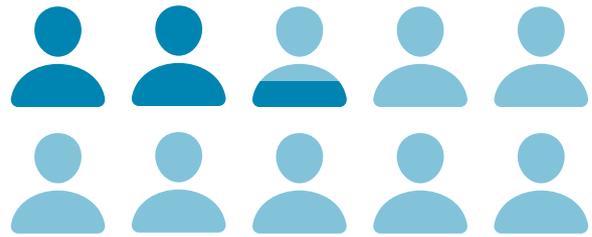
Intermediate



Advanced

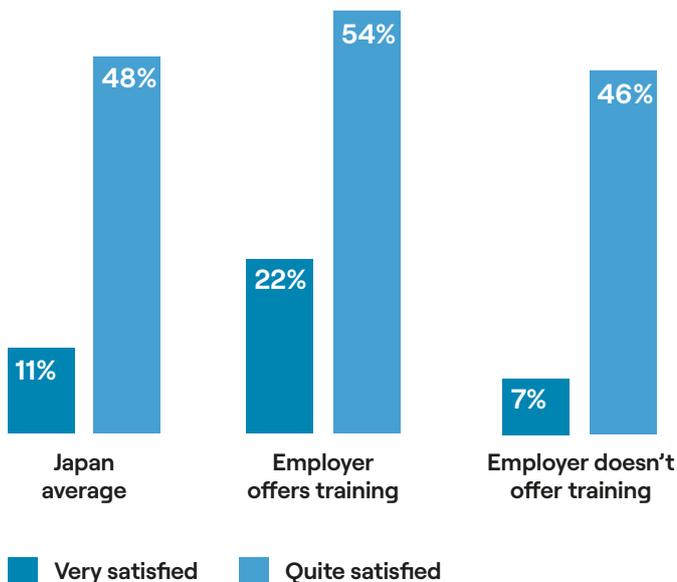


94% of employees would stay at their company longer if employers invested in training and development



However, only 24% of employees say their employer offers training

Employees who state they are satisfied, or somewhat satisfied, with their job



Only **59%**

of Japanese respondents said they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their current role – much lower than the global average of 77%

The message to employers is clear – particularly in Japan where 40% of employees are not satisfied with their current role: Seriously consider language training for employees as part of your retention and engagement strategy. Language skills serve not only as a workplace asset for employers, but they are a key factor in your employees' professional fulfillment.



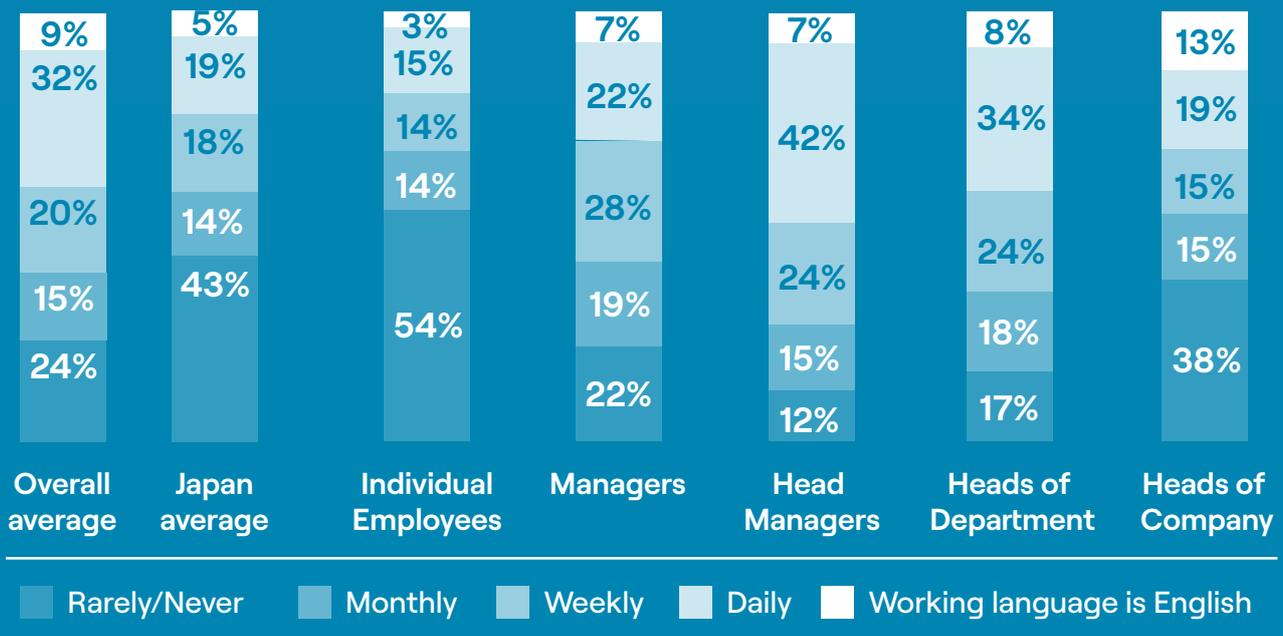
## Better English skills lead to more confidence at work

Whilst English proficiency is a requirement for many jobs around the world,<sup>11</sup> a recent survey by Nikkei revealed that only 8% of Japanese companies set an English proficiency requirement as part of recruitment criteria, even though 67% of businesses believe that English communication is a skill that is lacking in their organization.<sup>12</sup> This belief is reflected

in global research that suggests there is up to a 40% skills gap in English language ability across industries.<sup>13</sup>

In our survey sample, just over half of Japanese candidates (51%) said they had a formal English qualification, and of these, 36% said they had taken the TOEIC listening and reading test.

### Frequency of English use in the workplace



<sup>11</sup> Power Skills Survey Asia Pacific, Pearson (2022)

<sup>13</sup> English Abilities Crucial But Lacking In the Japanese Workplace, Nippon.com (2019)

<sup>14</sup> English at work. Global analysis of language skills in the workplace, Cambridge (2016)

In Japan, this test is used by many organizations as a reference during the recruitment process, even though it provides little insight on a candidate's ability to communicate in English. Many employers have expressed frustration that the English ability benchmarked by such qualifications does not reflect the English that is actually needed in the workplace.

## The ability to speak and write in English is the biggest challenge for Japanese employees

## Reading, writing, speaking and listening are all essential skills at work

Whilst only 5% of respondents in Japan work for a company that has adopted English as the working language, around an additional quarter (10%) told us they use English every day at work and over a third more (37%) use it at least once a week. This is 15 points lower than the global average, again reflecting the relatively low use of English in the Japanese workplace. 2 in 5 Japanese respondents told us that they never use English at work – compared with a global average of just 1 in 4.

Whilst the top stated need for English at work is to understand documents, articles, reports, instructions etc, most of the top uses of English in the workplace according to the survey require employees to speak or write in English (such as dealing with customers, giving presentations, writing emails, giving instructions to others).

