

About six months ago, a nice teacher at my school asked me if I would be willing to give a lecture in the library after school one day. She said it could be about anything, and that the library group would be happy to hear about anything I was interested in talking about. I hesitated to say yes because of course I don't really enjoy public speaking. But my biggest hesitation was because this speech will be in Japanese. At the time, I thought it would be a good way for me to practice Japanese, so I decided that I would say ok!

As time went on, I started to realize that this was going to be a difficult task. It's scary to speak in front of many people in a foreign language! I started to dread the day of my speech, and instead of working hard to make a good draft, I put it off until the last minute, and kept telling myself, "I'll work on it tomorrow." In many ways, I am showing the same qualities that I am disappointed to see in my own students. Last term, we did a show and tell speech project, where most of the second year students were responsible for writing and presenting a speech in front of the class. We gave the students several weeks to work on their speeches, writing drafts and practicing in class. But many students refused to do any work! It was very frustrating to me that the students would come to class each week, still with nothing written on their papers. "They are so lazy," I thought. But now, I am doing the same thing and I completely understand.

Now, my speech is coming up at school tomorrow. If I would have written a draft and practiced my ideas in Japanese during all the time that I've worried about this speech, I'm sure that I would have been completely finished preparing by now. I've thought about it for weeks, no, months, but until today have been incapable of actually sitting down and writing it. Why? I like to think that I'm a dedicated student of Japanese, but it's very intimidating to think about standing in front of a crowd of teachers and students and speaking Japanese for more than an hour. If it were in English it would be so easy! I can finally understand the feelings of those students who never wrote their speeches until the night before they were due. I'm sure they aren't lazy, just scared!

When I think about it objectively, I'm sure the speech will be fine. My Japanese isn't perfect, but I hope that the students and teachers will be understanding of my mistakes and won't be so critical of me if there are some things that they can't understand. After all, they struggle to speak in English to me every day, so they must understand my nervous feeling. But still, when I sit down at the computer and start to type my ideas in Japanese on the blank page, I'm sure that my nervous feeling will come back. It's just a relief to know that next week at this time it will be done!