

Otemae University's English Speech Contest 2016

Introduced by Daniel Tang and Shirley Ando

Introduction

Public speaking consistently ranks in the top three personal fears for us¹. Furthermore, these are fears from people thinking about making a speech in their *native* language. Thus, why you cannot help but admire every participant in the Institute of International Education's 2016 annual speech contest. In the English category, each of the 12 participants wrote and memorized five-minute speeches. It was commendable and impressive, considering this was an extracurricular activity. Given the high overall level of all speeches, it was difficult to pick the top three winners. In the end, Namiko N. Ookawara won first prize for her speech, "What I Want to Give People Through Art." Ms Ookawara spoke about a cherished art teacher and shared her personal account of the transformative power of art. Namie Tsuji won second prize with her speech, "Talking With My Hands." Ms Tsuji spoke about the use of sign language and its ability to overcome barriers. Kumiko Sugimoto's speech "Challenge," won third prize. She spoke about the importance of always challenging yourself.

As a whole, these speeches demonstrate the commitment of Otemae University students to social service and making the world a better place. Each student has found their own way, and the journeys they shared about discovering what made a difference to them and the world around them was profoundly moving for the audience. In particular, it was especially impressive that there was a high number of freshmen students who joined sophomores, juniors, and seniors in sharing their dreams and their experiences. Listeners were impressed with the students' poise and polished speech performances, no matter what their year in university or their previous public speaking experience.

Otemae University is pleased to present a small but impressive collection of original student speeches from our 2016 speech contest. Transcripts of selected speeches follow.

¹ As seen in the Chapman University Survey of American Fears, most recently published on October 11, 2016. Retrieved February 2, 2017, from <https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2016/10/11/americas-top-fears-2016/>

What I Want To Give People Through Art

Namiko Nicole Ookawara

Good morning.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you. Today, I would like to talk what I want to do in the future and how it became clear through some experiences related to Art.

Without meeting my art teacher, I, as an artist wouldn't be here. When I was a high school student, I started to go to an art school. The school was a little bit different from the "common art school." The teacher accepted ANYONE who loved to do art. We used different materials to create art. She didn't teach us how to draw and even NEVER forced us to draw!

We could express ourselves freely because she never evaluated whether an artwork is good or bad. I didn't have to care about what people said about my art. What she taught me was the joy of making art for myself.

My teacher passed away two years after we met. Her death was unexpected. I couldn't say thank you enough to her. So, at her funeral, I made a decision: I will NOT STOP making art as long as her TEACHING is in my HEART.

Since then, I made art just for myself. However, these days, I think that I don't have to make art just for myself anymore. Could you guess why? It isn't because I don't like art. It's PRECISELY because I LOVE and ENJOY art, the way my teacher taught me.

I studied Studio Art and Art Therapy in the United States for a year. I still kept enjoying making art and made many friends in Art classes. When I had a very hard time living there, many friends supported me. They always gave bright smile and love. I realized that their attitude was similar to my teacher. I started thinking how I can help people like my teacher and friends. The passion was growing in my heart.

Then I had the opportunity to combine my passion of art and helping people in a graphic design class in America. We created word pictogram, which explained the meaning of a word with a picture. As an English learner, I realized that word pictograms can help people who are learning a new language. I thought it was the thing what I wanted to in the future- helping people and making difficult words easy to understand by design.

Finally, I found the way that I could help people. I always receive lots of love from the people in my life. Now is my turn to give. I know the joy of making art, so I want to use this joy to give love to people. Mother Teresa said, "It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in doing." Now, it became clear for me that what impressed me the most in the art school: how much love my teacher had and how much love she put to care for each of us, just the way I want to be. *Thank you.*

Talking with my hands

Namie Tsuji

I am very pleased to be here with you. I would like to speak to you about sign language. Before I start I have a question for you. Have you ever heard of the word “deaf” and “sign language”? I don’t like the word “deaf”. It indicates people who cannot hear or listen to sound or voice. So I want to say that they aren’t deaf. They just find it “difficult to hear” voices. I don’t want you to reject them because of the difficulty they have. But in this speech, I will use “deaf” because I haven’t found the best word to describe them yet. I say this because of my personal experiences with deaf people, which I want to talk about now.