### Top contexts for using English at work

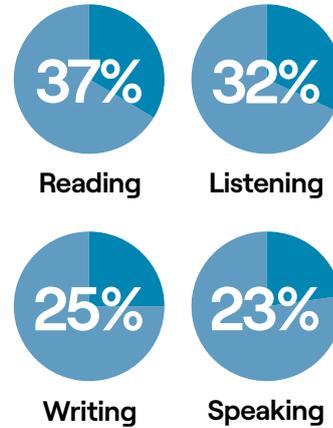
	Japan Average	Elementary	Moderate	Intermediate	Advanced
Reading documents, articles, reports, instructions, manuals etc	25%	8%	27%	42%	56%
Communicating with customers, clients and/or members of the public	23%	6%	24%	42%	52%
Attending meetings	14%	2%	9%	28%	53%
Writing long form documents, papers, presentations	13%	2%	10%	23%	48%
Writing informal internal communications	11%	1%	6%	22%	39%
Utilizing specialist computer programs, software, or tools	11%	4%	10%	17%	29%
Delivering presentations	10%	1%	5%	19%	47%

## Employees are least confident in speaking and writing

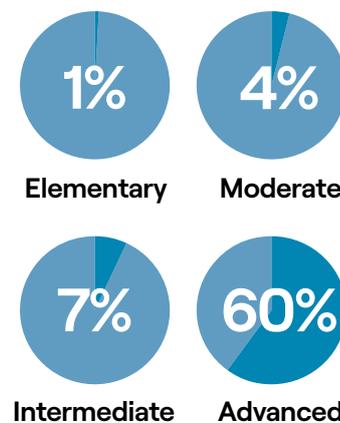
When asked about their confidence levels in using English at work, only 7% of Japanese respondents felt confident in all four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing). This figure is as low as 1% for those with low levels of proficiency. There are a number of reasons why the figures are so low for Japan. The English education system (see Section 3) is very much geared towards the university entry requirements with a focus on grammar, listening and reading rather than building communicative competence in the language. At the same time, Japanese people are not comfortable making mistakes. It is impossible to avoid making mistakes when learning to use a language and this focus on perfection creates barriers to progress. As a result, those skills which require the production of language (speaking and writing) present the biggest challenge. Around three quarters of those surveyed in Japan (75%) said they were not confident to produce written English and a similar number (77%) lacked confidence in speaking.

A key challenge for Japanese businesses is to move away from recruitment processes that assess English proficiency based on reading and listening and to focus on the key skills that are needed in the workplace: speaking and writing. 69% of Japanese companies want to upgrade their English recruitment hiring criteria to require proficiency in all four skills.<sup>14</sup> The sooner this can happen, the better it will be for the Japanese economy.

### Confidence in each of the four skills



### Confidence using all of the four skills by proficiency level



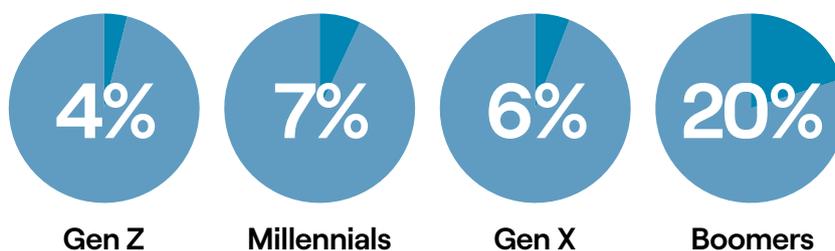
Only **7%**  
say they feel confident in  
all four skills

## English entertainment boosts Gen Z confidence in understanding English

Globally, younger respondents (Gen Z and Millennials) were generally more confident than their older peers (Gen X), but there is little variation between generations in Japan. One area in which Gen Z expressed more confidence, however, was in understanding others speaking English.

This may be the result of curriculum changes or the increased exposure to spoken English in music (on platforms like Spotify) or movies (on platforms like Netflix).

### Learners' confidence in all four skills by generation



### Breakdown of confidence across all four skills by generation

	Japan average	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Reading	37%	29%	37%	38%	51%
Listening	32%	42%	32%	27%	36%
Writing	25%	20%	21%	27%	46%
Speaking	23%	27%	22%	18%	41%



## Poor English language skills impact self-esteem at work

Working in English when it is not your first language can lead to a number of frustrations. Day-to-day work tasks become more challenging, as does communication with colleagues and customers. In our survey, 70% of Japanese respondents said they would find their job easier if they had better English.

Furthermore, only 14% of Japanese employees felt they could express themselves fully at work and a similar number (15%) said they felt stupid because of their English skills. Unsurprisingly, this is more extreme for people with limited English, 93% of whom said they felt they couldn't fully communicate their ideas in English.

Only **14%**

of employees with limited English proficiency felt they could express themselves fully at work

**70%**

of respondents said they would find their job easier if they had better English

As well as impacting self-esteem, a low level of English proficiency means that employees are unable to showcase their true skills and may avoid certain tasks such as speaking in meetings or writing up notes or reports due to the amount of effort required.

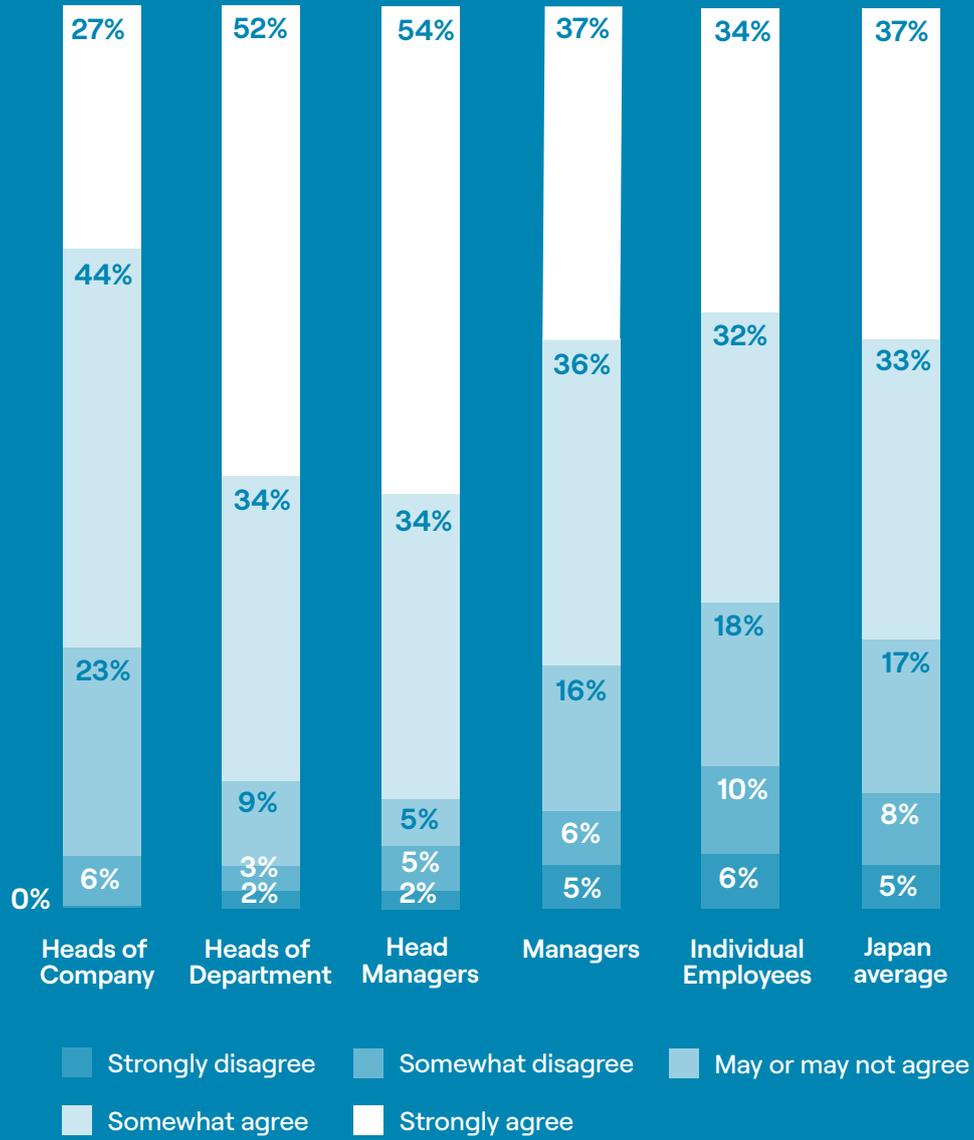
Poor communication costs the average organization \$62.4 million per year in lost productivity.<sup>15</sup> By raising English proficiency levels among second language speakers, organizations will not only improve productivity but also maximize the potential of their talent that is struggling to work effectively in English.

