

<最優秀賞>

上島 早百合さん 京都文教高等学校 1年

エッセイ内容:雨がとても嫌いで、水の大切さや貴重さを知らなかった私。当たり前のように目にし、何も考えずに水を使っていた。水に恵まれ「青い惑星」と呼ばれる地球。それはたぐいまれな事でどれほど幸福な事であるかということに留学を通して気づかされた。

Our Blue Planet

“Oh, and, by the way, don’t flush the toilet every time you go,” said my host father sternly. It was my first day in Adelaide, Australia. My host family was from the Philippines originally, so I felt right at home in their Asian-style household. Just like in Japan, I did things like take off my shoes before entering the house. But unlike Japan, Australia was in the middle of a serious drought.

I used to really hate rain. I hoped it would always be sunny. In Japan, it rains once every three or four days. Whenever I woke up to rain, I felt it would be a bad day. So I was really happy when I first arrived in Australia because I heard almost every day was sunny. But I soon learned the down-side to weather like this. My host-family showed me around their house and the shower I would use. My host-father introduced me to the timer I would need to set whenever I bathed. “Ten minutes, tops,” he barked. There was a bathtub in their house, of course, but no one had used it for years. Taking a bath was out of the question. I immediately felt homesick.

I couldn’t have imagined this in Japan. Wherever you go, you see water and can use it to your heart’s content. Taking long baths was my way of letting off steam. But now, bathing was a big pain, because I would always hear the timer going tick, tiCK, TICK as I showered. I always worried about using water, otherwise my host-family would say don’t do that, or do this. Once I flushed the toilet without thinking and immediately my host father yelled, “What are you doing?! You must be more careful!” I apologized timidly but thought: “Oh, shut up! What’s the big deal?!”

When I met up with the rest of my classmates from Japan, I whined about my short shower time but found out that we were all in the same boat. We could only do laundry once a week when our host families did their washing. Once the washing machine broke down and I almost started to cry. I broke into a cold sweat, fearing that it was my clothes that were the straw that broke the camel’s back. My host mother told me not to worry, but I could see my host father shaking his head in disappointment.

On my tenth day in Adelaide, a miracle happened and it began to rain. My host brothers, Keethan and Jarot, shouted, “Yay! Yay! It’s raining!” and dashed into the downpour. I thought, what on earth are they doing? More surprising, my host father had a big grin on his face and waved to me to come outside to dance in the rain. I let the drops fall on me. The rain washed away all my stress. I felt a rush of happiness well up in me, as if I were a wilting flower suddenly blessed with water. Seeing my host father’s smiling face, I finally saw who he was. Not the bossy, grim man I thought, but a person who always had to worry about having enough water for his family. Understanding this was more important to our communication than English. From then on, I showered quickly, never flushed without thinking, and never saw another frown on his face.

The earth we live on is also called “the blue planet” for its wealth of water. But only three percent of this is fresh water necessary to support most terrestrial life. Three percent is not a big margin for error, so we all must work hard to conserve this valuable resource. I only hope that we all realize how precious our supply of fresh water really is, or, in the future, people will worry more about their own thirst than giving a thought to others. That’s one blue planet I hope I will never see.

<優秀賞> ※「日米協会会長賞」も受賞  
島田 紘佳 さん 慶應義塾湘南藤沢高等部 2年

エッセイ内容:人間は、一人一人が自分の経験に基づいた価値観を持つ。そのことを理解した上で他人の新たな考え方を受け入れることにより、お互いに影響を受け合う。その結果、より上位の価値観を得ることが出来る。

### Accept and Respect

Communicating is the most valuable tool that humans have. Through communication, we are able to tell each other about our opinions and feelings. In order to be able to communicate well with each other, we must first accept each other.

I lived in England from age 9 to 15. My way of thinking changed drastically through the six years of being there. England is a multicultural country where there is no official culture and a variety of many different ethnic groups live in the same society. At my school, there wasn't a single Japanese person, but at the same time, no one was purely British. Everybody had some sort of foreign blood in the family. It is impossible to tell where I lived from the nationalities of some of my closest friends: Malaysia, Greece, Turkey and Israel. I cannot describe in words, how much appreciation I have towards these people, for shaping who I am today.

