

ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
of
WESTERN HARIMA



NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS!

2018/11/30
Volume 3, Issue 6

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Welcome everyone to the November issue of the English Teachers Association of Western Harima's Newsletter. As the year draws to a close, we are sure you are all very busy preparing for final exams, and looking forward to end of year of parties, and the winter holidays. With the New Year only one month away, it is a good time to reflect on 2018. How was the year for you? For some of you it was the start of an exciting new direction as ALTs. For others it was a year of further development as continuing ALTs

and JTEs. The students too have had so many wonderful experiences during the year. They have participated in so many activities such as festivals, sports events, cultural exchanges and club activities, and learned so much.

We are blessed as English teachers with so many rich and wonderful experiences, seeing the joy and satisfaction of students as they develop and grow as individuals, and deepen their English ability throughout the year. By instilling in students a

desire to learn English beyond that required for tests, we can give them the opportunity to become global citizens in the era of globalization. The ability to understand English provides students with so many opportunities to enrich their lives, through interpersonal communication, and the acquisition of knowledge. As students graduate and move on from school, our efforts as English teachers to motivate the students to continue learning English will be a lifelong benefit to them.

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

The first article written by Ms. Sachiko Okabe, is titled "Global Education of Himeji High School." Himeji High School's approach to English is to promote international English communication, motivating students to use English as a tool to communicate with people overseas. Students participate in international exchange programs, and also use Skype in daily English lessons with other students in Taiwan. They work together on lots of different projects, bringing English to life through wonderful activities.

The second article is written by Mr. Troy Halls,

an ALT at Ako Senior High School. His article is divided into two parts, and he begins his article with an amazing history of Ako Senior High School, which was originally designed in the style of a European medieval castle! It was located in the ruins of Ako Castle and was adorned with amazing paraphernalia. Mr. Halls discusses the natural beauty of the historical town of Ako, and how its location benefits the students.

The third article is part 3 to "The English Tales of Haga: Last Bullet – A Story of an Old Matagi." In the climax to the story, we finally learn the fate of

Ryuichiro the hunter, and his fateful encounter with the giant bear!

The last article reports on the 51st Kinki USJ Conference on English Education. The conference was held at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies with more than 200 English teachers. An outstanding report was given there on "Foreign Language Activity," and there was an extensive panel discussion on the new course of study being implemented in the near future.

Please thoroughly enjoy reading the articles.

GLOBAL EDUCATION OF HIMEJI HIGH SCHOOL

By Sachiko Okabe

I have been working for Himeji High School for five years and seven months. Almost all students in Himeji High School enter universities after the graduation. Therefore, they learn English with enthusiasm and try to get high scores on English tests. Now I am in charge of the third-grade classes. My students are trying to study hard and doing their best to pass entrance examinations. Although the system of entrance examination will be changed in two years and high school students must improve their English proficiency, my students, who are college bound seniors now, mainly focus on learning reading, listening and writing, with less focus on speaking. Therefore, they tend to have negative attitudes for “output” activities in class. Because of our situation, we English teachers have needed to make them have a strong motivation to acquire English skills. During our daily English lessons, it is obviously essential that we spend a lot of time on output activities, but unless they consider English as a tool for communication in our global society, they are reluctant to practice. We should offer them a lot of opportunities where they must use English in a real situation. Thus, we have put a lot of effort in giving opportunities where our students can experience global communication. In this article, I would like to introduce the global education at Himeji High School and write about my work last year.

Himeji High School had carried out overseas school trips ahead of other high schools and practiced an approach to an international education until five years ago. But we decided to go abroad again three years ago and have visited Taiwan since then. One of the most interesting events in our school trip is a cultural exchange with the Taiwanese school. We visit them and deepen our exchange with each other, showing performances and joining the club activities. Last year, my school signed for a sister’s school agreement to deepen the relationship and develop both schools’ education.



The Principals at the Signing Ceremony

The international exchange with them is carried out not only in the school trip but also in the daily English lessons. Himeji High School has a special course class, Tankyu Kagaku course, consisting of 40 students. They work on various activities by finding out a problem and solving it by themselves. In the curriculum, there is a special English lesson called Global Issues. In this class, they have Skype lessons with our Taiwanese sister school. Last year, my students gave a presentation whose topic was “What Japanese goods we want to sell to Taiwanese teenagers”.

