

Michael Downey (first prize, category 1)

The unique Japanese approach to showing consideration for others and its disappearance from modern society

Last year when studying abroad in Japan, I had many interesting experiences based on my interactions with Japanese people and was able to create many lasting memories. Many of my experiences are closely related to my chosen topic of 'omoiyari', very roughly translating as 'compassion' or 'consideration for others'. I feel this word has an untranslatable quality, and contains a uniqueness that captures a part of the Japanese spirit.



It was from reading a particular passage in the book entitled 'Saga no gabai baachan' (The amazing grandmother from Saga) that I feel my attitude towards Japanese social interactions took a rather marked turn. The example in the book appears to me to capture the essence of Japanese *omoiyari*, and since reading it I have often reconsidered my past experiences and thought about my experiences since then in a different light. I feel as though there have been many things that I have taken for granted and missed through not appreciating the depth of *omoiyari*. Hence, in this speech I would like to try to convey the uniqueness of Japanese *omoiyari* and its value in society based on my various experiences.

Furthermore, I would like to advance the opinion that in modern Japanese society the traditional sort of *omoiyari* is potentially disappearing. On the basis of results from a small survey I have taken, I shall propose a difference in the way of thinking between Japanese people and non-Japanese people. I feel this distinction lends itself to an explanation of why Japanese *omoiyari* has a unique quality; one that is worth maintaining in Japan and also assimilating into other societies. In light of what I view to be increasing problems in British society, I will in addition touch upon the idea that a lack of *omoiyari* may have an adverse affect on society, being relevant not just to Japan, but to other cultures and countries too.

日本人独特の思いやり

昨年、日本で経験した日本人との交流の中で、日本の温かさを感じ、日本人の持つ思いやりに強く惹かれた。日常生活で感じたこと、また授業で学んだことを通し、日本的な人と人の付き合いについてますます関心を持つようになった。大変印象に残っているのは、ある授業で読んだ「佐賀のがばいばあちゃん」という本に出てくる思いやりについての事例である。

この「佐賀のがばいばあちゃん」に出会って以来、自分の日本に対する態度がすっかり変わったように思う。そして、それまでの経験を考え直したり、その後の経験も以前とは違う受け止め方をするようになった気がする。今もなお日本的な思いやりには何か特別な価値があると思っており、このスピーチでは自分の経験を基に、その価値について述べてみたいと思う。

さらに、現在の日本では、このような伝統的な「思いやり」が消えつつあることも主張したい。日本人と日本人以外の国籍の人の思いやりに対する考え方についての調査結果で得た一つの違いを提示し、これを活かして日本的な思いやりは現在の社会にとって非常に重要であるということ強調したいと思う。そして最後に、日本に限らず多くの国でも思いやりが欠けることで社会に影響が出てしまうのではいかという点についても述べたい。

Antoni Slodkowski (second prize, category 1)

Living in a Japanese teahouse – cultural experience in Kyoto

Between 2003 and 2004 I went to Japan as a participant in the youth exchange programme. I lived in Takatsuki, a city located between Osaka and Kyoto. During that time I was hosted by the Japanese families and took part in many extra-curricular activities. The one I enjoyed most were tea ceremony classes held in Kyoto. While practicing I became more and more interested in the culture of Kyoto and the Japanese tradition. This is why, during next year's summer holidays, introduced by my tea ceremony teacher, I spent a month living on the second floor of the Japanese teahouse.

Although it was a very short, one-month period, as I was only an 18 year-old Polish schoolboy, it seemed to be a great cultural experience.



However, since the world I entered so suddenly is slightly elitist and not even every Japanese person has an access to it, as well as due to its harshness, I felt very uncertain about the whole undertaking. Thinking that I have to quickly melt into this environment, I was apprehensive of my success in Kyoto for two reasons. Firstly, I learnt my Japanese on my school's corridors, imitating my friends' Kansai dialect. Secondly, in return for my stay there I had to help out in the teahouse. I have never worked in my entire life until then and therefore did not have any faith in my own potential.

However, as the month was drawing to an end, I got used to my duties and the relationship between me, the Okaasan (the teahouse's owner) became more familiar. I realised that I have learnt two very important things. First, due to the fact that I lived in the largest, the most traditional and the most famous of the Kyoto's geisha-districts, I managed to deepen my knowledge of the "world of the flowers and willows" history and culture. Secondly, the fact that the Okaasan, did not approach me as a foreigner or a child, but first and foremost dealt with me as with another human being made me understand how important it is to perceive others, as they are regardless of their age or nationality. Thereby, the time I spent in Kyoto greatly influenced my relationship with other people henceforward.

Lastly, having worked under someone, who had entered a very harsh world from the outside, went through the hardship all her life, and in spite of all the difficulties she encountered kept her faith, I myself grew mentally stronger. Since then I have always believed in myself and realised that anything can happen if you work hard for it.