By living in a country where there are people from so many different countries, I learnt how to accept others and understand people with a different perspective. Of course, the first year or so, I was lost in confusion. Seeing all the different traditions that my friends had had, I was puzzled, because back in Japan, I had never even heard of such things. For example, my Jewish friend told me that they were allowed to manipulate electrical items on the weekends, which is called *Shabbat*, for religious reasons. These meant that she couldn't switch on and off lights, be driven or use her phone. When I asked her why there is such a rule, she explained to me that on the Old Testament, God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, hence why they don't use electrical items. Even with this explanation, I did not understand their customs and thought that it was a very odd thing. However, sooner or later, I realised that there are people with many different customs in this world. What amazed me, was the way my friends treated my culture. For European people, it must feel strange seeing people use two sticks to eat food. However, rather than thinking of this custom as 'weird' or 'strange', it was more like 'that is so cool!'. I started to understand that although, my friends' customs were very divergent from mine and my customs were different from theirs, as long as we were able to accept each other, and we could easily stay friends. By being in a multicultural environment, I learnt how to accept all kinds of people and moreover, how to respect their ways of thinking by communicating. I can say that this is the most important life lesson I have had so far.

I am now back in Japan and I often find that I make good use of this experience in many situations. Even though in Japan, everybody has the same traditions, we have all had different lives, and our perspectives are shaped based on our experiences, meaning we all have different opinions. The club I belong to hold a lot of meetings within the teammates, and we often argue about things. We all want our own ideas to be chosen. In this situation, it is important exchange our opinions. We can first accept that we have different ideas, and respect that. By communicating, we are able to combine other ideas with our own which we had originally.

What is important is not whether we have the same opinion or not. It is whether we can accept the fact that there are people with different opinions and respect them. By doing this, we can reflect on our own opinion and realise that yours isn't the only possible one.

<優良賞>

林 美沙 さん 早稲田大学系属早稲田渋谷シンガポール校 2年

エッセイ内容:身近にいる自分とは合わない人を受け入れることは、異文化を受け入れることへのはじめの一步。一番身近で、一番嫌いだった弟から学んだ、自分の殻を破ることの大切さ。

Come out of your shell

Have you disliked someone before? When I was young, I disliked my brother very much. From his attitude to his voice, everything about him irritated me to a great extent. I never saw him as my brother. However, looking back at my time growing up with him, I realize that I learned many things from him.

Firstly, my brother taught me about the importance of smiling. When I was a primary school student, I didn't like my brother's smile as he always took everything away from me with a smile. Be it my parents or my friends, everyone was mesmerized by his smile. For instance, when I got an 'A-grade' and he scored a 'C-grade' for an exam, my parents would always console him before rewarding me. My mother always told my brother, "My dear, studying may not be your strength, but don't worry, your personality is the one thing that you should be proud of, and it is the most important strength one can have."

I constantly doubted his motives, thinking that he must have some hidden agenda behind his smile. However, I could not find any evidence to prove it. I started wondering why he kept smiling, even when there was nothing lucky or special happening around us. I could not come up with any reasons for this behavior, thus I decided to imitate him. Every time I caught him smiling at others, I would do the same. Over time, I found that my world began to change. I started to feel loved by more people, including myself. At the same time, I became less obsessed with failure. I learned the importance behind smiling; when we smile, we will feel happy and since lucky things will come to us naturally, we can pardon our failures more easily.

Secondly, he made me realize the importance of seeing people in different ways. After entering junior high school, we joined our school's basketball team. Even though I played basketball better than him at first, he made rapid progress. I wondered why he was learning so quickly, so I started to observe him carefully. After a while, I figured out that he practiced basketball every Sunday. I was surprised, as I had never noticed that. In contrast, I did not put in as much effort as he did and yet, I was judging him. Since then, I started to see him as my brother, and slowly began to accept him. I tried talking to him more often to find new sides of his character. We talked about our hobbies, dreams, and even our personal views on our parents. To my great surprise, I found out that we had much in common. For example, our attitudes towards close friends are very similar. We do not expect anything more from them than having a sincere smile. Through these moments, I realized that he was not the bad person I had made him out to be. After all, I have learned from him that we cannot judge a book by its cover. We shouldn't draw quick conclusions without putting our best foot forward when interacting with others.

