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Thoughts on New Words and Buzzwords

New words and buzzwords have always attracted attention. Even the newspapers of the Meiji era were keen to keep up with the latest buzzwords. On the other hand, new words and buzzwords are always shunned by a certain generation.

The commentary at the skateboarding street, the site of the new skateboarding event at the Tokyo Olympics, using unfamiliar words such as "gong aggression" and "bitta bitta", became popular on Internet social networking sites (SNS) where people described them as "easy to understand". A sympathetic column appeared in the newspaper, but I felt a sense of generational disconnect.

More than that, I felt uncomfortable when the same commentator used the words "yabai" and "yabee" repeatedly on public television. Although more and more young people are using these words in a wonderful sense, it was originally used in criminal society. Even now, many people above a certain age use such words in a negative sense.

On the other hand, I felt the lightness of the word in the interviews with 12- and 13-year-old medallists. In the first place, it is very difficult to spin words from children in their early teens. Kyoko Iwasaki, the 14-year-old gold medallist in the 200m breaststroke at the Barcelona Olympics (1992), said "I am the happiest I have ever been in my life", which was so spontaneous.

This year's Olympics have been a mixed bag, with some promising athletes failing to qualify. You have to look closely to notice the words of the losers, but perhaps that is where the weight of the words lies. The Olympics was also a time when the career paths of our seminar students, who had been with us up to the third year, became clearer. Although the results of job-hunting activities do not clearly divide winners and losers, I was tempted to look for the words of the losers at a time when I was thinking back to a long time ago and trying to think of what words of encouragement, I should give to them.

I am also uncomfortable with the term "human flow", which has become so common in the wake of the new coronavirus. I don't know who first started using it in public life, but why shouldn't it be "the flow of people"?

Nowadays, language skills (communication skills) are becoming an issue. These skills are all about how to greet people properly, how to use *keigo* (honorific Japanese), and so on. We want our children to learn correct and beautiful Japanese so that they can enrich their minds and develop better relationships with others. To achieve this, we need to take a long, hard look at our language environment.