

# SPEECH OF THE LEARNERS, BY THE LEARNERS, FOR THE LEARNERS

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I think it is one of the goals for the learners of English, and also a wish and a dream, to speak our own thoughts in English to an audience. Once having a personal experience of this, we are more motivated to learn English. When we participate in a speech contest, we expect to work hard in our efforts and activities. But the real pleasure and the achievement of making a speech is the reward for learners keeping this point in mind. I think it is meaningful to learn how to make a speech and to become participants in various contests.

Students in my school start giving speeches at the third term in their first year of junior high when their vocabulary has expanded. They can talk about many things. Two or three students make a speech at the first stage of our daily lesson. The audience listens carefully because they have to ask questions to the speakers, and then communicate to each other through the speech. Speakers have to talk clearly and loudly enough so that the other students can hear. Students are taught to use eye contact and to use easy, understandable words and phrases.

Some third year students are speech-crazy. The contents of their speeches are well thought out. The teachers have to be prepared by using English newspapers, magazines and mass media.

After summer vacation, we hold a speech contest for the second and third year students. The time limit is two minutes. The judges grade the speech on contents, voice, pronunciation, and delivery.

In the fall, there are several speech contests in our prefecture. The contestants are chosen from the applicants of the summer contest. The participants start improving their manuscripts and practicing in the language laboratory. Other students come to hear their speeches and tell them their impressions to the speakers, sometimes criticizing them. This constructive criticism from their peers really helps. After these contests, the speakers are given a chance to give their speech in front of all the students. Some students in the lower grades are stimulated to learn English and to become better speakers like their senior students.

I've learned a lot while I have been coaching my students in their speeches.

I'm indebted to the contests, especially those outside of our school. I really owe a lot to the participating teachers from all over Japan. These teachers are excellent in teaching skills, attitude toward teaching English, enthusiasm, good knowledge of English and so on. There is no comparison between these people and I. They always teach me a lesson. But I always find myself at the same level as before. I feel I am left on my own, supporting my students only through my learned experiences.

The other day I had a chance to listen to a lecture given by Mr. Mitugu Iwashita who works in the Intercultural and Business Communication Center. He spoke about "Rules for Effective Presentation" and I learned the following.

### Rules for Effective Presentation

#### A. Goals Specification

1. What is the goal/s of presentation?
2. What point/s do you want to appeal?
3. How do you specify a problem area?
4. How do you define terms and concepts in presentation?

#### B. Attention-getting Strategies

1. How do you draw the attention of audience numbers?
2. How do you present and explain the importance/significance/urgency of a speech topic?

#### C. Determining a Speech Topic

1. Should the topic be argumentative or problematic?
2. Should the topic be informative?
3. Should the topic bring about advantages?
4. Should the topic be interesting to the audience numbers?
5. Should the topic satisfy the audience?
6. Should the topic encourage or motivate the audience?
7. Should the topic enlighten the audience?
8. Should the topic entertain the audience?

#### D. Be Conversational

1. Use conversational English

2. Rephrase difficult terms with other English

E. Arrange Information Sequentially

1. Introduce the topic, the perspective, the conclusion, or the evaluation at the initial stage of presentation
2. Draw the audience's attention in the initial stage of presentation
3. Tell the reason why the topic is so important/urgent/significant/advantageous
4. Satisfy the audience members by presenting the key concept
5. Visualize advantages if the topic or plan has been adopted
6. Tell the plan of actuation

F. Make a Speech Clear and Direct

1. Cite an example
2. Compare and contrast arguments with others
3. Action - oriented presentation

G. Be Logical

1. Use data and statistics
2. Cite authoritative statements
3. Discuss issues on criteria

H. End a Speech Impressively

1. Cite famous statements
2. Reinforce the points of appeal impressively

Here is a manuscript by a girl who participated in the municipal preliminary for the HIH Prince Takamatsu Trophy All Japan Inter-Middle School English Oratorical Contest, which was held in 1990. Unfortunately, she did not win. (The winner's MS Copyrighted) Disregarding the delivery, let's concentrate on the contents, sentence structure, and use of words. I feel that the supporting materials should be arranged. In this matter, some people say that the topic needs some personal touch to distinguish it from other speeches. The usual standard for judging speeches is as follows :

English.....Pronunciation

Rhythm

Sentence Structure

Use of Words

Vocabulary, etc.

