

23rd March, 2015

Before I begin my speech I would like to say, thank you for giving me a chance to make a speech here today. I feel very honoured to be able to stand here in front of you all. I haven't made a speech in front of so many people in so many years. I remember my earliest memory of making a speech was about myself and my pet snail. So, I hope my speech today is going to be a lot better than that. But don't worry, in the past week, I had the chance to visit my "home" country – the United Kingdom – so I am hoping that at least my English will be pitch-perfect.

To start with, I would like to say, fellow graduates, congratulations on your graduation from Keio University. And as for the twelve special graduates, congratulations on making it to the end of the PCP course. We lost many, many colleagues on our way here, but guys, we made it!

Okay, so, in making a graduation speech, I decided to look back through my university life at Keio. I started by looking back at the first two years over my usual cup of tea but then I realised that I had a little bit of a problem...to be honest with you, I couldn't seem to remember too much about those two years...not because I had some kind of issue with my memories from back then, but because the following two years were so much better – the two years I spent with you guys, as a PCP student.

I remember our journey started roughly two years ago when we were all complete strangers. After our results were announced, we were gathered into a room to listen to schedules in the following term. My most clear memory from that day – I am sure everyone remembers this – was this blond guy saying that he did not have a mobile phone. Everyone was laughing, but for some reason I was there in my seat thinking, yes, I chose the right course to take.

It turned out that that particular assumption I made in my seat about PCP was not wrong. Like him, everyone I met at PCP was so different yet so inspiring to me. There was a fluent English speaker from Osaka; a curly haired American from Seattle; many funky party girls from America; a party guy from Tokorozawa; a posh-English speaking golfer; a familiar face from London; an "Indian" from Los Angeles; a "giant"; a "Brazilian", and many, many more.

Although each of us possessed contrasting backgrounds, we were somehow alike in having the same aspiration – looking for an English learning environment. Here, I would like to share my story with you – the reason I decided to take PCP.

As some of you may know, I lived in Hong Kong for four and a half years and in the United Kingdom for seven and a half years. After living abroad for all those years, coming back and adapting to life as a true "Japanese" was full of hardships. In fact, till quite recently inside me were two completely different people – an "English" self and a "Japanese" self. It may seem awkward to some of you, but that was the state I was in, before starting PCP. Life in Japan was so much easier being the Japanese half of me – the shy, quiet girl hiding her real self, so determined to fit into Japanese

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society, so afraid of getting bullied for being different from her peers. But every time I spoke English, the other half of me gave a nudge in the arm reminding me that she still existed. And so, I decided to take courses like PCP in University which used English as its main language.

Choosing PCP, I think was one of the best choices I have ever made. It provided me with all the possible things I needed to pull myself back together again. All the countless presentations, the debates we had, the papers we wrote on economics meant so much more than just studying in English. To me, PCP was a home, somewhere I felt I truly belonged.

There are so many things I learned, so many things I earned here as a PCP student, but as goes for time; I have picked out three things I love about PCP in ranking form.

In third place come the classes we had at PCP. I personally think I did most of my studies as an economics student, right here in PCP. So, I am wondering where all the other economics students have been doing their economics studies.

In second, comes the people I have met. In short, you guys. I met so many people with similar backgrounds to me which meant that there was no more hiding. The feeling of being able to reveal my real self, reveal my past felt so good, I actually felt alive for the first time in many years. How can I say this... Thank you all for choosing to take PCP. This course would not have been the same without you guys. You guys changed my life. I think I am seeing some of your parents here with us today. I would like to give special thanks to you all for sharing this moment with us today. And how can we forget. I would also like to give a huge thank you to Lili- our lovely German friend for coming all the way from Germany.

Last but not least. In first place, I think comes all the lovely professors and secretaries who have made PCP such a wonderful course to take. Professor Kaji; Professor Fukasaku; Ayumi-san, we learnt so many things here. I am sure we will cherish the many lessons in life and classes you have taught us. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Fellow graduates, today we graduate from Keio University, from PCP. Today marks the end of a great chapter and the beginning of a brand new one. From now on, every single one of us will be walking different paths from the person sitting next to us. But I am sure that all of you will have prosperous futures waiting for you out there.

I hope that in many years to come we will be able to talk about the good old days we had back in PCP. And amongst those memories, I hope that you will also remember the girl with a British accent who made a speech in front of you on graduation day.

Once again, congratulations on your graduation. And I hope the best for your futures.

Thank you.