In conclusion, I had never thought that I would learn something important from people I dislike. Yo-yo Ma said: "As you begin to realize that every different type of music, everybody's individual music, has its own rhythm, life, language and heritage, you realize how life changes, and you learn how to be more open and adaptive to what is around us."

Had I not tried to talk to him, I would have never learned the importance behind a smile and wouldn't have changed my view of others. I would also have missed the opportunity to learn about the common ground that my brother and I share. So why don't you try to communicate with people you dislike? It is easy: just come out of your shell, open your mind, and talk to them frankly. That's it. No big deal. I can guarantee that you will not only learn some good points about them, but also find that it is a good way to live. May your enemy become your friend one day.

## <特別賞>

竹谷 真帆 さん 日本女子大学附属高等学校 1年

エッセイ内容:香港でのサマープログラムを通じ、言語の違いから生まれる価値観の差異について知った。また外国語を学ぶことは視野を広げ、その結果自分を客観的に見ることができるようになるのだ。

### How Languages Influence Us

This summer, I participated in a program that changed my values dramatically. Participants from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Japan gathered to discuss Sino-Japan relations and develop understanding and respect toward each other. I decided to participate because I wanted to explore a world outside my comfort zone and encounter people with an entirely different background. As the participants and facilitators came closer, I acknowledged one of the biggest differences between us; language— a simple tool – takes on huge role in the formation of various characteristics.

For example, a plain word “why?” seemed aggressive to me when a Hong Kong participant used it. She deliberately bumped in to me and shouted “why?” in my ears, but when I glanced at her face she was smiling. I thought she was making fun of me and my attitude toward her automatically stiffened afterwards.

On top of this, I found the language of Hong Kong waiters brusque and impolite as well. Unlike in Japan, no one said “welcome” or “thank you” when I entered and I felt as if I was forced to a seat rather than being welcomed to a restaurant. Even when we finished ordering, the waitress took the menus away without a word. The dishes were delicious and I enjoyed the lunches and dinners in the city; however, the uncomfortable feeling seemed to linger for the whole time.

While a part of me was still feeling uneasy, I stayed up one night chatting with my new friends and came across an interesting topic. My Hong Kong friend Natalie, shared her concern about their language being rude. “Have you ever felt offended by Hong Kong people?” she asked and I couldn’t answer right away because I knew exactly what she was talking about but didn’t want to hurt her feelings by telling her so. After an awkward silence, I chose to divulge my honest perception and Natalie listened with compassion. She told me how it was culturally normal for people of Hong Kong to be terse and said that people used aggressive words without deeply thinking so foreigners feel shocked at first. Natalie had an objective perspective about her country and I was amazed with her critical thinking.

This was when it hit me regarding how much languages were influencing us. We convey traditional values with a certain logic as we speak in a certain language. This is because words are labels, categorizing the world around us and the range of meanings are slightly different from one languages to another. To illustrate, Japanese contains a variety of courteous words and “yoroshiku”, an expression of gratitude and appreciation that is a common word. Thus, I noticed that many Japanese people bowed as they greeted each other, and talked politely while participants from other regions seemed more casual during the program. My conversation with Natalie made me realize that from the others, Japanese people might have seemed too formal or stiff and made them uncomfortable as well.

Additionally, I felt the necessity to get involved in diverse languages. Surprisingly, my roommate from Hong Kong could speak English, Japanese, Cantonese, and Mandarin. It made me realize that she had access to a variety of perspectives while I was stuck in my limiting environment. Learning other languages can in turn lead to appreciation of your own language.

There are roughly 6,500 spoken languages in the world. I became aware of how this tremendous number symbolizes the world filled with bountiful ways of thinking, customs, and manners. As we grow up in our respective environments, our personalities are being formed. It was shocking to experience how such a familiar and common tool, language, had a huge influence on us. Therefore, I believe that learning a foreign language is not just for communication; it is a way to step closer to each other and learn who we really are.

