
From the Selected Works of Everett N K Ofori

March 15, 2014

Writing Showcase

Everett N K Ofori



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Writing Showcase

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*Struggle slows some souls down;
Struggle spurs some souls on.*
- Everett Ofori (Editor)

March 15, 2014 Vol 6 No 2

Learning to Speak Japanese

Japanese had always sounded like a difficult language to learn but I was intrigued by its “strange” looking characters and the sound of the words. When I found myself on a visit to Japan a few years ago, I marveled at non-Japanese who felt so at ease conversing with the Japanese (in Japanese!) and wondered if I too would be able to do so in the future. Though I secretly longed to speak Japanese and to understand the sea of voices around me the possibility seemed remote.

After living in Japan for three months I was no closer to responding to even the simplest of expressions. I relied tremendously on a Brazilian friend who relished speaking Japanese and showing off his skills at every opportunity. At those times when I found myself alone in a shop or at a train station I felt totally at a loss. I resolved to remedy the situation by enrolling in a Japanese language course.

On my first day in school I expected the teacher to begin with some English explanations. No such luck. The class comprised English, Korean, Chinese, and Bahasa Indonesia speakers. From the get-go we were supposed to communicate in Japanese.

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The first few lessons were easy enough as the teacher pointed to various objects and indicated their Japanese names. Soon enough I had learned the names of half a dozen objects.

Learning to write was another matter altogether. The Japanese hiragana and katakana are not all that difficult to learn and yet I found myself putting it off for weeks. Eventually I succumbed as I realized that I was in danger of being at the bottom of the class.

Within a matter of months some of my classmates had begun to make long-winded sentences in Japanese. I could only look at them with mouth agape. The Japanese course was not exactly cheap; unable to join in the conversations of my fellow classmates, I began to think that I was throwing good money away.

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Six months passed.



One day, as I got on the train, I noticed one of my school mates, a tall, slender Korean girl, standing next to me. As I stole glances at her she turned her gaze towards me and asked me, *Doko ni ikun desu ka?* My mind raced a mile a minute...but in less than a minute I was able to respond that I was going to Koiwa station. Her face lit up. She was going to the same station. She seemed to be in a mood for conversation or maybe she had taken a secret shine to me. Whatever it was, there was no escape for me. I could not speak Korean and she could not speak English. She asked me another question. And another. The train lurched from time to time but I stood my ground. By the time we got to Koiwa, fifty minutes had passed and we had been conversing amiably all along. Then it dawned on me: I too could speak Japanese. Between the station and my home, my feet never touched the ground!



*Excerpt from *Guaranteed Formula for Writing Success* by Everett Ofori

*Writing
Showcase*

Guaranteed Formula for



Public Speaking Success

by

Everett Ofori, MBA

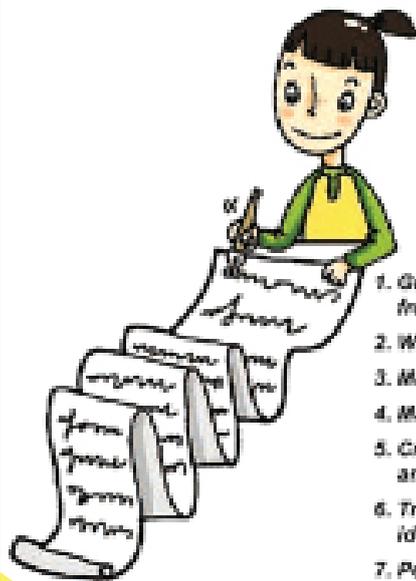
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Why do Japanese People Always Evaluate Females by Age?

A few months ago, I watched the Sochi Olympics on TV.

I was impressed by how each athlete performed. However, whenever a TV announcer introduced an athlete, inevitably, it was accompanied by the athlete's age!

In particular, announcers seemed to emphasize the age of female athletes. This was harsh on my ears. We understand that the Olympics are very tough, therefore, many athletes are in their teens to early thirties. Hearing the age of the athlete on TV might help viewers as they watch the athlete's performance.

It is also possible that hearing the age of the athlete might make the viewer focus too much on the appearance or attitude of the performer.

