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Yokohama, Japan

November 10, 2018

Interview Between International Students

The person I interviewed was my KGU buddy and a former Linfield international student. He has actually studied abroad in two other states in America before Oregon. During the interview, he mentioned that Japan is a low-context culture compared to America. Japanese people tend to expect what the other person is trying to say without specifics. He also noted that Americans show more facial expressions than in Japan and they smile more. As for conflicts, Japanese people don't not have their own opinion but agree to one person or else they are isolated from their own group. If a Japanese person were to visit America, then it would be very difficult for them to express their own opinion. It also proves that Japan is a collectivist country where everyone belongs and works together in a group.

My interviewee also talked about his education in grade school. His interest in English started when he was involved in Labo party (a language school where you can learn from English and Japanese through music and song lyrics). From there, the program also required him to study abroad. When he studied abroad for the first time, he realized that the English he was taught in Japan was very different when being taught in America. During his education, he also went to juku (cram school) like typical Japanese students. His parents made him go to cram school because he barely studied; however, he seemed to enjoy it because his scores increased, and he learned things that he did not know such as math equations. I thought that Japanese students would not enjoy juku because it is a lot of work, and since it is at night they would become tired, but it depends on the students. If the teacher is like a father figure, then they will

enjoy it, but if he/she is boring, they won't get anything out of it. As for grades, usually it is very important for students in Japan to get good grades because they will repeat the same year if they get failing grades. In my interviewee's case, it did not matter in his family. The only thing that was more important in his report card were the comments. It is because his parents thought that a good personality such as kindness is more important than grades. They also said that "If you pick on or bully other students, you will never consider to be a good student even with good grades." I also asked him about marriage and politics from his point of view and Japan. He wants to marry and have children because the parents want to see the future wife and grandchildren, and pass down the apartment that they manage. However, marriage is not important for the rest of Japan. The marriage rate is decreasing which means that the birth rate is also decreasing which makes the entire population rate decrease. It is because more women want to work in the labor force and/or they are not interested in marrying. As for politics, he is sort of aware about what is happening such as nuclear weapons in North Korea, but for other young Japanese people, they are not as interested compared to the older generation. It is because they don't know much about the history of Japan's past, such as the date of when WWII ended. In America, the marriage rate is also decreasing while the divorce rate is increasing, but for politics it is different. Today, the younger generation is motivated to vote in the recent elections because they are the ones that want to change the world. With that being said, they are pushing to have a diverse amount of people running for office who will make the right choice.

From a young age, my interviewee was interested in learning the English language. From there, he wanted to broaden his perspective and study abroad three times in the US. One of the reasons why he chose KGU was because of the buddy program where he can communicate with international students. While he was in America, he learned about the subcultural aspect that

many people don't notice such as the low context/high context. Because the cultures are different, it can be hard adjusting from your normal cultural norms. For his advice to Japanese students wanting to study abroad in America, his advice is to show facial expressions that you feel in your mind and express your opinion (what you are thinking about), and to be positive in talking to other people in order to improve your English. After graduating from college, he has decided to be an English teacher at a local juku where he can work with elementary and junior high school students. I learned that when you first learn a foreign language, it is very interesting but you don't get the same immersion of the language compared to living in that country with that native language. But when you study abroad, it makes an impact and changes your life. You get to learn a different perspective on the people and its culture and when you come home, you incorporate that new knowledge into your normal life. Just like my interviewee, I started learning Japanese when I was in grade school, but since studying abroad I am learning so much more in the culture and people. And for me, it was a little hard to adjust to cultural norms in Japan as well and that is normal when studying abroad. Hopefully when I come home, I can use that knowledge I learned abroad and try to encourage people to not be afraid in traveling overseas, and have an open mind.