<特別賞>

吉良 尚也 さん 福岡県立香住丘高等学校 1年

エッセイ内容:「転がる石に苔むさず」には2つの解釈がある。その例として、野球一筋で過ごした経験を元に、1つを継続することも様々なものに挑戦することも大切だ。その両方の価値観は興味深く、新しい観点への気づきこそ大切だと実感している。

A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss

When I encounter a new perspective, I'm very curious about it. Although I've never been abroad, I've tried to make chances to learn different ways of thinking by talking with foreign people in Japan because I really want to polish my international awareness. During my conversations with them, they often make me realize that the Japanese spirit, which I take for granted, is unique from a foreign perspective. One example is our Japanese attitude toward club activities, *bukatsu*. I think that it may be hard to translate the word "*bukatsu*" into one English term. I realized that "*bukatsu*" and "club activity" are not equivalent with respect to endeavor when I talked to my English conversation teacher from Canada.

I played baseball every day from in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of elementary school to junior high school. I loved baseball very much, but everyday practice was nothing but hard. It was 8 years full of baseball. I could take only a few days off throughout the year. Beyond the baseball skill itself, I was drilled in the perseverance of continuing to practice baseball every day. My coach often said to me, "You have to develop good manners." "You must respect seniors." "You must cherish your uniform, spikes, bat, glove, and balls." "You have to show your gratitude for your parents, your teammates and the opportunity to play baseball." "You should not give up practicing until you satisfy yourself by developing your baseball skill." All these lessons from my coach still live inside me. I strongly believe the way of thinking I learned through baseball is the same and normal in other sports and *bukatsu* in Japan.

However, when I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and I talked to my English conversation teacher, I realized this attitude toward *bukatsu* isn't always the same as the attitude toward club activities in other countries. He said to me, "Why are you doing only baseball? When I was a student, I experienced a lot of sports, for example, tennis, cricket, rugby, and so on. We were taught to try many things in club activities in school in order to broaden our viewpoint." He was surprised to learn that I put my baseball practice before my personal business. In fact, I never had a long vacation with my family. I thought it would be normal not to go on a trip with my family because I had to take part in practicing baseball first of all. That's why I was also surprised to learn that he set his personal business above his club activities.

When I heard this, I learned that my way of thinking toward *bukatsu* was one viewpoint, and there was another angle too. The perspective of my English teacher reminded me of a famous proverb, "A rolling stone gathers no moss." I learned in my English class that it has a double interpretation. One is that we should not move around until we achieve one objective. If we often change the place where we are, we cannot gain "moss," a kind of perseverance. The other is that we should try to move a lot in order to look for something new, something interesting. If we stay in one place, we unfortunately gain "moss," a kind of boringness, and we can no longer gain any creative ideas. I understand the former is a typical Japanese viewpoint, and the latter is common in other countries.

Recently, internationally successful Japanese sports players such as Ichiro, Masahiro Tanaka, and Kei Nishikori have often been praised for their stoicism, perseverance, and orderliness. I think their basic common behavior lies in their hard training in *bukatsu* in their school days. They show the Japanese spirit to the world and I'm proud of them; however, I don't think I should decide which way of thinking is superior to the other. I understand both ideas. I have devoted my energy to baseball and learned the importance of persistence. On the other hand, I can sympathize with the idea of trying many things and enjoying each one. I also sometimes enjoy swimming, soccer, and basketball with my friends. I believe what matters is to respect other ways of thinking when we encounter them.

<特別賞> ※「日米協会会長賞」も受賞  
鹿田 果歩 さん 金蘭千里高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容:「謝る」という、万人にとって身近な行為も、その捉え方は国によって大きく異なることを日本人メジャーリーグに関するニュースを通して学んだ、謝罪の文化に対する考察。

### Is Apologizing Good or Bad?

How many times do you apologize in your daily life? Have you ever thought about the reason for your apology? In Japan, I often see people apologizing for something. I had thought it was usual until I recently read a newspaper article.

It was the article about Masahiro Tanaka, a popular professional baseball player who joined New York Yankees last year. The article said that he had to leave the team for a long time because he broke his right elbow and he apologized to his fans and his teammates for the injury in an interview. American media was surprised at “his apology” and wrote about it. There is another example about the same matter. When Hideki Matsui broke his left wrist, he sent a letter to his team manager, in which he apologized for his injury. Then American people were shocked at his behavior. “He apologized!”