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GLOBAL EDUCATION OF HIMEJI HIGH SCHOOL

By Sachiko Okabe

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At first, they created the project plan and collected some data and information about goods which they would introduce. All of the procedures were like working at a company. They also conducted a questionnaire through Google Form to the Taiwanese students. They took almost four months making their presentation. During the Skype lesson, they spoke English at all times, including question and answer time. My students were embarrassed because they could not convey what they wanted to say in English and had difficulty in listening to English, but they really enjoyed communicating with foreign friends. It should be productive for students to communicate with their foreign people in English even though both people are non-native English speakers. At the other Skype lesson, we became the listeners while the Taiwanese students gave their presentations about Taiwan.

Tankyu Kagaku course's students also have worked on a research project about global issues since they were in first-grade. Last year, we applied for and took part in the international symposium held in Kagoshima prefecture. High school students from all over Japan gathered and showed their research in presentations or poster sessions in English there. In terms of the necessity for giving an opportunity where they can convey their idea in English, it was very effective and meaningful for the students. They had a poster session and explained their research in front of the audience. After the explanation, they were asked some questions by their audience. The students must answer them in each case. It was a hard work and they must have been depressed by their inability to do well. However, people learn a lot from the failure. In fact, they regretted what needed to be regretted and tried to improve it by their own will. They were given an opportunity to give their presentation in front of all the students in my school. It was more sophisticated, and they had a confidence with speaking English.



Himeji students listening to their Taiwanese friends in the Second Skype lesson



Himeji students presenting about Wanko Soba during the Skype lesson

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GLOBAL EDUCATION OF HIMEJI HIGH SCHOOL

By Sachiko Okabe

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Himeji students giving their presentation at Kagoshima



A group photo of the participants at Kagoshima

I make sure that these programs help the students have higher motivation. Actually, it is hard work for not only students but also teachers because we must do many tasks such as instructing students about how to make a presentation, correcting their English, helping them practice and things like that. In addition to that, it might take a long time to set up the places where they can talk with foreign people or show their presentations. However, our efforts will absolutely result in students' development. I believe that what we should do next is to spread this educational opportunity to all students in the school besides Tankyu Kagaku course's students. We have started lessons like Global Issues focusing on communication in the first-grade class. I would like to encourage my students to practice their English skills in a real situation.



Himeji High School

THE PAST IS ALIVE ~A BRIEF HISTORY OF AKO HIGH SCHOOL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ~

By Troy Halls

This time, we have received a long essay about the historical town of Ako and Ako High School, written by a second-year ALT, Mr. Troy Halls. As a real Ako watcher, he describes many interesting features of the area, one of the most famous historical spots in Japan, with the story of the 47 loyal samurais. As the very season of the "Chushin-Gura" approaches, we hope all of you will enjoy reading his report for two months.



Mr. Troy Halls with a student

Nestled amongst the mountains of western Hyogo and facing the Seto inland sea, Ako city is well known for Japan's famous legend of the 47 loyal samurai, and home to Ako Senior High school. First established in 1927, the school building was originally an imposing medieval European style castle, designed by a German architect, and housed within the walls of the Ako castle ruins. In days gone by, students once travelled to school, first through the castle ruins' dominating main gate, before finally arriving on campus under the stern eye of the gargoyles that once adorned the school's stone façade.

Sadly, the original school building was demolished, and in 1981 the school was relocated from within the castle ruins to its new location, east of Japan's famous Chikusa river, to Ako's Ozaki district. The school now sits adjacent to the Ako seaside park and Misaki cape region. On clear days the ferris wheel from the nearby amusement park can be viewed from the south-facing classroom windows, while to the north Hyogo's scenic mountains are always in sight to lift spirits. As the school is in close proximity to the sea and Chikusa river, one can often spot intrepid turtles slowly exploring the nearby streets and adventurous crabs roaming the school's ground floor. Surviving elements of the original school building, including a gargoyle, stone relief and pieces of masonry are preserved in the school's entrance foyer.

