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Learning Cultural Interaction Through Teleconferencing: Observations of the First UCTP Class (2006-2007)

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Abstract

During the Fall term of the 2006-2007 academic year, a teleconferencing class called "Broadening Perspectives: Understanding Culture Through Photography" (henceforth referred to as UCTP) was held between Emery Secondary School in California and Reitaku University and Keio University in Japan.

Analysis of the photographs the students chose for the four areas selected for discussion —Self-Introduction, Family, Friendship, and My Culture— as well as of their interactions in class showed that although the students began with differing concepts of the "Self" and different ways of expressing themselves and understanding others, they eventually developed sensitivity towards their own cultural assumptions and towards potential misunderstanding between cultures.

Teleconferencing provides a unique opportunity for students who otherwise would not have had the chance to "meet" across the Pacific. Face-to-face meeting and actual exposure to each other's cultures could have developed the friendships they began to develop as well as deepened cross-cultural understanding. However, the UCTP class has shown that the new technology born in the past decade can provide a novel type of interaction, one that could not even have been imagined before the dawn of the Internet Age.

Ⅰ. Introduction

During the Fall term of the 2006-2007 academic year, the first teleconferencing class was held between Emery Secondary School in California and Reitaku University and Keio

University in Japan. The title of this experimental class was "Broadening Perspectives: Understanding Culture Through Photography" (henceforth referred to as UCTP). The students from each campus uploaded digital photographs on the four themes of Self-introduction, Family, Happiness, and My Culture and discussed each photograph through teleconferencing during the weekly sessions[2].

The present study is based on the following: the photographs and descriptions, transcripts of the sessions, and observations of all but one of the seven 2-hour sessions. The purpose was to observe the interactions over the internet and attempt to answer the following questions: How did the relationships among the students develop over the course of the sessions? Could friendships and a sense of closeness develop through teleconferencing? Further, how did the students develop cultural awareness, both of each other and of their own culture? Finally, did the students develop a "UCTP subculture" in the process, fully comprehensible to only the participants?

A brief description of the project will be followed by a section on methodology and a review of observational studies of schools in both the United States and Japan. A description of the site is followed by an analysis of the photographs used during the UCTP sessions and descriptions and analyses of the interactions between the students. A discussion on the benefits and limitations of cultural interaction over the internet and an analysis of the findings sums up the paper.

A. Background of the Project

Below is a brief description of the three educational institutions chosen for the UCTP classes, followed by a short outline of the class and its members:

Reitaku University is located in Chiba Prefecture, which is just west of Tokyo. The group there was coordinated by Eriko Machi, Professor of the English Department and Clyde Lewis, English Language Lounge Coordinator. Keio University held the UCTP classes at its Hiyoshi campus, just outside of the city of Tokyo. The group at Keio was led by Tomoko Yoshida, Michael Ainge, and Kenichi Kuradate.

Emery Secondary School is located in Emeryville on the east side of San Francisco Bay in California, and like many of the schools in this area, has students from a wide variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. The group at Emery was led by Mark Davis, Mary Esther Augustine, and Donovan Moretz. Readers are referred to Lewis *et al.* (2007) and Lewis *et al.* (2008) for more detailed descriptions of the schools and the UCTP program in

general.

A total of nineteen students, six from Emery and Keio and seven from Reitaku, participated in this program, which continued for seven sessions. They are listed in Table A below:

Table A

Emery (identified as "E")	Reitaku (as "R")	Keio (as "K")
Maurice	Asuka	Momoko
Lucia	Yone	Shoko
Hanan	Taz	Tami
GG	Shizu	Hiro
Lien	Chi	Oka
Alex	Masa	Sae
	Melo	
		(Yuko--Student Assistant)

The students from each campus uploaded digital photographs with descriptions and the reasons for choosing them (on the four themes of Self-introduction, Family, Happiness, and My Culture) onto the Broadening Perspectives webpage (http://flang.keio.ac.jp/uctp/index.html). These photographs were discussed during the joint teleconferencing classes[3]. During the course of the term, the students were randomly assigned to groups, with at least one member from each campus, and worked together over the Internet to produce a photo essay book (Emery, Reitaku, and Keio, 2006) at the end of the term, which was distributed to all the students and others in the three institutions.

The UCTP webpage includes the following: the course syllabus, faculty photos and short biographies, student team assignments, students' uploaded photographs (pass-key encrypted), Broadening Perspectives' Bulletin Board (BPB) (pass-key encrypted), participating organizations' links, and a chat room. Students could comment on each other's photos, decide on a time to meet in the chat room for conversations, or post announcements on the program's message board to "meet" on the net outside of class (Lewis, *et al.* 2007).

B. Method

1. Method used in present study

To more fully understand how students developed through the UCTP class, we decided to study them from a variety of angles using several different methods. First, to examine whether

the students' intercultural sensitivity changed, we administered Bennett's Intercultural Development Inventory (Bennett and Hammer, 1998, 2001) as well as short essay questions before and after the class (See Machi *et al*., 2008 for a detailed discussion). Second, to better understand how students felt after the class, we conducted and analyzed focus groups with students from each site after the termination of the sessions (Manuscript in preparation). As the first study focused on changes *before and after* the classes were conducted, while the second study interviewed students *after* the classes were over, we felt that a third study that observed the process of their interaction with each other over the entire set of sessions was necessary. This study fills this gap.

Observational methods are suitable for studying heretofore unexamined sites and groups to discover what is actually going on, and to discover what questions might be further investigated. Since the class observed was the first UCTP class, observational methods were deemed appropriate for studying the process of its development.

The present study will first analyze the pictures that the students selected to discuss in class. It will then concentrate on analyzing the communication between the students during the teleconferencing class sessions. The students at the Hiyoshi campus of Keio University were observed directly, and the students from the two other campuses were observed on the screens in the Keio classroom during the Fall term of 2006-2007. Notes taken at six of the seven 2-hour sessions, based on methods developed by Spindler (1955, 1963, 1974, 1982, 1987), as well as transcripts of the sessions (totaling 66 pages) will be used, along with the photo essay published by the students (Emery, Reitaku, and Keio, 2006) and the information on the UCTP webpage.

2. Ethnography as a method for observing classes

Observational studies have traditionally been conducted in the field of anthropology, studying the lives of peoples from remote societies that had not yet been studied, living with them and participating in their lives over several years. Since the middle of the 20th century the methods used in anthropology have come to be employed in studying less traditional sites, such as schools and classrooms in industrialized societies (Muro-Yokokawa, 1998).

George and Louise Spindler and their students have pioneered in applying ethnographic methods to educational settings (Spindler, 1987, pp. 78-84). The books they have edited (George Spindler, 1955, 1963, 1974, 1982, 1987; Spindler and Spindler, 1987, 1994) include (in addition to observational case studies by various writers) chapters devoted to the

methodology of observational research--particularly in Doing the Ethnography of Schooling (Spindler, 1982)--(See Muro-Yokokawa, 1998 for more details). The present study is based on methods learned through the Spindlers' classes at Stanford University as well as from their books. Other books on qualitative methods include those by Glaser & Strauss (1967), Schatzman & Strauss (1973), Johnson (1975), Agar (1980), Bogdan & Biklen (1982), Louis (1982) and van Willigen & Dewait (1985), and Emerson (2001).

Of particular interest to the present study are observational studies conducted at educational institutions involving the two cultures that the UCTP participants come from. Many ethnographic studies of schools in the United States and Canada, particularly of minority schools or of the academically disadvantaged, have been conducted since the 1960s. Some of these studies have been on Native American schools (King, 1967; Wolcott,1967; Erikson and Mohatt, 1982), others on African-American Schools (Rosenfeld, 1971; McDermott, 1974; Rist, 1979), and others on the academically or socially-disadvantaged of all ethnic groups (Everhart, 1982; Wilcox, 1982; Cusick, 1983; Page, 1987) or on white minorities such as the Amish and the Hutterites (Hostetler, 1971; 1974).

There have also been a number of observational and anthropological studies on the adjustment of Japanese children at schools in the U.S., including Minoura's study on Japanese children in Los Angeles (1980), that of Farkas on the children of the Japanese car manufacturers in Ohio (1983), and Muro's study of Japanese children in schools in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (1988).

