

Good morning.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the annual Japanese Language Speech Contest today. My name is SHIMADA Junji and I am the Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne.

I'd like to briefly introduce myself. I am originally from Osaka, which has been Melbourne's sister city for over 40 years. Around the time Osaka became Melbourne's first sister city, I went on my very first overseas trip to Sydney as a young university student! Since then, I have been looking forward to returning to Australia, so I am incredibly happy to be able to live and work in Australia now.

Today, I would like to show you this beautiful boomerang which was gifted to me in Sydney in 1983. I have always treasured this. On the backside of this boomerang, it says "guaranteed to return"! What a simple and meaningful phrase this is! I feel that this boomerang has guided me back to Australia.

The first time I became interested in learning English was when the Japan World Exposition in 1970 was held in Osaka. I visited the Osaka Expo about 10 times, and I was so fascinated by the various exhibits showcased by many countries! It was this Expo that initially sparked my interest for an international career, leading me to where I am today – working in Melbourne as a diplomat after postings in Washington D.C., Beijing, and Jakarta. The venue for the World Expo in 2025 will be in the Kansai region in Japan, which includes Osaka. I hope that you will keep up your passion and effort for Japanese language learning throughout university years and beyond – and visit the Expo if you get a chance!

In June this year, I met Dr Alan Finkel, a notable Australian neuroscientist. He taught me the word tensegrity – a design principle often used in architecture. I liked the sound of the word which I've never heard of before. There is still so much to learn even after decades of studying English, and for me, English learning will be a lifelong journey – and of course, I hope you continue your Japanese language learning in the years to come too!

Lastly, I would like to talk about how I remember difficult spellings for English words. I set the word as the password for my computer login, and after using the word as the password for over a week, the spelling will come to me naturally. I then move onto a new word – practice makes perfect!

今日は皆さんも頑張ってください。ありがとうございました。