I was very surprised to see that just an apology can be an article of the newspaper. I think that there is a big cultural difference between America and Japan. In Japan, apologizing is one of the basic behaviors and we easily apologize for things which are not actually worth doing so. On the contrary, in America, only those who really did a bad thing apologize. It is said that American do not apologize but insist that they are right, because apologizing means “I admit that I was wrong. I will compensate you for the loss.” This can be true of not only America but also some other countries. Thus the two baseball players’ apologies are acceptable for Japanese people but can be misunderstood overseas. For, people overseas may think that the player did not prepare for the game enough and got injured necessarily. For example, when Yu Darvish, another Japanese baseball player in Texas Rangers, apologized to his manager for his ball being hit in the game, the manager admonished him not to apologize anymore, because in America it usually means that he did it on purpose. In their opinion, having got injured accidentally is not the subject of an apology. Why does such a difference exist? I think one of the reasons is that the background of American culture is “sense of guilt” and that of Japanese culture is “sense of shame.” Most Americans are religious and they have god in their heart. So, they have the concept of a sin. While in Japan we are not so conscious of gods. Instead, we are strongly conscious of other people’s eyes. We are afraid of being laughed at or blamed. This feeling often decides the behavior of Japanese, I think. Another reason comes from the differences of the characteristic in each country. Japan is totalitarianism and America is individualism. So in Japan, even if we did not do anything so bad, we apologize readily to keep harmony in the society they belong to. Apology plays an important role to smooth the human relationship.

I myself apologize at once. I am typical Japanese. However, I learnt that what our apology meant differed from a country to a country through the article I read. Therefore, I would like to remember this cultural difference.

<特別賞>

村崎 樹江里 さん 千代田区立九段中等教育学校 5年

エッセイ内容: 国によって教育制度は異なる。しかし、グローバル化が進む中、それぞれの国が教育制度を発展させることで、私たちは個人のみならず世界をも成長させることができる。

Is the World Changing?

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” Nelson Mandela once said. The world is constantly evolving as well as the way people think, and yet, education hasn’t made this change.

This summer, I met a German girl who was home staying in Japan for two weeks. Since we both happened to feel uncomfortable about our countries’ education, we discussed the matter. This was the first time I realized that Japan was not the only country which was also dealing with problems in the educational system.

Each year, nearly five hundred thousand Japanese high school students take the “center exam”, which is a unified college entrance test in January that permits students to enter a college from April. I have always felt that this exam within the educational system puts too much pressure on students, considering that their future might be decided in a few days based on a test. On the contrary, the United States has adopted a system which you can take the SAT tests as many times as you want to, and they allow you to hand in the best score. Not only that, but colleges also carefully examine each person’s personalities through several essays, in order to decide whether that person will suit its school color. I think that the system Japan has right now is weighing down on many students, because they can only show their abilities through knowledge based examinations. This system does not allow the students to show how passionate they can be towards different kinds of activities, and how devoted they can be.

However, the Japanese educational system is trying to change. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) plans to abolish the unified test for university admissions and establish a new achievement test for high school students within five years. This new system is similar to the SAT tests, and students will have more chances to redeem themselves from exams if they were to score badly the first time.

On the other hand, the German girl taught me that her country has its own unique educational system, and that it is dealing with a huge problem right now. Most of the students in Germany must decide on their future when they are only 10 to 12 years old. After four years of elementary school, the students will then attend one of three different kinds of schools; Gymnasium, Hauptschule or Realschule. The first type of school is for students who want to go to a university in the future, and the other two prepare students to go to a vocational school. Students are able to choose which school they want to enter based on their school grades, and their own opinion. However, once a student decides to go to either a Hauptschule or Realschule, they cannot enter college. Since students decide their professions and dedicate their schooling to improving their techniques at an early age, it is difficult to change their field in vocational schools even if they have lost interest in it. Nowadays, there is a trend; where, people think that more intelligent students go to Gymnasium. As for the other students, they tend to lose motivation in their field of studying, and drop out into the society without finishing compulsory education.

Germany should embrace an educational system that mirrors the Japanese or American one. Students should also undergo a similar curriculum until they are 18 years old, and then decide whether or not to go to a vocational school or a college. Japanese students have 12 years in total before they graduate high school, if not, during their additional years in college, they can continue to consider their future. During this long period of time, students can ponder what they want to become, and also have a chance to change their dreams, without consequence.