On the other side of the Pacific, ethnographic studies on schools in Japan include those on 15 kindergartens (Catherine Lewis, 1984), pre-schools and elementary schools (Catherine Lewis, 1995), an elementary school (Cummings, 1980), a junior high school (Singleton, 1967), and five high schools (Rohlen, 1983). For more details on how observational studies on a smaller scale are conducted, readers are referred to Muro-Yokokawa (1998).

The current study applies observational methods to a teleconferencing class. Although only one of the groups could be observed directly, the other two groups could be seen and heard on the screen. It is hoped that further studies from the viewpoint of the other two campuses can provide different angles on the project as a whole.

Ⅱ. Description of Site and Activities

A. The Classroom in Keio, and Reitaku and Emery through the screens

The classroom used for UCTP at Keio's Hiyoshi campus is a light, airy room surrounded on

two sides by tall windows that let in a lot of natural light. In the center there is a long white table, which is actually a semi-circle connected to an oblong table. The students sit around this table on the orange, red, blue, turquoise, green and yellow chairs that surround the table. They are dressed in shirts, sweaters, and parkas. Various faculty members and technical staff sit a little apart from the table. Towards the left of the table, the transcriber types rapidly on her keyboard. In front of them to the left is a large screen that shows the students from all three campuses and another screen that shows "net meeting", with transcripts by Yuko, the student assistant.

The students at Reitaku are sitting in a semi-circle a little distance from a round table in front of them. The students in Emery are also sitting in a semi-circle, with no table in the middle, sometimes glancing at the screen a little to the left of them. (This changed in the later sessions as more space became available.) The students at Emery appear to be sitting up straighter compared to the students in Japan, who often lean forward or sprawl on the table, partly out of an attempt to hear the exchange over the internet more clearly.

B. Interactions with the other campuses

The students at Keio speak towards the microphone on the table, while looking at the students from the other two campuses on the screen. When they want to speak with someone on the other campuses, they call out that person's name and throw a yellow ball at the screen. Someone at that campus throws a similar yellow ball at the person named, thereby giving the illusion that the ball crossed the ocean and fell into the lap of the respondent:

EXAMPLE
Momo: Alex, what do you think about this dish? (Throws ball at screen)
(Ball is thrown to Alex)
Alex: I think the food in my restaurant is much better!

Most sessions began at 9:00 AM Saturday, Tokyo time, which is 5pm Friday in California, and continued for about 2 hours. In the beginning, all the students from one campus introduced each of their pictures on the theme under discussion, after which the students on the other campuses (and sometimes at their own campus) asked questions or made comments before moving on to explanations at the next campus. In the later sessions students from each of the three campuses took turns introducing their picture, to prevent students from only one

campus from talking at length at any one time. All four of the themes were discussed in this way.

Let us look at how one of the sessions start:

> Beginning of Week 3:
>
> Machi-sensei can you see this [net meeting]? Can you please connect with us as soon as your Polycom is up?
>
> Machi: Yes, I can type in. Net meeting is working.

> Third week of Broadening Perspectives:
>
> Now that we have started to know each other a little bit, I think it's a good idea to start to change how we do things.
>
> This week: we will start with Lien, ok this is for ~~ (throws ball)

> At this point, Lien starts to talk about her picture for the week.
>
> (Transcript, Week 3)

Before we look at the exchange between the students, let us see what photographs the students chose to illustrate each of the four themes.

III. The Photographs
A. Descriptions of the Pictures

Each of the students was asked to submit a digital photograph with explanations on the following four themes: Self Introduction, Family, Happiness, and My Culture[4]. The photographs will be analyzed below by topic (See Appendix 1):

> ① Self Introduction
>
> Emery —Of the six pictures, three (G.G., Lucia, Maurice) are pictures of the individual introducing him/herself, and one of them is a simple portrait with no other significant objects included. The other three pictures (Lien, Alex, Hanan) are pictures of objects or places, with two of the pictures showing personal creations [a painting (Lien) and a computer (Alex)] by the individuals concerned. There are no pictures of groups.

Reitaku —Of the seven pictures, only two (Masa, Chii) are pictures of individuals, and both of them are doing something. The one other picture with people in it is a group picture of a sports team (Yone), but the individual concerned is not identified. The other four pictures (Melo, Shizu, Asuka, Taz) are pictures of objects and places without people, two of them of food (Melo, Azuka).

Keio —Of the six pictures, two are of individuals (Hiro, Tami), both surrounded by objects that identify their activities. The three pictures of groups (Yuko, Sae, Oka-chan) are all of sports teams, and only in one case (Yuko) is the individual specifically identified. The other two pictures are of places (Shoko's university) and objects (equipment from Momoko's favorite sports).

② Family

Emery Of the six pictures, four (G.G.,Hanan, Alex, Lucia) are group pictures, two (G.G.,Hanan) of extended families and two (Alex, Lucia) of nuclear families. The one picture of a baby (Lien) represents the whole family, again an extended family. The one remaining picture (of Alex's dining table) is symbolic.

Reitaku Of the seven pictures, only two (Chii, Asuka) show either group or representative pictures of their family of birth (extended family). A symbolic picture (Melo) of a bunch of grapes with hands reaching out represents a nuclear family. The other four (Masa, Shizu, Taz, Yone) pictures are all of "families" that are not related by blood, either of an adopted host family (Masa), or of groups of friends brought together by proximity (Shizu, Taz, Yone).

Keio Only one (Momoko) picture shows all the members of an extended family. Of the remaining pictures, three (Oka-chan, Yuko, Sae) are of pairs of siblings representing the whole nuclear family. The other three are of objects connecting the family (Hiro's television, Shoko's cell phone, and Tami's letters).

③ Happiness:

Emery Of the six pictures, three (Hanan, Lien, Alex) deal with or actually show family members, and two (Maurice, G.G.) are related to friends. Only one (Lucia)

deals with a personal interest, shopping.

Reitaku The pictures are most varied here. Of the two (Aska, Masa) that deal with family, one (Aska) is of the family of birth, and one (Masa) of a host family. Of the two (Chii, Melo) that deal with friends, one is of the friendship with a student from Emery. There is also one composite picture of multiple photographs (Taz), and one (Yone) of personal interest (food).

Keio Of the six pictures, only two (Hiro, Sae) show any people, and both are doing something (Hiro eating, Sae walking). The other four (Tami, Shoko, Oka-chan, Momoko) pictures show examples of personal interests or hobbies (Tami's collection of antiques, Shoko's tea ceremony building, Oka-chan's violin, Momoko's bath.) All six pictures center on the individual rather than on friends or family.

④ My Culture:

Emery Of the three (Lucia, Lien, G.G.) dealing with traditional themes, two (Lien, G.G.) were of religious activities. On the other hand, one (Hanan) deals with modern, global culture (technology), and one with the individual (Maurice). The last one (Alex) is a composite picture of the new subculture born from the interactions inside the UCTP class.

Reitaku There is also one (Melo) composite picture of the new subculture born from the interactions within the UCTP class at Reitaku. The other pictures are split between introducing modern culture and traditional culture. The three (Aska, Yone, Masa) dealing with modern culture introduce trends currently popular in other parts of the world—"Otaku" culture, manga, and Japanese fashion. The three (Taz. Chii, Shizu) dealing with traditional culture introduce elements considered "typically Japanese"— mochi, kimonos, and tatami rooms.

Keio The six pictures here include only one (Sae) example from "traditional" culture—rice in its many manifestations. There is also one (Tami) photo of friends from many cultures. The other four (Hiro, Momoko, Oka-chan, Shoko) deal with culture more on the level of everyday life—sleeping on the train (Hiro), using cell

phones (Momoko), ecological consciousness (Oka-chan), and interest in brand name fashions (Shoko).

B. <u>Common themes and Differences— Comparisons and Contrasts</u>

1. Differing concepts of the "Self"

The clearest difference appeared among the first set of pictures, "Self Introduction".

First, the explanations accompanying the pictures from Emery are generally on a positive note, pointing out the strong points of each individual:

- "I took a picture of a painting I am most proud of." (Lien)
- …my avid participation in both school and church…two is always better than one." (Maurice)

  "This is a huge accomplishment for me…" (Alex)

  "…I can say that I'm a really gregarious person, hardy, and a very very funny one" (G.G.)