A reader who has an age-bias might easily find reasons to confirm such beliefs.

In traditional Japanese culture, young girls are considered cute and seen as the embodiment of goodness.

Still, it should be noted that females are free to choose their fashion and hobbies based on their personality and identity.

Matsugu Mutsumi
(Japanese language instructor,
Tokyo, Japan)

These preferences should not be swayed by age. It is sad that Japanese society and the media are so fixated on the issue of age.



Ms. Aiko Uemura is a mogul skier in Japan. She has participated in the Olympics four times. Her performance has been consistently good and she took fourth place in the Sochi Olympics. However, Japanese media outlets do not emphasize her age, 35, and her appearance too much. Her consummate skill and performance as a mogul skier are rightly the focus of attention.

Also, we need to pay attention to why Ms. Uemura has continued in the tough sport of skiing for so long. We cannot forget her effort and enthusiasm, along with her pride, as a mogul skier. Some media outlets have reported that "She is great even though she is 35 years old." It is very sad to focus so much on her age.

Japan has entered the era of an aging population, however, our society seems too childish; it seems so hard to find a sense of maturity in our culture and country.

When I visited Paris a few years ago, I was surprised to see so many elderly people having fun in a cafe at night.

I hope we will have a mature society and culture that does not focus too much on evaluating people by age. People should be evaluated by their humanity and their personality.

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Tomohiro Yoshida
Research scientist
(Tsukuba, Japan)

Heavy Snow

On February 8th, the Kanto area of Japan recorded a record amount of snow. Tokyo had about 20 centimeters of snow.

The snow paralyzed some public transportation systems, and led me to a long night.

In the middle of January, I was invited to a wedding reception following the wedding ceremony of one of my colleagues. Of course, I promised to attend. The party was held at Ginza on February 8th. When I left home, Tsukuba was not covered in snow, and I went to Tokyo on the Tsukuba Express train as usual. But when I arrived in Tokyo, it was like an entirely different world. Everything was covered with over 10 centimeters of snow.

Amazingly, I managed to make it to the party venue.

During the party, we had a happy time, and it was over at almost 7 p.m. When I went out of the venue, it was still snowing

and there was no sign of the snow stopping.

My friend, who had also come from Tsukuba, was worried that the Tsukuba Express would stop running, so we decided to return to Tsukuba.

We took the Tsukuba Express train from Akihabara Station, and it started to go smoothly. But it suddenly stopped at Kita-Senju station.

A station staff member announced that all Tsukuba Express trains had been suspended and won't resume until they had completed clearing the snow from the tracks. He also announced that it was uncertain when the trains would restart!

My friend and I waited in the train for around 30 minutes, but it was so cold that we decided to go somewhere near the station.

First, we entered a restaurant and ate dinner. Fortunately, there was a website that we could check on our smart phones for updates on when Tsukuba Express would resume. Although we waited at the restaurant until 10 p.m., the train did not restart.

Then we realized for the first time that it was better to arrange for accommodation.

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The Changing Japanese Woman:

From Yamatonadeshiko to YamatonadeGucci

大和なでしこからYamatonadeGucci



Everett Ofori

NEW RELEASE!!!
Check it out.

The Changing Japanese Woman is a playful book but it captures one of the most important social changes in Japanese society: the embracing of Western values and the apparent loss of *some* traditional Japanese values.

Read *The Changing Japanese Woman: From Yamatonadeshiko to YamatonadeGucci* and decide for yourself whether Japanese women are still wedded to the nostalgic values of yesteryear or the excitement and possibilities of the modern era.

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This newsletter offers an opportunity for English learners around the world to share their thoughts and experiences and get some writing practice in the process. In many areas of life, most people would readily agree that quality is more important than quantity. This is no less true when it comes to writing. To get to the point where you can produce quality writing on a consistent basis, however, you may have to get into the habit of writing regularly knowing that much of what you produce might win no prizes for excellence. As you keep on writing and thinking, however, who knows what hidden gems might emerge? *Writing Showcase* is published on a bimonthly basis (every two months). If you are interested in contributing to it, please contact the editor, Everett Ofori.



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* Maximum number of words = 300 (exceptions occasionally made)