Ako Na Sunod! My Turn!

It is no secret that Filipinos love karaoke. In the Philippines, almost every celebration comes with a microphone and a long list of people waiting for their turn to sing. Birthdays, *fiestas*, Christmas parties, New Year celebrations, and even weddings are never quite complete without it. And if there is no karaoke machine, a Magic Sing microphone will do just fine!

What makes Filipino karaoke special is that it is often held outdoors, in an open guest area where family, friends, and even neighbors can hear the fun. You do not have to be part of the party to enjoy the music. Sometimes, the whole neighborhood becomes the audience!

A karaoke machine you can find in most Filipino homes, restaurants, and even beach resorts!

Filipinos also love imitating their favorite singers. One moment, someone is channeling *Lady Gaga*, *Katy Perry*, or *Taylor Swift*. The next, someone is performing *Michael Jackson, The Carpenters, or Journey*. We may not sound exactly like the original artists, but that never stops us from giving our best performance. It sometimes made me think if growing up singing English songs has helped many Filipinos become more comfortable speaking English, too. After all, we learn lyrics by listening, repeating, and singing along, even when we do not get every word right.

When I first came to Japan, I wondered if people also enjoyed karaoke at home. Back in Chiba and Tokyo, I was welcomed by quiet neighborhoods, so I rarely experienced the kind of open-air singing I was used to in the Philippines. I thought karaoke might be a little different here, and I was right! Japanese people love karaoke just as much, but they usually enjoy it in private rooms where they can sing, eat snacks, order drinks, and have their own little party. I love how you can sing your heart out while still having some privacy. It is also such a good way to relieve stress after a long day!

After living in Tawaramoto for six months, my friend Miya-sensei and I terribly missed our Friday karaoke sessions back in Tokyo. Thankfully, we finally found a place along Route 24, near the border of Tawaramoto and Kashihara City. During Silver Week, we went there with our Eikaiwa friends and spent the afternoon singing and enjoying each other's company.

Sakiko and I were singing "Close to You" by the Carpenters.

One of my favorite moments was singing a song by *The Carpenters* with my friend Sakiko. It may sound like a small thing, but sharing a song I love with a friend in a place far from home made me really happy. For a moment, I was reminded of the music I grew up with and the simple joy of singing with people you enjoy being around.

That evening made me realize something. Although our karaoke traditions may look different, the joy they bring is much the same. In the Philippines, we might sing under the open sky with the whole neighborhood listening. In Japan, we might gather in a cozy private room with friends. Either way, music brings people together. We do not always need to speak the same language to enjoy the same song. Sometimes, a familiar melody brings back memories and feelings that are difficult to put into words.

I came to Japan to teach English, but my karaoke adventures have reminded me that communication is not just about words. Music has its own language, one made of rhythm, melody, laughter, and shared memories. Whether you sing like a professional or confidently miss half the notes, there is always room for you at the microphone. So, when your favorite song comes on, do not be shy. Grab the microphone and let everyone know, **"Ako na sunod! My turn!"**

- **You can sing between bites!**

At a Filipino party, you might eat, chat with relatives, and sing karaoke all at the same time!

- **Some Filipinos learn the sounds of a song by listening and practicing, even if they don't understand every word.**

Example: First Love by Hikaru Utada.

- **Frank Sinatra`s *My way* is an all time favorite.**

Challenge time!
Practice your English with MAE! Try these questions.

1. Do you like going to karaoke?
2. What is your favorite karaoke song?
3. Do you sing loudly or quietly?
4. Can you sing a song in English?
5. What song makes you happy?