



My thoughts between cultures

In this issue of Mimitaro, we talked to Ms. Lu Jie (Omihachiman)
who works as an interpreter and Japanese instructor.



I married a Japanese national and have lived in Omihachiman for 22 years. I studied Japanese in high school and university so I worked as a company interpreter after coming to Japan. I continued to work after my child

was born, but moved to China with my child for 3 years when he was in preschool (youchien). However, for this reason, I gave my child a difficult time with language as he was unable to speak Japanese after returning to Japan. I therefore quit my job and decided to accompany my child to school for one month. This led to interpretations at school and teaching Japanese which I continue to this day.

I have had many encounters with people and situations through my work as an interpreter. What I felt through the process was that plain translation of terms was not enough to convey one's thoughts and that it required cultural understanding. For example, there was an incident at Sports Day where a mother who just arrived from China was not satisfied and said, "Even though my child is fast at running, my child didn't stand out." The reason behind her dissatisfaction was in the different approach towards sports day events in each country, where sports day in China is very competitive having only selected students running while other students cheer on. An explanation of cultural differences that sports day in Japan involves all students enjoying sports was necessary before the mother came to an understanding.

The way of expression is also very different among the two cultures. Chinese people have a culture of expressing things in a straightforward way so ambiguous Japanese expressions can be frustrating. Each of us have our own culture and it is not easy to change the way we think, but we can try to understand others and we feel happy when our thoughts are being understood. That is why I think learning about each other's culture it is very important for communication between people of different cultures.

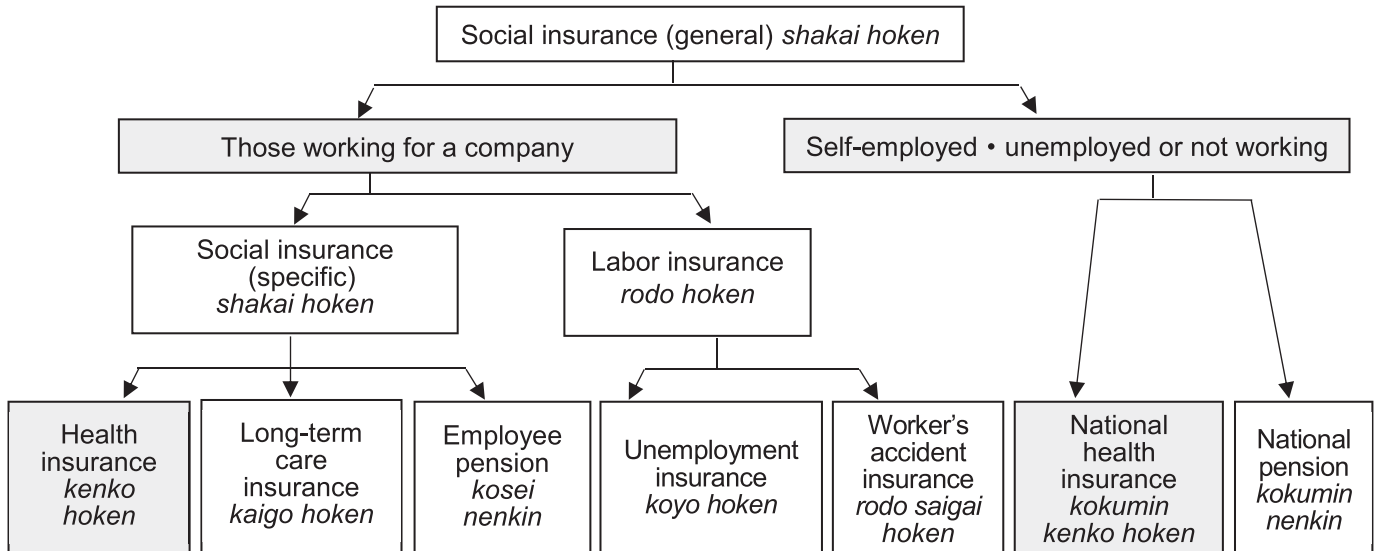
Cultural differences are apparent especially in children more than adults. Foreign children initially find it difficult to express themselves due to the language barrier, however, even after acquiring the language, there are often times when children have difficulty expressing their opinions because of differences in cultural background. Also, there are situations where children who live in a bi-cultural environment; Chinese culture at home and Japanese culture at school, have concerns they cannot express to their parents or Japanese friends. In such cases, I am a convenient source to them living in a bi-cultural environment myself, where I can give advice such as on how to socialize with Japanese friends. I feel close to these children as if they were my own relatives.