Contents.....Choice of Topic

Introduction

Organization

Conclusion

Supporting Materials, etc.

Delivery.....Gestures

Memorization

Posture

Eye Contact

Audience Adaptation

Voice Projection, etc.

## A MESSAGE ABOUT OUR EARTH'S CRISIS

ASHIKAGA DAISAN J.H.S.      MINAKO HASHIMOTO

Did you read about the mysterious "crop circles" that appeared in a field in England this summer? The paper said that a technological investigation is underway to determine what causes such unusual figures. I was very excited to see a photo about this in the newspaper. It reminded me of a UFO.

I have been interested in UFOs since I was very young. My parents, who run a small sushi restaurant, used to say to me, "Minako, you've grown up looking at the stars while we have been busy downstairs with our customers every night. That's why you've become interested in space." Maybe they are right. I am crazy about science fiction and I am interested in UFOs. I have read many science fiction books. One of them is an old book called "An Escape from a Dying Planet." It is a story about a space ship that goes through space for a long time. The crew was on an important mission to

find a new safe planet where their people could live. At the end of many adventure in this story, they find a beautiful planet with plants, animals, and fresh, clean water.

This story was written long ago. But I do not think it is fiction. Why? Because their old planet seems somewhat like our beautiful earth of today. The fictional planet had very little water. Everything was dried up and the ground was cracked. Plants and animals could not breathe due to the spoiled air, and it became very hot.

Fortunately, this is not our earth completely. But it could happen because many things are destroying our precious earth, such as acid rain. It sounds like a fictional word, but we have acid rain in many areas. Unseasonable weather brings droughts, floods, and poor crops. Our deserts are also becoming a problem. We know that they are becoming wider and wider. The rain forests in Brazil and Malaysia are being cut down and the life forms that live in them are endangered. As we lose more trees, our earth becomes warmer and warmer. Did you know that the water level at Tokyo Bay goes up a few centimeters each year? Some scientists say that it is caused by the melting of the ice at the North Pole.

We also sometimes suffer from photochemical smog. It can bother our eyes and our throat, and we may even have breathing difficulties. You may have heard about our environmental problems regarding tainted tuna and polluted fish. When such news is reported, my parents' business suffers.

There are many more examples that I could tell you. But everyone needs to consider that these problems are caused by man, which means that we can make a difference. Each one of us should consider what we should do or should not do. For example, it is quite easy for everyone to recycle and to control his or her trash.

Before we go to find a new planet, let's make more of an effort here on our own earth before its too late. For the fictional story, I like this ending better: "Due to man's skill and effort, their old planet turned into a beautiful healthy planet once again."

These days we read things that we cannot believe. But I believe that the "crop circles" were made by a UFO to give us a clear message about our earth and how we should treat it.

It is true that some others factors work more effectively than others. How would you score this speech? For example, his or her English is not excellent ; therefore, our emotions might be moved in the judging.

Actually I myself have taken part in speech contests. I still remember a judge at a contest who told the contestants to let the audience know our true sincerity. There is something of importance that we should not forget when we communicate to other people. When we make a speech using perfect English and perfect sentence structure, we can still not communicate our true feelings if the emotion is not there. Speeches should be of the people, by the people, and for the people. Speeches need a speaker and a listener. Fortunately, I have my students. We enjoy making speeches together.

The following is my own ms. in the 26th All Teachers' English Speech Contest which was held on December 3, 1988. Having personal experience of this, I still have a dream in learning English.

#### A PRESENT FROM STUDENTS IN STORMY DAYS

Ashikaga Daisan L.S.S. - Tochigi: Toshiko Ishii

If the good and bad times in our lives can be compared to changes in the weather, then the period I am going to describe to you today was surely the severest of typhoons. At the time I was working in a school which was torn by acts of violence and other serious discipline problems. There were times when I was almost overwhelmed by the pressures put upon me as a teacher, but with help, I survived. Today I'd like to tell you how the lessons I learned from my students and their parents helped me to weather the storm. I am grateful to them, and feel that they are the ones who have pushed me up to this contest.

