

“Summertime and the livin’ is easy.”

George Gershwin, from the opera *Porgy and Bess*, 1935

Not long ago, I was in the bookstore on my university campus, where I encountered a learning experience. Now, my Japanese ability is not very good, and in many situations I have difficulty. On this occasion, I struggled to get my message across to the clerk about the item I was looking for. Well, my message finally got through, and in the process I learned a new phrase from the clerk: *yoku gambarimashita*. Not in reference to my effort to communicate but in reference to the item I was in the bookstore searching for, which was some gold stars to stick onto my freshmen students’ written assignments to acknowledge their hard work.

Sometimes it seems that my students would rather not attempt spoken communication unless they are sure they can communicate with perfect grammar and vocabulary. This is fine if the communication takes place in class where there is probably time to prepare. But how much more valuable it would be to take a risk and a stab at unscripted spoken communication. This advice to my students, however, seems to go unheeded too much of the time. It’s too bad because I think students would discover, per my experience in the bookstore, that learning a language takes place through *using* the second/foreign language, not just through studying it.

Whether or not your summertime living is easy, I hope it’s a safe and cool summer for you all.

I look forward to hearing from you through your contributions to the newsletter.

Thanks very much.

Sybil Armstrong



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