

Ship for World Youth

On February 24th, the Ship for World Youth made port at Yamada High School. The Ship for World Youth, abbreviated as SWY, is an exchange program sponsored by the Japanese government where young people from Japan and a dozen or so other countries board a cruise ship and visit locations around Asia. This year, participants from fourteen countries, from Zambia to the Solomon Islands, toured around Japan. Kochi prefecture was one of the destinations, and thirty SWYers visited Yamada High School for an event planned under the Global Research Course with the theme of the “empowerment of young people.”

After a frenzied reception and handing out of name cards, SWYers, Yamada students, and support staff from local companies were divided into groups and exchanged self introductions. In English, of course. As is often the case when people from so many different countries gather, English was the common language. Because of this, it was a great chance for students to experience international exchange, or a situation where they had to use a language other than their native language in order for any significant communication to take place. Such opportunities can be major source of motivation for studying a second language, which can be a long and frustrating journey.

But before fully entering English mode, everyone participated in a rain gutter relay as an icebreaker. This relay is one where teams use rain gutters to pass a ping pong ball. But, when you roll the ball to the next person, you have to say their name. The sounds of shouted names and chaotic footfalls filled the room as groups successfully learned each other's names and erased any remaining nervousness.



From there, things calmed down as we transitioned to a poster session. In the Global Research Course, students choose a topic to research, either in groups as first-year students or alone or in pairs as second-year students, and in this poster session, they presented their progress up to now.



To make the most of this opportunity, students had been working hard on their English since January, doing a thorough job making posters and speeches, working on pronunciation and presentation skills, and practicing taking and answering questions. The sight of the students who consider English a weak point struggling to overcome their difficulties was moving. I was also busy at work checking pronunciation, serving as an audience and asking questions, proofreading student posters, and translating the posters of local businesses who would also be presenting.

In total, all nine first-year students, eleven second-year students, two third-year students, and two local companies (Futagami and Netz Toyota) presented. Everyone presented twice and had three minutes for their speech, five minutes for Q&A, and two minutes for receiving feedback. SWYers and other audience members who came as spectators saw a diverse set of topics: how to be high schoolers prepared for an earthquake, how to make damaged jeans from chemicals you can easily find at home, what we can learn from terakoya (temple schools during the Edo period of Japan), using AI to make recycled chalk, and more.

After presenting, everyone was a bit drained from straining their brains and wringing out so much English, so it was time to work out their bodies instead. One second-year student, to apply what he had learned through his research

into audio engineer work, had planned a dance event. SWYers and students learned Kochi's Yosakoi dance, watched a professional dance duo's performance, and finally danced freely while listening to a mix of English and Japanese songs. It was heartwarming to see usually shy and reserved students be drawn in by the energy and gradually come out of their shells to dance.

Now that everyone was physically and mentally tired, it was time for some lunch, which consisted of bentos, Tosa tea, and ponkan mandarins and was all from Kochi and provided by JA Kochi. (JA, or Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, is a group of agricultural cooperatives in Japan.) While I had thought I could take a rest too, as if to say, “wouldn't it be unfair if only students had to struggle with their second language,” I was asked to interpret an introduction of the Tosa tea and ponkan, with content ranging from deep-steamed tea from Shizuoka prefecture to the unique geography of Kochi prefecture. After safely making it through the introduction, I felt relief and satisfaction at first, but then a pang of vexation at my mistakes and a desire to further hone my Japanese.



And before we knew it, it was time to say goodbye. While it had only been around four hours, the room was filled with the sound of camera shutters taking final pictures and a lingering reluctance to depart, and students saw the SWYers off until their bus had left.

With that, SWY had weighed anchor and left Yamada, and after cleaning up, without much of a physical trace. But what was left behind was gratification from successfully commanding a second language for so long, ambition to study and improve even more, and some good memories in the students. And so were some ponkan, which I happily interpreted and accepted as a translator's fee.

二月十四日に、「世界青年の船」のメンバーが山田高校に来校しました。この機会を活かすため、一月から生徒たちは英語の勉強に四苦八苦作っていました。ポストカードや練習、質疑応答を徹底的にしました。苦手を克服しようとする生徒の姿に感動しました。私も発音のチェックをしたり、観客役として質疑したり、企業の方のポスターを翻訳したりすることで忙しかったです。ポスターセッションの具体的な内容は、一年生と二年生の二人の三年生が、その三分間の発表と五分間の質疑応答を二回行いました。地震の後で役に立っている高校生になる。どうすればいいのか。ダメ・寺子屋から学ぶことは何か。再生・寺子屋クを「で」作れるかなどの多彩な探究成果が発表されました。

慌ただしい歓迎と名札配布を終えた生徒、まずはSWYたち・山田高校の生徒・地元企業からのサポートスタッフを交わしました。もちろん英語で何か国からの人の集まりの例に洩れず、共通語が日本語ではなく英語で流れている。だから減多に出来ない、国際交流という、外国語を使わなければならない状況を経験するチャンスではない。この歯がゆい機会を習得する道が長い。でも本格的に英語モードに入る前、雨どいを使ったりピンポン玉を転がす競争です。ただ、次の人に玉を転がす際にはその人の名前を言う必要があります。一位を競い合った響いて、皆が互いに名前を覚えて緊張感をすっきり吹っ飛ばしました。

そこから落ち着いてポスターセッションに移りました。グローバル探究科では、一年生がグループで二年生が一人か二人でそれぞれのテーマで探究をします。このポスターセッションで今までの成果を発表しました。

この機会を活かすため、一月から生徒たちは英語の勉強に四苦八苦作っていました。ポストカードや練習、質疑応答を徹底的にしました。苦手を克服しようとする生徒の姿に感動しました。私も発音のチェックをしたり、観客役として質疑したり、企業の方のポスターを翻訳したりすることで忙しかったです。ポスターセッションの具体的な内容は、一年生と二年生の二人の三年生が、その三分間の発表と五分間の質疑応答を二回行いました。地震の後で役に立っている高校生になる。どうすればいいのか。ダメ・寺子屋から学ぶことは何か。再生・寺子屋クを「で」作れるかなどの多彩な探究成果が発表されました。

英語力を振り絞って発表しきり、きつと精神的に疲れたところで、次はもう一度体を存分に動かす時間です。二年生の一人が探究の一環として、音響について学んだことを生かすダンスグループの演奏を見たり、英語と日本語の曲のミックスを聞きながら自由なダンスをしたりしました。シャイな生徒たちが徐々に青年の高温の光景でした。

脳の疲れに体の疲れが重なったので、最後には「」が提供された高知の材料（魚・野菜など）で作られた弁当と一緒に食べました。弁当だけじゃなく、土佐茶と山北からのポンカンもありました。

私も休めるかと思っただけ、生徒だけが言語力を振り絞らなくちゃいけないのはアンフェアだろう。一と茶や高知県の地形などに触れる土佐茶とポンカンの紹介の通訳をほぼぶっつけで頼まれました。やり遂げだ、自分の達成感を得ました。痛みはまだ日本語を極められることも痛感しました。

いつのまにか皆が食べ終え、サヨナラの時間が来たように、部屋が別々の写真のシャッター音と名残惜しさで充満していました。生徒たちは、青年のバスが去るまで送り届けました。ほんのりと跡形もなく帰ってしまっただけ、いい思い出、言語を振り絞った満足感、もつと勉強せねばならないという向上心が確かに残されていく。残されたので通訳代と積もる有難く頂きました。