**\$62.4m**

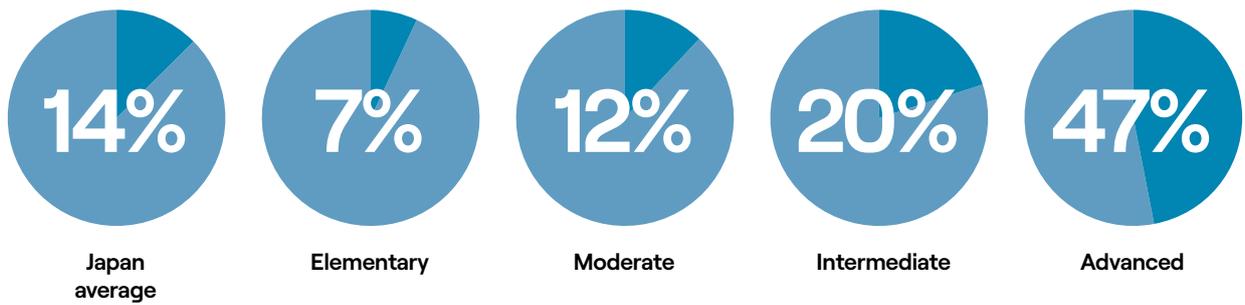
Poor communication costs the average organization \$62.4 million per year in lost productivity



## Employees who would find their jobs easier if they had better English



### I always feel able to fully express myself when speaking English at work



## Employers need to step up and offer employees language training at work

If English is indeed the *lingua franca* of international business, how are organizations accounting for this in their training strategy? Over ten years ago, the Harvard Business Review asked that very question: *What is your language strategy?* We know that many employers around the world set English language requirements as part of the recruitment process, but we are also aware that many are frustrated that the English qualifications used to demonstrate proficiency do not equate with the use of English in the workplace. The Harvard Business Review goes one step further in encouraging employers to provide necessary language training as part of their L&D strategy, to avoid ruling out top talent:

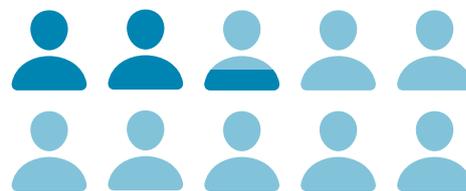
**To ensure that you are hiring the best people, you may need to accept some limitations on language capabilities and be prepared to provide training to meet both global and local language needs.<sup>16</sup>**

Harvard Business Review

So, have Japanese employers heeded this advice?

Sadly, our survey results suggest not. Whilst there is demand for English language training at work, not much is currently being offered by employers. In our research, 68% felt it was important for employers to provide language training, but only a quarter (24%) currently had access to such training. This aligns closely with other Pearson research carried out in APAC in 2022 in which we found that over 60% of organizations did not have a language training programme or strategy in place.<sup>17</sup> This is clearly an issue that employers need to address, especially in Japan where many employees are leaving formal education with a low level of English. Employees want language training at work and employers ignore this request at their peril. English proficiency within the workforce opens the doors to international business – and the language development of staff improves engagement and retention.

**A majority of learners say their employer doesn't offer English language training**



**Only 24% said their employer does offer training**

Further analysis of the data also suggests a lack of equity in the language training that is available, across job levels and incomes. Those in more senior positions (manager and above) are more likely to be offered language training by their employer than those who are not in a managerial role. Only 8% of individual employees report being offered any language training by their employer whilst this figure is double for those in managerial and department head roles. Similarly, training appears to be targeted more at those who already have a higher level of English proficiency or who are on higher salaries. 52% of those who said they were advanced had access to language training, compared with only 14% who said they had limited English proficiency. 48% of those in a high income bracket had access to training, compared with only 11% of those in a low income bracket. As companies increasingly start to address DE&I issues within the workforce, such data suggests hidden discrimination within the Learning and Development strategy.

Investment in language training has potential benefits at all levels of an organization. Investment in more junior staff could, for example, help build better leaders for the future:

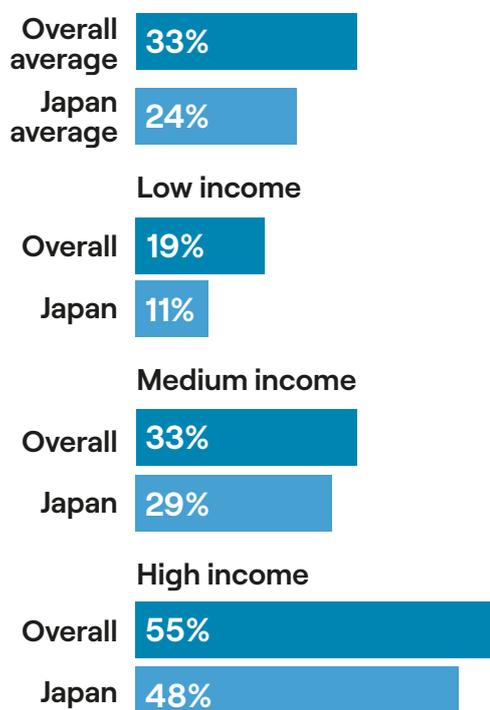
**“Companies often find that entry-level hires ultimately become their best leaders, because they have been trained from an early stage in company culture and practices.”<sup>18</sup>**

Harvard Business Review

# 48%

**of those in a high income bracket had access to training, compared with only 11% of those in a low income bracket**

## Proportion of employees being offered language training by income



As noted elsewhere in this report, many Japanese businesses fail to see the value in the investment in language training since they are working with a domestic workforce.

This could be a short-sighted strategy if Japan wants to reclaim its position in the global economy.

## Better English skills make your career more AI-proof

Much has appeared recently in the news about the impact of generative AI on people's jobs, with a focus on roles that will be lost as a result of the integration of this new technology. New research from Pearson reveals that AI will have the greatest impact on white collar jobs over the next 10 years but the story is not all doom and gloom.<sup>19</sup> The impact will in fact be positive as long as employers and employees prepare for the skills that will be needed in the workplace of the future, namely a combination of technical skills and those uniquely human skills that cannot currently be replicated by AI, such as communication and collaboration.