  "I love learning new things and am happy that I have the chance to explore other peoples' culture in the world." (Lucia)

Second, the focus of the pictures from Emery is on the <u>individual</u>. In other words, introducing the "self" is equated with introducing the "individual". The comments above introduce individual personalities and accomplishments. The answer to the question of "Self-Identity" is assumed to be that of the personality and individuality that resides within a particular person.

On the other hand, in introductions of the "Self", students from both Japanese schools do not necessarily focus on the individual. Although two pictures each from both Reitaku and Keio are of individuals, the focus is on what they <u>do</u> or where they <u>belong</u>, rather than on their personalities or achievements:

- "I like traveling…other cultures help me grow as a person, and inspire me to study foreign languages." (Masa-R)
- "I am a senior in the English Department at Reitaku University. I belong to the Dance Club. I have been dancing for 4 years." (Chii-R)
- "[These are]…reference books that I used to prepare for entrance exams [that] represent my high school days…comic books which represent my childhood…[and]

CDs which represent me now." (Hiro-K)

– "I'm a freshman and major in Business and Commerce…I like traveling abroad so I can experience differences in culture and religion." (Tami-K)

[All quotes are from Emery, Reitaku, and Keio, 2006]

Further, four of the pictures from Japan introducing "Self"(one from Reitaku and three from Keio) are group pictures; further, only one of the comments on the group pictures specifically identifies the individual concerned. The individual is not even in the other six pictures —or <u>any</u> people, for that matter. They are all pictures of objects or places. There was only one such picture (Hanan's picture of her neighborhood) from Emery.

In a book entitled <u>Japanese Sense of Self</u>, Rosenberger quotes the following passage on how the Western assumption that "self" is synonymous with the "individual" does not hold with the Japanese concept of the self:

> The study of Japanese concepts of self helps us as Western-trained scholars to understand the self as firmly embedded in the culturally constructed world. The very word for self in Japanese, *jibun*, implies that self is not an essentiality apart from the social realm. *Jibun* literally means "self part"—a part of a larger whole that consists of groups and relationships. *Jibun* is always valued in relation to that larger whole.
>
> (Dumont, 1970, as quoted in Rosenberger, 1992)

The questions from Emery to the Japanese students reveal the contrasting concepts of the self. The students from Emery ask questions of individual preference ("What do you like best?") or try to fill in details of daily habits and routines by asking specific questions that differentiate the individual from the sum of his activities and affiliations:

– "What do you like best in your university?"

– "So you love nature? Does your major in college prepare you to work in nature?"

– "Who's your favorite artist?"

– "Do you ever drink out of the cups or are they for decoration?"

– "Do you have trouble sleeping because you drink so much coffee?"

– "Which of those items in the picture most represents yourself?"

(Transcript of Week 2)

2. Similarities across Cultures, Differences within Cultures

The pictures chosen for "Family" and "Happiness" sometimes show more similarities across cultures rather than within cultures. For example, three of the seven pictures of "Family" from Emery were of extended families or representatives of extended families. Both of the pictures of blood-related families from Reitaku were of extended families.

On the other hand, all the pictures from Keio, whether of the family, representatives of the family, or representative objects, are of nuclear families, with the exception of one photograph which also includes a grandmother.

The dining table—"a place where family members can come together and talk and 'hang out'"— chosen by Maurice from Emery, is very similar in symbolic meaning to the bunch of grapes chosen by Melo of Reitaku—"we always eat grapes when we talk and watch TV." Regarding "Happiness", the theme of food was common to all three campuses, and both Reitaku and Emery students included "family" and "friends" as important to their happiness.

All six of the students from Keio, however, chose pictures of interests, daily pleasures (bathing, eating) or hobbies that gave them individual happiness rather than anything directly related to family or friends. Also, it was interesting that four of the seven students at Reitaku chose people that were not related to them by blood as "Family". The reason many of them gave was that they were currently not living with their family of birth.

One of the differences across cultures was that the Emery students often defined what family means to them, while the Reitaku students only did this when explaining why they chose people not related to them by blood:

Emery
– "The word FAMILY means to me something and someone who you can rely on and trust." (G.G.)
– "She shows that family is about unconditional love and care." (Lien)
      Vs.
Reitaku
– "But they are like a real family. You cannot imagine how close they are." (Masa)
– "We all share common feeling [sic], such as sadness, happiness, sometimes anger. "It is not too much to say 'This is my family in Tokyo.'"(Taz)
– "Since we live together, we help each other. They are very important to me and they are like my sisters." (Shizu)

(All quotes are from Emery, Reitaku, and Keio, 2006)

Another difference is that Japanese students talk more about what the family <u>does</u> together (four out of seven at Reitaku, three out of six at Keio)—for example, eat grapes, watch TV, go out to restaurants, or visit family graves together. Although two of the six Emery students do mention activities their families do together, it is not central to their definition of family. Rosenberger (1992) has this to say about the importance of material objects in connecting the multiplicity of selves in Japan:

> Multiplicity of selves also emerges in relations with material objects. Objects are invested with cultural meanings and therefore their use helps construct various aspects of selves and social relations…this idea [is extended] into different arrangements of nature—cherry blossoms around a temple or urban greenery—that also constitute various interactions of self and society. (p. 15)

3. The Different Ways of Understanding "Culture"

The students showed a wide variety of ways of interpreting the concept of "culture". Among the students at Emery, two chose religious themes—a Hindu temple and a Buddhist shrine honoring ancestors. Although the latter is very similar to the family shrines in many Japanese homes, none of the Japanese chose this or any other religious theme as representative of his or her culture.

The others at Emery included one on African clothes, which represent the tradition of the land where Lucia was born, one on the future culture of technology, and one that dealt with the constantly changing and unpredictable nature of life. There was also one, by Alex, on the composite subculture that the students from the three campuses had built together. It became the cover of the photo book the students put together at the end of the term (Emery, Reitaku, and Keio, 2006).

There was also one picture from Reitaku of a video screen showing the three campuses which represents the composite subculture born from interaction within the UCTP class. The other pictures split evenly between "traditional" Japanese culture—*mochi, kimonos, and tatami rooms*—and modern versions of Japanese culture—maid cafes and otaku, *manga*, and men's fashion magazines. Both appear to manifest a certain self-consciousness about what foreigners might consider to be "Japanese culture". Further, the explanations of traditional culture often revealed difficulty in explaining traditional Japanese objects and practices to those not familiar with them:

- We have Tatami mat for flooring and Shoji for sub-window. (Shizu)
- For example, we have Kimono, Yukata, and Hakama for both men and for women. The clothes which people are wearing in the picture is the Hakama. We wear the Hakama especially in the graduation ceremony. (Chii)

Both explanations repeat Japanese words without defining them, though more details were given when describing the pictures during the sessions. Contrast this with the description of Hakama by Yuko, who lived in the United States until high school. It shows a more meta-cultural awareness of such terms viewed from the outside:

- The (navy) clothes I'm wearing is called "hakama." It looks like a skirt but it's actually really billowy pants (Yuko)

The pictures from Keio take a different approach and are more tied to culture as seen in everyday life—sleeping on the train, using cell phones, shopping for brand name bags, and becoming aware of ecology. Even the picture dealing with rice explains how its various derivations have become a part of Japanese food products. This approach may stem from the fact that most of the students had experience abroad and/or had taken classes in culture and communication.

Ⅳ. Interactions on Culture

The discussions over the internet showed that over time the students developed a better understanding of each other's culture. There were, however, certain cultural elements that remained difficult to understand or to explain. Usually it was more difficult for the American students to understand Japanese culture than the other way around. In most part this was because American culture and businesses have permeated all parts of the world, so that Japanese students were already familiar with McDonald's or Hip Hop music. The Japanese students are also older and more widely traveled, and many of them have lived in the United States. Japanese students may also have asked for less clarification, as they are more reluctant to ask questions, often assuming that it is either their own lack of English ability or their lack of knowledge which is to blame (Muro, 2000).

A. Questions that revealed a lack of understanding the whole picture

Especially in the beginning, there were questions that revealed that the students from Emery did not understand exactly what the Japanese students were talking about:

Melo-R[5]: Onigiri is a rice ball and Japanese people always eat it as a meal or a snack. I eat it almost everyday…

It's made of salmon, rice, and dried seaweed.

