

Japanese managers tell employees to learn English

Japanese company leaders are telling their employees to learn as much English as possible. As the Japanese **economy** is slowly **declining**, managers think that learning English is the only possible way to communicate with the world. Rakuten Inc., a Japanese Internet company, has started a project in which it **requires** all of its employees to learn English up to a **certain** level. Those who do not are **threatened** with consequences. Some of the employees have **rejected** learning English and left the company. The **order** came from the boss of Rakuten, Hiroshi Mikitani, a **billionaire** who studied at Harvard and speaks **fluent** English.

When the project was **introduced** two years ago only 10% of Rakuten's **workforce** was able to communicate in English. The company thinks that by meeting and communicating in English it will have the **advantage** of getting into new markets. Two years later, Rakuten **expanded** into ten **additional** countries. In the next few years it plans to expand to a total of 27 countries and **boost** its **overseas sales** from 10 to 70%.



Ex.1 Match the expressions in bold in the text with their definitions:

1. _____ = extra
2. _____ = something that makes you better
3. _____ = to improve
4. _____ = not determined
5. _____ = slowing/going down
6. _____ = got bigger
7. _____ = very good at a language
8. _____ = started
9. _____ = instruction
10. _____ = foreign
11. _____ = decided not to accept
12. _____ = says something is necessary
13. _____ = amount of goods sold
14. _____ = said something wrong could happen
15. _____ = employees of a company

Ex.2 Combine the expressions from both columns to form collocations as in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. company | a project |
| 2. certain | sales |
| 3. overseas | level |
| 4. to start | new markets |
| 5. to get into | sales |
| 6. to boost | leader |

I know English idioms!

The topic of this lesson's reading text is learning English by Japanese managers. The concept of "learning" is often used in idiomatic expressions, like this one:

- to learn a lesson
- My computer crashed before I saved the document – I've learned my lesson and now I save everything all the time.

So what does it mean "to learn a lesson"? To understand something because of an unpleasant experience! How often we learn our lessons...

Phrasals, phrasals...

Talking about learning languages it would be good to remember that:

- It's easier to pick up English when among Englishmen.

Which means that it's easier to learn the basics of a language staying in the country where it is spoken. "pick up" means "podłapać".

Grammar corner

Here's another sentence from this lesson's text: "Japanese company leaders are telling their employees to learn as much English as possible." This sentence from the reading text uses a comparative structure "as... as..." which can be translated as "tak... jak...". It is usually used in a very popular expression "as quickly as possible" often used in emails as "asap".

GLOSSARY	
employee	pracownik
possible	możliwy/e
economy	gospodarka
to decline	zwalniać, obniżyć się
way	sposób
to communicate	porozumiewać się
to require	wymagać
up to	aż do
certain	pewien
level	poziom
to threaten	grozić
to reject	odrzucić
order	polecenie, nakaz
billionaire	miliarder
fluent	biegły
to be introduced	zostać wprowadzonym
workforce	siła robocza, pracownicy
to be able	być w stanie
advantage	przewaga
to get into	wejść na , podbić
to expand	rozszerzyć (działalność)
additional	dodatkowy
to boost	zwiększyć
overseas	zagraniczny
sales	sprzedaż

ANSWER KEY

Ex.1

1. additional
2. advantage
3. boost
4. certain
5. declining
6. expanded
7. fluent
8. introduced
9. order
10. overseas
11. rejected
12. requires
13. sales
14. threatened
15. workforce

Ex. 2

1. company leader
2. certain level
3. overseas sales
4. to start a project
5. to get into new markets
6. to boost sales