

ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
of
WESTERN HARIMA



NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS!

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Welcome everyone to the final issue English Teachers Association of Western Harima English Newsletter of the year.

It has been a warm start to winter this year, but soon the depths of winter will be upon us. However despite the cold we can find many enjoyable ways to warm the body and the heart this winter. Reading a good book under the kotatsu or just spending time with friends and family having

a laugh, will surely have a warming affect.

Christmas in the West is a time for family's to gather and enjoy giving presents and sharing an indulgent Christmas dinner together. Whether we celebrate Christmas or not, or we will spend time with our family's, we can still share the spirit of Christmas which is the spirit of giving. We can give our time, we can give a smile, we can give to those less fortunate

than our selves. In doing so we receive the true joy that Christmas originated from. To all those who have so generously contributed to the English Teachers Association of Western Harima Newsletter over the past year we extend our most heart felt gratitude, and to all the readers we hope you found the articles insightful and wholly enjoyable. Have a wonderful Christmas, and a very happy New year!

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

The first excellent article this month is written by Mr. Ishmael Ho, titled "How do we teach communication?" Ishmael discusses the challenges we all face in making English engaging and practical, and helping the students retain what they have learned. Ishmael provides some excellent strategies to enhance students retention through less structured and more meaningful use of English.

The second wonderful article is written by Mr. Troy Halls, continuing on from part one last month. His article is entitled

"The Past is Alive: A Brief History of Ako High School and the Surrounding Area." Troy continues his beautifully descriptive prose about Ako, and the fabulous story of the 47 Ronin who lay at rest in the grounds of the Oishi Shrine.

The third article is a wonderful post war era story called "The Story of Mischievous Boys in Chikusa." The original story was written by Mr. Yasuo Tsuchihira, and translated by Mr. Futamu Kishimoto. The story is about young boys growing up in post war Japan, facing the hardships but

also the delights of being young growing up in the countryside.

Finally a brief report about the Judge Seminar for the 12th English Debate Contest coming up in February 2019, is provided by Mr. Philip Wilby. The report briefly discusses the topic which will be about Euthanasia this year, and the judging criteria for the contest. The topic will be very challenging, but will hopefully be very rewarding for them as well.

We hope you find them all very satisfying to read.

HOW DO WE TEACH COMMUNICATION?

By Ishmael Ho

Recently I was discussing lesson activities with some friends from my home country of Trinidad and Tobago. I had hit a bit of a rut in terms of making activities fresh, exciting and enjoyable, while still being educational. Like many of the teachers I've had the pleasure of working with, I found that I had fallen into a similar pattern in lesson planning. In order to find some new inspiration and ideas I had to look outside of myself, and outside of the box I had made so to speak. Unsure of what else to do, I thought it would be good to consult some of my friends who teach in other disciplines, as well as those in other careers, what they thought would make lessons less dull, and more engaging for students. Their answers were a mix of things that I had already understood, and ideas that I found hard to incorporate into teaching English as a Foreign Language. Nevertheless, they encouraged me not to look outside, but rather to look back. Look back on what the goal of the lessons ultimately was.



Mr. Ishmael Ho teaching at Fukusaki High School

In the past I have written about the goal of English education in Japan. When I first arrived as an ALT, I had believed that the overarching goal was for students to be empowered with a useful tool to help them succeed not just in their own lives after graduation, but to help Japan succeed internationally, by opening their minds and their ability to communicate. Over time, I came to realize that in spite of the goal's appearance, what we were doing more often than not amounted to preparation for examinations (a no less important endeavor). At the time I felt conflicted and somewhat frustrated in trying to balance what was practical for communication, and what was necessary for exam preparation. The obvious downside to this was that my lessons became more concerned with education and preparation, aiming to cram as much English into a lesson as possible. They began to follow a familiar pattern. Discussing the topic beforehand, vocabulary introduction and confirmation (students used their dictionaries or discuss with partners the meanings of the relevant vocabulary items), followed by scaffolded short answer questions using the vocabulary given and then some kind of pair or group activity to help them practice saying what they had written.

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HOW DO WE TEACH COMMUNICATION?

By Ishmael Ho

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In my mind this was a logical order of information that would allow students to have a balanced class including new information, self-learning and practice in using new expressions. The downside to this however, was that it became formulaic quite quickly. Gradually what had been an easy to follow lesson plan for students had become predictable and boring. Moreover, I noticed students were not really gaining any competence or confidence in using English freely from the practice. Instead they simply read from their prepared scripts with all the enthusiasm and vigor of sea-cucumbers. Surely, there had to be a way to put the vibrance and enthusiasm back into some of these lessons, some way of giving students more communicative freedom.

