

COLUMN

「頑張ろう」は英語で 何ていうの？



トス ピエール
(Toth Pierre)

persevere (v.) continue in a course
of action in spite of difficulty...

-Concise Oxford Dictionary

The word, persevere, and its noun form, perseverance, aren't used as often as once they were – so much so that it is safe to say that they are not used in “natural” spoken English. Yet every native English speaker dealing with Japanese learners is asked how to express “頑張る (ganbaru)” in English. I'm sure many of those Japanese speakers reading this article have been told, “We don't have any expression like it in English,” or “We just say ‘good luck’,” or some similar answer. While these statements are true to some extent, they do not mean that the idea of 頑張る cannot be expressed in English. On the contrary, it can clearly and precisely be expressed using the words persevere and perseverance.

I have been using those two words since I was quite young. Westerners, and English speakers in particular, speak of luck as something magical that is outside of ourselves. I realized, one day, that our attitude and our thinking shape the things that happen to us, and therefore, we create our own “luck”. Because of that, the only thing we can do is to persevere. So, instead of saying “Good luck,” I began to say, “I wish you much perseverance.” Of course, people hearing this gave me a look of surprise. The English that I was using was not the “natural” English that they were used to hearing.

Does that mean it was incorrect? Certainly not. Does that mean it was outdated? Again, not so.

What happened was that I no longer lazily used the habits of spoken English by automatically saying “Good luck.” Instead, I chose to use precise English to express what I really meant to say – even if that English involved using words that are not so often used in this day and age. Was my meaning understood by the person to whom I was speaking? It certainly was.

And so, we come to my point. I caution all of you learners of English to beware of what you are told is “natural” English. Just because the English you are told to use is labelled “natural”, it is not necessarily correct English, nor will it necessarily help you to express yourself clearly. If you make some small effort, and if you persevere, then you will find the way to best capture and express your ideas and your meaning. I wish you all much perseverance.

【要約】 persevere (動)……困難に屈せずにやり通す [コンサイス オックスフォード 辞書]

実は、“persevere”とその名詞形 “perseverance” という言葉はかつて使われていたほど現在は使われていません。つまり、この言葉は「自然な」話し言葉では使われていないといったほうがいいかもしれません。日本人に『「頑張る」は英語でどう言うのですか?』とよく聞かれます。この記事を読んでいる人の中には、きっと「英語にはその表現はないよ。」とか「単に、“Good Luck”って言うんだよ。」あるいはそれに似たことを言われた人が、きっといると思います。

ある意味でこれは本当ですが、だからといって、英語には日本語の「頑張る」の観念を表す言葉が無いということではありません。それどころか “persevere” と “perseverance” を使ってはつきりと、そして正確に表現することができます。

私が言いたいのは、英語を学んでいる人が「自然な」英語と言われたものでも、よく注意してもらいたいということです。つまり「自然な」とラベルを貼られた英語表現というだけで英語を直す必要もないし、その言い方が必ずしも自分自身を表現する助けになるものでもないということです。ちょっとだけ努力をすれば、ちょっとだけ “persevere” すれば、あなたの本当の意見や言いたいことを表わす方法がきっと見つけれられるでしょう。

I wish you all much perseverance.

(翻訳・要約:協会英語相談員 本庄由美)

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2004年7月に来日。ALT(外国語指導助手)を5年間務める。

その間、幼稚園から高等学校、養護学校も含め、2500人以上の英語教育指導にあたってきた。美食、武術、詩をこよなく愛する親日家。国際交流センターで、気功・太極拳・少林拳の活動を展開中。