
第 2 講

① 次の英文を読み、下記の設問に答えよ。

My two-year-old daughter is the joy of my life. Her awkward attempts at language these days always bring a smile to my lips, and more often than not, a hearty laugh.

So it is really a shame that so many people in Japan and elsewhere are now choosing not to have children. Sometimes I think if I could just introduce them to my
5 daughter, they would be overwhelmed by her cuteness and immediately decide to start families.

Bureaucrats around Japan are trying to address the problem of the country's falling birthrate with a number of measures. Most of them involve minor financial *incentives of some kind, but they do little to change the fact that having kids costs a
10 lot of money.

Worse, for most women in Japan, taking time off work to raise children means surrendering the option of having a meaningful career in the workplace.

The reasons behind falling birthrates in industrialized nations are clear. People no longer need children for family farms or other businesses. And since women now have
15 labor market access, children economically burden families rather than contribute. I do not think there is any government policy that can change social forces so powerful.

So instead of trying to persuade people who are not interested in kids, how about making things easier for couples who want them? And what about working to make more people want them in the first place? Let me offer a few suggestions:

20 1) Make having babies free. Free child seats or discounts on nursery school are nice, but they cannot compare with complete and total coverage of all costs related to pregnancy and childbirth, regardless of complications. And provide total coverage of all medical costs for children who are born with problems, too. That kind of protection should influence some prospective parents.

25 2) Offer 100% insurance coverage for *fertility treatments. My daughter would not have been born without the magic of modern science (*in vitro fertilization), but we had to pay the 500,000 yen bill ourselves, far more than many can afford. People seeking such treatment are the people who want kids the most, so they should get as