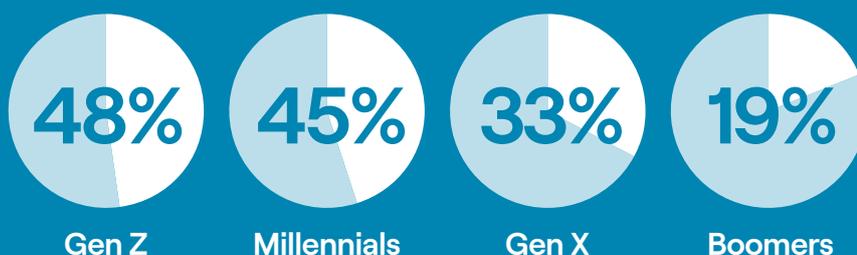
How then did our participants from Japan feel about AI and its impact on job security?

40% of survey respondents in Japan believe their job is likely to be replaced by AI within the next 5 years. Younger generations (Gen Z and Millennials) are more concerned (48% and 45% respectively) about losing their jobs to AI than Gen X (33%).

# 48%

of Gen Z are concerned about losing their jobs to AI

### Percentage of people who believe their job will be replaced by AI



Even though jobs may not completely disappear, certain tasks will be taken over by AI and employees are justified in prioritizing the need to upskill and reskill. Do Japanese employees see upskilling in English as a way to ensure job security?

Whilst 40% of respondents felt that their job was at risk from AI, only around 20% said they were learning English to help mitigate the impact of AI and technology – either as a way of keeping up with developments in technology or as a way of enhancing their skills profile to remain competitive in the marketplace. This is much lower than the global average (38%) and suggests that Japanese employees view other skills as more important than English when it comes to future-proofing their careers.

Whilst **40%**  
of respondents felt that their  
job was at risk from AI

only  
around **20%**  
say they are learning English  
to help mitigate the impact  
of AI and technology on  
their jobs

## Motivations for learning English



28% said they were learning English to help them keep their current job



20% said they are learning English to help them be competitive in the marketplace as more jobs are lost to technology/AI

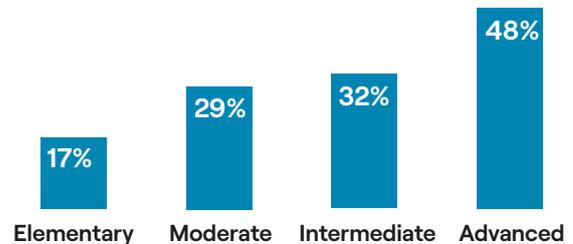


14% said they are learning English to be better prepared to find a new role in case they lose their job to technology/AI

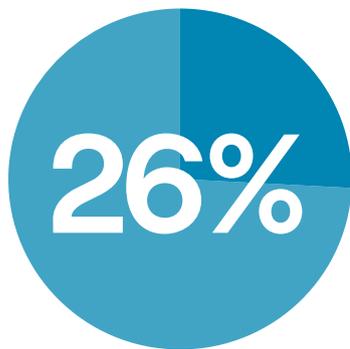
## Employees are looking to build stronger teams through language learning

Employers are actively seeking candidates with proven “human skills” – skills such as teamwork, collaboration and leadership.<sup>20</sup> By 2026, 60% of sought-after skills for the workplace will relate to relationship building. At the heart of all these skills lies good communication – and for the international workplace, this means being able to communicate well in English.

### Percentage of people, by proficiency level, who say stronger relationships with colleagues is a key motivation for learning English



### Percentage of people, who say stronger relationships with colleagues is a key motivation for learning English



Japan  
average

In the current survey, Japanese respondents were asked about their key motivators for learning English. 26% said they were learning English to help build better relationships with colleagues at work. Better relationships at work bring multiple benefits – from increased productivity and job satisfaction to better health and well-being.<sup>21</sup> It is encouraging to see some employees in our survey highlighting work relationships as a motivator.

## Section 2

# How English empowers your personal life



## Better English brings new friendships and greater confidence in all areas of life

In Section 1 of this report, we saw the importance of English for work – both today and in the future. Similar results were found when we asked people about the importance of English in their personal lives. Although the results from Japan are lower than the global average, Japanese respondents did agree that English is likely to be of increasing importance in five years' time – the figure rising from 47% today to 56% in five years.

# 35%

of those surveyed said that making progress in English has made them more confident in other areas of their life

### Current and future importance of English in personal lives

	Today	In 5 years
Overall	79%	81%
Japan	47%	56%

Many studies show that learning has an impact on quality of life and happiness.<sup>22</sup> Learning new skills gives us more choices and makes us more confident that we can engage with and contribute to the world around us. New skills give us a broader perspective on the world – and language learning opens doors to new relationships, cultures and experiences.

We have already seen how a higher level of proficiency makes employees feel more confident at work – but this psychological boost is not restricted to the workplace. 35% of those surveyed said that making progress in English has made them more confident in other areas of their life,

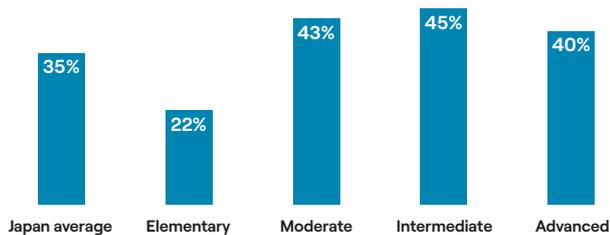
outside of work, and that feeling of confidence increases with greater proficiency (rising to 45% for those who say they are intermediate level).

Around a quarter of people surveyed (23%) said that one of the motivations for learning English was to make more friends. Friendships and relationships are key to a happy and healthy life and good communication skills are positively associated with better interpersonal relationships and health outcomes.<sup>23</sup> Gen Z appear to be more motivated to learn English to make more friends than older generations (35% as opposed to 19% for Gen X).

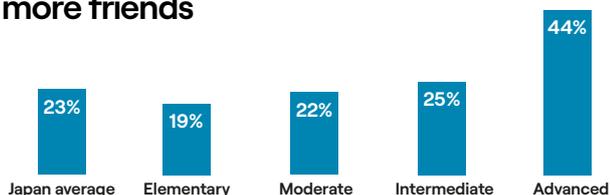
<sup>22</sup> Learning Is A Sure Path To Happiness: Science Proves It, Forbes.com (2021)

<sup>23</sup> Communication: Executive Summary for Employers, Pearson and Partnership for 21st Century Learning

**Percentage of people, by proficiency level, who feel that better English makes them more confident in other areas of life**



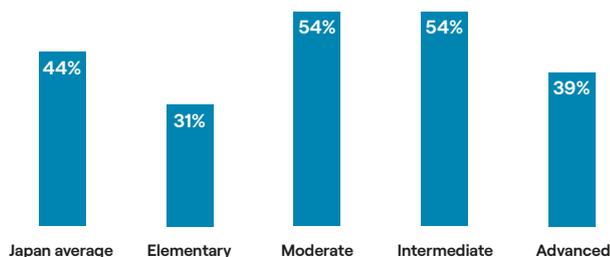
**Percentage of people, by proficiency level, who are learning English to make more friends**



**Percentage of people, by proficiency level, who feel they have more friends thanks to their English skills**



**Percentage of people, by proficiency level, who would feel happier and more satisfied if their English skills were better**

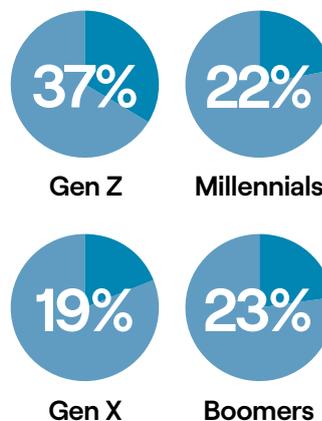


Those with advanced levels of English in our survey appear to be more aware of these benefits than those with lower levels. The number of people at an advanced level who said making friends was one of their motivations is more than double that of those at an elementary level. And does your English level actually impact the number of friends you have? Those with advanced levels of English clearly think so. They were 16 times more likely to say yes in answer to that question than those with a low level of English.