First, let me describe my experience with friends who are deaf from elementary school. Our school had a class for deaf children. All students had to study sign language to communicate with them. This affected my life. By knowing sign language, I could help in swimming races when I was a middle school student. I could also help customers at my part-time job. In both cases, I was a translator between people who are deaf and hearing people. I think I did a great job and I felt that my experience in elementary school improved my whole life. I’d now like to talk about barriers.

What do you think are the barriers with deaf people? Actually, I can’t see any barriers between deaf people and me. It doesn’t matter if you don’t know sign language. Some deaf people can talk without sign language because they can read our lips and they can practice pronunciation of letters. We can also communicate using pen and paper. Therefore, if you have any barriers, you can break the barriers, right? My deaf friend said that if people had motivation to accept them, social relations between deaf people and hearing people will be nicer than now. So we need to understand them more and help each other.

Finally, I want to share with you the joy of learning sign language. Sign language isn’t difficult. It really isn’t! Because you know English and you can write, read, listen and speak, right? Sign language is only speaking with your hands. It means that learning sign language is easier than learning other languages. You don’t need to prepare pen and paper. Just have motivation. Only knowing a little bit can help you to communicate and feel confident. If you complete Japanese sign language, you can start Korean sign language, American one, French one and so on.

In conclusion, I hope you will be interested in sign language. Sign language will brighten your life and affect people around you. You can expand your world, acquire new skills and make new friends. In addition, if you and your friends know sign language, you can have secret conversations hidden from adults and others who don’t know the language! Thank you very much.

Challenge

Kumiko Sugimoto

Good afternoon, everyone.

First, I have a question for you. Do you have any motto in your life?

Mine is to always try to challenge everything. Today, I'd like to talk about the three main things that I challenged in these four years and what I learned from those experiences. I am a senior now and I do hope that my experiences can help your campus life and future.

I've been studying English and international communication in Otemae. I like to study English since I was child, so LEO and GJS classes were fun for me. In those classes, I met many people and became good friends. Some are older and some are younger. To become a friend with them, I could know some different knowledge or cultures, especially one of my friends changed me a lot. He was an exchange student from America. He showed me how interesting it is to study abroad, and how important it is to challenge everything. When he left Japan, I promised him that I will study in America. However, I've never study abroad before, so I was afraid a lot about my English and be alone in a foreign country, but I challenged it. First, I went to a short study program in New Zealand. In the first week I became a home sick, and I couldn't use English well, so my heart was broken. However, I remembered about him--he always tried to talk to any Japanese students with his Japanese. So, from the second week, I tried to talk to my classmates with a not-good English and joined some school programs. I made many friends, and I could know how interesting study abroad was. Then two years ago, in this speech contest, I said I would challenge to go to America.

Last year, I did it! I went to America and studied for two terms or for 6 months! During the first term, I was in the second class from the top of ESL, the class for non-native speakers. But I wanted to pass ESL classes and study with native speakers. I asked teachers and some coordinators, but they said, "It's too hard for you. If you can get really high score in two exams, you can take it, but that's almost impossible." However, I didn't give up. I tried to study really hard. I went to the library to study, made a lot of friends and practiced listening and speaking. What's happened? I got 100 score in one of the exam, and I got high score on another exam. When I passed ESL, I was proud of myself. Not only studying, but I worked hard to let people know about Japanese culture as well. When I try some new things, I am always nervous, but the challenge makes me strong.

Second, I belong to the Acoustic Sound Club. To perform something, you need to practice hard. We're supposed to practice every day for three hours. In the freshman year, the club's atmosphere was not good because of the relationship and hard practice. Some members left and actually I wanted to leave too. However, I don't like to run away, so when I became a sophomore, I tried to change the atmosphere. I became a leader and tried to talk every member and had meeting sometimes. The club changed! Now we have good relationship. It was hard at first but from this experience, I learned communication skill and I can sing and play better.

Now, I am challenging new classes. As a senior, I don't have to take many classes but I want to learn many new things. I'm studying tourism and bookkeeping now and they're exciting because they're new to me!

I always chose difficult options. I didn't need to go to foreign country to study, but I did. When I was told that a class is too hard for me, I challenged the idea and passed the exam. When the club was bad, I could leave but instead I changed the club. Under these my situations, I chose the hard way. I believe what someone said, "When life gets harder, challenge yourself to be stronger." I will challenge everything forever. Lastly, I appreciate this university to let me have those experiences. Thank you very much.