Through talking to my friends, I realized that I had lost sight of what I had set out to do. My goal had been to help students communicate. Instead what they were doing was rehearsing and regurgitating meaningless words at each other. Unsurprisingly, doing this over and over became tiring, they no longer were mentally engaging with what they were saying, rather they were simply repeating things with no concern for whether what they were saying was getting through to the other person.

Not too long ago, I was tasked with helping students of the first grade prepare for performance tests. Although the preparation and practice for this activity followed the pattern mentioned above, students were allowed a greater degree of freedom in choosing their responses. By giving students models to build their own ideas off of, we were able to encourage them to challenge themselves to explain and describe the things that they thought. At the performance test, I remembered something useful that I had learned from Mori Miki-sensei in my second year as an ALT. It was the “plus alpha” approach to helping students draw more out of their answers. With this, even students who had merely memorized their scripts were able to dig a little deeper, and produce new, inventive sentences on the spot. I realized then that what was needed for more communicative activities in class was that sense of the unknown. What had been missing from our in-class practice were chances for students to create original utterances, questions and answers. The challenge now is helping students to develop their question asking skills and giving them the opportunities to use them.

The more I think about it, the more I find that successful communication relies just as much on our ability to ask and understand questions, as it does on being able to give an answer. It is still my hope to nurture and support students’ communicative competence and their development as users of English. In this regard, I will continue doing my best to find new ways of helping students push their own limits, and giving them new chances to create spontaneously, rather than just reading and rehearsing lines.

Mr. Ishmael Ho has been our staff writer and editor of this newsletter. If you have any question about his essay, please contact him at Fukusaki High School (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday) or at Kanzaki High School (Tuesday and Friday).

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

Part 2

By Troy Halls

(Continued from last issue)

The Ako castle ruins lay within walking distance of the Banshu-Ako train station and serve as the former seat of power for the Asano clan who once ruled the domain. Construction of the castle was begun by Asano Naganori's grandfather and took a total of 13 years to be completed. Following the abolition of the han system in 1871, castles became viewed as redundant symbols of the former shogun government and Ako castle was one of the some 2,000 castles destroyed at that time. However, the castle walls and several defensive fortifications remained, including the stone base that was to serve as the foundation for an auspicious 5-floor keep, the construction of which, owing to the relative peace of the era was abandoned.

Following the demolition of the original school building, the castle grounds underwent extensive restoration and preservation work, including the construction of a scale replica of the former castle's floor plan and restoring the castle walls to their original white splendour.

Girding the concentric walls of those castle ruins is the castle moat, originally intended as a defensive measure, the gentle waters once surmounted by walls of impenetrable stone now complement the endearing natural scenery of the area's many walking trails. Cloistered within these white walls, and open to the public are the castle gardens.

A single step through the castle wall's formidable doors, formed of mighty wood and unyielding steel, will treat the visitor to a vision of a grand lake, surrounded by a tranquil expanse of lawn, stippled with cherry blossoms trees. For those who visit in the right season, when the cherry blossoms are in full bloom, the gentle elegance of their branches, offering their blooms out to the wide blue sky like an offering to heaven will move even the hardest of hearts.

Following the path west of the inner garden leads one amidst the towering boughs of trees, against the grass covered and boulder speckled slopes of the castle ramparts and past lichenous stelae. In the early morning, as the new sun's first rays filter through the foliage reaching overhead from the ancient trees and illuminate the ground with flecks of gold, it isn't hard to become lost in a reverie while ensorcelled by those crepuscular rays, of a time when we weren't so distracted by the rattle and din of modern machinery and the electric lights that chase away the quiet beauty of the shadows that surround us.

At the end of the path one finds themselves before the immense stone torii of Oishi shrine, where within the souls of the 47 ronin and Oishi Kuronosuke, their leader, are enshrined.

On March 14th, 1701, within the auspicious great pine corridor of the former Edo castle, Ako's Lord Asano, incensed by recurrent slights against him by Kira Yoshinaka, a powerful official within the ruling Shogun's court, drew his dagger and struck out against the official. At that time, drawing one's sword within the castle walls, let alone striking a court official, was a grave offence, and Asano was compelled to commit seppuku that same day. Following the incident, the Asano clan was abolished, their holdings and land confiscated and Lord Asano's retainers left disgraced and leaderless.



