

Labor Gakuen Newsletter IV

News, Summer Plans, Student Profile, Activities, Movie Reviews, Book Corner

NEWS

On December 20th we held our annual Christmas potluck party. About 40 students and teachers attended. We had a lot of delicious food; we played a few games; and Labor student Akira Nakai gave a wonderful violin performance. Hopefully more students will join the next event we hold! Pictures of the party can be seen on the following website: <<http://iamagoo.smugmug.com/Japan/282091>>

TOEIC Test

The next TOEIC test will be held on March 23. If you're looking for a challenge, why not try it! If you're interested in taking it, ask the staff for information.

Book Corner

In the corner of the lobby you can find the Book Corner which has been reorganized. You're welcome to borrow books and magazines from there. There is more information later in this newsletter.

Short Courses

During the break between terms we will offer some short courses (2 lessons only). For the first time, we will have a Wine Tasting course! You can learn about wine tastes, and how to choose wines, all in English of course! You could also take an Elementary or Pre-Intermediate Review course.

Media Course

Next term we will be offering a course for Upper-Intermediate and Advanced students, which will use various forms of media (internet, video, newspapers, magazines, etc.) to develop listening, vocabulary and discussion skills. If you use the media to practice English, or want to, this course is for you!

Teachers' Summer Plans

Chris will probably be going home to Canada again for a few weeks, to attend a friend's wedding. He will also play a lot of golf and take lots of photographs. After he returns to Japan, he will spend the rest of the summer camping at Lake Biwa.

Mark is considering a trip to Mexico, as he has always wanted to go there. If he doesn't go to Mexico, he'll probably go home to England for a while.

Brooke has many things she'd like to do this summer, although she doesn't know if she'll have enough time (or money!) to do them all. First, she'd like to travel down to Hiroshima to visit a teacher who taught her Japanese in high school, and his 86-year-old mother, and also visit Miyajima again. Next on her list is Australia, she has to go back and visit her family in Sydney and hopefully her daughters will be able to come with her this year (if they're not too busy with volleyball). Then, just after Obon, she'd really like to go up to Sadogashima for Earth Celebration. It was absolutely fabulous last year, and this year she'd like to camp and take part in a few more taiko workshops.

Miles is planning to take his family to his hometown of Perth, Australia for a month and perhaps stopping in Bali on the way back to Japan. It means he'll have two winters this year (August is winter in Australia), but it also means he can spend a long time with his Australian family and friends.

MARK'S MOVIE REVIEWS SOME INTERESTING SHOWS

A lot of new students have said that watching movies to learn English is fun but they take a lot of time to watch and can be very difficult. So, this time I'm recommending much shorter (and hopefully more fun) TV shows.

First we have a BBC documentary series about Japan called **Japanorama**. It's available free online (on both 'youtube' or 'google video'.)

Unfortunately it's not available as a DVD.

JAPANORAMA HOW TO WATCH IT ON YOUR COMPUTER

Using either Yahoo (Japan) or google type 'google video'

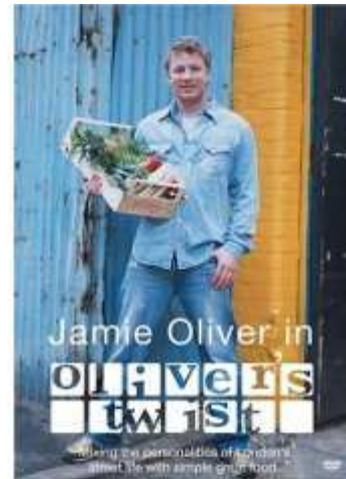
Now type 'Japanorama'. Then double click on an episode that interests you and enjoy. Most episodes are short, only taking 5-10 minutes.

If you like food. let me recommend British chef **Jamie Oliver**. His show '**Oliver's Twist**' is available on DVD at Tsutaya. His food is always delicious. His accent is a little difficult to understand but the DVD's have both English and Japanese subtitles. And they are great for learning phrasal verbs (e.g. put in, heat up, cool down etc) and words for cooking (stir, boil, simmer, roast etc.)

Finally, if you like magic then you should watch **Derren Brown**, his shows include '**Inside your mind**' and '**A trick of the mind**.' His mind tricks are amazing to watch and unbelievable. Just by using words he makes people give him money or tricks taxi drivers so they can't find famous places in London.

