

## What is necessary for a better understanding of different cultures?

Good morning, everyone.

The title for my presentation today is “What is necessary for a better understanding of different cultures?” First of all, let me give you one key word, that is, “What is a different culture?” My conclusion is that it is very hard to define it. Before I started this report, I was thinking vaguely that it is something we see, experience, and feel in a foreign country. But I came to realize that it is something we can feel and experience without going abroad, here in Japan in our daily lives. Now let me show you how my idea changed.

In our modern society, we have rules and each one of us has the responsibility to obey them. And we also have manners. For example, when we go abroad, people in a foreign country naturally accept us. And we do the same to the visitors to Japan. In doing so, “values”, “rules”, and “manners” matter very much. These three are communication between peoples.

The word “communication” has two definitions; one is “verbal communication”, which takes place when more than two people try to understand each other with words. The other is “non-verbal communication”, which includes atmosphere or smell that people feel abroad. These two ways of communication can be called “a fast information” because we feel it on the spot. On the other hand, we have “a slow information”, which we cannot understand on the spot and then come to know its meaning later on by researching.

In terms of two ways of communication, I was eager to know how foreigners felt when they first came to Japan. So I asked APU international students to answer four questions as follows: The first question is “Something surprising about life in Japan.” Some answered “People waiting in a line very patiently” I think this is related to Japanese character.

The next question is “Is your previous impression about Japan still the same as before?” Some pointed out that Japanese people reply in an indirect way.

Next question is: Can you name some customs that you found strange, but you are used to now?” Some said that many elderly people would touch them on the head. For some people in Asian countries, however, heads are very sacred and therefore must not be touched by others.

Finally, I asked them to give examples of customs that are unique to Vietnam because I’m interested in it so much. Of some answers, they say that people in Vietnam is not as punctual as we are in Japan. So we have to keep in mind that even if they are late, we should be as tolerant as possible. Because it is the way they live.

At the end of my study, I found four key words; they are, “The same but different world”, “Cultural friction”, View of religion”, and “Values.”

In the course of my study, I often came across the word “Orientalism.” It is the image that people have, but that image is different from the reality. This image makes us look at the world from a biased viewpoint. No matter what future course we will take, we are sure to meet different cultures. It is essential that we try to look at the world from a fair and different angle, not from a biased one. One more thing in the end. We can never tell which culture is better than other, because every culture should be equally respected in this global age. I hope that I will be a globally minded person like this.

Thank you for your attention.