Mr. Troy Halls with a student

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

Part 2

By Troy Halls

(Continued from page 4)

Asano's retainers, led by Oishi Kuronosuke were unwilling to let their lord go unavenged, and so in secret they swore an oath to end the life of Kira Yoshinaka and avenge their lord. Although acts of revenge were permitted under the Tokugawa shogunate, by drawing his sword within Edo castle, Lord Asano had committed a criminal act, and as such revenge was prohibited. Nevertheless, Kira Yoshinaka was fearful of such revenge, and so fortified his residences, increased his personal guard and employed spies to monitor the ronin. Careful planning and preparation was required in order for the ronin to realise their revenge, and after two long years in waiting they assembled at a secret location in Edo, whereupon they renewed their solemn vows.

On the 14th of December, 1703, amidst the heavy snowfall and harsh winds of the winter morning, the blades of the loyal ronin fell upon Kira's mansion in a storm of flesh and steel, staining the white snow with the crimson blooms of arterial spray. With the guards subdued and Kira cornered, Oishi bowed in deferential respect to the official's rank, and presenting him with the same dagger used in Lord Asano's seppuku, invited him to perform the same act in order to die an honorable death. These entreaties proved useless, and so the ronin decapitated Kira, after which they carried the head across the city to Sengaku-ji temple, whereupon it was washed and purified in the temple's well and reverently laid, along with the dagger, before Lord Asano's tomb.

Following the successful raid, the ronin turned themselves in. The incident provided troublesome for the shogunate, as although they had obeyed the samurai precepts, they had defied the prohibition on revenge. The Shogun resolved the issue by ordering the ronin to commit seppuku, rather than being executed as criminals. Oishi Chikara, the son of Oishi Kuronosuke, and the youngest member of the group was only 16 years old.

The path approaching the gates of Oishi shrine are flanked by the stone likenesses of those loyal retainers, their stony countenances reflecting the stoic resolve they demonstrated in their life and death. If one were to visit and look upon them in the dead of night, their silhouettes traced by the pale light of moon can seem almost lifelike. The shrine recently underwent extensive restoration work in 2002 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the ronin's vengeance against Lord Kira, and now contains several small museums housing displays and authentic articles relating to the legend. The shrine also serves the local community and is a popular destination for new year's prayers. Many students also find part-time work as shrine attendants during the school holidays.



Ako Gishi Parade

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THE PAST IS ALIVE ~A BRIEF HISTORY OF AKO HIGH SCHOOL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ~ *Part 2* *By Troy Halls*

(Continued from page 5)

This legend of the 47 ronin lives on through the yearly gishi-sai festival, held on December 14th the anniversary of that fateful winter raid. The highlight of the day is a parade commemorating those samurai who upheld their loyalty to the end. The parade is a grand procession commencing at 11am that winds its way through the town. Students from the school also take part in the day's events by joining the parade, as a dance procession, along with the school's student council leader dressed as Oishi Chikara. The school's music club performs several songs throughout the day and students from the kyudo club take part in a tournament held at the city sports hall. The festival sees the streets of Ako transformed into an epicurean wonderland, with many stalls selling delicious food, including some of the city's famous local specialties.

One such local specialty of Ako is Ako Salt, which is highly regarded nation-wide, with a production history tracing as far back as the Yayoi period. Even though salt is also produced in the surrounding Setouchi area, Ako salt is ranked as the highest quality and has been long sought after by salt connoisseurs, during the Edo-period production of salt in Ako accounted for nearly 7 percent of Japan's total salt consumption! Ako salt is a naturally produced salt, and in addition to containing a balance of high-quality minerals and compounds, also incorporates magnesium chloride, a white powder compound produced after the evaporation of the seawater and removal of the sodium chloride content. This compound has a variety of uses in food preparation, but, is primarily used to enhance the overall flavour and quality of the food.

Ako salt is used in a variety of local dishes, most notably as the soup base for Banshuu-Ako Shio Ramen. Those seeking to indulge in this local specialty can obtain a map from the tourism office, located next to the train station, that lists all of the restaurants that are a member of the 'Banshuu-Ako Shio Ramen Association'. Restaurants that are a member of this association pride themselves in using 100% Ako salt in their soup bases.

Another local specialty is shiomi manju. While manju is well known and beloved treat all over Japan, the Ako version presents an interesting and delicious twist, a precise amount of salt is added to the red bean filling to enhance the flavor. The production of these salty sweets can be traced back to the rule of the Asano family, who would often serve them to guests during tea ceremonies and would present them to the shogun when travelling to Edo. Their popularity continues to this day as a popular souvenir choice.