…

Q-Emery: What do you like to put in the onigiri?

A: Iwanori. Dried Seaweed.

Q: Is iwanori sweet?

A: No, it's not sweet, it's salty.

Q: Can you eat that without seafood? Because I don't like anything that comes from the ocean.

A: You can put anything you want in it.

Q: Do you guys have hot sauce? (tabasco) Do you eat rice with hot sauce?

(Transcript from Week 2)

The questions about seaweed revealed that the students were really not familiar with its taste, or did not understand that onigiri is essentially a rice ball. Although the question about using hot sauce on rice seems strange by Japanese standards, hot sauces are often eaten with Mexican rice or gumbo in the United States.

It would have been more helpful to provide an analogy in the beginning to something in their culture—"They are quick, convenient things to eat, like hot dogs or hamburgers."—rather than let the discussion get side tracked into the merits and tastes of seaweed. Although this is missing in the transcript, one of the Emery students eventually provided such an analogy.

Another example is that of the meaning of cherry blossoms in Japan. This is how Taz from Reitaku began to introduce himself:

– "There are many cherry blossoms in Shizuoka and it is very beautiful in the spring. When I see these cherry blossoms, I recognize that I'm Japanese."

(Transcript, Week 2)

Although the Emery students did not pursue this point, there have been examples of cases when the cultural meaning of cherry blossoms and cherry blossom-viewing was totally lost to non-Japanese. In the Japanese version of his book on intercultural communication, John Condon (1980) described how he showed a picture of cherry blossom-viewing to a class of American students and asked them to point out what was significant. The most common answer was "Shoes!". Why were there shoes outside, lined up by the mat? I have showed a picture of cherry blossom viewing in class to international students and gotten a similar response. To them, the cherry blossoms are part of the background, just as they would be in Japan when the flowers are replaced with leaves a few weeks later.

B. Detailed explanations vs. explanations in context/comparisons

Some detailed cultural explanations have no meaning if they are not explained outside of the context in which they appear. For example, flooding the Emery students with details about the special foods eaten in Japan during New Year's (Osechi) is only meaningful if they know of the significance of New Year's in Japan (someone did point this out later in a different context) and have some idea of how the colorful and elaborate foods are arranged in a lacquer box:

Osechi explanation

Maurice-E:　What do you usually eat on New Year's Day in Japan?

Chi-R:　With just my family, my mother, dad and brother we eat osechi. Traditional dish that we eat in the New Year. We call it osechi ryouri.

It's in a box. There's like shrimp, beans. There's meaning for everything you eat. Some bring happiness. Some bring longevity. So we eat that on New Year's.

Lein-E:　Do you have special decorations for New Year's?

Chi-R:　Yes, we put bamboo in front of the house. Actually pine? Decorated pine branches in front of the house--in front of the door.

> Most of the cars put [on] a rope ... a special decorative rope. It's hard to explain this in words. (Transcript, Week 4)

On the other hand, the Japanese students often did not pursue things that they did not fully understand. For example, when there was a discussion on baseball, it appeared that Hiro from Keio (and perhaps some of the other Japanese) did not immediately understand what "World Series" meant; yet neither he nor the other Japanese students asked any questions and let the discussion go on:

> Q: We're getting ready to start the World Series here.
> A: Let's enjoy the World Series. (Transcript, Week 2)

This partly stems from a difference in styles of explaining and asking questions. Americans try to clarify things step by step (Sakamoto, 2004, p. 49-50), while Japanese are more apt to listen quietly to the end. In <u>With Respect to the Japanese</u> Condon (1984) includes the following complaints (from a 10-item list) that Japanese often make of American patterns of communication:

1. *Americans talk too much* "they seem uncomfortable with silence and as a result chatter on about meaningless things."
2. *Americans don't listen enough* "They seem too eager to raise questions and put forth their own ideas before hearing out what is to be said."
3. *Americans are too direct in asking questions, giving opinions, and poking fun* (p. 37)

The corollary reaction of Americans to the reluctance of Japanese to ask questions or clarify points is expressed as:

1. *The Japanese are so polite and so cautious that we never know what they are thinking* "Some Japanese ask probing questions, but most just listen quietly, nodding and seeming to agree.
2. *The Japanese use vague words and ambiguous expressions so that it is hard to know where they stand.* (Condon, 1984, p. 38)

C. Disadvantages of Interaction over the Internet

Especially during the first few UCTP sessions, problems with internet connection often disrupted the discussions. Sometimes the two Japanese institutions were connected with each other, but Emery was disconnected, or only one of the schools would be connected with Emery. Even when connected, the sound quality would sometimes be poor, or the images stilted or hard to see. This made communication especially difficult, particularly for those speaking in a foreign language, as many of the non-verbal and paralinguistic cues were also cut off.

Even when the connections are relatively good, it is hard to read facial expressions and detect changing tones of voice through the screen; those who are not clear verbally are placed at a disadvantage when talking through the screens. This made communication difficult especially for the Japanese, who were already speaking in a language that was not native to them and also rely more on non-verbal communication to begin with:

> …in many ways, Japanese prefer nonverbal messages to those expressed in words. Americans, on the other hand, place much more trust in words than on fleeting impressions…in one, spoken words are not so highly prized and are not necessarily to be taken at face value. In the other, verbal messages are central and people are held accountable for what they say. (Condon, 1984, p. 45)

D. Ability to see the other's perspective—"Emery, do you know…"

As the weeks went by, however, the Japanese students in particular began to see the importance of clarifying cultural customs, either by explaining or demonstrating what they were trying to describe. Questions such as "Emery, do you know x...?" and "Emery, do you understand?" "Should we demonstrate?" became more frequent, as can be seen from this discussion on Japanese comics:

> Sae-K: Do you read girl's comics?
> Yone-R: I like "Fushigi Yugi". It's a little old…
>   *Emery, do you know "One Piece" or "Naruto "or "Dragon Ball"?
>   Do you know "One Piece"?
> Maurice-E: Yeah! I know that!   (Transcript, Week 7)

Instead of trying to explain everything in words, sometimes it was easier just to demonstrate. For example, when Shoko-K was talking about tea ceremonies, a question came up about how people sit on <u>tatami</u> mats in Japan. Hiro-K demonstrated by sitting on the table, legs folded (Transcript, Week 4).

Similarly, when Taz from Reitaku explained how to make <u>mochi</u> (pounded rice cakes), Hiro from Keio again offered to demonstrate, using an umbrella as the mallet or pounder:

> Taz-R: This is a picture of making mochi. In the winter we make mochi. Mochi is steamed rice made into a rice cake. This is the traditional way to make mochi, but now not many Japanese people make mochi this way. Recently, we make mochi by machine…
>
> *Chi-R: Can you imagine what these are Emery? Have you ever ate [sic] mochi?
>
> Alex-E: No, I've never.
>
> *Hiro-K: I'll demonstrate it. *with SAE*
>
> Tomoko: Thank you Hiro! You can sit down. (Transcript, Week 8)

E. <u>Cultural Understanding and Misunderstanding</u>

1. Culture in the abstract vs. "living" culture

As was mentioned in the section on pictures of "My Culture", students interpreted the term "culture" in various ways. Some gave examples from "culture" in more static, traditional forms such as religion or New Year foods, while others gave more personal, current examples from daily life.

When talking about culture with people who are not familiar with that culture, there are two tendencies that seem to appear. One is to tailor the cultural example to what the students feel "foreigners" think is "typical" of that culture—Mt. Fuji, kimonos, cherry blossoms, or the more modern equivalents of <u>manga</u> or high tech goods. The other is to go into minute detail trying to explain traditional objects or practices, often using terms that are in themselves confusing to the other side:

> – "…we eat <u>osechi</u>. Traditional dish that we eat in the New year's.
> – We call it <u>osechi ryouri</u>."
> – "We have a tatami mat for the floor and a shoji for the window."

2. Placing cultural elements in context

Some elements cause misunderstanding because the same things are interpreted differently by people of different cultures. Other cultural elements can only be understood when interpreted into the context of one's own culture. Photographs, that by their very nature often include unintended features and items, can give birth to interesting discussions that reveal these differing interpretations and provide opportunities to re-state the unfamiliar elements in terms of one's own culture.

