

# The 76<sup>th</sup> Tokushima Prefectural Senior High School English Speech Contest

Sydney Bartig

Diversity Promotion Division, Tokushima Prefectural Government

On October 2nd I had the pleasure of judging the 76th Tokushima Prefectural Senior High School English Speech Contest at the Shikoku University Koryu Plaza. This was my 4th time judging this speech contest, and every year it is great to see the students present in English. It was clear that some of the students were quite nervous, but everyone did their best to push through and complete their speech.

One point that I think most of the students really excelled at this year was projecting their voice and properly conveying the emotions necessary to fit the theme of their speech. While some students were certainly nervous, the majority did a great job by speaking in a clear and loud voice. Most students also had no issues with maintaining appropriate eye contact with the judges and audience. (Although it is worth mentioning that students should be careful to avoid looking at their notes/script too much as this can have a negative impact on their speech.)

Along with the topics of good voice projection, eye contact, etc., one thing I want to make note of is how some of the best presenters also incorporated emotion into their speeches through their voice and body language. For example, some students spoke about a myriad of societal issues, and you could hear the solemn tone in their voice when they were talking about such issues. This would then shift to an optimistic and lighter voice as they offered solutions and advice. This is an important part of a speech because, while of course the content is extremely important, if one cannot convey it in a convincing manner, then the overall quality will suffer. Of course, with something like emotion in a speech it is important to keep a good balance. One shouldn't be completely monotone, nor should they go over the top when expressing themselves.

Finally, I would like to give some advice to students for picking a speech

topic. It may seem obvious, but your topic should be something that you are personally interested in, are knowledgeable about (and willing to research to learn more), and that you think others need to hear about. If you're passionate about a topic and have put in the time to research it, then that will often come through in your presentation. Therefore, before even beginning to write your speech, it's best to take the time to really think about what it is you want to present on and what you want to convey to the audience.

All of the students, both those who placed and those who didn't, did a wonderful job this year. Gathering your courage to give a speech in a foreign language is certainly something to be celebrated, and I hope that for all the students this is only the first step in their language-learning journey and that they will continue their studies into university and adulthood.