Other local specialties of Ako include locally produced sake wine, ice-cream, and marine products such as conger eels, sand lance fish and oysters. Ako oysters are raised by skilled fishermen in the Sakoshi bay, located in the historic Sakoshi area. Sakoshi bay is fed by water flowing from the Chikusa river, whose crystal-clear water provides the perfect conditions and nutrients to produce oysters of an exceptional quality and are available to diners year-round.

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THE PAST IS ALIVE ~A BRIEF HISTORY OF AKO HIGH SCHOOL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ~ *Part 2* *By Troy Halls*

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Other attractions in Ako are the many restaurants, many of which are situated along the scenic castle road. If one were to saunter down the street's stone paved pathways in the late evening, their senses would be scintillated with the enticing aroma of freshly cooked meals wafting from the charming wooden storefronts. Those with an interest in history will find Ako to be a treasure chest of indulgences, the city is home to many historic areas and fixtures, one such example is the 'Martyr Lamp'. Located near the Ikitsugi well (itself a famous historic scene from the Ako incident), the 'Martyr Lamp' is a mechanical clock standing four metres tall, decorated with copies of authentic ukiyo-e prints owned by the local museum of history. The clock was constructed to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the municipal government, and at every hour, on the hour, the doors of the clock open and wooden dolls emerge, whirring to life to re-enact scenes from the legend of the 47 ronin. Close to the clock and housed within the city's grand former rice storehouse, is the city's history museum. The museum is host to a collection of artefacts and information detailing the castle town's establishment and early settlement. Of particular note is the extensive display of Ako's ancient waterways, which date from the 17th century, and are considered to be one of the most important waterways in Japan's history. The exhibition includes preserved sections of the original system, whose weathered surfaces have acquired an exquisite patina resembling fine leather, a sure delight for those who have an interest in the many textures of the ancient world.

West of the city centre lies the Shioya district. As the densely populated city centre gives way, one's eye is treated to the beautiful triptych of Japan's rural beauty – a wide expanse of bountiful rice fields extends out before the undulating mountains, themselves surmounted by the wide blue sky. Climbing those mountains under the harsh summer sun, one finds themselves amidst rows of tall trees sparkling with the chitinous iridescence of freshly emerged cicadas, their radiant forms transforming the firm boughs into jewelled pillars of nature's opulent cathedral. Under the heat of the summer sun one can hear the cicadas songs raise in unison, yet they sing no holy cantata, only calling out in longing for their other half, to bring forth offspring that someday too, will emerge from the ground and sing anew. As the wheel of nature continues to turn, and the blazing sun of Summer gives way, Autumn draws all into her comforting embrace, painting the leaves of trees and mountains in sentimental sepias and the cries of the cicadas diminish and fade, their small, fleeting lives lived only in serenade, remind us of the transience of all life and our connections to one another.

As the fresh blossoms of spring arrive to greet each graduating class, it is these bonds of friendship, and lessons learned that will endure as they pass from the school halls into their new life as adults.

The End

THE STORY OF MISCHIEVOUS BOYS IN CHIKUSA : *Gathering Fire-Wood*

Written by Yasuo Tsuchihira & Translated by Futamu Kishimoto

This month, we are very delighted again to introduce another life story of the boys just after the War. The original story was written by Mr. Yasuo Tsuchihira, who was born and brought up in Chikusa and now lives in Chiba. Mr. Kishimoto ran into his book at Michino-Eki Haga and instantly started translating the tale of good old days in Japan, identifying his own experiences with the story told by Mr. Tsuchihira. Please enjoy reading the story in a warm living room at home.

Even in winter, students walked to school in single file, as they did throughout the rest of the year. The only difference was their snow boots and the bundles of firewood on their backs. In those days, classrooms in rural areas like Chikusa and Haga were heated not by coal or kerosene, but by firewood brought to school by the students. Because the firewood was too heavy for younger students, the older students (generally those in grade three and above) would carry, in addition to their own share, enough firewood for the younger students each winter. The appearance of students carrying firewood on their backs reminded the villagers of ants at work. While the children of Nakashima lived relatively close to school, those from Kegono district had to cross long distances to reach school, all the while bearing heavy bundles of firewood. So it was especially hard work for the children of Kegono. As the students from Kegono silently passed through Nakashima, with their face red and beads of sweat on their brows, the watching villagers would call out words of encouragement in unison.

