

Good afternoon. Welcome to the 2023 Yee Fong Toy Scholarship Ceremony.

I am Uncle Andy, your host for today. I want to congratulate you on achieving very good grades and hence you are here today. Give yourself a big hand.

Today we are already in the third week of August. Some of the college winners have left for college already and so they are not here. Some are enjoying last minute family vacation. Next year, we will move the ceremony back to the second week of August.

I was one of the staff members who examined your report cards or transcripts.

In recent years, I started to see Chinese classes and Japanese classes. That is beautiful.

These days, everything is on a global basis. Everything has a global influence. In the old days, western cultures went to influence Asia. But now the reverse is happening. The Korean and the Japanese cultures are really reaching out to the rest of the world. As you pay attention, you will see many inventions and fashions, and TV dramas in NetFlix, coming from Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Are you into K-pop or J-pop? Listening to songs is the best way to learn new language. Songs are poems that rhyme.

So there are many good reasons to learn an oriental language and its culture. I want to emphasize the word: orient. It refers to three countries: China, Japan, and Korea only. For political correctness and inclusivity, now we say Asian instead of Oriental.

I have two interesting short stories to share with you, about learning Chinese. Both stories happened here among us.

Story #1. This scholarship winner learned Chinese because the elders in the family spoke to her in Chinese. They sent her to Chinese school. Later she decided to learn it on her own and at her own pace. And she picked and chose what to learn. So it became her personal interest to learn Chinese on CD's. And she succeeded. She essentially could speak everyday Chinese but she just needed to learn it formally or academically to kind of connecting the dots to really know the structure and the vocabularies of the language. I am happy to tell you that her Chinese was good enough to land her an assistant job for a doctor. After she graduated from Barnard College, she became the office manager for the same doctor.

Story #2. This scholarship winner was a big fan of Hong Kong music and she had her idols. But, she wanted to know the lyrics. When she was in high school, she enrolled in Chinese classes at CCBA. Yes, out of her own free will and not pressured by anyone. Slowly and surely, she picked up the vocabularies. Imagine you are a Chinese teacher and your student keeps asking you to explain the words from different songs. You have a winner. Your student wants to learn! To cut the story short, this kid eventually graduated from Chinese school at CCBA. I can imagine she was the oldest or eldest in her Chinese class. In the same year, she graduated from NYU. She was pursuing a career in Education.

When you learn a language, it would be beneficial that you also learn the culture of the land where the language comes from.

Here is a question. This week, what is that big festival in Japan? It ran from August 13 to August 16. It is the Bon Festival. Bon is the big fire in the open as in bonfire. The Japanese are burning incense and joss money and different things for their ancestors. Pay attention. Many Japanese festivals and Korean

festivals originated in China. So at this time, the Chinese is doing the same celebration. In fact, our family association was going to hire a van to take our members to visit the cemetery. But a lot of folks decided to celebrate at home instead.

I hope you enjoy the stories. I don't want you to remember Uncle Andy as the old man raconteur at the family association who tells anecdotes.

In closing. I want to encourage you learn Chinese and/or Japanese and their cultures. I want to congratulate you again on your academic success. Give yourself a big hand.

And please check out our Yee Fong Toy Youth facebook. The members are our scholarship winners and parents. I encourage you to send a request to our site administrator, that's me, to become a member.

Let's start giving out the certificates.