

Re: Need help choosing a novel to read

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang.japan/2005-01/0560.html>

From: Kevin Gowen (*kgowenNOSPAM_at_myfastmail.com*)

Date: 01/14/05

Date: Thu, 13 Jan 2005 23:57:32 -0500

necoandjeff wrote:

> *Kevin Gowen wrote:*

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>>>>*necoandjeff wrote:*

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>>>>>*Kevin Gowen wrote:*

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>>>>>>*Gavin Steyn wrote:*

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>>>>>>>*Since teaching myself Japanese*

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>>>>>>>>*No, you aren't.*

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>>>>>>>>*As a fellow dokugakuer, I wonder if you might clarify what you*

>>>>>>>>*mean here Kevin.*

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>>>>>>>>*You've never had any guidance whatsoever?*

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>>>>>>>>>*From a teacher? No, not until I had already been studying for 4*

>>>>>>>>>*years and was conversational. Even my girlfriend back then didn't*

>>>>>>>>>*really give me guidance so much as act as a sounding board for*

>>>>>>>>>*things I figured out on my own. I learned most of my Japanese early*

>>>>>>>>>*on from dictionaries, trudging through books word for word, and*

>>>>>>>>>*television dramas, as well as listening in on conversations among*

>>>>>>>>>*Japanese. The only real guidance I had was for one year at Nagoya*

>>>>>>>>>*University, but that was after 4 years of studying on my own and*

>>>getting to the point that I was able to pass the test and get the
>>>monbusho scholarship. By then I was already approaching JPL2
>>>ability.
>>
>>By "guidance" I don't necessarily mean an instructor. No one ever
>>taught me English.
>
>
> No one ever taught you English? Well perhaps that is why you are having
> trouble with what English speakers commonly mean when they say self-taught.
> By your definition, I think it is safe to say the only person in the world
> who is self-taught in a language is L.L. Zamenhof, being self-taught in
> Esperanto.

Well, Tolkien surely taught himself Quenya. When I think of "self-taught", I think of Srinivasa Ramanujan.

> Do you suppose that is how "self-taught" is commonly understood,
> Kevin?

As you may have figured out by now, I don't spend much time speculating about how this or that is commonly understood. Too ad numerum for me. Besides, what good is being common? I didn't get where I am today by aiming for the median.

> If you learned in a classroom under the guidance of a teacher, you
> are not self-taught. If you learned by yourself using reference books,
> dictionaries, texts, etc., outside of the formal classroom setting you are
> self-taught. Does anyone else have trouble with this concept?

I understand perfectly well that is your notion. I just disagree that you did it all by yourself. You benefited from interaction with native speakers and immersion in a Japanese environment. No one made you sit in a chair and hand in homework, but you certainly didn't teach yourself.

– Kevin