“Hey! Don’t give up!” “Why don’t you take a break?” They shouted the words of consolation as if from the single throat. The kids shouldering heavy loads of firewood had broken out beads of sweat on their brows with their faces red.

“Mom, that’s enough!” cried Yoshiro, looking at the mountain of firewood his mother stacked on his back.

“Don’t whine! I know you can handle much more.” his mother said putting yet another bundle on the back of a reluctant Yoshinobu. In winter this kind of scene could be seen every day at various homes throughout the village. However, Yasuo and Yoshinobu were exempted from carrying firewood to school, because their parents were merchants and the principal of the elementary school. They don’t possess their own forests, so they didn’t have any firewood they could bring to school. Instead, their parents had to pay with money, and Yasuo and Yoshinobu bore the heavy guilt of not having to carry firewood to school like their classmates. Each day, they quietly left for school after the rows of other school children had passed. Despite appearances, their parents (fishmongers and the owner of an electric goods shop) didn’t let their kids lead easy lives.



An Image of Fire-Wood Gathering

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THE STORY OF MISCHIEVOUS BOYS IN CHIKUSA : *Gathering Fire-Wood*

Written by Yasuo Tsuchihira & Translated by Futamu Kishimoto

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Winter was a harsh season both for Yasuo and Yoshinobu who had to bring firewood down from the mountain, a much harder work than carrying firewood to school. Immediately after school, Yasuo and Yoshinobu joined up with adults in the mountains.

“Oh, hello, boys!” “Where are your parents?” said a man who seemed at first to be a construction worker.

Each boy wrote his name in the notebook on the table and then started up the mountain. Many adults were already making trips up and down the mountain with large loads of firewood, treading the narrow mountain path, that was steep and slippery with ice. If they were not careful, they would surely fall and get injured. The boys eventually arrived at the top of the mountain, where the logs had been cut into pieces of fixed lengths and bundled neatly.

“Hey, come here, boys!” A friendly voice welcomed the boys. “What grade are you in?” “I see, sixth grade? Then you should be able to carry this much,” The man who had called out to the boys put six bundles on Yasuo’s back and five on Yoshinobu’s. The bundles of wood were as heavy as lead and the weight cut into boy’s shoulders.

“Okay, off you go!” the man said cheerfully. Yasuo and Yoshinobu, without speaking a word, started down the mountain. Of course, this was not the first time. They had been doing this since they were in 4th grade. In their experience, there was nothing harder than this work. If they could, they would have run away from the place, but thinking of their parents’ financial burden, the boys knew that they had to endure this trial.

At first, the boys didn’t feel the weight of the firewood on their shoulders. However, as they continued down the snowy path, the weight seemed to grow with each minute. They couldn’t rush, though; one misstep could result in a fall and serious injury. To make matters worse, a continuous stream of adults carrying firewood shoved past the boys on the way down. Showing little regard for the boys, the adults voiced their exasperation: To make matters worse, from just behind them came down the adults carrying bundles of firewood on their backs shoved passed on the way down. Showing little regard for the boys, the adults voiced their exasperation, “Hey! You there! Don’t get in our way!”

This work was available only in winter. The workers were employed by the day and paid according to the amount of number of trips they made and the amount of firewood they carried down. Thus the workers felt a sense of competition and tried to bring down as much as they could. Each time an adult shouted at Yasuo and Yoshinobu, they had to move aside to let the adult pass. If they didn’t like being overtaken, they would simply have to descend the steep slope at the same pace as the adults.

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THE STORY OF MISCHIEVOUS BOYS IN CHIKUSA : *Gathering Fire-Wood*

Written by Yasuo Tsuchihira & Translated by Futamu Kishimoto

(Continued from page 9)

Though it wasn't cold, slanting snow made their faces tingle in pain, pain on the face.

"Yasuo-chan, if we do this, our parents' fish shop and electric goods store won't lose out," grumbled Yoshinobu.

"That can't be helped." "Let's hurry! Or we'll get in trouble," Yasuo prodded, looking up the path.

With this, the two boys started down the path again.

Once when he was in fourth grade, he lost his footing on the snowy path, and ended up hurting his right arm. The wound bled quite a lot and resulted in five stitches. The experience had taught Yasuo to proceed down the slope by grabbing on to small twigs (kumazasa) along the way, even though doing so slowed him down considerably. He advised Yoshinobu in detail.

