

## A local problem that we should solve

If you live in Japan, you probably see people riding bicycle every day. Bicycles are available for all ages and are very useful for transportation, so there are many people who ride them, especially in my town, Mitaka. I usually ride a bicycle to go to school and places near my house. However, there are problems with riding bicycles in Mitaka. The problem is that cyclists have trouble riding on roads, especially busy roads. When I go to school, I need to take a road which connects some big stations and crosses many roads, it is very busy. Cars run so close to cyclists that they almost touch cyclists. In fact, I have had a slight collision with a car on my way to school. Fortunately, I did not get injured then, but I felt fear. Students who go to school by bicycles like me must have similar experiences. Cars driving so close to cyclists makes cyclists feel unsafe, and at the same time drivers likely feel unsafe too. Furthermore, when there is cars parking by the side of roads, cyclists have to circumvent the cars and ride in the center of the roads. This increases the probability of collision. Actually, this causes another problem. To avoid the possibility of collision, some people ride on the sidewalks. Bicycles are, of course, faster than pedestrians. Then, pedestrians are exposed to the danger of collisions with bicycles. Especially, when young children or elderly people collide with bicycles, they are likely to get a major injury.

One of the solutions to these problems is separating roads and setting up bike lanes. Bike lanes enable pedestrians, bicycles, and cars to maintain distance from each other. Most roads only have bike lane signs painted on, but these lanes are too narrow to maintain distance, and therefore do not reduce the danger of collision. What is important is physical separation. There should be guardrails or shrubbery to create gaps between roads, bike lanes, and sidewalks in order to divide the roads clearly. When riding on roads with bike lanes and guardrails, I felt safer because there was less the possibility of collision there.

Another solution is setting lower speed limits on cars in busy areas. This is possible only if the roads are wide enough. Not all busy roads are wide. When a car passes by at high speed, cyclists are in danger of being run over by the car. Limiting the speed of cars on narrow roads helps cyclists and pedestrians feel safe. Introducing hours for only walking and cycling in busy area is also a solution. By banning cars from entering busy area, cyclists and pedestrians can avoid accidents. Hours for only walking and cycling are employed in many other cities such as Ginza and Akihabara.

In conclusion, a local issue we have to solve in Mitaka is the danger of bicycle accidents with cars and pedestrians because of the narrow roads bicycles can run, and to solve this problem we have to create bike lanes with divisions, limit the speed of cars, and make hours for only walking and cycling in busy areas. Thus, encouraging a society in which we can ride bicycles without concern for accidents may contribute to well-being of the Mitaka city's inhabitants. I think by tackling this small local problem Mitaka will become safer and better place to live.

(560 words)

(本人のコメント)

今回、英作文を書くにあたって意識したことは、自分が日常生活のなかで感じていることを率直に書いたことです。タイトルに“A local problem”とありますが、地元の問題について、内容を掘り下げつつも、読む人にとってはわかりやすい文章にすることができたと思っています。テーマについてまずは身近なことから発想することが大切だと感じました。堅いテーマの英作文を書く際、つい難しいことを書こうとしてしまうことがあるかもしれませんが、与えられたテーマを自分にとって書きやすいことに結びつけることが大切なのではないかと思います。今回の英作文コンテストでは、日々自転車通学をしていて、車との接触の危険や歩行者との接触の危険は感じていたので、自転車と車、歩行者の交通の安全性について取り上げました。「道」は私たちがいつも使うものであるので、安全であれば、住民の安心感も増し、ますます住み良い街になると思います。