Throughout history, education has evolved and changed the way we think about the world around us. The world is constantly changing, and the educational system must then change with it, so that we may grow and develop, as a person, as a country, and as a world.

## <特別賞>

井上 尚子 さん 学習院女子高等科 2年

エッセイ内容:日本人の特色である空気を読み、相手に言いたいことを汲み取ってもらおうとすることは概念を共有しない国際社会では通用しない。故に、重要なのはうまい表現を使う事ではなく、言いたいことを正確に伝える事である。

### Reading Between the Lines

In these few years, the expression: “Read between the lines,” or “Kuki wo Yomu” in Japanese, has attracted people’s attention. To me, it first sounded like reading between the lines is one of the essential skills required for an adult to live harmoniously with others, and those who fail to sense the subtle expression of personal feelings are subject to blame. However, I began to question whether that really is the case through my experiences in the past year.

Last year, I studied abroad in New York, and I had many discussions in my science class about forces. Actually, I had already studied that chapter in Japan beforehand, so I had pretty good ideas about the subject. However, since I was not confident about my English skills, I just nodded to show my agreement and remained quiet so that I would not distract from other students’ heated conversation. We solved the problem individually afterwards. After the class, my science teacher took me to his office and told me that I was not taking the class seriously. He said that whether I solved the problem correctly or not was not the issue, but not sharing my ideas with others and not contributing to the class was a big problem. From my perspective, it would not be a problem because I solved the problems properly. So what he told me was a new concept to me.

I think the difference in evaluating whether remaining silent is good or bad owes a lot to its cultural background. Japanese people are an agriculturally based tribe, and many have lived closely in the same district for a long time; therefore, it is easier for them to share the same common sense. When it comes to an important decision making process, many choose to say the minimum, and dare to leave some vague room for later adjustment because they fear a lot to have apparent disputes among them. In contrast, people in the United States are from all over the world and have diversified backgrounds, so they do not share the same general knowledge. Hence, it is not easy for them to guess what others think without any explanations. For these reasons, being silent and expecting others to understand us without expressing our ideas will never work in the international environment.

In addition to that, even among Japanese people themselves, communication errors are increasing between the young and the aged. The new communication tools such as LINE have become a big boom in our generation. Long sentences have disappeared from our daily chat, and short phrases have replaced them. We gave up on expressing our thoughts in words, but started using stamps with various facial expressions to reveal our feelings. In that sense, we have become even more dependent on non-verbal communication, and have begun to have fewer and fewer opportunities to express our ideas in words. Such a tendency may not be a problem as far as we communicate only among ourselves. However, when we get jobs and start attending meetings in business world, we may face difficulties in trying to describe our opinions in words. We must keep in mind that we must be precise and accurate, and we should not leave any room for misunderstanding in the business world..

Andrew Grove, the well-known management member of INTEL, said “How well we communicate is determined not by how well we say things but by how well we are understood.” Communication is similar to playing a catch among people. When we throw a ball, we naturally aim to deliver it to where it is easy for the counterparty to catch. Having good techniques is not a matter here, but how well we throw a ball is important. Similarly, we must present our ideas in a way it is easier for others to understand. For that purpose, we must assess carefully whom we are talking to, their ages, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds, and we must adjust our expression accordingly. We bear in mind that expecting others to read between the lines works only in limited occasions, and leaving no room between the lines is desirable in the international community.



<特別賞>

臼田 有李 さん 遺愛女子高等学校 3年

エッセイ内容:逆カルチャーショックの経験が私に教えてくれたこと、それは、「地球人」になること。慣れ親しんだ文化と他の文化との狭間での苦しみから開放されて、出会った文化を心で受け止め、それを純粋に楽しんでしまえばよいということ。

Be a “World Citizen”

One of the cultures I have felt to be “different” is Japanese culture, the very culture in which I was born and brought up. I had reverse culture shock I when I came back to Japan after a three-month stay in Australia. My culture shock in the first week in Australia and the experience I had there taught me a lot, but the reverse culture shock did more than that. Suffering from the shock of difference of cultures, I had no idea how I should live in this world full of cultures unfamiliar to me. The answer I finally got is to be a “world citizen.”

