UTSA’s East Asia Institute hosted San Antonio’s 3rd annual Japanese Play Contest on February 27, 2016 on UTSA’s main campus with the support of the Japan Foundation, UTSA Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and The Japan-America Society of San Antonio. This year’s theme was “A day as exchange students in Japan.”

Friends and family members came in to support all the students performing in the play. Many of them were excited to see what their classmates or child had been preparing for and to see how much their Japanese proficiency had improved from taking Japanese language courses in school.

UTSA Japanese Advanced students, Mell Perez and Allyson Gamboa were the MCs of the event. Nine teams comprised of more than 30 Japanese language students participated in the contest, including students from the University of Texas at San Antonio, James Madison High School, and Churchill High School. Dr. Wan Xiang Yao, Director of the East Asia Institute, welcomed the audience and encouraged students to take part in global experience.

Prior to the contest, the students wrote and prepared their own skits and held numerous sessions of...
rehearsals to perfect their lines and acting. Most groups arrived with props and costumes for their skits. The purpose of the play contest is to encourage students to apply the Japanese language skills they have learned in a classroom setting to create and perform an original play, and to enrich their understanding of Japanese language and culture.

The contestants were evaluated according to their Japanese language proficiency level by a panel of four judges along with the depiction of Japan, grammar, pronunciation, storyline, creativity, understandability, acting, fluency, and the use of visual aids including props, costumes, background music, and English caption projected in PowerPoint. The judges included Ayako Cho, Japanese Interpreter / Translator, Rieko Johnson, former JASSA Kumamoto Sister City Relations Chair, Yuko Kawabe, Japanese Instructor at San Antonio Colleges as well as Ian Cruz, San Antonio International Relations Office. An audience member commented, "It was very enjoyable. The students worked hard and put on a great show!"

Another attendee stated, "Many aspects of cultural difference were introduced and presented throughout the skits. I enjoyed it very much!"

While all of the plays shared the theme of "A day as exchange students in Japan", each group added their own unique spin to the topic. One group had a comical Yakuza storyline in their play while another had a spontaneous game show variation. Many groups added a romantic plot line to their plays to give it a humorous effect that the audience could relate to.

"The contest was very well done, well-organized, enthusiastic participants from both high school and university levels! I think it was a great success!", stated one of the judges.

The top three winning teams of the high school level are as follows: (1st) 留学生モテ男ジョンの大失敗 (The Popular Exchange Student: John’s Big Mistake) by 外人 of Churchill High School (2nd) 分かんないのってコワイ！(It’s scary that you didn’t know!) by ねことへび of Churchill High School (3rd) ライアンの奇妙な冒険(Ryan’s Bizarre Adventure) by バション2.0 of Churchill High School

The top three winning teams of the college level are as follows:
(1st)それ是一！(Thats is!) by 六んだ of UTSA  
(2nd)日本はどうでしたか？(How was Japan) by きかい of UTSA  
(3rd)私のご家（My Family） by ピカピカ of UTSA

In addition to the play contest, native Japanese students and advance level students from Johnson High School performed a short Japanese skit on proper etiquette in a Japanese classroom. Through their skit, they showed the contrast between the way things are done in an American classroom that should not be done in a Japanese class.

The UTSA Japanese club also performed a J-Pop dance from AKB48's Flying Get and gave a short presentation on the club and its upcoming activities. Afterwards, Participants and guest enjoyed various refreshments provided to them.

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The UTSA East Asia Institute's mission is to promote appreciation and understanding of East Asian societies and cultures both on campus and in the community through research, outreach, networking, education, student/faculty exchange, and business development and cooperation.

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles (JFLA) promotes international awareness and mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S. through cultural exchange programs and grants aimed at introducing Japanese arts and culture, supporting Japanese Studies and language education, and promoting publications, translations related to Japan.

The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at UTSA offers students a wide variety of language study choices with courses to increase their marketability in business, law, government work, education, and many other fields.

The Japan America Society of San Antonio fosters increased understanding and cooperation between the citizens of San Antonio and the citizens of Japan through educational and cultural outreach.

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