

People often say there is more to language ability, and I believe it is communication skills. I have been to many countries by myself and interacted with different kinds of people since I was a first-year student in Chukyo University. I have come to realize that the key to do well in a global market is not to have only English skills, but intercultural communication skills too. At first I thought if I speak English fluently, I will be able to connect with people from other countries. However from my experiences, I have realized that English is just like Wi-Fi: English allows you to connect with people, and Wi-Fi allows you to connect to the internet. Both are tools that make your lives convenient.

When I first left Japan to go to Canada by myself, I went to a language school for three weeks. The first week, I could not make any friends because I thought my English was poor. However, one day, I saw a student who did not speak well either, but had many friends and enjoyed talking with them. I was wondering why. I found out when I got closer to her. She was always herself, smiling, open and warm. She was not afraid to say her opinion, but she tried to get to know others who have different values. From her, I learned that to do well in a global market, you need to put things in perspective and express yourself so that you can have good relationships. These are two important intercultural communication skills.

There are challenges connected to intercultural communication. For instance, I have been annoyed because of cultural differences. When I went to Spain to see my friend, I was only around Spanish people. We actually talked a lot about values. In Japan, we tend to think fair skin is the best. Generally for Japanese women, a suntan is to be avoided in the summer time. There are people who have umbrellas to protect their skin from the sun. On the other hand, Spanish think a tanned skin is beautiful. In the summer time, they spend more time outside because getting a suntan is positively viewed and praised. I thought it was common to think that fair skin is beautiful, but I understood each country has its beauty standards. Although it was hard to believe it at first, this experience broadened my view and helped me better see the complexity of the world, and appreciate it.

In Spain, they kiss and hug when they meet, even someone they meet for the first time. For me, it was so weird. I told my friend that I could not be so demonstrative

because I am not this way in Japan. At the same time, I felt my cultural barrier, and I thought that if I keep it, I will never get closer to them. I found out that being open is very important when I have new experiences and meet new people who have different ways of thinking. Adjusting to Spanish culture, and greeting people the Spanish way, it became really comfortable for me to be there. Through this experience, I discovered that being stubbornly attached to your culture is not helpful. You should be flexible, changing your thoughts and actions when needed.

Putting things in perspective, expressing yourself, being flexible and open minded answer two of the needs of globalization. The need for intercultural communication skills, so that you can do business and share information with people all over the world. We also have to learn more about other countries by searching, visiting and talking to people. It should help being connected and empathetic towards people who have different background, culture, career and hobby. The second need is that of more creativity: as competition increases with globalization, people need to be more innovative. When you get over conflicts caused by cultural differences, your creativity increases as you have to look at a situation from different angles. The more you experience difficult situations and try hard to solve them, the easier it is to overcome problems in a global market.

That is why, we need intercultural communication skills to survive in this world. I was annoyed sometime, but I will keep being interested in other cultures, values and interacting with people around the world. I am sure my life journey with my Wi-Fi will be wonderful.