The school has a spacious campus redolent in the fresh scent of the sea breeze. The main building is four floors high and, in addition to regular classrooms, is also equipped with specialty rooms catering to a range of academic and cultural subjects, including music, calligraphy, a dedicated language learning lab, and a traditional Japanese-style tea room replete with tatami mats and sliding shoji doors. The campus also has a wide range of athletic facilities, including a spacious athletics field, large gymnasium, pool, martial arts dojos and an archery range. A weight training room was also recently unveiled to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the school's founding. In addition to the regular day school, the campus also has a dedicated night school wing and staff.

All students from both the day school and night school study English. In addition to teaching the core skills of English, the school also provides students with subjects focusing on improving their communication and expression skills. Third year students may also further their English studies by electing to undertake an additional English subject. Both second, and third year students also have weekly English lessons team-taught by the school's ALT. Lessons planned by the ALT primarily focus on supplementing and supporting the topics and grammar presented by the school's curriculum and textbook and building their confidence in using English as a communication tool, by giving student's the opportunity to put into practice what they have been studying. Not only do these lessons provide students with a reprieve from their regular language instruction, they also afford students the opportunity of exposure to a native speaker and, in contrast to the sometimes-stiff dialogue of listening practice CDs, allow students to hear authentic spoken English and the speaker's own nuances.

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THE PAST IS ALIVE ~A BRIEF HISTORY OF AKO HIGH SCHOOL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ~

By Troy Halls

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Students passionate about English may also choose to participate in many of the speaking contests held in the region. Teachers from the school's English department and the school's ALT are always eager to volunteer their services and provide the students with assistance and support to help them excel. The school also has an 'English Speaking Society' club hosted by the ALT that meets once a week after school, and partakes in various activities. Club activities are tailored by the ALT to meet the requests of the club members from the prior week and can include English discussions, games, film screenings and listening to music, or presentations on topics the students are interested in learning about.

The summer vacation sees a select group of students embarking on an adventure abroad to continue their language education in Australia. Sequestered away on the coast of Western Australia, students spend a week living with an Australian host family. During their sojourn they are immersed in cultural exchange and language study at the prestigious University of Western Australia's Center for English Language Teaching. But, to the delight of student's they aren't entirely ensnared to their studies and have plenty of time to tour the many natural parks, famous local Zoo and the urban jungle of Perth's cityscape.

The school's culture festival spans two days. The first day of the culture festival is held at the school campus and features a range of performances by students, and the school's various cultural clubs. Third year students also demonstrate their culinary abilities and business acumen through food-stalls held in the campus courtyard.

The second day of the culture festival consists of the annual chorus contest, for this, the festivities are shifted to Ako's 'Harmony Hall', the epicentre of performing arts and culture in Ako city. The chorus contest has a long history spanning over 50 years, and students spend the month leading up the contest rehearsing intensively three times a week in preparation. Ako city's 'Harmony Hall' is also the birth-place of the annual 'Le Pont' (French for 'bridge') international music festival. The festival was established by world-renowned violinist Daishin Kashimoto, who aimed to bring performers and audiences closer together via a European style music festival, wherein musicians perform in their hometowns or locations they are connected to. The first performance was held at Ako's 'Harmony Hall' in the fall of 2007, and successive years have seen the venues expand to include specially erected stages within the Himeji castle bailey and Himeji's Shoshazan Engyoji temple. The festival is host to a wide range of musical talent from all over the world and the rapid rate at which tickets sell out is a testament to the festival's popularity and appeal.



The preserved entry gate from the former school building

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THE PAST IS ALIVE ~A BRIEF HISTORY OF AKO HIGH SCHOOL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ~

By Troy Halls

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Throughout the year the school also holds many thrilling sports festivals and events. The first of the which is the sports festival, held in September. For one day the campus' athletics field is transformed into a living image of physical glory and athletic prowess. The athletic games include demonstrations of speed, through sprints and relays, physical mastery and athletic ability through the shot-put and high jump and finally, student's camaraderie and co-ordination abilities are put to the test through the raw challenge of the tug-of-war and team jump-rope. Later in the school year, a second athletic festival is held, this time the focus is on various ball-games. In February, all students take part in the school marathon, whose course tracks through and around the nearby Misaki area and Ako seaside park. The challenge is gruelling, and students are pushed to their physical limits through either a full 10km trail or a half trail at 5km, a challenge made even more arduous by the late winter weather. The perseverance of Ako students and their peer's encouragement carries them to the finish line.

