

Calligraphy class for international students (September 9, 2024)

The University of Tokyo Kashiwa Committee, Kohei Hiraide

Calligraphy is a culture and an art of the Kanji speaking world.

In China, it has been regarded as an important cultural accomplishment for educated people.

In Japan, calligraphy has been one of the children's common lesson along with the calculation on the abacus until I was a child.

However, as our writing tools become more diverse ranging from pencils to ballpoint pens and even to word-processors, the habit of writing with brush has almost disappeared from our daily life.

In the occasion of congratulation and condolence, brush is still used to write our names on paper envelope containing money and in the list of attendants.

As is often said that writing is the expression of personality, a master of brush writing is a master of pen writing as well.

After all, there is nothing better than good handwriting.

Let's put the preface aside, the calligraphy class for international students was held at Kashiwa campus of Tokyo University on September 9 from 2:00 to 5:00p.m.



Greetings from the organizer

There were 22 participants, 7 from China, 2 each from the UK, Iran, India, Indonesia and Myanmar, 1 each from Egypt, Canada, Slovakia, Vietnam and Venezuela.

Almost one third were from China and one of them attended in an attractive Cheongsam (Chinese native dress).

Thankfully, we received the cooperation of 9 master calligraphers from Kashiwa City Calligraphy Association. They guided the students very kindly and attentively.

9 V-Net members attended as their assistants.



History and characteristics of typefaces

Since calligraphy was originally a part of Chinese culture, many of the Chinese participants were writing very beautiful characters with brush. The works of some of them were so wonderful that they looked like professional calligraphers, which I was enchanted by. It was also interesting to see the people from non-Kanji using countries struggling with the unfamiliar brush strokes.



Practice scene “First of all, how to hold the brush…”



Finished work

However, after more than an hour of instruction by teachers, they got used to handling brushes and transformed their writing from awful scrawl to decent ones. They seemed to have been satisfied with their experience of a part of Japanese culture. I hope that this valuable experience will keep them interested in calligraphy. Most of the participants also attended the reception, where they became familiar with each other and engaged in pleasant conversation.



Commemorative photo



Scene of the party

“ English Rakugo is a lot of fun ! “ --- English Rakugo Appreciation Party

(November 7, 2024)

The University of Tokyo Kashiwa Committee, Kohei Hiraide

An English Rakugo appreciation party organized by Mitsui V-Net Todai Kashiwa Section was held on November 7 at the Media Hall of the University of Tokyo Kashiwa Campus Library. This annual event was a great success with 101 attendants this year compared to 70 last year. Among them were the families of our exchange partners and even small children were listening attentively.

One who had to leave during the show said that the Rakugo was very interesting and it was a pity to leave in the middle of the performance.



What is rakugo (Mr. Merlin)



Vaudeville dance (Kako-san)

In addition, we received following very positive feedback in the post-event questionnaire.

“ I had never been to a Yose(Rakugo hall) and this is the first time I have seen a live Rakugo performance. When I heard Rakugo , I imagined something more classical ,but it was interesting to see how modern elements were incorporated.”

Most of them watched and listened attentively to the end of the show.

The performers were ,as usual, members of the Tokyo English Rakugo Kaishikai.

I was amazed at how fluently (in English, of course) they spoke as well as their skillful gestures. which I would not have expected from amateurs.

“ Okiku’s Ghost”, for example, had a realistic chilling feel, that made me shudder.

Unlike mere talk shows, Rakugo is a unique Japanese performing art from the Edo period.

In addition, Rakugo has many topics from the perspectives of ordinary people, so it is a great way for foreigners to know Japan in real life.

If we can increase the number of international students of Rakugo fans through these opportunities, we will be able to contribute to the beneficial cultural exchange..



Prohibition Banya (Daisuke-san)



Commemorative photo with everyone