That is not to say that survey respondents with lower levels of English were not aware of the added benefits of improved proficiency in English.

**Over half of those with a moderate or intermediate level of English said they thought they would feel happier and more satisfied if their English were better.**

**Gen Z are more motivated to learn English 'to make more friends' than other generations**



## Entertainment, travel and study are key motivators for English language learning

The desire to access the latest English-speaking entertainment and to travel more are key reasons for learning English outside of a work environment. The data from Japan is very much in line with that of other countries when it comes to these two key motivators.

Globally, 50% of people surveyed said they were learning English to be able to watch movies and online content in English and the Japan data is very much in line with this global trend. Indeed access to entertainment in English was the key motivation for Japanese learners, 53% of whom said they regularly watch English-speaking TV or movies, with or without Japanese subtitles.

One motivator that stands out in the data for Gen Z respondents in Japan, however, is the need for English to help with future studies.

# 53%

said they regularly watch English-speaking TV or movies, with or without Japanese subtitles

42% of Gen Z listed this as one of their motivations. Whilst there is a certain amount of material in Japanese for academic study and professional training, a lot more is available in English. Mastering the language facilitates access to a wider range of sources.

When it comes to the social standing associated with greater English proficiency, around 1 in 5 Japanese said they were learning English to look better to those around them.

### Key motivations for learning English

	Overall average	Japan average	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
To watch shows, movies and online content in English	50%	47%	47%	46%	49%	43%
To travel more	55%	44%	44%	43%	44%	44%
To read English around me	48%	40%	40%	41%	39%	31%
To help me with my future studies	39%	35%	42%	37%	30%	25%
To make more friends	30%	23%	35%	22%	19%	23%
To look better to those around me	25%	18%	17%	19%	18%	13%
To follow my favourite influencers and online personalities	18%	10%	16%	12%	7%	3%
To keep up with my children	22%	8%	11%	8%	8%	2%

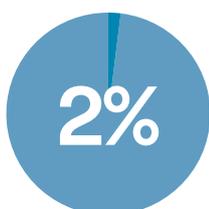
## English is a game changer in shaping people's interactions on social media

For anyone in Japan looking for information online, having strong English skills gives you an undeniable advantage. Almost 60% of all web content is in English.<sup>24</sup> Around 38% of people using the internet do so for educational purposes – with this figure rising to just over 50% for the 16-24 age category.<sup>25</sup> Over 60% of the world's population – almost 5 billion people – accessed social media channels in 2023, more than double the number who did so in 2015.<sup>25</sup>

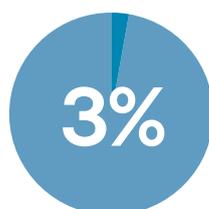
Social media figures prominently in the lives of Japanese learners – and one of the most popular ways to learn English in 2023 is via social media videos (see next section). Our survey respondents reported that better English also enabled them to increase their interaction with and presence on social media. 16% of Japanese Gen Z use English to follow their favourite social media influencers, whilst 11% of those with intermediate or advanced proficiency in English claim to have more followers thanks to their ability to post in English.

Almost **60%**  
of all web content is in English

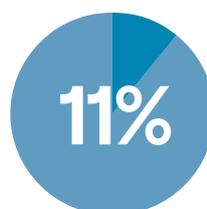
### Learners who have more social media followers thanks to their English skills



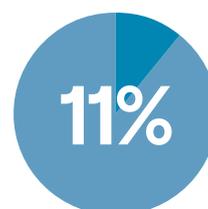
Elementary



Moderate



Intermediate



Advanced

<sup>24</sup> Most used languages online by share of websites 2023, Statista (2023)

<sup>25</sup> Social media use reaches new milestone, We Are Social UK (2023)

## Section 3

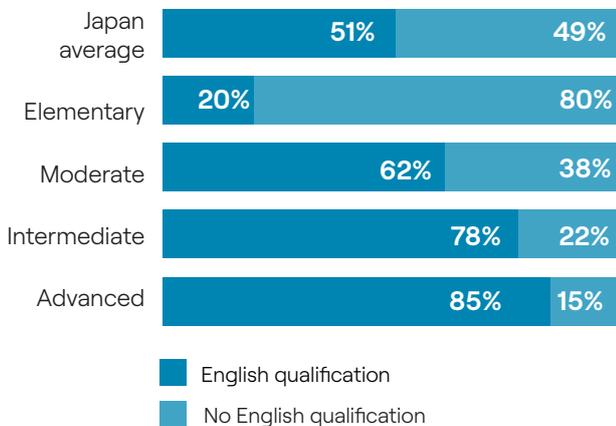
# Your language learning journey



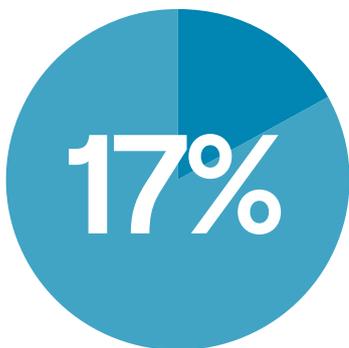
### Number of years spent studying English



### English qualification



### Percentage of people who felt they reached a good level at school

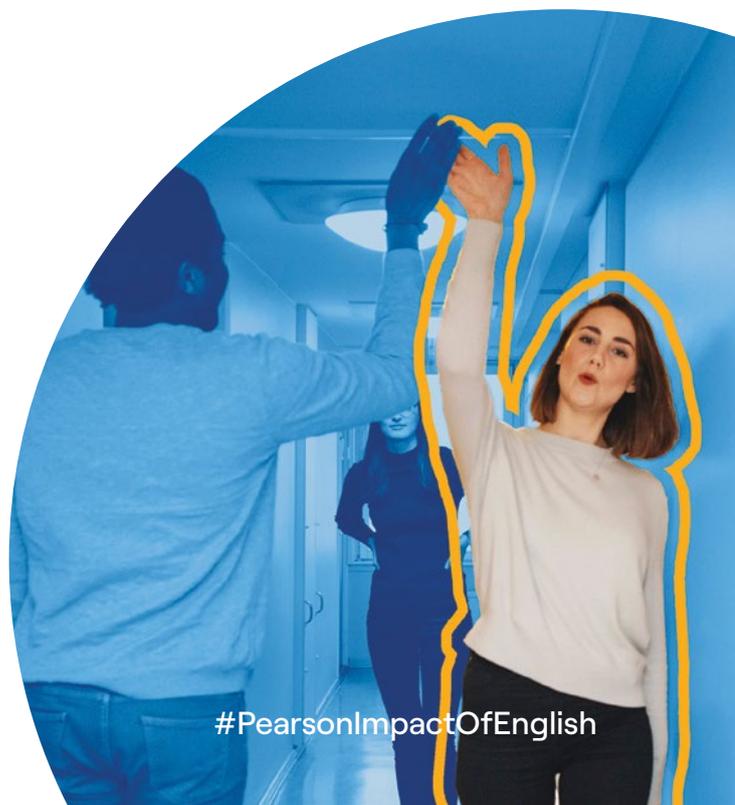


Japan average

## Alarming gulf between what you learn at school and what you need at work

Our research results suggest that the Japanese education system still has a lot to do in order to adequately prepare their students for the workplace.