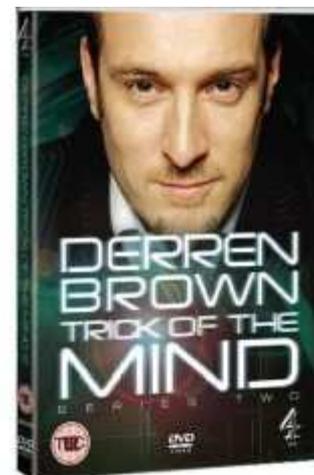
My favourite moment is from the first series **A trick of the mind** Where he plays chess against 13 world champions at the same time and beats over half of the players! And then after he has won he shows you how he did it! It's amazing! He is really famous in England! His shows are available at **Amazon.co.uk** at really cheap prices.

ENJOY



Oliver's Twist in Tsutaya.

Derren Brown available on DVD at Amazon.co.uk



Prepositions Exercise

Fill in the spaces with an appropriate preposition.

1. Many kids look _____ to Ichiro. He's their idol.
2. She fell _____ her bicycle _____ the way to work.
3. Stop leaning _____ my car!
4. The quickest way of traveling is _____ air.
5. I'll lend you the money if you promise to pay me _____ soon.
6. She put her arms _____ me and gave me a kiss.
7. He is very fond _____ children.
8. Why don't we go _____ for dinner tonight?
9. We haven't seen Cathy _____ 1998.
10. She knocked before she walked _____ the room.
11. The city is going to build a bridge _____ the river.
12. We took a shortcut home _____ the park.
13. Tears ran _____ her cheek as she watched the movie.
14. I usually go downtown _____ weekends.
15. It's been 3 months since we've heard _____ Jennifer.
16. We walked _____ the river until we reached the gardens.
17. The teacher accused me _____ cheating _____ the test.
18. Can you help me _____ this weekend? I'm moving.

Student Interview

Miki

How long have you been at Labor Gakuen?

I've been studying here for 4 years.

What level did you start at, and what level are you at now?

I started at Intro level (the beginner class) and I'm now at Upper-Intermediate.

Why do you learn English?

I want to go to University in N.Y to study music business. Hopefully, I'll be going this year to study for about 2 years.

Where and how often do you use English outside class?

Speaking and listening

I take another lesson for an hour once a week. It's a private lesson, so I can talk about whatever I want and I can take a lesson wherever I want - at my place, the teacher's place or in a cafe.

Reading and writing

I like Roald Dahl, the author of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", so I often read his books, such as "The BFG", "The Witches" and "Matilda".

Books for children are easy for me to read. I try to read a book a week, on the train or in bed at night.

I made some friends on a short study trip to N.Y and so I often email my friends who live in the U.S and Taiwan.

How do you improve your vocabulary and sentence structure (grammar)?

Though I don't know whether it is effective to improve my vocabulary or not, I bought a word book (for TOEFL, with vocabulary and exercises) and I look at it as much as possible; every day I can.

How do you improve your pronunciation and fluency?

When I drive my car, I listen to music and sing along. I especially love the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

How do you improve your listening?

I try 'shadowing'*. This is a method where I listen to a CD and imitate it with a little delay. You can buy special books for shadowing in book shops such as Junkudo.

Do you have any advice for other students?

I often feel embarrassed when I can't speak well. However, language is one of the tools for communication, and moreover, we can already speak Japanese. So, we should speak English with more confidence and just keep trying.

*Shadowing was originally designed to help improve simultaneous interpretation.

However, it is a simple method and can also be helpful for language learners too.

When listening to flowing conversation, being able to 'shadow' the conversation (by repeating immediately afterwards) can help improve listening, fluency and pronunciation.

Editors Note: Miki has improved a lot in a fairly short time because she makes a lot of effort at home, as well as in the classroom! Only you can decide how quickly you learn English. A little extra work makes a big difference!

The Book Corner

Have you noticed the new 'Book Corner' in the waiting room? We've organised the bookshelf there, adding labels to the books, and a new "Recommended Books" section. We hope you visit the Book Corner and use it to improve your English skills and enjoy using English. You will find:



Graded Readers

Graded readers are popular books that are made shorter and more simple so English students can enjoy them. The idea is that you can read a whole book quickly and understand most of the story, without having to 'study' the vocabulary and feel tired or frustrated. They are organised into three levels: Beginner / Novice, Elementary / Pre-Intermediate, and Intermediate and Up. There's nothing wrong with choosing a 'simple' book that is below your level. It is a good way to use the vocabulary and grammar you study in class, and see how it is used in 'real English'.

