

Comments on the 2025 Composition Contest

Gerard Marchesseau

Department of English Language Education

Naruto University of Education

This year, the 2025 Annual Tokushima Prefectural Composition Contest for high school students was held on October 12th. Contestants enter the contest, not knowing what the topic is. They must craft coherent, inciteful answers to a thought-provoking question on the spot, with only a pencil and dictionary. While most prefectures hold only an oratory speech contest, I believe that the composition contest is a very constructive, positive addition. I am always impressed with the creative and well-written responses. I would especially like to congratulate all of those who participated this year. Win or lose, your voices can make a valuable contribution to society, now and in the future.

We try to vary the topics of the composition contest from year to year. Common themes include social issues and various matters which affect young people. This year, the question for the composition contest was: “How can teachers increase students’ motivation to study English?”. This is an important issue for teachers, of course, and it is also important to explore this from the students’ perspective. As a teacher myself, the students’ responses to this question have given me a lot to reflect on. It should also be mentioned that there are no ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ answers to the question this year or in previous years. What is important is that contestants express thoughtful ideas which are developed and supported by evidence or in argument. The ideas should also be presented in logical coherent form, including an introduction and conclusion.

Some common themes emerged in the responses this year. Many candidates suggested that students will feel motivated if they truly understand the purpose of learning English. By engaging with authentic sources like foreign media and including content which is related to students’ lives or currently in the news, they will see that English is a living language in the real world. The true purpose of English is not to take tests, but to communicate and experience new things. Communication and experience lead towards sustainable learning and motivation. Similarly, contestants also wrote about the importance of active learning. Having discussion and working through issues with classmates, as well as playing games and doing a variety of tasks makes English fun and engaging. Other students came up with interesting ideas to improve English skills. One memorable contestant outlined how learning the roots of words can improve vocabulary learning. Knowing that “manu” is a root meaning “hand”, for example, makes it easier to learn new words like “manuscript”, “manufacture” and “manicure”.

As a final message, the composition contest is always competitive, and there are always many great ideas. Congratulations to the winners and to everyone who participated. There were so many great ideas, and the judges enjoyed reading each composition. To all contestants, I sincerely hope that you continue to exercise your unique voices in various capacities in both English and Japanese!