I soon recovered from the culture shock, and got used to the Aussie lifestyle. I enjoyed their food culture. I spoke with an Australian accent. I loved the lively classes where everyone spoke and shared opinions. I enjoyed assessment tasks that allowed me to think about the topics a lot. I loved hugging each other, the words “How are you doing?” and their positive way of thinking. Somehow I seemed to regard myself as an Australian.

At that time, I felt I had succeeded in “intercultural communication” but actually I hadn’t. It was not until I came back to Japan that I realised “intercultural communication” doesn’t simply mean getting used to another culture or just becoming friends with foreign people.

Back to Japan, I found myself suffering from reverse culture shock. I couldn’t accept Japanese culture! That surprised me as I had never imagined I would refuse my own culture. I missed everything. I couldn’t believe that I was in Japan. I always wished to go back. I found my school too strict. I found my silent classes boring, no one but teachers spoke, forcing us to memorise everything. I often heard many people say negative words. There were no hugs or the words “How are you doing?” These things disappointed me. I was critical of Japanese customs, culture, and society.

Day by day, I got back to my routine, but I was still disappointed and feeling lonely. I asked myself if I was really Japanese. I had no idea what I was then. That meant I hadn’t succeeded in intercultural communication. I was refusing one culture!

Several months later, I finally found an answer with the help of a friend of mine, who had the same experience. What I am now is a “world citizen,” and I have only to enjoy both cultures. I gave up comparing the two. I found that I needed both cultures. After that, I came to see Japanese culture from a positive point of view.

Then, what are “world citizens?” I think it’s like they are standing in the centre of the world and seeing the whole world equally. They always have worldwide ideas, not domestic ones. They are never in favour of certain cultures. They don’t treat them in their minds, but receive it with their hearts, enjoying facing other cultures. They don’t find how different and strange some cultures are, but how interesting and attractive they are.

One of my teachers who went to Africa last year told us about her experience. It was the first trip abroad for her. She said, “I had a wonderful experience! Living in Japan is quite convenient of course, but I didn’t find it hard to live in Africa. I enjoyed their way of living and learned a lesson from it. Many people worried about me before I went there, but I didn’t. I was excited to meet people there, and their culture which might be very new to me. Through my trip, I found how interesting their culture, and our culture, is.” I believe she is a “world citizen.”

It took me long to find out that I should be a “world citizen.” However, there are still many people who haven’t found it out yet. We tend to see the world subjectively, thinking our culture is the best and the most comfortable, but we can call ourselves “world citizens” by giving up such behaviours. I hope I can help someone broaden their mind by sharing this experience.

<日米協会会長賞>

歌代 十和音 さん 鎌倉女学院高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容:西日本・東日本には異なる文化が存在する。異文化に対し誰もが初めは抵抗を持つ中、どのように互いに文化を理解すればいいのか。私は祖父の家で異文化を体験し、多くのことを学び、今どうすべきかを考えた。

### Respecting Mutual Cultures

What would you think if you were asked about “the different cultures”? I would imagine talking about differences between Japanese and foreign countries, but I have also noticed there are different cultures right on my doorstep. When I experienced these differences, my instinct was to politely reject people with different cultures. However, through firsthand experience, I learnt to accept and respect characteristics unlike my own. The following experiences will demonstrate how I grew and changed.

People are often amazed that Japan has so many different dialects which can't be understood by people outside each prefecture. I use a standard form of Japanese, which is used in government, education and the media in urban areas like Tokyo and Kanagawa. However, some of my family live in Gifu prefecture, which is far from Tokyo, and in this part of Japan most people speak “tounou” Japanese. When I heard it for the first time, I was quite shocked and felt it was an inferior dialect because it sounded so strange. In fact, when I first started visiting my cousins' house in Gifu, I could only understand half of what my cousins were saying. However, once I started visiting more often, I became used to it and I no longer cared that it was different. I am now very proud of being able to speak in the tounou dialect and I feel strongly that we should respect and encourage these differences in our culture. They are what make a country interesting. Living in a city which is as modern as Tokyo, it's easy to forget that in some areas of Japan there is a much stronger connection with the natural environment. I live in Kanagawa, which is hi-tech things, so when I first started visiting my cousins' house, which is surrounded by nature, I was worried by the lack of modern conveniences. In Gifu in winter, they chop wood to use as fuel in the stove. The firewood stove is then used to boil water and for cooking food. Cutting wood in winter seemed like difficult and unnecessary work to me, and this lifestyle seemed so old-fashioned. However, once I started to see how cheap resourceful it was (they have no fuel costs). I started to change my way of thinking. It's great to have such an “easy” life in Kanagawa, but I also learnt how to respect and enjoy their closer connection to nature.