For many years, business leaders in Japan lobbied the government about its approach to English language teaching. Many feared that they were losing out in the global market to other Asian countries like South Korea due to the low level of English among Japanese workers. They pointed out that English teaching was taken more seriously in other countries, resulting in a higher level of English proficiency. South Korea ranks 49th in the English proficiency Index. Vietnam is 58th. Japan is 87th out of 113 countries. English finally became a mandatory part of the Japanese elementary school curriculum in 2011, introduced in Grades 5 and 6 – impacting Gen Z respondents in our survey.

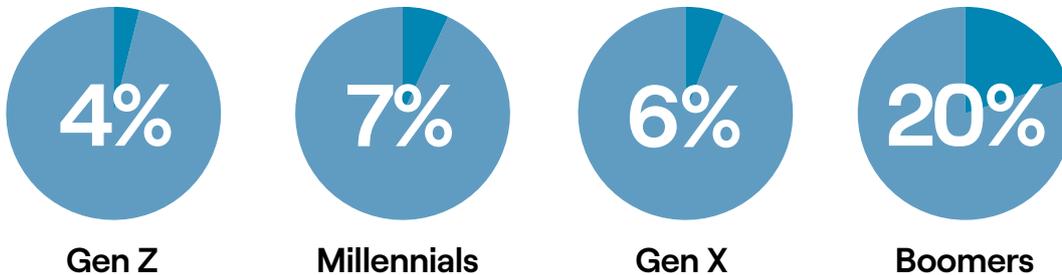


Whilst all Japanese survey respondents have had some formal education in English (an average of just over 8 years) – be that at school, college, or both – and around a half have a formal qualification, there is concern that the English they have learned to date has not adequately prepared them for the workplace.

Only 19% of respondents felt that their formal education had provided them with a good level of English proficiency, well below the global average of 46%. 15% of Japanese respondents reported having little to no English, double the global average, and only 6% (a third of the global average) claimed to be at an advanced level in English.

Around the world, Gen Z expressed more confidence about their English level compared to older generations. Our findings showed that around a third of Japanese Gen Z (35%) felt they had reached a good level of English compared with only 12% of Gen X. There are undoubtedly many factors which influence these results including the introduction of English into the elementary school curriculum, greater exposure to English-language content (movies, music, online) as well as the number of years that have passed since the end of formal education.

### Percentage of people who said they were confident in using all four English skills, by generation



**Prof. Yukio Tono**  
Tokyo University of  
Foreign Studies



The learning and teaching of English in Japanese high schools is very much geared towards passing the university entrance exam. Once this has been achieved, many students don't see a future use for English and lose interest in making further progress.





Given that only 17% of those surveyed in Japan felt they had reached a good level of English proficiency by the end of formal education, it is not surprising to find that only 7% of respondents said they felt confident in using all four skills (speaking, writing, listening, reading) in the workplace, considerably lower than the global average of 25%.

The gap between classroom teachings, which focus on the skills required to pass the university entrance exam, and the real-world needs of life after formal education is hindering professional readiness and something that the Japanese education system needs to address as a matter of urgency.

Only **7%**

**of respondents said they felt confident in using all four skills (speaking, writing, listening, reading) in the workplace, considerably lower than the global average of 25%**

## Language education systems are failing: not enough focus on speaking and writing

If the Japanese education system is failing to adequately prepare their students for the workplace, what is it that needs to change?

When survey participants were asked why they felt they had not acquired the relevant skills, Japanese respondents pointed to three main reasons, all connected with the actual use of English:

- **too much focus on grammar and vocabulary**
- **not enough opportunities to use English outside the classroom**
- **not enough English spoken in the classroom.**

The introduction of the communicative approach to language learning in the 1980s aimed to address these issues – especially the over-focus on grammar and vocabulary, shifting the indicators of proficiency from theoretical knowledge to what learners can do in the language.

It is a philosophy that underpins the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and Pearson’s Global Scale of English (GSE). A skills approach to language teaching in Japan is a more recent introduction and as we have seen elsewhere in this report, the key focus of English high school education remains the university entrance exam which does not require test-takers to demonstrate spoken or written skills. An evaluation of last year’s National Assessment of Academic Ability further highlights the poor spoken proficiency of students in the third grade of junior high school. 60% of students failed to answer even one of the speaking questions in the test. “The national government is raising the hurdles in English education, but many teachers are struggling with how to engage in linguistic activities. Many of them still teach English straight from textbooks in a one-way manner,” an official of the Kochi prefectural board of education said.<sup>26</sup>

### Barriers to achieving greater proficiency

	Japan
We focused on learning grammar and vocabulary instead of using English	60%
I didn’t have enough opportunities to use English outside the classroom	55%
There was not enough English spoken in class by teachers or students	36%

### Confidence in using English at work in all four skills



In the university sector, proposed plans to move to 4-skills admissions assessment using privately-run English tests have been postponed for financial and logistical reasons.<sup>27</sup>

Real-world use of language can only be mastered by practising the productive skills. Speaking and writing are especially problematic in the workplace and a key gap for employers. The Japanese education system is falling short by not placing enough emphasis on these particular skills.

Formal education in Japan is also failing to build confident language learners. We have already seen data that highlights this lack of confidence in using English in the workplace and 24% of Japanese respondents (double the global average) claim they have not achieved a higher level of proficiency because they are “just no good at learning English”. This “fixed mindset” (the belief that some people cannot learn certain things no matter how hard they try) is a self-imposed barrier to progress – usually the result of multiple failures and bad learning experiences.

It is particularly high among Gen Z learners in Japan (34%). Educators need to take care to develop “growth mindsets” among their students so that learning can continue well after the end of formal education.

Our results also suggest that there is a disconnect between the English learned on a general English course and the language and skills needed in the workplace. A general background in English will not necessarily prepare an employee to be able to negotiate with customers, give instructions and feedback to colleagues and prepare reports. The British Council calls on employers to be more involved in creating the curriculum for formal education – so that employees are better equipped for the workplace.<sup>28</sup> Even if this were to happen, it would take many years to have an impact. An alternative conclusion would be for employers to recognise that a general education in English language will not adequately prepare learners for the world of work and that they need to provide on-the-job language training to upskill their staff.



