

# MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, April 2025

—Voices of the WGO? Staff and Members of the Volunteer Guide Seminar—

## April Expenses

Of course I sometimes argue with my husband.

Because even married couples have different ways of thinking, it's sometimes hard to just accept someone for who they are.

For example, inside he carries an ideal image of a woman who is obedient. He sometimes tries to fit me into that image. When things don't go his way or he's just exhausted, this tendency shows itself more often.

The other day, a dispute over dishwashing erupted with sudden fanfare. It was just about who would wash the pots and plates piled high in the sink.

Our son, who was supposed to wash the dishes, went out without doing them. My husband didn't want to leave the dishes in the sink and ordered me to clean up the mess. I wanted to wait for the boy to come home, so I merely made an annoyed-sounding remark and walked away.

Soon, he started doing the dishes himself. Then he followed me upstairs and tried to convince me with his "logic" that I was handling the dishes situation wrong.

At the peak of his irritation, he changed to another topic, and I couldn't follow his argument. As usual, he ended up insisting, "My mom could do it, but you can't. My friend says his wife does all the housework by herself..."

His way of speaking made it seem as if he was in a rage. When we argue like this, to me it almost sounds ridiculous. Still, he's completely serious.

I have to tell him over and over that I am neither his parent nor his friend's wife.

Mostly, the stereotype he has of women seems to come from his background and the influence of his friends. My viewpoint is formed by my experiences.

I know people want to interpret things in a way that is convenient for themselves, but the problem is that he picks a fight with me when my behavior doesn't match his values or fulfill his expectations.

Everyone has petty quarrels, and a small spark may flare up into a big fire.

It's fruitless to yell at each other. I hate situations where my voice inevitably becomes loud. However, it's also not good to simply put up with it.

Is the art of putting out the fire a compromise? Is it patience? I'm sure it's to listen with compassion to the other person and speak calmly.

His argument came to an unexpected conclusion. "Being wealthy would give us room to breathe, and we wouldn't argue over trivial matters." "What?" I wondered.

The fiscal year begins again. From April, my work schedule will be different from last year's. As a home-teacher, having night classes every weekday will keep me busy.

He has been self-employed since last fall working from his office at home. We see each other more often than before.

As a couple living under the same roof, it's time to think and talk about what a husband and wife are for.

(Miwa N.)

"Teaching and learning *eikaiwa* in Japan is a commercialized activity built on the commodification of English, whiteness, Western culture, and native speakers constructed as

superior, cool, exotic, or desirable.”

This from Ryuko Kubota, a professor of language literacy and education at the University of British Columbia.

She forgot to list fly and hardcore.

I saw a commercial for an English conversation school the other day. A young, blonde-haired teacher B-Girled in front of a white board while delivering her lesson in rhyme.

Then a 7-year-old future daytime TV star leaps up and says something like, “In the future, I want to be a hip hop musician!”

A line she probably learned phonetically.

I can’t imagine that most Japanese parents would be too thrilled if their kid’s future life goal was to rap something like “Freek-a-leek” and smoke as much weed as Snoop Dogg.

And the commercial doesn’t even mention the importance of your child mastering English so he or she can enter a good kindergarten, so he or she can enter a good elementary school, so he or she can enter a good junior high, and so on and so forth.

Until your child finally enrolls in a top Japanese university and spends the next four years sleeping in class and avoiding studying.

Because that’s pretty much how it works in Japan.

But I digress.

Even schools that don’t hire native English speakers as teachers always seem to run commercials featuring non-Japanese aspiring model types, or else utilize Japanese celebrities with little or no connection to English education.

One recent ad even has MLB superstar Shohei Ohtani promoting English. I don’t know too many English schools in Japan that employ staff based on their game stats. Even if they are superstars.

But given that Ohtani probably doesn’t actually use Kose cosmetics or search for new jobs via DIP’s job agency app either (two other companies he endorses), it’s not all that surprising he appears on commercials for a *juku*.

Such celebs are recognizable and, regardless of their relevance to language learning, when worries regarding junior’s English education rear up, if parents can recall a handsome young American they saw on a poster or a particularly cute cat or rabbit-like cartoon mascot that appeared in a YouTube ad, that might just be enough to sway them to choose one English school over another.

Since the majority of parents learned no more English communication skills in school than their kids inevitably will, moms and dads probably rely on flashy advertising that suggests but never promises their kid will be transformed into an international, bilingual social butterfly. If only they’ll sign a contract for a year or two of expensive courses.

Whether they actually believe the hype or not is debatable. Or, in the long run, if it’s even important.

Because eventually, whether or not their child can pass public or private school exams will encapsulate every hope and fear a parent has for their child’s future.

And by that time, the ability to communicate in spoken English will seem about as important as being able to square dance or play xylophone.

Or rap.

(Editor)