UTSA’s East Asia Institute hosted San Antonio’s 4th Japanese Play Contest on March 25, 2017 with the support of the Japan Foundation, San Japan, UTSA Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and The Japan America Society of San Antonio on UTSA’s main campus. This year’s theme was "Japan trip".

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. Approximately 100 people in the audience came to observe and support all the students performing in the play. Among them were friends and family members who 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.

Ten teams comprised of more than 30 Japanese language students participated in the contest, including students from the University of Texas at San Antonio, Brackenridge High School, Churchill High School, Johnson High School, James Madison High School. Dr. Santiago Daydi-Tolson, Interim Chair of the UTSA Department of Modern Languages and Literature, welcomed the audience and encouraged students to take part in unique
cultural 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 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 captions projected in PowerPoint.

The judges included Noriko Baxter (Japanese Instructor at Incarnate Word High School), Rieko Johnson (Former JASSA Sister City Relations Chair), Yuko Kawabe (Japanese Instructor at San Antonio College), as well as Ian Cruz (former JET participant and San Antonio International Relations Office). This year San Japan also sponsored a newly added award to the student team with the best costume and props.

While all of the plays shared the theme of "Japan trip", 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. "It was very enjoyable. The students worked hard and put on a great show!", said an audience member. Another attendee stated, "Many aspects of cultural differences were introduced and presented throughout the skits. I enjoyed it very much!"

Before the judges’ deliberations were announced, representatives from the UTSA’s Japanese Club, Japan America Society of San Antonio, and San Japan all made a presentation about their own organization and their outreach and/or charity activities. These groups
provide opportunities for the area residents to learn more about Japan, Japanese culture, and Japan-related activities in the San Antonio area.

**The top three winning teams of the high school level are as follows:**

(1st) ぼったくり (Rip-off) by チームヴァーチャス (Team Verchasu) of Johnson High School

(2nd) 留学生・ヨンチョルの奇妙な一日 (The Transfer Student, Yeonchul’s Bizzare Day) by ほしぞら (Hoshizora) of Churchill High School

(3rd) 富士山の旅行 (Trip to Fuji) by あつい先輩 (Atsui Senpai) of Madison High School

**The top three winning teams of the college level are as follows:**

(1st) 私は日本を夢見る (I dream of Japan) by 六ばん (Roku Ban) of UTSA

(2nd) あなたは観光客ですか (Are you a tourist?) by The Tourists of UTSA

(3rd) 萌え萌えオムレツ (Moe Moe Omelet) by Minute Hitotachi of UTSA

Team Rokuban of UTSA was the winner of the San Japan “best costume and prop” category and the award was presented by Rudy Alba, Executive Associate of San Japan. After the awards ceremony, participants and guests enjoyed various refreshments provided at a reception. “This year the contestants all did an outstanding job,” said Erina Romanowich, program coordinator of UTSA’s East Asia Institute. “The participants’ Japanese proficiency, their skits, and their acting all improved from the previous year’s groups.” Many of the participants stated they are looking forward to continuing their Japanese language study and returning to complete at next year’s Japanese play contest. See you all next year!
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 Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at UTSA offers students a wide variety of language study choices with courses. Numerous UTSA students opt to enhance their future marketability by taking foreign language courses to support their career goals in business, law, government work, education, and many other fields. UTSA Department of Modern Languages and Literatures offers a Japanese major and minor and encourages students to study abroad. UTSA also offer study abroad scholarships and works with agreement schools to keep the price affordable for students.

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

The Japan-American Society of San Antonio, or JASSA, was established in 1985 to foster increased understanding and cooperation between the citizens of San Antonio and Japan. As a non-profit, educational, and cultural group, we strive to make Japanese culture better known in San Antonio.

Formed in fall 2005, San Japan, LLC is a fan-run organization providing an annual anime-focused convention. San Japan supplies high-quality entertainment and education while fostering a safe and fun environment for all our attendees. San Japan strives to cultivate an acceptance and appreciation of anime and related fandoms in South Texas. The inaugural three-day convention was held in San Antonio, Texas on August 8-10, 2008. San Japan aims to provide an opportunity for all participating cultures and participants to come together in appreciation of Japanese animation and other unique aspects from surrounding Asian and fan cultures, which associate with this convention.

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