**Prof. Yukio Tono**  
Tokyo University of  
Foreign Studies

“

Japanese people tend to have a perfectionist mentality and do not want to be seen to make mistakes. This is one reason why they lack confidence in using English since mistakes are an integral part of the learning journey. We need to encourage students to be more relaxed about making errors while they are learning.

”

<sup>27</sup> Japan college admission English exam reforms stunted by economic, regional disparities, The Mainichi (2021)

<sup>28</sup> The Future of English, British Council (2023)

## Self-service apps and social media are the most popular way to upskill English

Given that only a quarter of employees have access to language training through their employer, those looking to upskill in English need to find alternative solutions. Time and cost are given among the top barriers to achieving greater proficiency and EdTech appears to be the area of language development that is helping to remove those barriers.

Investment in language learning apps grew exponentially during the pandemic and today there are many self-study apps to choose from when it comes to learning a foreign language. At the same time, an increasing number of entrepreneurial English language teachers have set themselves up as online teacher-influencers, sharing lessons and learning tips via platforms such as YouTube, X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok.

### Barriers to achieving greater English skills

	Overall average	Japan average	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
I don't have many opportunities to practice speaking in English	33%	47%	45%	48%	49%	43%
Lack of time	40%	40%	43%	44%	36%	25%
Difficulty finding an approach to learning that works for me	20%	26%	31%	24%	27%	16%
The cost of the best courses and materials	28%	26%	23%	29%	27%	13%
I'm just no good at learning English	12%	24%	34%	25%	21%	20%
Not being able to see that I was making progress	14%	22%	27%	21%	23%	20%
The difference between what is taught in school/university/certifications and the type of English skills required to communicate effectively in the workplace	28%	16%	16%	17%	16%	16%
Lack of support from my employer to develop and improve	15%	10%	12%	12%	6%	13%
Technology limitations (Poor internet connection, lack of smartphone, computer, etc.)	8%	4%	4%	4%	4%	8%

70% of Japanese employees are using self-service tools such as language learning apps, and 36% are learning English via social media videos. 86% of those using social media to learn English do so every week.

Unsurprisingly, Gen Z learners are more likely to play online games or use online chatrooms as a way of practising English (24%) as opposed to 12% of Gen X.

Access to other approaches such as tutoring is limited by income. Those on higher incomes are three times as likely

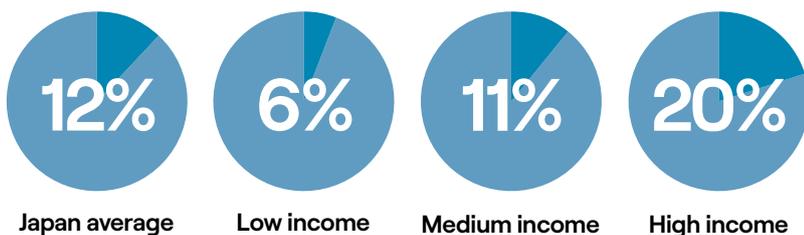
(20%) to be studying with an online tutor than those in lower income brackets (6%). A similar pattern emerges for in-person training with a tutor (17% v 6%) although tutoring in general is more likely to be online than face-to-face.

Access to tutoring also seems to favour those with higher levels of English. Three times as many people with advanced proficiency had access to in-person tutoring compared with those who reported having a low level of proficiency, rising to 10 times as many for online tutoring.

### Preferred methods for learning English

	Japan average	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Self-service tools (e.g., apps, books, websites, etc.)	70%	71%	71%	68%	65%
Social media videos	36%	38%	39%	34%	26%
Online games/chat rooms	17%	24%	18%	12%	3%
Friend/Family member	16%	22%	15%	15%	16%
On the job training	13%	7%	12%	17%	16%
Online private tutor in a formal program	12%	8%	14%	10%	10%
Online classes in a formal program	11%	10%	12%	11%	10%
In-person classes in a formal program	9%	9%	11%	7%	6%
In-person private tutor in a formal program	9%	7%	10%	8%	3%
Club/Community center	5%	6%	5%	5%	3%

### Access to tutoring, by income



Those with Advanced English are more likely than those with elementary skills to be learning via on-the-job training (20% vs 9%)

# Recommendations

Our research shows clearly that better English skills can lead to better jobs, a wider range of opportunities and better salaries by giving access to an international job market. In short, English proficiency has the ability to improve lives and economic prospects. Better English makes people more confident in life, in friendships and at work. Despite this, employers are

not investing sufficiently in the in-work language training their employees so clearly want and need. And the Japanese education system is not adequately preparing their students for the realities of using English for work. So what needs to happen now? What are the implications of this report for employees, employers and educators in Japan.

## For employees/learners

**The standout takeaway from this research for employees and those learning English for work is that your ability to communicate in English can have a direct impact on your career.**

- Higher proficiency in English correlates with higher salaries, a wider range of job opportunities and access to the international job market.
- English is the language of international business and an investment in English is an investment in your future career.
- Focus your learning on developing English skills (especially speaking and writing) rather than just knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. These are the skills needed by businesses.
- Find opportunities to practise these skills in order to build confidence.
- Personalize your learning by targeting those skills that are needed in your chosen profession.
- If business English courses are not available to you, search out apps that target those scenarios that you are likely to find yourself in – such as dealing with customers, leading internal meetings or collaborating with colleagues.



## For employers

**There is a clear message from our research that employees would value on-the-job language training in order to be more effective in their role.**



- Formal education will almost certainly not have prepared your employees adequately for the use of English at work. Be prepared to upskill employees once they have been hired.
- Review your criteria for measuring English language proficiency as part of the recruitment process. Ensure that candidates have the language skills that you need – especially when it comes to spoken and written English.
- Be prepared to offer language training to applicants who have other skills that your business needs but may not be proficient in English.
- Greater English proficiency among your workforce will enable you to work more easily with international partners and customers.
- Language training will improve staff engagement and satisfaction.
- Language training will improve communication and raise productivity.
- Language training will give you access to a wider talent pool.
- New technologies have made in-company language training more scalable.

## For educators

**For those in formal education who are training the workforce of the future, change needs to happen.**



- Employers are looking for people who can use English in their work.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on a skills-based approach to language learning, rather than a focus on vocabulary and grammar.
- Students need to be able to practise skills, especially speaking and writing, on a regular basis to build confidence.
- Teach general English skills that have relevance for the workplace, eg. Negotiating, giving opinions, making suggestions.
- Embrace new technologies, such as language apps and social media, to motivate and engage students.

# What's next? How Pearson can help

As the world's largest learning company, Pearson is here to support employees, employers and educators in addressing the issues raised in this research. We bring together English language and business expertise to create products and resources to transform lives and careers through education.



The Global Scale of English (GSE) is a proficiency scale (from 10–90) to measure language ability in the skills needed for the workplace: speaking, writing, reading and listening. Sets of learning objectives, developed over the past ten years in collaboration with 6000 language experts from around the world, describe what learners can do in English at each point on the proficiency scale. The GSE is a one-of-a-kind framework that ensures English learning, teaching and assessment is as effective as possible, fast-tracking progress and building learner confidence. It underpins all of the English products and services created by Pearson Languages, powering the Pearson Connected English Language Program.