In the following example, the specific color of the jackets the students from Reitaku wore appeared to be salient to the Emery students, but for a different reason than for the Japanese students:

> Taz-R: I am a member of the school festival committee and this picture shows the members of my Department…
>
> *Q-E: Why are you all wearing blue jackets?
>
> A: I don't know. When I entered the university, [or] from when the school festival started, the jacket has been blue.
>
> *Q: Is blue your school color?
>
> A: No, the General Affairs Department's is blue, other Departments are different colors…
>
> Q: What is the school color?
>
> A: Green.
>
> Q: What is Emery's school color?
>
> A: Blue and Gold.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Transcript of Week 3)

The Emery students also tried to provide analogies from their own culture (homecoming, pep rally) to try to understand what a "school festival" is in Japan:

> Q: Emery, do you have a school festival?
>
> *A: No, we don't. But a pep rally is almost like a school festival. Homecoming is also like one. This is when people come together to have a competition to choose the King. Homecoming is also like a place where classes come together and unify and show school spirit. It gets students excited about school. It's a chance for alumni to come back, too.　　(Transcript of Week 3)

Since school colors are a significant cultural morpheme in the United States, the question from Emery about the color of jackets revealed that they thought the color itself (blue) had some significance, while the Japanese students probably did not see significance in the color per se, but rather saw wearing the same color (any color) as a symbol of group unity. School festivals are similarly understood in the context of Homecoming and pep rallies, with which the students from Emery are familiar.

3. Forming their own Subculture/Friendships

Towards the end of the 8-week sessions, the students in the UCTP program began to develop a consciousness of forming their own subculture, a set of shared experiences, and a form of friendship across the screens. The students from Reitaku and Keio had occasion to meet each other in person both during and after the program, and appeared to feel like they were instant friends when they did.[6] Although we know only of Melo from Reitaku who actually visited Emery, some of the students keep contact over MySpace and Facebook.

a) Conscious Expressions of a Shared Subculture

Melo chose a photograph of herself at Emery with Alex for the "Happiness" section. She and Alex also created different composite pictures for their "Culture" section. Alex took a picture of all the sweets that the Japanese students had sent, and labeled the picture "TOMODACHI" [Friends]. Melo took a picture of a composite screen showing the three screens from all three campuses to express her "Culture".

b) Inside Jokes and Allusions to the Past:

As the weeks went by, the students also began to share past experiences and jokes among themselves. The Japanese bathtub Momoko from Keio chose for her "Happiness" picture generated a lot of discussion and explanations:

> MOMOKO-K: My happiest time is when I'm taking a bath. I love taking a bath. Everyday I'm in the bathtub for about an hour. Sometimes it's more than an hour when I feel really relaxed. In there, I think about many things like what did I do today? What am I gonna do tomorrow? Sometimes about my life. I also read magazines. You see the lid? I put the lid on the bath and then put the magazine on top of it to read the

                    magazine.

                    …..

       Q-E: Is the pillow soft? [the pink hearted-shaped pillow on the edge of the
                    bathtub]

           A: The pillow is very soft and feels good.

           Q: Do you use candles to take baths?

           A: No. Do you?

    Aska-R: Yes. I use candles with a nice smell.

                    …..

                    ~Comparison with American bath tubs: Deeper bath tub in Japan. It
                    also looks smaller. Twice the depth.

     Gigi-E: Do you talk to yourself?

                    …..

           A: I think in Japan we wash our body and faces and hair and then go into
                    the bath. We usually take our time. About a half hour or an hour in the
                    bath tub. Everybody goes into the same bath tub so we have to keep it
                    clean. There's a big difference.

           Q: How do you keep the water hot?

           A: We can keep the water hot automatically, when we press the button,
                    the machine works and keeps the water hot. A heating system in the
                    bathtub.

                                    (Abbreviated version, from Transcript, Week 6)

Later on, when Hiro from Keio said something about how the trains and buses in the
United States were not as safe as those in Japan, there was an allusion to the Japanese
bathtubs from Emery:

    Hiro-K: Which is more dangerous, using buses or using the subway?

   *Emery: Bus. I don't see the danger of sleeping on a train. *It's more dangerous to
                    sleep in a bathtub than on a train.* [Emphasis mine]

                                    (Transcript, Week 7)

Another inside joke that surfaced later was generated by the picture that Hiro posted

of himself sleeping on the train in the section of "My Culture". Here is how the original conversation went:

Hiro: …. I think one of the most original factor[s] is that Japan is still very peaceful. In Europe and the US I heard that it's incredible to sleep on the train. That's why I think this represents Japanese culture well.

…..

Q: Who took this picture?

A (Hiro):   My friend took it for me. I really appreciate her cooperation.

HER?! at 11pm at night?

Q: How long have you known her?

A (Hiro):   Actually I'm talking about Japanese culture and not about my personal life. Please comment about my picture.

Hiro will become a great politician, not mentioning his personal life and [sic] all   (Transcript, Week 6)

The following week, the topic of the mysterious female photographer came up again in connection with Maurice's photograph from Emery and was picked up by Melo and Aska from Reitaku and Oka and Hiro from Keio. Note that this conversation transverses all three campuses:

Maurice-E: [I don't want to jump], Not right now…

it's to show that I'm spontaneous.

Oka&Hiro-K: Who took the picture? (You are today's victim…)

Hiro-K: Last class, she was really just my friend.

Melo-R: It's ok. Take it easy.

Aska-R: Why are you so upset?

Hiro-K: Nothing!   (Transcript, Week 7-- Last week)

c) Shared objects—the yellow ball, snacks, gifts

As is discussed in some detail in Lewis, *et al.* (2007, p. 4-5), the students had opportunities to share objects in the real world as well as in the virtual world. The yellow balls mentioned above gave the illusion that the three campuses were within ball-throwing distance. The

students also had a chance to share snacks from the other side of the Pacific while observing each other taste the unfamiliar snacks they had sent to the other side. In addition, at Christmas time students from each of the campuses sent gifts to students in the other two campuses, and opened them on screen. In this way, they were able to share more than what the two senses-- of sight and sound-- allowed over the screens, and were able to add a sense of reality to their virtual experiences.

The question of whether similar results can be replicated is discussed in the section below:

Ⅴ. The Benefits and Limits of Cultural Interaction over the Net
A. Advantages

One of the many advantages of this kind of class is that it gives those who might otherwise not have had the chance the opportunity to interact and become familiar with one another in an educational setting, enabling them to ask questions that may have gone unasked and unanswered. For example, after the first day of class, some students from Reitaku (Japan) were surprised to learn that all of the students from Emery Secondary school were from different ethnic backgrounds. Teleconferencing allowed the participants to make observations that they would have been unable to had the class been between pen pals or strictly based on e-mails.

When the students from Keio University and Reitaku University first met in person, they said they felt as though they had known one another for a long time, since they had been meeting and chatting with each other every week through teleconferencing. They were able to openly express their opinions and ideas from the beginning, which is unusual in the more formal atmosphere of Japan.

The structure of this class (e.g. videoconferencing, intercultural, led by instructors) allowed participants to overcome some of the difficulties associated with meeting new people, especially those from an unfamiliar culture. Although the students were from "separate" cultures, they were able to overcome their initial nervousness and better understand that people can see and understand the world through multiple perspectives.

Another advantage was that since all three groups were in their home culture, none of the groups had the cultural advantage of surrounding everyone else with their own culture, as would have been the case had the class been held entirely in either Japan or the United States. Teleconferencing can provide a neutral third culture within which discussions can be held.

B. Limitations

While there are many advantages to a class like UCTP, there are also limitations. While not being hosted by either culture provided a more neutral cultural milieu, the setting also made time and distance the two biggest obstacles to smoother communication. The students from Emery Secondary (California) were by and large excluded from actually meeting the Japanese students face-to-face (with the exception of Melo, who traveled to California to meet Alex).

Although a sense of familiarity grew from socialization during the teleconferencing class, it did limit some of the benefits which could be gained from face –to-face meetings. Had the students been given the opportunity to meet each other *outside of* class, the friendships that were established *during* class could have been strengthened.

Although the students from Keio University and Reitaku University were both in Japan, the two-hour distance between the two campuses made meeting each other difficult, even though the instructors did organize events at midway locations off campus. For the Emery Secondary School students, distance would prove even more of a hindrance, as students would have had to pay for an airplane flight, hotel, and other expenses.

