WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES!

SPEECH FOR

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Hello everyone! I am honored to be here today and I am especially honored to have the good fortune to participate in this speech competition. Even though I am quite young, I have been learning about so much, and what I am especially proud of is how I have learned to speak English since last year.

Although we do not speak much English, last year I was encouraged to enter a speech competition to be given in ENGLISH!! Somewhere, somehow, I knew there was a good chance to learn a lot, and with the encouragement of my mother, I entered the competition. Although I practiced many long and hard hours to learn the language and refine the speech, it was THE WORST SPEECH EVER!!! And you know what? Having that experience really inspired me to take the time, learn my English, and to speak to all of you today to share my progress.

Last year when I entered the speech contest, I had a lot of help and encouragement from my mother and a teacher at the Hakwon private academy. I wrote my speech out in a script form and gave it to the teacher for review. What did I get back? A page full of red!! I could barely read my script for all the corrections that had been made. I thought to myself, “HMMMMMM….” I guess I have some practicing to do!” My mother encouraged me to practice all of the time. Whether I was at school or at home, I had my script to study, but let’s keep one thing in mind…I am still a young girl and I love to play!! If only I could have figured out how to make studying into play…I have to admit that sometimes I pretended I was studying, when indeed, I was playing with my friends in class, BUT I didn’t get away with that…you see, my mother is an after school coordinator….UH OH!!! Someone’s watching over me!!! One thing I discovered about being my age is that although I wanted to play, I also realized I had a responsibility to my commitment and I knew I had to honor that commitment.

I practiced and practiced…almost as much as I should have…I admit…and then the day of the speech competition arrived. There were several people ahead of me and I must admit they did really well. And then it was my turn. As I approached the stage, I saw the judges in front. I saw the speakers who had already given their wonderful speeches. I saw the audience….all of those people who were just waiting to hear me speak. I thought of all of those who went before me, so beautifully prepared…..the 2 boys before me each did a great job. Their speeches were interesting and their pronunciation was really good. Each boy had completely memorized his speech. “Hmmm…tough competition” I thought. My best friend Naiy went on stage right before me. Her speech was about her grandpa and the noodles he made. That speech was very educational as well, as Naiy shared her grandfather’s advice that home made food is more nutritional than fast food. And there I was. The people who preceded me had interesting stories, memorized their speeches, and provided educational information. I’ll never forget the feeling, or shall I say, NON-feeling, of standing in the middle of that stage. My heart began to beat so hard and loud I couldn’t hear myself speak! Everything became blurry! I began to speak. I did fairly well with the beginning part of the speech-the part I had practiced, but as I progressed, the speech got as blurry as the room. I had no idea of what I was saying, and as my heart beat louder, I couldn’t hear my words. I felt my mouth moving, but I can’t say that I knew what was coming out of it! All I kept thinking was, “UH-OH….this could be the end of my public speaking career!!”

And now it’s one year later. I have not only learned English, but I have learned some valuable lessons that will stay with me for my whole life. I have learned that if you make a commitment to do something, you should always try to do your best. Even if you fail, you have tried and you have learned. I have learned that a year makes a big difference. I can see how I wanted to play and avoid my responsibilities last year, and this year I want to practice and succeed. I have learned it is okay to be a little frightened of new experiences, but learning from them is what life is all about. And most of all I am proud to say, I have learned to speak English, and I want to keep improving.

This year my younger brother brought home the paper announcing the English speech contest. He was a little lazy about learning his speech and asked me for help. And this year I noticed how he approached the assignment. As I watched him deliver his speech on stage, I remembered how embarrassed I was just one year earlier. What a difference a year makes! My heart is still beating, although it is not too loud to hear myself speak. The room is not blurry and I have remembered that I must breathe! I understand what I am saying. I am happy to be able to share this experience with all of you and I hope all of you have enjoyed my speech today.

Thank you all for your attention and consideration!