

2021 ENGLISH SUMMARIES OF SPEECHES

These summaries were written by contestants in their own words. Contestants are listed in alphabetical order.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR DIVISION

1. The world's and Japan's expression of love – Matthew Botterill (SA)

My speech is about the differences between how people generally express their love around the world compared to how people do so in Japan.

In Japan it is common for children to share a bed and bathe at the same time with their parents, however in other parts of the world this isn't common.

Physical signs of love are done in public in Australia, and most parts of the world, but doing so in Japan is typically frowned upon.

Weddings also work differently. Wedding gifts are typically household appliances and flowers in the world, but in Japan wedding gifts are an envelope of money called Shuugi.

Even though the world and Japan have different signs of expressions of love, originally these expressions of love are used to convey feelings, and it's those feelings which makes one's life never boring!

2. Building confidence and finding yourself – Max Hollis (NT)

My speech talks about building confidence in Japanese and Australian high schools and the comparison between them. As schools have a wide range of school events this gives students opportunities to build on themselves and find what they like and where their strengths are. I also talk about my personal experience in both types of environments and my thoughts on the positives and negatives of certain aspects. The main event I talk about is the sports festival and sports day in the respective countries. Finally, I talk about how I think people can build on their confidence from what I have learned.

3. Anime – Fran Jakab (TAS)

Animated movies, known as "anime", are loved and popular all around the world. Interesting characters, beautiful animation and inspiring stories are some of the reasons why people enjoy watching anime. Anime can also raise awareness about important issues to educate young people. A good example would be the recent popular anime called "Weathering With You", which features a variety of environmental issues, and a bittersweet love story between Hina and Hodaka. In this anime, it is constantly raining in Tokyo, so everyone wants to see the sun. Hina can control the weather at the extent of her own wellbeing. Eventually, Hina sacrifices herself so others can be happy and enjoy the weather, which poses an interesting question- "What would you do for the sake of happiness?". I recommend Weathering With You to both children and adults.

4. Opportunity Cost – Fiona Kim (VIC)

In 2014, my mother, who barely knew how to speak English, decided to move into a foreign country where she didn't know anyone and had no one to rely onto. From then, she gave up her own life just to make her daughter's life better, turning herself into an opportunity cost. In this speech, I talk about how I personally felt moving into a new country watching my mother sacrifice herself and thanks to my mother's sacrifice, I was able to become the person I am today. The speech also wishes for the listeners to have a chance at reflecting back on their own family's effort too.

5. The Sense of Humour – Zihui Lin (NSW)

In this lonely age where people are easily polarised by difference in ideology or culture, and physically separated by the COVID-19 virus, comedy brings us together by utilising laughter. In my speech, "The Sense of Humour", I took it upon myself to investigate the reason behind the popularity of the act of "Monomane" --- Imitations. I found it to be a culture shock at first, and struggled to understand why Japanese people thought it to be entertaining. But as I familiarised myself with Japanese comedy and culture, I realised that perhaps people gravitated towards it as a part of human nature, through our want to belong to communities, and to feel represented. It shows how crucial it is for us to imitate and connect with others, which made me really fall in love with it.

6. Kansai dialect – Nick Mesics (ACT)

In my speech, I address the unique dialect of Kansai. With a short intro on Kansai's Osaka and its unique association with Manzai comedy, I break down the differences that it has from Standard language.

The Kansai dialect differs in terms of word, accent and collocation changes.

For example, the sentence ender “だよ” becoming “やで” in Kansai. I also introduce words unique to Kansai such as さら and べへ.

I encourage anyone interested to do some research of their own into the Kansai dialect and/or others as there is a plethora of information not able to be covered in my short speech.

7. Impact of smartphone– Channie Rhim (QLD)

Smartphones are one of the most significant electronic gadgets in our daily life. They are extremely helpful in our daily life that majority people can no longer live without them. In fact, there are problems are due to excessive usage of smartphones. They are one of the main reasons behind the wastage of our valuable time. However, a lot of people are not aware or taking seriously about the negative impacts of the smartphones. Excessive usage of smartphones can cause various problems in our health and lifestyle, which need to be solved. To overcome these problems, we must need to learn how to manage our time we spend on the smartphones.

8. Living Through Corona – Chelsea Tan (WA)

'Technology that Connects the World' is a speech that talks about the problem of loneliness during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how technology has helped communities reconnect with each other. Speaking from personal experience, I addressed how communications technology has allowed me to connect with students in Japan through an online exchange program and build a relationship which I wouldn't have been able to without technology. They taught me about Japanese songs, how to skate on a skateboard, and even about Pokémon. Although there are many advantages of using technology, there are also disadvantages, such as unexpected audio problems and poor Wi-Fi connections during calls. Though there are both pros and cons, this doesn't change the fact that times right now are filled with solitude. However, I believe that one day, with the power of technology, we will be able to meet each other freely again.

OPEN DIVISION

1. Message from an Older Sister to an Older Brother – Monika Agarwal (NSW)

‘Now that my storehouse
has burned down, nothing
conceals the moon.’

Mizuta Masahide
(trans. Yoel Hoffmann)

When Mizuta’s storehouse burned down, he was neither angry nor sad, for instead he found himself witnessing the bright, beautiful moon. In a similar way, in our lives, our ‘storehouses’ also burn - whether it be losing a job, facing a natural disaster, or losing a loved one. It is not easy to stay calm and we often fall into despair. However, by sharing my own story I want to show that, just as Mizuta wrote in his haiku, there is hope in any situation and that these painful experiences can often be, in sometimes unexpected ways, an important part of our lives.

2. Decadence: A Nihilistic critique of culture – Tian He (VIC)

In his work Decadence, Ango Sakaguchi introduced the idea of decadence (daraku), a particular kind of self-recognition regarding the contingency and impermanence of human nature. According to Ango, human nature is complicated by paradigmatic ideologies; people tend to prey to “big ideas” and suffer from the conflict between their ideal self and reality as it crumbles. Therefore, decadence serves as an intermediate state between chaos and the emergence of new value; and people can only achieve the latter stage through the existential realization of their genuine desire. Ultimately, this speech discusses how Ango’s work inspired the contestant to think about the futouko and hikikomori issue through reflections of his personal experience during the COVID pandemic. Personality and desire should be defined by the individual rather than the cultural/social settings per se, to prevent the frustrations from failing to answer the pragmatic needs of the society.

3. What is Leadership? – Daniel Lim (WA)

Recently, ‘leadership’ has become something of a big deal. But how well do we understand leadership? One often imagines a confident, charismatic individual with the ability to effectively command those under their leadership. A good leader, however, is not necessarily defined by these things. A good leader takes action, creates a space where everyone can easily voice their thoughts, and listens to everyone’s concerns - in other words a team player. A strong sense of responsibility is also crucial, in order to overcome the challenges that one will face as a leader. Leadership is a great responsibility that not everyone can bear.

4. Two sides of the same coin; the blue and white mask. – Jason Lim (ACT)

COVID-19 has changed our lives and made wearing a mask a daily necessity, despite a small minority running counter to this. But what is the significance of that blue and white mask, we have come to take for granted? Through a friend working in a 'black company' in a pre-pandemic Japan, I learnt that wearing a mask was not just an act based in kindness. In a harsh work environment with little paid leave, a mask is vital in protecting oneself from others. Elsewhere, I found that wearing a mask can evoke feelings of fear because of the association with being deathly ill. Only while returning to Australia at the start of the pandemic, did I feel both protected by the mask on my person yet fearful of it on others – these two aspects really are just two sides of the same coin to the blue and white mask.