The seaside park is a sprawling expanse of lawn, dotted with artificial lakes and carefully sculpted gardens, a popular destination for families and their children, lovestruck couples out for a romantic picnic or solitary souls keen to lay in repose by the gentle sea waves. Additional entertainment options within the park grounds also include tennis courts, an amusement park, zoo and museum dedicated to the area's history of salt production, wherein visitors can try their hand at the salt manufacturing process. A popular fixture of Ako life is the annual summer fireworks festival which is held within the park grounds. Many travellers take the opportunity to dress in light summer kimono and delight in the dazzling eruptions of colour that ignite the sky in the lengthy fireworks demonstration.

Tracing the coast eastward and ascending deep into the mountains of the cape, one can find Ako's famed onsen region, whose mineral rich waters have led to them being referred to as the 'springs of revival'. Secluded amongst the trees and overlooking the wide expanse of the sea are the many ryokans where a weary traveller can heal their body and soul. The area also has many scenic lookouts offering superb views of the tranquil sea and is an ideal location to view the melancholic gentle beauty of a waning moon.

The school is also deeply linked with the wider local community and traditions of Ako city. Outside of the school's own athletic and cultural events, students also participate in many of Ako city's long running events throughout the year.

One such event is the Ako City Marathon. Held yearly in November, and with course totalling nearly 20 kilometres, the Ako City Marathon is an arduous test of the participant's athletic ability. Commencing a stone's throw from the ruins of Ako castle, the course first runs against the coast of the Seto inland sea before winding up and through the scenic mountains of the Misaki cape area and culminates in a rapid flight down the stone paved paths of Ako's iconic castle street towards the castle ruins,. The school's students, who engage in the event as volunteers are key to the smooth functioning of the event. In particular is the school's brass band, who are always on hand to deliver a thunderous fanfare to keep the runners light of foot and hearts ablaze.



Ako Misaki

(To be continued on to the next issue.)

THE ENGLISH TALES OF HAGA:

Last Bullet - *A Story of an Old Matagi* - Part 3

Written by Mokutaro Sugatani & Translated by Futamu Kishimoto

(Continued from last month issue.)

Abruptly, Ryuichiro returned to the present. Imagining the bear watching with shining eyes from inside the cave, Ryuichiro felt the cold blue flame inside him flare up. With his right hand, he grabbed his rifle, the metal stealing his body heat and pointed the muzzle directly at the cave. With his left hand, he moved aside the tree branches and shrubbery the bear had piled up at the entrance of the cave. Finally the bear came into view, like a huge black rock, motionless and staring at Ryuichiro inside the dark cave. It was the same bear Ryuichiro encountered a few days ago. His heart pounded with excitement and as if he were meeting a dear old acquaintance. Ryuichiro was ready to shoot but bears have rather small heads relative to their bodies and it would be difficult to aim without first making the bear stand up with its hind legs. Suddenly Ryuichiro noticed a cub crouching in the shadows behind the large bear. Something was very strange about the cub. The lower half of its body was extraordinarily small compared with its torso. Still keeping his attention, on the big bear, Ryuichiro stole a glance at the cub. The cub had wire wrapped around the trunk of its body cutting deep into its flesh. Ryuichiro couldn't help wondering how the cub had survived in such a state. Now the cub was terror-stricken and trembling behind its mother without the slightest intention of fighting.

What beautiful eyes weak animals have! Ryuichiro was reminded of his grandson Kenta. What reason do I have for killing this bear? I'd be killing for the sake of killing! I'd be killing for fun, like nothing more than a game. Ryuichiro shook his head to free himself of the lingering attachment. How can I, a hunter feel pity? I have lived such a long time as a hunter. Now that things have come to this, how can I deny my way of life? I don't want to kill you for your meat nor do I want to kill you for simple pleasure. It is the inevitable outcome of our encounter, tied by the thread of fate. Fate! It is an inevitable outcome of our encounter tied by the thread of fate.