"Don't try to do what adults do. We are kids. Whatever people say to us, we need to stick to the sides." Yasuo said, reminding Yoshinobu and himself to stay alert. A group of adults with empty firewood carriers "seoi" made their way up the path toward the boys.

"You boys are still on the way down. Taking your sweet time, are you?"

At long last, the boys reached the collection site. The overseer smoking a cigarette, said to the boys. "Make a tally next to your name in the notebook, and don't try anything fishy!" "One tally!" Eyeing them, the man said, "Quite out of breath, aren't you? Kids today are of no use. When I was your age I could do ten times what you just did." Inside, Yasuo and Yoshinobu were angry but they didn't say anything. Putting a tally next to each of their names, they started back the mountain.

"Wow! You are going up again. Be careful not to break your legs." The overseer said half teasingly, half encouragingly. "Don't give up!"

The words warmed the boys inside, but their faces and hands were freezing. Climbing again, they both warmed their hands with their breath again and again and then they brought their warmed hands to their faces. They continued to work into the evening. Despite teasing from the adults, they somehow managed to transport firewood five times. patted their faces many times with hands. The work continued nearly toward the evening. In spite of booing and teasing, they somehow could finish carrying firewood five times.

"Only five times! I'd expected more!" the overseer said. "Here!" he handed each boy 25 yen.

Silently, taking the money, the two boys made their way down the mountain. Twenty five yen was enough to buy two boxes of caramel and a box of Kabaya, but the two boys were hardly happy.

"Yasuo-chan I really hate winter." Yoshinobu said. "Patience! Yasuo responded." "What we need is patience." "Patience?" said Yasuo. "Yes, patience!"

The boys looked at each other and their smiles returned. As they made their way down Takanosu road, the lights from their homes, lined up next to each other, came into view. Hearing the sounds of their families pounding rice cake (*mochitsuki*), the boys felt relieved. Laughing, they said, "New Year (*Oshougatsu*) is right around the corner!"

The End

THE JUDGE SEMINAR FOR THE 12th ENGLISH DEBATE CONTEST HELD - A Brief Report -

By Philip Wilby

On Tuesday, December 11th, a training seminar for the judges of the upcoming English debate contest was held at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies. This time, 20 schools will take part in the contest: Amagasaki-Oda, Kawanishi-Midoridai, Takarazuka-Nishi, Ashiya, Kokusai, Ashiya-Kokusai, Kwangaku, Hotoku, Mukogawa, Fukiai, Shindai-Fuzoku, Akashi-Nishi, Akashi-Josai, Kakogawa-Nishi, Himeji-Nishi, Himeji-Shikisai, Shikama, Toyo, Kendai-Fuzoku, and Yamasaki. Mr. Philip Wilby, an ALT at Yamasaki High School and a staff writer of this newsletter, now gives you a brief report of the seminar.

The twelfth Annual Hyogo Prefecture Senior High School English debate contest will be held on the 10th of February, 2019. The proposition of this year's debate is: Japan should legalize voluntary active euthanasia. It is a very challenging and controversial subject, grappled with by governments around the world. In order to debate such a difficult topic, the students participating will be required to consider their own preconceptions, analyze data, and produce cogent arguments, while anticipating the rebuttals of their opponents. The debate format will require the students to utilize creative and flexible thinking, within a tight time limit, all spoken in a foreign language.

The debate format consists of 10 stages starting with constructive speeches by the affirmative and negative sides, followed by cross examination. Then both the affirmative and negative side will give an attack speech to their opponents, followed by defense speeches and then summaries. In order to do justice to the fantastic efforts the students are making in preparation for the debate contest, the assigned judges met on the 11th of December for a training seminar. A carefully considered scoring system is utilized to award points in a fair and consistent way, considering the content and proof of the argument, and the involvement of each student. The training seminar went through a model debate video, considering the scoring for each of the 10 stages. Judges ruminated on their scores, and considered carefully a range of possibilities that had not been heretofore anticipated.



The 11th English Debate Contest 2017
The Final Match (Fukiai vs. Ashiya-Kokusai)
At Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

Despite such a comprehensive scoring system, the primary aim of the contest is not to just win the contest, but to enhance the communication skills of the participants, and encourage in them an ability to think in a fast, creative and adaptive way. The participants will utilize their English skills in such a way as to be convincing and thought provoking. My fellow judges and I look forward to witnessing the student's marvelous efforts, and for the participants to gain a great deal from the deeply enriching experience.