Japanese people are very proud of their food culture, but I mistakenly believed that it was uniform across the country. However, when I first started going to Gifu, I had yet another unexpected surprise. Even though we eat the same dishes, they are often prepared with different sauces or broths. This might seem like small culture difference to non-Japanese people, but it was quite big difference for me. Living in Kanagawa prefecture, I had become accustomed to soy sauce being used in the preparation of oden and udon, but in Gifu prefecture they use miso seasoning and soup stock for these dishes. When I visited my cousins' in the new year, I used to be quite shy about eating zoni, which is a traditional new year dish, because of the different seasoning. I felt it was strange that such an important dish could be prepared using a different sauces, but I was wrong. I have grown to love the differences in our food culture and realize how important it is to be more open and ready to try and accept new things.

Dialects, lifestyle and food differences are just three examples of the “different cultures around me.” Having grown to really understand the way they speak in Gifu, the way they live their lives closer to nature, and the way they prefer to prepare their foods has really made my life rich. I have learnt how to communicate with people outside of my circle: chop wood and become less dependent on modern conveniences and enjoy different tastes and flavors not available in Kanagawa. Most importantly, I have learnt that I am not to judge or criticize things just because they are different. It's important to respect local characteristics and enjoy our differences.

## TOEIC®プログラム

TOEIC テスト、TOEIC スピーキングテスト/ライティングテスト、TOEIC Bridge の総称。

3 テストを合わせた世界の 2013 年の TOEIC プログラム受験者数は年間約 700 万人、約 150 カ国で実施された。

## TOEIC®テスト

Test of English for International Communication の略称。

1979 年に開始された、英語によるコミュニケーション能力を幅広く評価する世界共通のテスト。テスト結果は 10 点から 990 点までのスコアで評価され、その評価の基準は常に一定に保たれる。スコアによる評価や英語能力を正確に測定できる質の高さが評価され、企業・団体においては昇進・昇格の要件として、また、社員の採用の際などに参考にされており、また、学校においては入試や単位認定などでも広く活用されている。2013 年度の受験者数は 236 万 1 千人。

## TOEIC Bridge®

TOEIC への架け橋という意味を込めて、基礎的なコミュニケーション英語能力を評価する世界共通のテストとして開発され、2001 年より開始。スコア表示による評価方法や、評価の基準が常に一定に保たれる点など、TOEIC テストの特長を備えつつ初・中級レベルの英語能力測定に照準を合わせて設計されたテスト。結果は 20 点から 180 点までのスコアで評価される。2013 年度の受験者数は 21 万人。

## TOEIC®スピーキングテスト/ライティングテスト(TOEIC SWテスト)

TOEICスピーキングテスト/ライティングテストは、国際的な職場環境において効果的に英語でコミュニケーションをとるために必要な、話す・書く能力を測定するテスト。テスト開発機関であるETSの認定を受けた、複数の採点者が公平に採点し、合格ではなく、0点から200点までのスコアで評価する。また、発音・イントネーション/アクセントについても3段階で評価を知ることができる。TOEICテストと同様、一般的な、またはビジネスの場面が採用されているが、特殊なビジネス英語や特定の業界・分野の知識を必要としたり、特定の国の歴史や文化に関連する固有の事象がわからなければ解答できない問題などは含まれていない。2013年度の受験者数は1万4千7百人。

## 一般財団法人 国際ビジネスコミュニケーション協会(IBC)

「人と企業の国際化の推進」を基本理念とし、1986年に財団法人国際ビジネスコミュニケーション協会として設立。

以来、「グローバルビジネスにおける円滑なコミュニケーションの促進」をミッションとし、国内外の関係機関と連携しながら TOEIC事業およびグローバル人材開発事業を展開している。2012年4月1日付で一般財団法人に移行。