The skills needed by a learner depend very much on the context in which the language will be used. As we have seen in our survey, the English currently taught as part of formal education is not addressing the needs of English in the workplace. For this reason, we have developed a set of learning objectives specific to Professional Learners. [Check them out on our website.](#)

These learning objectives can be used by educators and trainers to identify the language skills needed in the workplace – and to create courses that will equip employees and future employees with the language they need to be successful in their careers.

**Find out how to get started with the GSE, visit the [Pearson Languages website.](#)**

**“The Global Scale of English is the most useful tool available for teachers in the market. We encourage every single teacher to use it.”**

### **Macarena Sanzano**

Coordinator of the English for Work Program,  
Ministry of Education, GCBA

“The Global Scale of English represents the most significant advance in performance-based approaches to language learning, teaching and assessment since the development of the Common European Framework of Reference.”

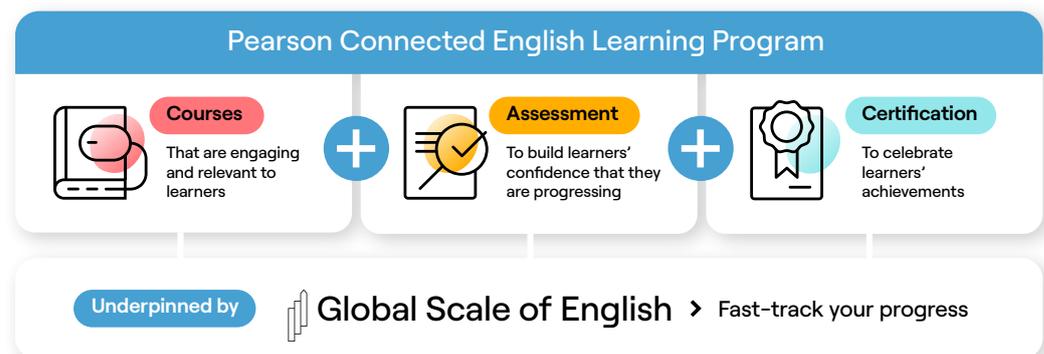
**Dr. David Nunan**

Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics,  
University of Hong Kong

## Pearson Connected English Learning Program

In order to ensure the most effective and efficient language development training, learners need a combination of engaging and relevant study materials and regular evidence that progress is being made. Our research shows that over half of the employees surveyed felt that formal education at school and college had failed to prepare them with the English language skills they need in the workplace, leading to a lack of confidence in communicating with colleagues and customers.

The Pearson Connected English Learning Program has been expertly designed to support educators in building English learners' confidence and fast-tracking their progress – from kindergarten to university. Underpinned by the Global Scale of English, Pearson's connected suite of courses, self-study apps, assessments and certifications boosts English learners' enjoyment and motivation to learn English so they can experience and demonstrate success in the classroom and the workplace.



**To learn more and build your bespoke learning program, head to the [Pearson Languages website](#).**



# VERSANT<sup>TM</sup>

## by Pearson

It is critical for organizations to assess the language skills that employees will actually be using in their roles. Our report highlights the skills gap when it comes to language ability in the workplace – and employees themselves are least confident about speaking and writing. Recruiting staff who have an English qualification that tests grammar, vocabulary and comprehension leads to the frustration of discovering that employees are unable to speak or write in English once in role. At the same time, the interview process for testing the English level of each candidate can be resource-intensive.

Versant by Pearson offers a range of testing and certification solutions to support recruitment. These easy-to-deliver digital assessments measure ability on the Global Scale of English in the skills needed for the workplace: speaking, writing, reading and listening – making it a scalable option for applicant vetting and progress monitoring – already trusted by some of the world's biggest brands.

**Discover the right language assessment solution for your business on our [website](#).**

# mondly

by Pearson

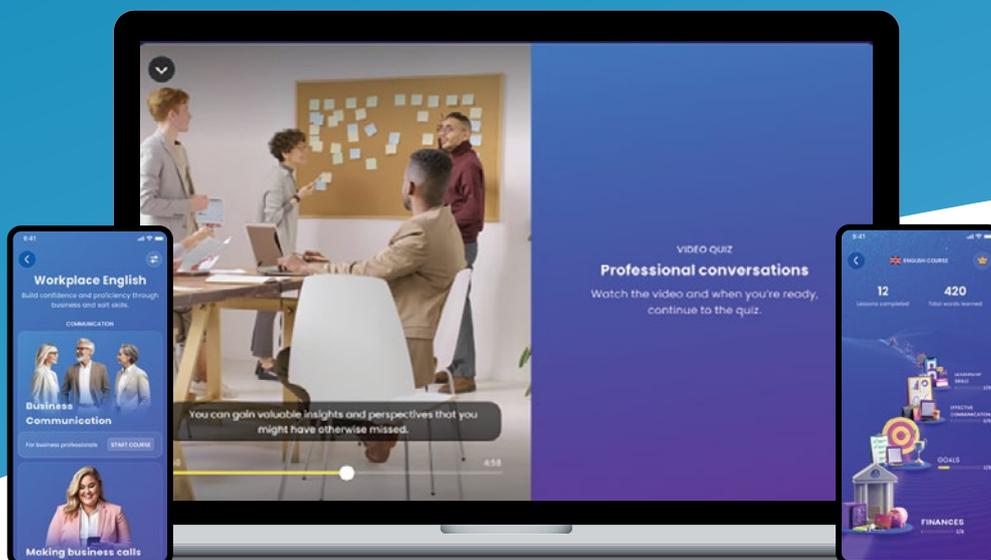
Effective communication with customers, colleagues and suppliers is essential for business growth. Our research has shown that spoken communication is the most problematic for employees and the area in which they feel the least confident. At the same time, the majority of employers are not currently providing language support for their employees – even though it is clearly sought after and valued.

We know that language training at scale can be an issue for many organizations and employees may well have a range of different proficiency levels and needs. With this in mind, we have developed Mondly by Pearson, a suite of flexible online language learning solutions, designed specifically to meet the needs of businesses.

Employees are able to study at their own pace, fitting lessons around busy workloads, whilst employers are able to assess progress on a regular basis from a central dashboard.

Powered by the Global Scale of English, Mondly by Pearson also builds employee confidence in the soft skills needed as part of effective communication and collaboration: teamwork, leadership, time management and dealing with customers. And why stop there? Live Language Tutoring is also available online to accelerate your employees' confidence in spoken communication.

**Find out how Mondly by Pearson's language learning solutions can support your workforce's needs by visiting our [website](#).**





## About Pearson

Learning is the most powerful force for change in the world. Pearson is the world's learning company, active in nearly 200 countries, helping everyone achieve their potential through learning. We do that by providing high-quality, digital content and learning experiences, as well as predictive technologies and assessments to help HR and business leaders understand what's coming, make data-backed decisions and upskill and reskill their people for the future.

 [pearson.com/languages](https://pearson.com/languages)

## About PSB Insights

PSB is a global insights and analytics consultancy. For more than 40 years, PSB has provided actionable insights and guidance for corporate, government and public sector clients in over 100 countries. With deep expertise across qualitative and quantitative research and social and predictive analytics, PSB brings an integrative approach to helping clients solve their most complex challenges.



## Continue the conversation



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