Conversations outside of class could have helped the Emery Secondary School students to better understand some of the things discussed in class (e.g. mochi making). Communication through sight and sound alone can be limiting, especially when the sound quality or images were not always clear.

During the semester that UCTP was conducted, California was 16 hours behind Japan, which made gathering the students difficult. Students in Japan were expected to be at the school at 9 am on a Saturday, while the American students had to wait until 5 pm Friday night. In addition, differences in academic calendars, daylight savings time changing in the middle of the course, as well as holidays and school festivals disrupted the schedule.

Conclusion

Through observing the students in the UCTP class from their first session to their last, a unified "class" seemed to emerge from what originally were three separate groups of students on three separate screens. What at first seemed like a group of six young people at Keio seated around a table anxiously leaning towards a screen trying to discern the sounds of varying quality, gradually evolved into an exchange of jokes and explanations going back and forth among students at the three campuses. Even though they were, in fact, only connected by the screens in front of them, they appeared to become members of a single class.

In that sense, "real" relationships did seem to develop among the members of this far-flung class. Without the benefits of the internet and the framework provided by this class, it is unlikely that the six high school students from a suburb of San Francisco would have ended up in the same class as college students from the Tokyo metropolitan area.

In fact, it was almost as unlikely that underclassmen from the southern end of the greater Tokyo Metropolitan area would ever have met upperclassmen on the far western end of the area, separated as they were by over two hours of travel by public transportation. In addition, in age-conscious Japan, the upperclassmen at Reitaku and the freshmen and sophomores at Keio were unlikely to form friendships under other circumstances, or even be in the same classroom.[7]

After their seven sessions together, the people on the other end of the screen were no longer "the American kids", but became Alex, Maurice, Lucia, G.G., Lien, and Hanan. Similarly, "the Reitaku students" became Asuka, Melo, Masa, Shizu,, Taz, Chii, and Yone. The same was presumably true of their feelings towards the Keio students. When the students from the two Japanese universities met in person, they acted like old friends. After Melo visited Emery and became friends with Alex, they both chose composite pictures representing their UCTP experience as "My Culture".

The above examples show that teleconferencing provides opportunities to meet and interact with people who they would otherwise not meet, and also show that such contact helps to break down the initial barriers when meeting in person. The same examples also show, however, that face to face contact appears necessary for the relationship to develop further. It would be interesting to see how the students would feel if they were to meet each other in person for the first time after several years have passed.

From the point of view of cultural awareness, particularly self-consciousness about one's own culture, the benefits were more apparent. The analysis of the photographs they selected in the four areas—Self-Introduction, Family, Friendship, and My Culture—and of the discussions that developed over these photographs showed that although they began with basic differences in concepts of the "Self" as well as with different approaches to expressing themselves and understanding others, the students from the three campuses eventually became more sensitive towards potential cultural misunderstanding.

Instead of assuming that the Emery students understood words and concepts that they themselves were already familiar with, the Japanese students started asking "Emery, do you understand?" far more often in the later sessions. The Emery students in turn began to

provide analogies that tried to put unfamiliar events like Japanese school festivals into the context of events they were already familiar with. It is hoped that the ongoing study based on post-session focus groups will reveal how the students themselves felt about becoming more culturally aware.

Towards the end of the sessions, the students started to share inside jokes and allusions as well as the sweets and presents from each other that they were able to share on-screen. Had the class continued a while longer and the students had the opportunity to meet each other in person, these shared experiences might have developed into what might be called a "UCTP subculture". In fact, Alex from Emery and Melo from Reitaku—who did meet each other and become friends--both posted different composite pictures symbolizing their UCTP experience as their "My Culture" photograph. Again it will be interesting to see how the students themselves felt about the UCTP experience as the beginning of the formation of a new subculture.

Face-to-face meeting and actual exposure to each other's cultures could have developed their friendships and deepened cultural understanding. However, the UCTP class has shown that the new technology born in the past decade can provide a novel type of interaction that could not even have been conceived of before the start of the Internet Age.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1) Corresponding Author

2) The sessions were usually held every Saturday Tokyo time (Friday, California time), but vacations and other breaks interrupted the schedule several times.

3) Professor Michael Ainge suggested this method of using photography for cultural learning after attending the workshop *Using Photography in Intercultural Communication Teaching and Training*, facilitated by Dr. John Condon and Dr. Miguel Gandert at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication, from July 31st –August 4th 2006.

4) The students interpreted what each of these terms meant to them, including "My Culture".

5) The student's school is identified by "E" for Emery, "R" for Reitaku, and "K" for Keio. ("Melo-R" means "Melo from Reitaku")

6) A study on interviews of the students in this program is in progress. The findings should be able to tell us what they felt about their friendship and how they felt and acted when they first met "off net".

7) In fact, Keio has two separate campuses for students in the same department, one for the freshmen and sophomores and another for the juniors and seniors. This pattern is fairly common among the older universities.

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APPENDIX 1: LAYOUT OF PICTURES AND EXPLANATIONS

SELF INTRODUCTION

	Emery	Reitaku	Keio
Individual	 G.G. This is a picture of me. Well i really know dont what to say but i can say that im a really gregarious person, hardy, and a very very funny one. I just love to laugh and play, and have a good time with my family and friends. =) GG Lucia My name is Lucia Fallah. This picture represents who I am, what I do, my social life, and my ability of how I see different things around me. I love getting to know people and learning about what makes them unique. I love learning new things and am happy that I have the chance to explore other peoples culture in the world. Maurice In this picture I am holding two trombones. One I play at school and the other I play at church. This picture also symbolizes my avid participation in both school and church...two is always better than one.	 Masa Hi guys. I'm Masanori Yanagisaki. Just call me Masa. This is the picture I took in New York. I like traveling. I have been to Boston, New York, Thailand, and Cambodia. Other culture makes me grow up, and inspires me to study foreign language. If you know good place to visit, please tell me Chii Hi, everybody. I'm Chii.Nice to meet you all! I am senior in English department in Reitaku. I belong to Dance circle. I have been dancing for 4 years. What I proud of myself is my excellent white teeth!!	 Hiro The right pile are reference books and textbooks used for the entrance exam which represents my recent high school days. The center pile are comic books which represents my childhood. The left pile are CDs which represents me now. Tami Hi! My name is Misato Takanishi. Please call me Tami.

Group	No group pictures for Emery	Yone	Yuko

Yone

Hey guys. I'm Yone, a senior in the English Department at Reitaku University. My favorite hobby is volleyball. I've been playing volleyball for ten years. It is impossible for me to live without volleyball.

Yuko

Sorry for the late introduction! I will be helping this class as Ms. Tomoko's assistant and possibly as a participant. Last week's session was great and I'm excited how things will unfold in the next two months:) My name is Yuko and this is a picture of me doing Japanese Archery. I grew up in America and moved back here at the beginnig of high school. I was in this club for 3 years of high school, and the people in the club and the sport itself taught me many things (some of my teammates you can see in the background). It was the first time that I was truly able to enjoy Japanese traditional culture first hand and it's one of my favorite hobbies. *The (navy) clothes I'm wearing is called "hakama." It looks like a skirt but it's actually really billowy pants.

Sae

This is my team mates. I'm in the center wearing Micky Mouse T'shirt. I play basketball.

Oka-chan

Hello everyone! I'm Nozomi Oka. Please call me "OKA-chan". I'm really excited that I can join in this program. I'm going to explain my picture. I am a cheerdancer. I started it when I was in high school. My team was very strong and we got the first prize in high school teem division and the grandchampion of all divisions in a big competition in Japan. Then we were recommeded to participate in the competition in the U.S. And we got the first prize and grandchampion again! This picture was took in Orland, Florida. I love all team mates. Now I still continue dancing as a member of OG team.

