



全英連 第12回全国高等学校英語スピーチコンテスト 第2位 読売新聞社賞 ラムチャンダニ 妥耶

2019年2月10日に、国立オリンピック記念青少年総合センターにおいて行われた全英連 第12回全国高等学校英語スピーチコンテストで、近畿ブロック代表として出場した本校5年次生 ラムチャンダニ妥耶さんが堂々たるスピーチで第2位に入賞しました。



How Synthetic Are We?

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“AHHH!! There’s a jellyfish on me!” “No, that’s a plastic bag.” “Look! There’s a fish down there!” “No, that’s a plastic bottle.” This is the conversation I had with my sister while swimming in the ocean in Bali. I was expecting for the sea to be paradise, but it felt like I was wading through an ocean of plastic. The locals reassured me that the trash will soon disappear when the wind blows offshore. Disappear? Really? No, it’s just blown out to sea so we can’t see it anymore.

Humans produce almost 20,000 plastic bottles every second. 20,000! By the time I’m finished with this sentence, we could have filled this auditorium with plastic bottles! And where do you think this plastic goes? Ideally, it should be disposed of in an eco-friendly way. The reality is, about 8 million tons are being dumped into the ocean every year. That’s about 20 Tokyo domes filled with plastic EVERY YEAR! The problem is, it takes hundreds of years for plastic to fully degrade. During that cycle, it breaks down into small pieces called “microplastics” which have formed a “plastic smog” in the middle of the ocean twice the size of Japan.

These microplastics leak toxic chemicals and merge into the bodies of marine life. Ironically, much of the plastic we make comes back to us on our dinner table, meaning there is more plastic in you than hundreds of marine animals. According to the US National Institutes of Health, the chemicals that make plastic, such as BPA and DEHP, can interfere with our hormonal system, and have been proven to be carcinogenic. So how synthetic are we?

You may be thinking “Yeah I know it’s a big problem but how am I related to this?” I asked myself the same question. Yes, this is a worldwide issue. But we Japanese have a special role to play because, believe it or not, Japan consumes more plastic than all of the other Asian countries and Africa combined. How come? In Japan, mostly everything we sell is over-packaged in plastic. Millions of onigiris are wrapped in plastic, candies are wrapped individually in plastic, and then put into another plastic package. Even plastic straws have plastic packaging. And all of this is only for one-time use. Why do we do this? We are living in a plastic frenzy where presentation is king. We stop at nothing to recreate

this image of sterility and hygiene, and our plastic obsession reaches everything we touch. Let's tear ourselves from our plastic present, and start to heal the gift that enables it all. Our Earth.

Fortunately, there are promising initiatives at work. For example, a start-up company in England has recently presented "Ooho" which is a plant-based water pouch that you can just plop into your mouth like a fruit. Taiwan is banning single-use plastic items including straws, cups, and shopping bags by 2030. Change is starting to take place. Wouldn't you want to be at the forefront of this?

I'm sure much of this information isn't new to you. But it's one thing to have the knowledge and another, to act on it. When you're about to litter without a second thought, wake up! This piece of plastic will surely outlive you, and will soon cover and drown our Earth. However, we can prevent more from getting there. I have started picking up plastic garbage along the river while walking my dog. I pick up about 10L of plastic once a week. In a year I will be preventing a big fridge full of plastic from getting into the ocean, and that's just by myself. Whether it's a high school girl or everyone here, the impact we can have on our world is both incredible and terrifying. Mindlessly and without much effort, we have created an island of plastic you can see from space. Now, imagine what we could do if we tried.

When I go into the ocean in the near future, I want to be able to say, "Ugh that's plastic. Wait.... No, that's a jellyfish!" Ah!