

強者の戦略

8月も終わり、次第に暑さも和らぎ始めた今日この頃、皆様いかがお過ごしでしょうか。

こんにちは、英語科の池吉です。今回は、再び私がアカデミックの世界を垣間見る一題を提供したいと思います。

以前にも書きましたが、要約能力は、アカデミックの世界で最初に求められる能力です。前回は主にこの種の問題がもつ意義を理解してもらうために多くのページを割いてきました。今回は、要約するための具体的な方法論について詳しくお話ししてゆきたいと思います。

今回の一題は、1993年に東京大学で出題された問題から。設問形式は、前回と同様に要約問題です。はっきり言って、英文は「これが東大?!」と思うくらい平易です（事実、研伸館ではこのレベルなら高校2年生の基礎レベル講座で扱っています）。ですが、要約問題で、しかも制限時間が限られた中で挑むとなると、単に読めるだけでは正答に辿り着くことは出来ません。ざっと英文に目を通して「簡単だな」と感じた人は、是非タイムアタックに挑戦してみてください。制限時間は…そうですね。この程度なら、10分もあればお釣りが来るでしょう。

それでは、解説編で再びお会いしましょう。

問. 次の英文を読み、全文を80~100字の日本語に要約せよ。ただし、句読点も字数に数える。

Eight, five, seven, three, one, two. If I asked you now to repeat these numbers, no doubt most of you could. If I asked you again after a long talk, you probably couldn't — you will keep the memory for a short time only.

It seems to be the case that two quite different processes are involved in the brain in memory storage, one for the short-term — that is about fifteen minutes to an hour — and one for long-term memory. Many items of information find their way briefly into our short-term stores; most are discarded, and only a few find their way into the long-term store. While memories are in this short-term store, they are easily destroyed: by distraction, for instance — do you remember the number sequence we started with? — or by interference with the brain: by an epileptic fit, or concussion, for example. The film hero who wakes up after having been knocked out in a fight and asks “Where am I?” isn't joking; if the blow that knocked him out had been real it would have affected the electrical processes in his brain and so destroyed his store of short-term memories. But he will not have lost his store of permanent, long-term memories — indeed, it is extraordinarily difficult to erase them. Quite often in psychiatric treatment the psychologist tries to remove them by drugs, with electrical shock treatment, with insulin therapy, or psychoanalytic techniques, but usually with a very limited amount of success.

Indeed, when one comes to think about it, memory is perhaps one's most durable characteristic as an individual. I can lose limbs, have real organs replaced by plastic ones, alter my facial appearance with plastic surgery, but I am still “myself” — a complex of past experience, past memories, held tight and firm within my brain; only when I lose these do I cease to be myself.

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- (注) epileptic←epilepsy : てんかん
concussion : 脳震盪 (のうしんとう)
psychiatric : 精神医学の
insulin therapy : インシュリン療法
plastic surgery : 形成外科