

As I reflect on the academic year coming to a close, I'm thinking a lot about speaking tests. They have been quite an enjoyable experience for me! They may be a lot of work and yet I wish they could happen more. It was the first time I really had a conversation with many of the students. And I came away every impressed! Most of them surpassed my expectations in English. But more memorable are their characters. I think each of them, even the ones who like to pretend their "bad", are destined to be wonderful people. From an academic perspective, I'm also glad that speaking tests are encouraged here. As an American student I made it from junior high school to my 3rd year of college, 8 years of foreign language, before my first speaking test. Even though my understanding of the language was good, I performed very poorly because I was so nervous! I'm so glad the students are confronting that now instead. I believe, whether they continue foreign language or not, it will be a useful skill. All of this really fills me with fervor to encourage the students even more in the future. I want to push them to be more and more comfortable speaking in front of others and when they don't have time to craft a perfect sentence first. I've already begun thinking of ways to get students in front of the class or projects that involve things like filming or music. Hopefully, my time studying theater can really help. As I recently told the 3rd year students, "Communication isn't just about perfect grammar and pronunciation, it's also about sharing ideas and having fun." In the future, not only will I try to include more opportunity for speaking but I'd also like to develop my role as a cultural ambassador more. There are a lot of fascinating parts of English like accents and history to explore, interesting foreign culture notes, and, as the world becomes more connected, plenty of relevant uses online and with events like the Olympics. It is my hope that, while teaching points like these become active learning moments, they also allow for discussion on tone. It's very important for students to learn proper English but casual English is important too (and frequently more fun)! Shigaraki is a wonderful place but it's a bit removed from the world. Fortunately, it has strong history with ALTs and I'm excited to dedicate myself to bringing some of the outside world to the students here!

