

Closing Address

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In this closing address, I would like to firstly thank all the staff members, especially Professor Takeshi Suzuki, who has been organizing the conference since the beginning, Professor Shigeru Matsumoto, Professor Junya Morooka and other Rikkyo University members, and of course, all the participants in this conference to make the conference a success.

Back in 1976, 40 years ago, I went to an ESS, English Speaking Society in Kyoto University just to make some new friends. And I soon got interested in debating, fascinated, and devoted to practices. Except for the last year of my college when I was writing the graduation thesis, I spent more time on debating than anything else.

More than making some friends and learning debate, I also met argumentation and debate scholars who came to Japan on a debate tour. Dr. Ronald Matlon from the University of Massachusetts in 1978 invited me and I joined his debate camp in UMass. It was quite an experience both in learning policy debate in practice in the US and taking a glimpse of American college life. In 1980, I met Dr. Mike Hazen and we continued to correspond in coauthoring papers and working on classroom projects. In 1982, probably, I hosted Dr. Goodnight's tour in Osaka. One of the debaters, Kate Palczewsky, later became a tour coach and came to Fukuoka. She also taught a graduate course on argumentation after the tour at Kyushu University. These memories continue on and on, meaning I'm getting old.

I continued to practice debate, coaching, judging, and later teaching in classrooms. I also started doing research on debate and debate education.

This kind of experiences probably overlaps many of other educators and researchers of debate and argumentation of my age and some later generations. This group of people met in 1986 to start the Japan Debate Conference, that promotes debating activities in Japan. We have continued to help develop debating activities in Japan with many people in here and more people not in here. I must particularly mention Fr. Scott Howell in Sophia University who had been a mentor to many of us and supporting debating activities. He passed away just before the previous Tokyo Argumentation Conference in 2012. We owe him a great deal.

The JDA did a lot to help students debating, selecting the national debate topic, organizing the US-Japan debate tour, hosting annual tournaments both in English, for some years, and in Japanese; Tournaments in Japanese are continuing. But an organization like JDA consisting of educators and researchers may not be in a complete shape without research activities. Teaching is important but it is important to develop and improve teaching based on evidence from research. Also often times, we are evaluated more often and more heavily by research. In many cases, finding a university job and promotion are based NOT on the number of debate tournament we judge but the number of papers we published.

In this sense, The JDA has become a full shape as an academic organization by starting a research conference. After a small-scale domestic conference, the JDA launched this Tokyo Argumentation Conference in 2000. Takeshi Suzuki, who initiated and has continued to work on this conference should receive a special acknowledgement. And of course we should acknowledge all other people who worked together with him, and of course, those participants from Japan and abroad.

This year's theme: Argumentation and Debate is particularly relevant and important in reflecting upon the 30 years of the JDA. In Japan, debate, a western, or Anglo-Saxon style of debating was introduced and developed in English speaking or English-learning contexts. But it has spreads to Japanese contexts and has been localized. Are we simply adopting an American style of debating or British style? Or are we adjusting, modifying, incorporating such into a Japanese style debate? In Argumentation in general, perhaps the core nature of argumentation -- reason-giving and disagreement -- are universal. If you want to make a claim or say something, then you must give some reason. If we have different opinions, we do disagree. They are part of human nature. But what constitutes a reason? What constitutes a good reason? Some of them may be universal; some others are may be more culture-specific. How do we resolve disagreement? How do we decide when we have disagreement? Modes of resolving disagreement may take a format of debate in competitive tournament. But more often are they in other shapes and formats in other contexts. Some may be universal and much more are culture-specific.

Many of the presentations in this conference addressed to this issue of universal and culture-specific issues. Much of our discussion have been concerned about this. Having this conference in Japan to promote exchanges of ideas with people from Asia, Europe, American,

and around the world is particularly important. And our activities in the past 30 years have helped this kind of exchange of ideas. I hope this will continue in 10 years from now, 20 years from now, and 30 years from now.