

High Flyers in Japanese Language

The Second Japanese Speech Contest for University Students

3rd February 2007



The Second Japanese Speech contest for University Students, organised by the British Association for Teaching Japanese (BATJ) and the Japan Foundation London Language Centre (JFLLC) took place on Saturday 3 February 2007 at SOAS, University of London. 11 finalists were selected from over 60 applications, received from 16 universities, to speak in front of a panel of judges and an audience of over 100 people including key figures from the UK-Japan world and Japanese language enthusiasts.

All finalists were required to make a speech on one of the following themes; 'My Dream', 'What I want to change in Japan/UK' and 'My experience of a different culture'. The finalists were judged in two categories, depending on whether they are studying Japanese as an Optional/Elective subject (category 2) or as their main degree subject (Category 1). The standard of the speeches given in both categories was exceptionally high, as echoed in comments from Mr Harufumi Murata, Centre Director of the JFLLC:

'Today has been a wonderful opportunity to hear from students who have not only achieved an exceptionally high level of Japanese language ability, but who also have a profound understanding of the topics they chose to speak about. I am truly impressed and I hope that the increase in students studying Japanese at primary and secondary school will be matched by an increase in the number of students opting to take Japanese at university.'

Mr Murata also expressed his sincere thanks to the sponsors, Baker & McKenzie LLP, The Daiwa-Anglo Japanese Foundation, Japan Airlines, Japan Centre, JP-Books (UK) Ltd, Ricoh UK Ltd., and Toshiba of Europe Ltd whose support made the contest such a success.

The contest, in its second year, gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their high level of spoken Japanese, acquired in Japanese courses at HE institutions in the UK and Ireland.

Jonathan King, a 2nd year student at the University of Edinburgh, found the whole experience incredibly worthwhile: 'Thanks to my participating in the contest, I not only found myself refining existing skills, but also beginning the development of new ones. It was definitely a worthwhile experience and I look forward to coming back to - hopefully - claim victory in two years time'.

Results

Category 1 (Japanese as Main Degree subject)

- 1st prize:** Katherine Wilde, 4th year at University of Cambridge
'Reform of the Japanese education system in the 21st century: focusing on the individual'.
- 2nd prize:** Jonathan Barnes, 4th year at Durham University
'The problem of bullying in Japanese schools, how should it be dealt with?'

Category 2 (Japanese as Optional/ Elective subject)

- 1st prize:** Kyusang Lee, 2nd year student at University of Birmingham
'Beyond the Cultural Differences by Understanding Others'
- 2nd prize:** Andrew Davies, 3rd year students at University of Bath
'The Truth behind Modern Agriculture'

Special Prize

Andrew Harding, 4th year student at SOAS
'What exactly is International Exchange?'