Teachers' Recommended Books

The teachers will highlight interesting or useful books on top of the bookshelf, with a short note about it and showing the level. Please borrow these books! When you do, we will put another recommended book in its place.

Picture Books About Places

There are some large "coffee table" picture books about places in the USA, Australia and UK. These are also easier to read than dense travel books, and good for lower levels.

Magazines

The great thing about magazines is that they are shorter than books, and cover a variety of topics, so anyone can find something easy to read inside. Also, the pictures help you to understand. The Book Corner has a lot of Geographic magazines, as well as copies of Kansai Time Out (written by and for the English-speaking community in Kansai) and fashion magazines like Vogue. You can just look at the pictures and read the headlines. Browse while you are waiting for class!

Books with Japanese Notes

These are ungraded books that have notes in Japanese at the back to help you understand them.

Study Books in Japanese

These are books about English, written in Japanese. They can help you study vocabulary, grammar etc, but remember, the fun of reading is using English, not studying it.

Novels and Biographies

We have put some popular and classic English novels in the shelf for students who want a real reading challenge. There are book by Charles Dickens, Japanese writers like Mishima, and even The Lord of the Rings! Recommended for Advanced learners only.

Have fun and please borrow a book!



Book Corner Quiz



To get to know your Book Corner, try this quiz:

1. What magazine has an article about "bilbies"? What is a bilby?

2. Which book is recommended for Intermediate students?

3. What is the recommended book for Beginners about?

4. How many picture books are there about the USA? Which places?

5. Which Kansai Time Out is about Japanese dolls (ie the date of issue)? What else is it about?

6. What level is the reader "Robin Hood" for?

7. What level is the reader "I Robot" for?

8. Which Tanizaki Junichiro novel in English can you borrow?

9. Which Harry Potter novel can you borrow?

10. Which Roald Dahl novel has Japanese notes at the end?

Student Interview

Shiroishi Yoshiko

How long have you been at Labor Gakuen?

About 2 years.

What level did you start at, and what level are you at now?

I started at Elementary level, and now I'm in the high Intermediate Business class.

Why do you learn English?

Because I want to use English for my work, which is doing environmental assessment for an electronics manufacturer. For example, communicating with clients, and gleaning related information.

Where and how often do you use English outside class?

Actually I have little chance to use English at work at the moment, but I used English a few weeks ago to communicate with a woman who is my Labor Gakuen classmate's friend. I was also spoken to by a cool-looking German guy at an English bar the other day!

How do you improve your vocabulary and sentence structure?

I'm reading internet newsletters related to my work theme. For example I receive the US Environmental Protection Agency email magazine.

How do you improve your listening?

I'm listening to English programs on my walkman on my way to the office for about one hour every day, for example the NHK program.

Do you have any advice for other students?

Enjoy your classes, and make friends with Labor Gakuen classmates! It's wonderful, I think. So how about asking your classmates to drink?

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

How do you feel in these situations? Choose from the words below.

1. Oh no! I have an exam tomorrow, and I'm not prepared. I'm going to fail!
Example: I'm worried (f)
2. Wow! I'm rich! I've just won the lottery!
I'm _____
3. Aah! There's a big hairy black spider hanging from my bedroom ceiling!
I'm _____
4. I can't get my car to start. I've checked the oil, the tires and the gas, but I don't know what's wrong. I'm going to be late for work.
I'm _____
5. I've had a long day. All I want to do is put my feet up, watch TV and relax.
I'm _____
6. I hate my class. My teacher just reads his notes, and it makes me feel like falling asleep.
I'm _____
7. Where's my boyfriend? He's late! Is he playing tennis with that woman again?
I'm _____
8. I just ate a packet of salty peanuts.
I'm _____
9. My father came to visit me last weekend, but I didn't know he was coming!
I was _____
10. Hey! Somebody's stolen my car!
I'm _____

a. surprised	b. angry	c. thirsty	d. ecstatic	e. exhausted
f. worried	g. scared	h. frustrated	i. jealous	j. bored

Answers: 1.(f) 2.(d) 3.(g) 4.(h) 5.(e) 6.(j) 7.(i) 8.(c) 9.(a) 10.(b)