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Why do we study foreign languages?

Yukiko Sugiyama

What are your reasons for studying foreign languages? Because these are required classes? Because foreign language proficiency is an advantage for finding employment? Or because we are in an age of globalization?

As an English language teacher, I would like my students to become competent in English so that they can use it as a convenient communication tool. More importantly, I would like them to experience the fun of learning a language itself.

For example, among the many languages of the world, there are languages that have only three vowels. On the other hand, there is a language that is said to have nearly 40

vowels. English has three cases, namely the nominative case, the objective case and the possessive case. The Finnish language has as many as 15 cases. Speaking of numbers, English has a distinction between singular and plural nouns in addition to the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns. Furthermore, some languages make a three-way distinction between countable nouns: dual numbers in addition to singular and plural numbers. By contrast, in Japanese, the distinction between singular and plural nouns is very vague. With still another language, the speaker must indicate the information source (the speaker himself/herself saw it, or he/she heard it from another person, etc.) about the content of the utterance. These are only a few examples of how languages can differ from one another. I cannot help being amazed at the diversity of

languages.

Whether you like it or not, or whether it's right or wrong, it's undeniable that English is now the common language of the world. Although it may seem strange for me to say this, given that I am an English language teacher, I don't like to see foreign language learning being narrowed down only to English.

Not only does each language have its own grammar and sounds, but it also reflects the values and culture of the place where it is spoken. Whether or not you become proficient in a language, the more you learn about it, the deeper its world becomes, thus stimulating and satisfying your intellectual curiosity.

Everyone, please do not let yourself fall into utilitarianism. Instead, expose yourself to various languages in the world.

Science and Technology Information

A new attempt of our faculty

"Faculty briefing sessions" targeting high school student guardians

Ever accelerating globalization and advancement in IT characterize our modern business scenes. This calls for young people to have capacities and human qualities, such as: (1) good at mathematics; (2) advanced programming skills and IT literacy; (3) good at negotiations in both Japanese and English; (4) a far-sighted decision-making ability; and (5) a personality loved by everyone. We must remember that university education that was successful in the past does not necessarily mean success in the future.

To meet these requirements of the times, Keio University's Faculty of Science and Technology is addressing a variety of new attempts.

To explain our initiatives in this respect,

from this academic year we began offering briefing/open-campus sessions targeting guardians of prospective high school students in addition to open-campus sessions targeting high school students wishing to join our faculty as freshmen. To promote open-campus sessions not only for Keio High School students but for students from outside as well, our faculty delivers messages to guardians through lectures by the Dean and PR department manager while offering opportunities for guardians to look around the Yagami Campus where our faculty is located.

Being a new attempt, it was extremely difficult for us to estimate the number of participating guardians. But once the session opened, we found participating guardians number about a half that of the prospective students, to our pleasant surprise. Also, many husband-and-wife couples participated. The Q&A session following the briefing was also very active. We were confident of success of the open campus as it made the participants feel the advanced nature of the Yagami Campus.

In the days ahead, the Faculty of Science and Technology will continue to supply information through briefing and open-



campus sessions. We will deliver information about these events on our faculty website on a regular basis. Please check it if you are interested.

<http://www.st.keio.ac.jp/>



Editor's postscript

A person full of energy in spite of her petite figure – this was the first impression of Dr. Sugiyama. However, I must say that her overflowing energy was not overpowering at all but was something like brightly shining sunlight. I saw her as a person capable of attentive consideration for others and the environment around her, which is very attractive. She claims trail running to be a mere hobby but it's surely beyond the level of a hobby. With a bright smile, she said, "Route planning itself is also fun." I was convinced that students love and respect her because of this splendid personality. (Ayumi Higuchi)

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