

# Normalization and Knowledge: The way to a better society

ノーマライゼーションと知識

—より良い社会への道

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***Editor's note:** On November 28, 2015, Megumi Iguchi took part in the All-Japan Student English Presentation Contest, held in Tokyo. It is a highly competitive nationwide speech contest, with over 600 applicants. Out of these, based on their application and video summary of their speech, around one hundred fifty were chosen to come to Tokyo and give individual presentations. Megumi Iguchi was chosen and gave her speech to the judges in Tokyo. Below, we give her speech in its entirety.*

*While she unfortunately did not place, Otemae University celebrates her accomplishments and the fact that she was able to go to Tokyo to participate. We print her speech here in recognition of the wonderful way in which Ms. Iguchi has worked hard to make the most of her education, and to make the world a better place, both inside and out of the classroom. We offer our deepest congratulations to Ms. Iguchi for her hard work and a job very well done. For more information on the contest, see: <http://www.kandagaigo.ac.jp/contest/report/>*

Keywords: Paralympics, normalization, All-Japan Student English Presentation Contest

## 編集者注

2015年11月28日に井口めぐみさんが東京で開催された全国学生英語プレゼンテーションコンテストに参加致しました。このイベントは数百名の応募者がいる競争率の高い全国規模のスピーチコンテストです。応募書類とプレゼンテーション概要を収録したビデオに基づいて、これらの応募者の中から約150名が東京へ行き、個別にプレゼンテーションをするべく選出されました。井口めぐみさんはその150名に選ばれ、東京にて審査員の前でスピーチを発表を致しました。最後に彼女のスピーチをそっくりそのまま記載しております。

彼女は賞こそ獲得は出来ませんでしたが、大手前大学はその業績と東京で審査されるべく選出された事実を褒め称えたいと思います。井口さんが教育を最大限に活用しながら教室の内外において世界を寄り良い場所にする為に一生懸命学業に励んだ結果です。その功績を称えて彼女のスピーチをここに印刷させて頂きました。井口さんの努力と素晴らしい成果に心からのお祝いを申し上げます。

コンテストに関する詳細が欲しい方は下記のリンクをご覧ください。

<http://www.kandagaigo.ac.jp/contest/report>

キーワード：パラリンピック、ノーマライゼーション、全国学生英語プレゼンテーションコンテスト

Good afternoon everyone. As the MC stated, my name is Megumi Iguchi. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you. Today I'm going to talk about the recognition of disability sports in particular the Paralympics. The reason why I want to talk about this topic began a personal question: I wanted to know why we rarely see people with disabilities in our daily lives. At your work place or school, do you see people with

disabilities or have you ever interacted with them? When you communicate with them, how do you feel?

When I was in nursery school, I had a friend with Down's syndrome. We also went to the same elementary school. But in elementary school I did not see her often. She was enrolled in the regular class but actually she spent most of the time in a special class. After I graduate from elementary school, I went to private middle and high school. There, I never saw anyone with a disability.

According to the Japanese Cabinet office's research in 2013 the number of people who lived with disability in Japan was approximately 3 million. This number is 6% of the population of Japan. If the population in Japan was only one hundred, 6 people would have a disability. But in daily life, most of us never meet anyone who is not able-bodied. This is the case in broadcast media too.

While my personal experience highlights the question of segregation in Japanese education, my main theme today is the connection between my personal experience, the education system, and larger social problems. The small parts and individual behavior have a big impact on change in society.

First, I would like to examine the question of the unpopularity of the Paralympics. I would like to talk about the unconscious social prejudice against people with disabilities. The unconscious social prejudice in our society starts from three parts; isolation, social prejudice, and lack of recognition. These three ideas have the same basic root. The problem is popular ideas of negative prejudice against people with disabilities. Japanese society has less social space to allow able-bodied people to interact with people with disabilities. When you see people with disabilities, how do you feel? Do you feel sorry for them or do you think they are not so happy because of their disabilities? These ideas are examples of unconscious social negative prejudice against people with disabilities.

The first idea, "social isolation" comes from these negative ideas. Japanese society isolates people with disabilities because we feel uncomfortable around them. This discomfort comes from not understanding daily lives. It is also true that many people with disabilities live in welfare institutions, creating a cycle of misunderstanding and isolation. Such institutions also make them more invisible. They spend their entire lives within the institution and don't often interact with the rest of society.

Second, social prejudice indicates a larger problem in our social system. Our society has limited space where able-bodied people can interact with people with disabilities. Thus, many people don't know about the realities of life for people living with disabilities. In fact, disability does not mean that people are unable to do things. It simply means they have to do things differently. But the idea that people with disabilities cannot do things becomes a source of prejudice. Unintentional ignorance is part of the social problem.

Third, the lack of recognition is part of the landscape around people with disabilities. We use the word "barrier-free" in many places. Many institutions have created convenient access for people with physical disabilities. However, our society still separates people according to their abilities. And there is still great prejudice against people whose disabilities are not visible. - Buildings may be barrier-free for people who have physical disabilities, but barrier still exist for people with mental disabilities. If people act differently from the majority, that becomes a cause of alienation from the group. It is important to remember that not all disabilities are visible and there is prejudice against all types of disability.

Next I want to explore the regulations of broadcasting. The broadcast media is one of the most powerful and effective ways to get information. But have you ever watched the Paralympics on any commercial broadcasting stations? The answer is “No.” NHK only broadcast the opening ceremony and highlights of the Sochi Paralympics. You can see the difference in broadcast hours in the power point. They have a system where on TV, especially commercial stations, the Paralympics are not broadcast at all. They don’t broadcast them because they believe people aren’t interested. But people aren’t interested because they do not know. The issue of ignorance becomes a cycle.

Finally, I will now introduce my ideas for policies to improve the recognition of the Paralympics. My idea is “normalization”. Have you ever heard this word before? This is the idea that people with disabilities live in same place with able-bodied people in society. By increasing visibility, people are educated and the cycle of ignorance ends. But in reality, it is difficult to find a specific solution in Japanese society. My idea start from how to spread knowledge about people with disabilities. As I said, all the issues are based on social problems. I believe change should start with education and change the idea of society by creating opportunities to interact with people with disabilities. For example, in compulsory education, children with disabilities should join classes with able-bodied children. Children should learn about Paralympic athletes and the lives of people with disabilities. Lessons should be redesigned to integrate awareness about disabilities, and Paralympic broadcasts could be part of the general education curriculum.

For university students, courses should introduce art, books, or movies that feature people with disabilities. Pop culture representations of people with disabilities also have an important impact. An example would be manga. Manga is the most well-known form of pop-culture. In fact, there are some manga that talks about disability sports. For example, the popular boy’s manga *Real* features a protagonist in a wheelchair who play basketball. This manga pointed out the fact that there are sports that people can play even if they have disabilities. Ideas of inclusivity and visibility should come from both schools and the government.

In conclusion, I would like to introduce the proverb [彼を知り己を知れば百戦危うからず] which I translate as [If you know yourself and him, you do not fear the hundred battles]. We do not fight with people with disabilities. We fight together against social prejudice. Now, I want everyone to think about the meaning of understanding. If we don’t know the reality of who people with disabilities are, we would feel fear of them and have prejudice. When I started my research to make this presentation, I was scared to learn about people with disabilities. I also had a prejudice against people with disabilities. But if we start to know about them that knowledge will change the future. Every one of you has a great power to change the future and together we will make a great Olympics and Paralympics in 2020. Thank you so much.