祇園のお茶屋で学んだこと

2003年から2004年まで、日本の大阪と京都の間にある高槻市という町で青少年交換留学生として、一年間ホームステイをさせていただきました。その時色々な経験を得ましたが、その中で一番よかったのは京都でやった茶道のお稽古です。次第に京都の文化や日本の伝統に興味をわいたため、ポーランドに戻っても、どうしてもそれについての知識を深めたいと思いました。ですから次の年の夏休みに茶道の先生の紹介で祇園のお茶屋の二階で住ませてもらうことになりました。

一ヶ月だけ、とても短い期間でしたが、18歳のポーランド人の僕に対しては立派な京都文化体験になりました。しかし、少しエリート主義の、一般的な日本人があまり入れないような、過酷な世界にいきなり入れられて、とても不安に感じました。「早く溶け込まないと」と思いつつも、二つの理由で上手くいくかどうか疑いました。まず、僕の日本語は高校の友達を真似して勉強した若者の大阪弁だったからでした。それから、住ませてもらう代わりに少しお茶屋の経営者（そういう人は花柳界で「お母さん」と呼ばれる）を手伝わなければなりませんでしたが、今まで全く働いたことがない僕は自分の能力に全然自信を持っていませんでした。

しかし、一ヶ月が終わりに近づくと仕事に慣れてきて、お茶屋のお母さんと親しくなり、二つの大事なことを学んだのに気がつきました。一つは京都の五つの花街の中の一番大きくて、有名で、伝統的な祇園甲部にて、花柳界の歴史

や文化についての知識を広げることができたことです。もう一つは、お茶屋のお母さんの影響を受けて、お母さんが外国人や子供としてではなく、人間として扱ってくださったので、人間は皆同じことと人間は皆同じに扱わなければならないことがわかるようになりました。以来、それを実行し、京都の経験はとても強く僕の人との関係に影響したような気がします。

最後に、とても厳しい世界によそから入って、苦勞して、信念を持って、生きてきたのお母さんの下で働いて、自分自身が成長しました。自分を信じて「空を飛べる」と思えば「空が飛べるようになる」というように強く生きたいと思います。

Handoo Seo (first prize, category 2)

Life's Magic

The speech will begin with an introduction to Magic, a subject not well-known to people despite many having come across it before through various media.



There will be an explanation of how I felt when I experienced magic for the first time. At the time I had no interest in magic and afterwards I will talk about how that experience led me to study and practice magic tricks in order to perform in front of family and friends.

Then I will discuss the origin of magic, the progression and development of magic which has led to the various kinds of magic performed recently by professional magicians.

Despite the hard work and effort that goes into practicing magic, there is one common reason for magicians to continue what they do. The reason is that for magicians, watching the delighted reactions of people to whom

they perform is the most important and happiest of all things.

Then I will talk about the influence that magic has on people and how it is used by many people in different situations. I particularly would like to spread my enthusiasm and knowledge of magic to other people.

僕と魔術

メディアを通じては接したことがあるけどあまり人々によく知られていない魔術と僕自身についてスピーチするつもりだと皆さんに歓談に紹介します。むかし、魔術に全然興味なん持っていなかった僕がある男から始めて魔術を見せてもらったエピソードとそのトリックについてできるだけ詳しく説明します。そのことがあってから僕は魔術の魅力に落ちてしまってそれから僕家族や友達に見せてあげるためにどうやってマジックの勉強や練習をしたか話します。魔術の期限、発展過程、現代魔術の種類、そして世界的なマジシャンなど魔術についてのいろいろな情報を皆さんにご紹介します。マジシャンたちがなせつらい練習にもかかわらずに魔術をやり続けるか。その理由はひとつです。自分の魔術を見て喜ぶ人々をみるのがなによりも幸せなことだからです。その後は意いいろいろなところに役に立つ魔術の影響力について話してから魔術の面白さをほかの人々に伝えるために僕が何をするか、そして僕がもともと今日のスピーチでしようと思っていたことについて最後に皆さんに話すつもりです。

楽しんでください。

Faizal Farokh (second prize, category 2)

Do videogames have a bad influence on youth?

Videogames have acquired a reputation of influencing youths into committing violent crimes and are generally portrayed as bad for society. However, the same has been true for similar forms of entertainment when they were first introduced. Adults and the mass media don't understand games well, so they are quick to lay blame on it for the problems in society. There have been 2 recent cases of youth violence whereby it was initially thought that the criminals were motivated by videogames; however it was later found out that there were other causes. It may be possible for a mentally unstable person to be influenced by a videogame to commit violent crimes, but he can be motivated by other sources as well. Also, there has yet to be a study which links videogame violence to real world violence.



ビデオゲームは青少年に悪い影響を与えますか。

ビデオゲームは青少年に影響して、暴力的な行動を引き起こすといわれていて、一般的に社会に悪いといわれています。しかし、こういったものが初めて社会に紹介されたときも同じ態度がありました。大人やマスコミはビデオゲームのことがよくわからないと思いますから、簡単に社会の問題をビデオゲームの責任にします。最近、二つの青少年に起こされた事件がありました。その犯人が始めてビデオゲームに影響されたと思われていましたが、最後にほかの原因があったと見つかりました。精神的に不安定な人はビデオゲームに影響されて、暴力的な事件を起こすとは可能ですが、ほかのことに影響されることもできます。また、暴力的なビデオゲームと暴力行為をつなげる調査はまだありません。