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Objects	 Lien I took a picture of a painting I made this year that I am most proud of. It describes my love for painting and drawing. Painting and drawing during my spare time has been a hobby of mine since before I can remember. It helps me stay content and it is a really good way to express my feelings. I wouldn't know a better way to spend my time but painting.	 Melo I am onigiri.	 Momoko I played handball for 5 years at middle school and high school in japan. I was a goalie and enjoyed playing it with all the team mates. When I was seventeen I went to michigan as an exchanges student and there I played volleyball and softball. I was also a member of the girls' basketball team and helped them keep scorebooks and other things. Now I play tennis at university. Since i played only sports that require no instrument, it is hard for me to use the racket... but I have to use it anyway! :)
	  Alex I chose the picture that I did because it has a lot of sentimental value to me. The computer, monitor and accessories are the first that I purchased on my own. Not only did I buy my computer but I built it from the ground up. This is huge accomplishment for me, I wouldn't have learned it without the opportunities that I was given. I chose this angle of a picture because there is Aztec face in the background which to me symbolizes where I came from. As a Mexican American I am very proud of my ancestry. The," Your computer sucks" sticker because I am very competitive in life. I wont settle for less, most of the time. Everything there has something to do with who I am.	 Shizu Hello everyone I am Shizu from Reitaku. This picture represents me. It means 2 things. First, I love travel. Second, I love coffee. I have been California, Las Vegas, Seattle and Canada. I got a black tumbler from San Francisco, white cups with lid from Seattle, another 3 from Vegas. I drink coffee every morning. it makes me awake. Whenever I use this cup to drink coffee, i can remember my good travel memory.	 Shoko Hi! Im Shoko Kimura and sophomore at Keio University. Please call me Shoko. I took this picture in my university. I like strolling and my house is near from keio. So I often see this scene. It makes me a little happy:) I walk thinking many things such as my friends, family, future and, myself.

| Objects |
Hanan

Hello my name is Hanan Ali and the reason I chose this picture because is because I feel like the community that I live is composed of people from different cultures. |
Asuka

Hello. My name is Asuka (Askar) Abe, senior year student of Reitaku University. One of my hobbies are cooking, as you can see in this picture, some of the dishes are Traditional Japanese. I also like having home parties. These dishes are for a party last weekend.

Taz

Hello, again. My name is Tatsuhiro Yoshida, a student of Reitaku Uni. Everyone call me "Taz" in the University, call me Taz. I was born in Shizuoka, which is famous for Mt. Fuji. In spring, I can see the beautiful flower of the cherry tree. When I see the cherry blossom, I recognized that I am Japanese. | |

FAMILY

	Emery	Reitaku	Keio
Extended	 G.G. This is a picture of me and some of my family members. The word FAMILY means to me is something and someone who you can rely on and trust.	 Chii the picture was taken in the restaurant when my family and the cousin's family had a celebration party for the new year. I live with parents and a brother. We love to go out and eat dinner often. I love my family. the time having dinner with them is the most comfortable time, and it makes me feel very relaxed.	 Momoko It's a meal cooked in a pot, which is called "nabe" in Japanese. In the pot, we boil vegetables, meat, rice cake, and even fish. Since we put only one pot on the table, we need to get closer to get the food from the pot. On weekdays, we usually don't have dinner all together because we come home at a different time. But on weekends, we stay home at a dinner time and have dinner together. This meal is good for us because it makes it easier to talk.

Extended	 Hanan This picture was taken at my aunt's wedding in Cannada two years ago. As you can see my sisters and cousinsare all excited to be apart of the wedding we helped plan all summer.		
Nuclear	 Alex This is a picture of my family at our Family Restaurant. We enjoy eating mexican food. We always dedicate one day for family. No matter what. This is very important to us.	No pictures of nuclear families	No pictures of nuclear families
Representatives	 Lucia This is a picture of my family. My dad was on his way to work and my little sister head was cut off, because of the way my dad took the picture.	 Asuka WHEN?? This was taken in family reunion in one summer some years ago. WHERE?? In my house. WHAT Are We Wearing? YUKATA. This is traditional Japanese cloth like KIMONO. Kimono is too hot to wear in summer. We try to have family reunion with our relatives twice a year in summer and in the New Year in my house. My grandfather and my father are both first son who maintain the place where our family and roots were started. Not many people can success to gather every family reunion because some live far and some are always busy. In this picture, we were ready to visit at a grave to pay our respect. In family reunion, most important thing is visiting our fathers' graves. Even if they are passed away, we often show our respect in this opportunity. In my family, I've been always taught that thanks to our fathers, we are here now since when I was young. We think our roots are very important. (Extended)	 Oka-chan Hello, everyone. I'm sorry that I couldn't come last week. I went to Beijing, China, and joined international program as my club activity. Beijing University students showed us around there, and we also talked about Sino-Japan relations a lot. Those days were really wonderful!! Well, this is the picture of my brother and me. I'm not sure how old I was, but when I was little, my family went to somewhere every weekends. I love my family, and my brother. He took care about me very much. For me, Family is my treasure.

Representatives	**Lien** Hi everyone! This is my neice, Allison(and my mom and dad in the background). She is the newest addition to my family. She is three months old. Everyone loves to gather around her. She shows that family is about unconditional love and care. (Extended)		**Yuko** This is a picture of me and my sister celebrating her birthday. No matter how busy my family is, we celebrate each other's birthdays or celebrate each other's success on special occasions. Not only my parents and sibling, but my grandparents and cousins all wish each other happy birthday. Also, people who are like family to me, like family friends or really close friends celebrate birthdays together so that is why this picture reminds me of family. **Sae** This photo is the picture hung in the living room. My parents asked their favorite illustrator to paint a picture imagined from their favorite photos. It's my sister and me. (All Nuclear)
Symbolic	**Maurice** This represents a place where family members can come together and talk and "hang out" with each other.	**Melo** hi, I am melo the crazy guy from reitaku. do everybody remember me? The pic is represent my family that our favorite fruit is grapes, we always eat grapes when we talk and watch TV. I love my family even if my father is bald (don't tell to my father he will mad) lol	**Hiro** This is my old fashioned TV. When I was young, all my family watched this television at the same time, because we have only this TV. This type of TV, which still has channels.

Symbolic			 Shoko I live alone now. But whenever I am so happy or depressed, I call my mother. She is one of the closet people to me. By the way, my mother bought me the right key ring when we went to see "kabuki". Tami Hi there!! the last lesson was bad for sound and image. But I could enjoyed so much! I am looking forward to seeing everyone again(^-^*)/^^ Well, next theme is about family. I chose this picture because now I can't live with my family together, so sometimes my mom and grandmother send me letters. I treasure these letters!!
Non-related	No pictures of non-related families	 Masa Hi, everyone. I posted a pic about family, but it disappeared from web. I don't know why. I post again. This is the picture to represent family. This is the my family when I was in America as an exchange student. As you know, they are just old mother and little boy. Little boy is an adopted child from Paraguay. But, they are like real family. You cannot imagine how close they are!	No pictures of non-related families

Non-related	No pictures of non-related families		No pictures of non-related families
		 Shizu they all are my sisters!! actually, they are my friends in dormitory. I cannot live with my family because my university is far away from my home town so that I live in dormitory now. I met them in the dormitory. Since we live together, We help each other. When i was sick, they took me to the hospital and cooked food for me. they are very important me and they are like my sisters. Taz Family… I think family means not only kindred people, but also people around me. My family is in Shizuoka(my hometown), so I live all by myself now, actually I do not have family now. But there are great people around me. I am belong to a school festival committee, and I am secretary-general in the commitee. In the general affairs department, there are 43 people are warking with me. I have spent 3 years in this committee, and the members are all the world to me now. We all share the common feeling, such as sadness, happiness, sometimes anger. Common hardship knitted us together. It is not too much to say "This is another family in Tokyo" Yone This picture represents my friends at St.Martin University in America. The friends in the picture were like my family because most of time we spend the time together. and when someone got a trouble, we helped out one another.	