The problems in my school were severe. Students inhaled thinner fumes, smoked cigarettes, and stole from their classmates and neighbors. Many acts of violence occurred among the students, and sometimes even against the teachers. Students often threatened teachers and a pregnant teacher was even kicked in the belly. There were problems at home, too. Many students came from broken families, and some ran away from home.

Some people may feel that homeroom teachers in junior high schools have too many duties for their students, both inside school and out. But it is our way, so we often work for our students 24 hours a day, because they are with us even in our dreams. So the teachers suffered under these conditions. Many got sick, and some resigned. How could we feel that our job was worthwhile when our work seemed like constantly trying to chase wild horses into a pen?

My homeroom was a second year class. Though they were not yet quite as bad as their seniors, they showed signs of developing the same extreme behavior as they grew older. But, in addition to the troublemakers, there were some students who were trustworthy, and some others who were weak. Though I often thought about resigning, I knew those students needed my help, so I had to persevere.

I also knew most of the violent and disruptive students had troubled families, so I tried to understand them and help them, especially for the sake of their futures. But this help was not always welcomed by the students or their parents. It was painful for me to go home on my bicycle at midnight after a fruitless visit to a student's home, wondering about my purpose as an educator.

One summer morning, I was late for school. On the way I tried to think of excuses, and I found myself sympathizing with students in similar situations.

Finally I decided to do as I often told them to do -- tell the truth. I arrived at my classroom door in a sweat. It was strangely quiet. I opened the door saying, "Good Morning! I'm sorry, actually I ...". All of the students were silently looking at me. I rambled on. "Actually I had another flat tire on my bicycle." But the students still looked suspicious. Then there was a stir in the class, and someone shouted "Shabby bike! Silly!" They became noisy as usual. My relief that they did not accuse me was tainted by my guilty feelings.

The problems in the school continued, and as entrance exams came near, the parents became anxious. At the end of November, the parents of my class held a clamorous meeting. They protested the discipline problems and insisted that I prepare their children well for the exams. I was shaken by their criticism as I went out into the cold and dark night. Then a mother came up to me. She said, "Sensei, you have to have conviction. If you waver, we parents would waver, too, and so would our kids. If you have faith in your convictions,

we will follow you without question." I felt as if I had gained a host of supporters. She understood me! This encouraged me to keep understanding my students as well.

Those stormy two years came to an end. During the graduation ceremony, I was full of deep emotion. Afterwards, in the garden, I saw the other teachers being welcomed by their students, taking pictures, and laughing happily. But my students had already disappeared. I felt sad and lonely.

Sitting at home that night, I heard a babble of noise outside and voices calling, "Sensei!." Rushing out I saw my dear graduates with big smiles. Among them I saw a new bicycle shining in the dark. Standing without a word, I learned that they had collected money from everyone in the class to buy a new bicycle for me. They saw my tears for the first time.

As the students left me they shouted warm words: "Take care," "Never grow older," "Live long," and "Don't be late for school!". Most touching of all though was the comment, "I liked your English lesson!" I was heartily ashamed of myself as an English teacher.

I had taught them English just as another subject, with formulae to memorize -- like science or math. I never gave them a chance to experience the pleasure of communicating in English. I hadn't given them my best.

No typhoon lasts forever. Now, rain or shine, I still go to work on the bicycle that they gave me. Each time I ride it I feel sorry that I was doubtful of my students even on their graduation day. I try to understand my students' true feelings, and to trust them. I look for the good qualities, knowing that however deeply hidded, with patience and trust, those qualities will surface eventually. My convictions based on the lessons I learned from that stormy time are very strong. Since that cold November night, that mother's words have been my motto. Now I feel sure that if I have faith in my convictions, students and parents will understand me some day. Finally, to repay students for the respect they give me as an English teacher, I strive to improve myself and my teaching through study.

These things, trust, conviction, and professional competence are the gifts I want to give my students, for the joy that they give to me. Look at me here on the stage, my boys and girls!