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An image of *matagi* and a bear.

THE ENGLISH TALES OF HAGA:

Last Bullet - *A Story of an Old Matagi* - Part 3

Written by Mokutaro Sugatani & Translated by Futamu Kishimoto

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Ryuichiro set Taro up on the bear, hoping to make the bear stand up. An ordinary bear would have showed its teeth and reared on with its hind legs to threaten the dog. However, this big bear didn't move an inch, remaining on all four. Ryuichiro took one step forward, keeping his gun aimed at the bear. The big bear, finally moved to protect its cub, letting out a roar and standing up with surprising swiftness. The loud report of the gun reverberated through the mountains.

From that night, the snow that had been falling since the end of February began to accumulate. The whistling and rumbling of the mountain were muted by the snow falling thick and fast. The snow continued to fall throughout the next day, until everything was buried under the snow.

The search party found Ryuichiro a week later. From a small opening in the snow, they saw, lying face to face in the cave, the large bear shot through the head with a hole running its mouth through to its skull, and Ryuichiro, with still clasped his rifle in his right hand, half of his face missing, and his scarf crusted in frozen blood.

Poacher Found Dead with Bear

Ryuichiro Yamamoto, 72 was found dead on Hyo mountain near San no Maru, after having shot a bear of more than 200 kilograms at close range. Yamamoto was then counterattacked by the bear and found with his skull smashed. Next to the dead bear was a cub that had gotten tangled in wire that prevented the cub from growing normally. Regrettably, the cub believed to have frozen to death beside its mother, as it was unable to move by itself.

After a search party of more than 180 people including the local fire fighters was sent out, deep sympathy went to the pitiful cub that had frozen to death after losing its mother, rather than the poacher. The local police also expressed their displeasure regarding the stupid behavior of the poacher.

The above article along with a picture appeared in the local newspaper the next day. The secret blue flame that had burnt inside of Ryuichiro, which he himself had been unable to understand, and the mountains where Ryuichiro had chased the big bear were wrapped thick with snow.

The End

THE 51st KINKI USJ CONFERENCE ON ENGLISH EDUCATION HELD - A Brief Report -

By Hisaaki Harada

On Tuesday, November 20th, the 51st Kinki District Junior High School, Senior High School, and University (Chu-Kou-Dai) English Education Liaison Conference was held at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies with more than 200 English teachers from in and around Hyogo Prefecture. The very word “USJ” within the title of this section above is not Universal Studio Japan, but it is a nickname of “Chu-Kou-Dai,” because “U” stands for University, “S” for Senior High School, and “J” for Junior High School.

This year’s conference became an important milestone for the future of English education with an outstanding report of “Foreign Language Activity” class by Mr. Kazuya Nakane at Kobe City Ibuki-Higashi Elementary School. With the advent of the new course of study for elementary school announced on March 31st, 2017, the teachers in many elementary schools are already actively preparing for the introduction of “English” as a subject into their curriculum. In this sense, it is highly probable that the name of this conference with more than fifty-year history will be changed into “Sho-Chu-Kou-Dai” in the near future.

Another noteworthy phenomenon at the conference this time was that there was no team-teaching demonstration lesson. As far as we know, we have seen ALTs on the stage every year for more than thirty years. Thus, only Japanese teachers lined up at the panel discussion after the lessons as the picture shows below. The present course of study for senior high school declares that English should be taught through English “in principle,” and the new course of study for junior high guides us to teach English “basically” through English. All the demonstration lessons this year clearly proves that we have built up confidence to teach English on our own feet.



Mr. Kazuya Nakane at Ibuki-Higashi Elementary School



Ms. Haruka Nakano at Kobe City Shioya Junior High School



Mr. Naoto Itakura at Kobe City Fukiai Senior High School



Prof. Kazuhiro Nomura at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies



Panel Discussion



The Great Hall and the audience