**How to Lead Question and Answer Sessions in English**

Although presentations are important in a conference, interaction is just as important. In fact, if your Conference Room is 50% presentation and 50% interaction, it would be ideal.

At the beginning of the conference, there is a 15-20 minute breakout room for self-introductions and conversations about why the guests are interested in Japan and Hokkaido. Then we have seven presentations, each followed by a Question and Answer (Q&A) session. The Q&A session is usually for 3-5 minutes but you can go longer if the conversation is interesting. Remember, there is another interaction time of ten minutes at the end of the program. You can cut that ten minute time if Q&A is fun and takes longer than usual. Also, if there is a presenter no-show, you will have more time.

What is the best way to lead these? Many Q&A sessions fail because the moderator makes these two mistakes: 1. Saying “Do you have any questions?”

2. Not asking 2-3 of your own questions

Never say a yes/no question like “Do you have any questions?”. If you do, there will be silence or maybe one or two short questions. In Asia, people are shy and show respect to a presenter by being quiet. So in order to get a discussion going you have to call on people, and give your own questions as well. In short, follow these five rules for good interaction:

1. Tell everyone to be ready with a question to the presenter
2. Call on participants by their first name\*, and ask them to give a question
3. Allow people to ask follow-up questions—keep the conversation going
4. As a moderator, you also ask follow-up questions constantly to keep the conversation going.
5. Ask questions to the international guests: “How about in your country, what is…?”

First, introduce the presenter and then lead the Q&A in English like this:

1. Ok, I would like to introduce the next presentation. During the presentation, you can write a question in the chat. And please prepare a question to say. Because after the presentation, I will call on you for your question. OK? Now let’s welcome, \_\_Taro\_ \_Satsu\_\_, with a big hand. (applause)
2. Thank you, Taro, for a great presentation. A big hand, everyone! (applause)
3. Now, to start off questions, let’s begin with \_\_Akiko\_\_\_. Go ahead.
4. And next, \_Jiro\_\_, your question, please. (and then Jiro asks some follow-up questions)
5. Thank you, Jiro, anyone else? OK, next, \_\_Kyoko\_\_ what is your question?
6. And my question is……. ? And also please tell me about ….?

Then after ten or more minutes of presentation and Q&A, move on to the next presenter.

At any time, the moderators including teachers should ask questions to keep the conversations going, and of course, have fun.

\* be sure to get everyone to write their romaji names (especially first names or nicknames) on their Zoom picture. Then say their names out loud—Chinese and Thai names are difficult to pronounce, so repeat several times at the beginning of the session.