HAPPINESS

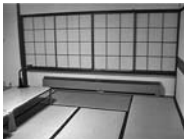|	Emery	Reitaku	Keio
Family	 Hanan This picture represents happiness to me because it shows my little sister smiling on her first carousel ride. Lien Hello everyone, for this week's theme, happiness, I chose a picture of my family members. This picture is of my three sisters and my two nieces on Halloween at the mall. I love spending time with them. Happiness to me means enjoying something you do or being around people that you can laugh with. Alex This picture was taken last night when me and my dad went to a boxing match in San Jose HP Pavilion. It was my first time going to one of these, It was definitely a good time.	 Aska This picture describes my happiness. Please do not get confused as a family topic picture. Being with my family is the happiness for me. Almost it's been 6 years since I moved from my home, since then I started strongly feel that having opportunity of being with my family is my happiness. Thank you. (Host/Adopted)Masa I'm sorry for I missed a couple of classes. I'm afraid it's too late to post a pic about happiness. I was back to America where I used to study. I met old friends again. Of course, I visited my family in America. Mother are always yelling against a little boy. He still dilly-dally... I felt happiness when I saw a boy is already bigger than his mother.	No pictures of families

Friends	**Maurice** This place brings me happiness because whenever I go here I know I'll get a good healthy nutritious bean burrito meal! **G.G.** This is a picture of my friend Ravnit and me on wacky tacky day. We were having a little bit too much fun and decided to take crazy pictures and my friend Karishma took the picture.	**Chii** I have lots of happiness. For example, hanging out with my friends, playing with my lovely dogs, when I'm eating chocolate mint ice cream. However, the greatest happiness is dancing. I have practicing girls-hip-hop dancing for about four years. I think I am much more brighten up when I'm dancing than usual. I would like to try other kinds of dances (ex; Hula, African, and flamenco) in the future. **Melo** (With Alex of Emery) This picture describes my happiness. Alex spent one day to accompany us. We had lunch and shopping. I had a very enjoyable time. Alex: thank you for everything.	No pictures of friends
Personal	**Lucia** This is my happiness picture. What makes me happy is shopping and trying on new clothes. I love new clothes.	**Shizu** I am very happy to eat!! I like all kind of food, Japanese, American, Indian, Thai, Chinese etc. Especially. I love sweets:) This picture was taken in the cafe. Can you see the big parfait? It is so delicious. it is for 6 people so I share with my friends, of course.	**Hiro** These colorful cubes are--somebody may know--"Sushi" Actually, I like a lot of various food, but sushi is one of my favorite dishes! As you know, I don't eat to live, I live to eat, so.... **Sae** I love the sunny day. I go for a walk and refresh myself.

Objects/ Interests	No pictures of objects		
		  Taz was at a loss an answer "my happiness" actually I do not have exact happiness. I do not mean i do not have happiness, but I think there are a lot of happiness around me. I am happy when I see my family, friends, happy to sleep, eat.... Everything I experienced in the past and future can be may happiness. I can not dicide what my happiness is... because I always feel "happiness". it was really difficult to take a photo about happiness. this is a picture taken in my room. I alipped many photos on the wall! I think this is a compilation of my hapiness	 Tami well, sorry to be late(>_<;) i love collecting antique. when i was a junior high school student i began to collect and now there are many antique in my room. the most favorite antique is a camel sand art in a bottle. it is so beautiful art!!!!! Shoko I can be refreshed after I take a tea ceremony lesson. This is a teacher's house.
		  Yone What's up guys! This is Yosuke from Reitaku University. These two volleyballs in this picture are my precious things, like a treasure. As I mentioned earlier, I really love to play volleyball. The ball on the right is normal one to play in a gym. And the one the left is for beach volleyball. I'm curious how many of you have heard about beach volleyball. Only in the summer season, I'm able to play beach volleyball in a beach. It's so much fun that you have to predict how the ball will move depends on wind. Whenever I see a volleyball, I can't help reaching my hand and touching it. I cannot tell how I'm excited and happy when I play volleyball. That's why I chose this picture to represent my "happiness."	 Oka-chan My happiness is the music. I love singing songs, playing violin or piano, listening to the music. I take the orchestra class, which you can be a member of orchestra with other classmates. I play the violin. I've played it since when i was 3 or 4 years old. When I play it, I feel so happy! Momoko When I heard this week's topic, all I could think of was this picture... yes, I feel very happy when I am taking a bath. It makes me refreshed and relaxed.

MY CULTURE

	Emery	Reitaku	Keio
Traditional	 Lucia This is a picture of clothes that people wear in Africa. Most people wear these kind of clothes for occasions like weddings, parties, church, and funerals. Today most people try to wear jeans and other different clothes or materials as much as possible. These clothes were given to me by my best aunt that I ever had. She gave them to me to wear to church. Lien(Religious) This is a picture of me honoring by grandfather, who passed away a few years ago. I am burning an incense as a way to honor him. It is believed that our ancestors will protect our family from danger and harm as long as you honor and show respect to them in the after life. Respect is a very important thing in my culture. I think it is important to all cultures.	 Taz New year season in Japan, we are making Mochi!!(but, not every family) Mochi is rice cake. The picture is very traditional way to making Mochi. In the picture, A man spound steamed rice into rice cake... I don't know who he is....hahaha We pound boiled rice in a mortar to make rice cakes. In Reitaku university, it is taradition to make mochi in this way, and the mochis are served for students and professors. In my parent's home, we make Mochi by a machine. Chii I love Japanese culture. Especially that we have traditional special clothes to wear in the special day. For example, we have Kimono, Yukata, and Hakama for both men and for women. The close which people wearing on the picture is Hakama. we wear Hakama especially in the graduation ceremony. But we wear it just in the graduation ceremony of University. I had been looking forward to wearing Hakama since I was high school student. I think it is very pretty. This year(in next March), I'm going to wear Hakama. I'm very very sad to graduate University, but I'm happy that I can wear it finally.	 Sae I can't live without rice. Rice is important crop in Japan. It is processed to many products, rice wine, rice vinegar, rice flour, rice cake and so on.

Traditional	 G.G.(Religious) This is a picture were i go pray in my temple. GG	 Shizu This is traditional Japanese room. most of houses have this kind of room. We have Tatami mat for flooring and Shoji for sub-window. U can see the table at the left side of the picture. we sit on the tatami mat so Japanese table is very low.	
Modern/ Everyday	 Hanan This image represents culture to me because through technology we create a new type of culture, which is universal.	 Aska hello. we have a cafe called "maid cafe". it is now becoming very popular and famous in japan. women wearing maid cloth serves drinks for you in that caffe. in the cafe, they treat you as if you are a master. i think it is becoming a part of japanese culture! Masa This is a fashion magazine for men, not for women. In Japan, even men take care of their looks or what they're wearing too much! I mean "too much". You can see a lot of fashion magazines for men. I can't find such a kind of book in America. On the other hand, there are few magazines for muscle. Everythins is different between America and Japan. That made me suprised.	(Everyday) Momoko I think Americans know a lot about Japan these days. Sure we have great electricity! We have washlet (the toilet which washes you after you use a toilet), and many other great things! Especially it is known that cell phones are spread even to elementary school kids. But do you know what exactly we use it for? I'll explain it tomorrow! ;)

Modern/ Everyday		Yone Though I believe everyone know about it, but for someone who don't know about manga, I gotta tell you about it in detail. Manga is one of a major representative thing of Japan. plus it is spereading and getting popular all over the world. However, in my opinion, it isn's just a thing to read. Manga is something you can really get into. it sometimes encourages you, sometimes makes you laugh, and even sometimes make you think deeply about something. some of the Japanese adults tend to regard manga as a negative thing for children, but I definitely recommend for people all over the world to read and feel it, at least, once. Oops!!! I almost forgot to talk about the photo. The manga's titles are, from the left side, "One Piece", "Hellsing", and "Naruto(my favorite one)." Although there is more i wanna talk about, at last, I'd like to say that, if you wanna learn and know about Japan, the easiest way to do that is to t take a look at Manga. And one more thing to tell, I'm not the one who is called "Otaku(オタク)." Just wanted to make sure. Thanks.	Oka-chan Eco-friendly lifestyle Shoko I love fashion and brand goods! I cant buy these brand bags, but like reading fashion magazines. Hiro This picture is the scean of my sleeping in the train, but it represents my culture. It represents the peace of Japan. The peace is one of our features of my culture.
Individual	Maurice Well ive been working on this for quite some time, i think the image is self explanitory. I hope you all enjoy it.	No pictures of individuals	No pictures of individuals

Friends	No pictures of friends	No pictures of friends	 Tami well, maybe many Japanese students talk about Japan, so I want to talk about India!! I went to India this two weeks and i made many friends who came from various countries. This picture was taken at Indian party. many different cultural people wore Indian clothes and did a party. I wore sari!!!
Composite/ *Subculture*	 Alex Well ive been working on this for quite some time, i think the image is self explanitory. I hope you all enjoy it.	 Melo This picture is represent my culture.	No composite/ Subculture pictures