

朝英語の会 MATERIALS FOR 'MORNING ENGLISH' SEMINARS

This week's featured article

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If you say *yabai* in Japanese when you eat something, does it mean "very tasty" or "rather poisonous"?

The word traditionally means "risky" or "dangerous," but young Japanese have begun to use it with a new meaning: "unusually great."

Now, over 1 in 4 Japanese use the word in the new meaning, an Agency for Cultural Affairs survey showed on Thursday.

In the survey, which received responses from 1,942 people aged 16 or over in January and February, 26.9 percent of them said they say *yabai* to express admiration, up 8.7 percentage points from the previous survey a decade ago.

An increasing number of dictionaries also include both meanings, according to agency officials.

A shift is underway also in the meaning of *bimyō*, originally meaning "subtle" or "delicate." More than 90 percent of respondents in their 30s or younger said they use the word when they cannot decide if something is good or bad.

Bimyō was used this way among 66.2 percent of all respondents, up 8.4 percentage points from the survey a decade ago. The agency said the adjective has taken on more of a negative nuance among younger people.

The slang word *uzai* was used to describe things that are annoying or unsettling among 20 percent of all respondents, up 3 percentage points.

Among relatively new words, *konkatsu*, or "spouse-hunting activities," was recognized by 93.8 percent, and *ikumen*, or "men actively engaged in child-rearing," by 89.6 percent.

First published in *The Japan Times* on Sept. 19.

Warm up

One-minute chat about "My favorite phrase."

Game

Collect words related to "word," e.g., speak, dictionary, language.

New words

- 1) **poisonous**: dangerous to one's health or life; e.g., "Be careful! The liquid is poisonous!"
- 2) **admiration**: sense of wonder, delight or approval; e.g., "The current pope inspires admiration even among non-Christians."
- 3) **subtle**: slight, and not obvious; e.g., "There is just a subtle change in the plan."
- 4) **adjective**: a word that describes a noun; e.g., "Adjectives are useful when describing how somebody looks."
- 5) **unsettling**: causing trouble; e.g., "The news was unsettling for the people."

Guess the headline

'Admiration' replacing 'r___y' as 'y____' gains new currency

Questions

- 1) What is the original meaning of *yabai*?
- 2) What percentage of people in their 30s or younger use *bimyō* to express that their mind is not made up?
- 3) Are dictionaries starting to accept the new meaning of the word?

Let's discuss the article

- 1) Do you use the word *yabai*? If so, what do you mean by it?
- 2) Make a list of "new Japanese words" or ones whose definitions are changing.

3) Do you think we should keep the original meaning of the words or should the new meanings be accepted?

Reference

いつの時代にも流行の言葉があり、数年で使い古され時代遅れとなる言葉もあれば、いつの間にか定着し正式な日本語として"昇格"する言葉もあります。

新しい言葉は比較的若い世代によって広められることが多く、大人たちに怪訝な顔をされることも常でしょうし、言葉の意味することが世代間で違っていれば誤解を生む可能性があります。

しかし言葉とは、共有することで思いや考えを他の人に伝えるためのツールです。

誤解のもととなることは避けなければいけないでしょう。若者の言葉が乱れている、大人は頭が固いなどと言っているのはその誤解は壁となり、状況は悪くなる一方です。

数ある言葉の中から選んで発したその一言に込められた意図を汲み合わせるように、言葉の持つ新旧の意味を洗い出し広めることが必要なのかもしれません。

「朝英語の会」、はじめてみませんか？

「朝英語の会」とは、お友達や会社の仲間とThe Japan Timesの記事を活用しながら、楽しく英語が学べる朝活イベントです。この記事が教材に、お友達や会社の仲間を集めて、「朝英語の会」を立ち上げませんか？朝から英字新聞で英語学習をする事で、英語を話す習慣が身に付き、自然とニュースの教養が身につきます。

「朝英語の会」の立ち上げ、もしくは参加に興味がある方はこちらまで。株式会社ジャパンタイムズ「朝英語の会」運営事務局

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