

THE VALUE OF SPEECH COMPETITIONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Stephanie Griffiths

Member of the Panel of

Judges at the Second

Rissho Speech Contest

The Second Speech Contest was held at Rissho Joshi Tandai on Thursday 29th February. This was a competition within the school to pick a representative for the forthcoming Joshi Tandai Speech Competition.

Obviously all the contestants had done a lot of preparation for their speeches. The topics were generally interesting, and grammar construction comprehensible. It is quite an ordeal even for an experienced person, to stand in front of a panel of judges and fellow students, and delivers a speech in a foreign language, but everybody showed poise and confidence. In addition to careful preparation, then, the contestants showed that they had practised well, and often.

What, one wonders, is the fruit of all this labour? Winning? English practice? Not everyone can win first prize of course and while this is, undoubtedly a great honour, winning alone is not the answer.

Most of the contestants mentioned in their speeches, that they liked, and enjoyed the study of English. However, I was a little disappointed that the number of entrants was limited to nine students.

Speech competitions are surely an excellent, enjoyable and profitable way of learning and practising English. Enjoyment, I think, is the key. The

lack of interest in learning English on the part of many students, stems, I feel, not from an inherent dislike of the language itself, but from a lack of enjoyment because they have no direction and purpose for their study.

Preparation and presentation of a speech are one way of providing this necessary direction and purpose. Speeches are a practical method of using language skills. They require imagination in choosing a topic, careful sentence construction and the choice of appropriate vocabulary in writing, and finally correct pronunciation coupled with confidence in presenting the speech. Thus writing and speaking skills are utilized in an enjoyable way.

Next year, I would like to see more entrants in the third speech competition.