Currently, there are many foreigners living together in the prefecture. Under such circumstances, I feel that Chinese people tend to be independent, possibly a Chinese characteristic, and work hard on their own. Meanwhile, it is also important to have connections with others, being great if there is a consultation desk or someone you can consult right away when you have a problem. However, in reality, it takes a lot of courage to talk about your own problems, furthermore, start contemplating if you think about it alone. You can only see a circle by looking at a cup from straight above, but see other shapes from other angles, and just as you can enjoy beautiful colors and designs, you can see other scenery by changing viewpoint. When you are stuck with a problem, perhaps your heart will lighten up if you go outside for some fresh air, talk to people, and try something new. By getting exposed to different ideas and new information, I think we develop as an individual.

I feel embarrassed looking back to my past as I believe I was only thinking about myself when I was young. Recently, my views have slightly changed, probably due to age, and feel the encounters with people to be most important. I therefore established *Shiga Kikokusha Kakyo Kajin Rengo-kai* (Chinese Association) with my friends last year, hoping for those living here to help each other out and enjoy time together. I would like to continue to build on rich "moments" among many people.

Japanese Public Insurance System

When you get a job and start working for a Japanese company, you will probably notice social insurance premiums being deducted from your salary. What does this “social insurance” mean? There are many types of social insurance systems in Japan, where everyone can join and be covered regardless of nationality.



◇ In this issue, we will look at the difference in **health insurance** systems between those who work for a company and those who do not.

● Those working for a company and receiving a salary

Enrollment into social insurance is made through the company. Insurance premiums are deducted from your salary, where half of the expenses are paid by the company. Household dependents may also be enrolled. Insurance premiums are at no cost for household members. Enrollment into health insurance and pension are a set package.

● Self-employed • unemployed or not working for a company (those other than the above)

Enrollment into national health insurance is made individually. Health insurance premiums are paid on your own to the city hall of residence. The total amount of insurance premiums including those for each family member are at the individual's expense. Similarly, enrollment into national pension is made individually.

● Payments at the hospital are only 30% of the total cost for both types. Benefits for high medical bills, child delivery, and death are also the same. Company social insurance provides benefits for partial salary guarantee for leave of absence due to illness or childbirth, while national health insurance does not.

◇ Process of enrollment and withdrawal of health insurance

● Employment at a company

The company will undergo procedures required for enrollment into social insurance, however, it is the responsibility of the individual to withdraw from national health insurance. Please visit your city hall of residence for withdrawal procedures to prevent double billing.

● Leaving a company

When you leave your company and lose qualifications for social insurance, return your insurance card to your company as your card is no longer valid. You will have to visit your city hall to undergo procedures for enrollment into national health insurance in order to receive a health insurance card. Please check for other options, such as continuing optional social insurance or becoming a dependent of a family member.

Make new discoveries using the library!



There is a total of 51 libraries located in the 19 cities and towns in Shiga prefecture. A library card can be made for free at the local city/town public library of residence or commute. If the book you want to read cannot be found at your local library, it can be requested from other libraries including Shiga Prefectural Library. Please consult a library staff if there is a book you want to read!



There are foreign books
and magazines too!



Shiga Prefectural Library

〒520-2122

1740-1 Seta Minami-ogaya-cho, Otsu

TEL : (077) 548-9691

Access : Take the Teisan Bus or Oumi Bus bound for *Shiga-Idai* from JR Seta Station. Get off at *Bunka-zone-mae* (approx. 10 min. ride).

The library is a 5-min. walk from the bus stop.

Open

○ Wed~Fri 10am~6pm

○ Sat•Sun•public holidays 10am~5pm

Closed

○ Mon•Tues (open if a holiday and closed on Wed. of same week)

○ Following day of public holidays (open weekends)

○ Year End & New Year / inventory period



◇ Let's make a library card!

A library card is required in order to borrow books. Fill out an application form along with personal identification to confirm your residence (driver's license, health insurance card, student ID, etc.) at the reference service counter on the second floor to make a card.

◇ Let's borrow some books!

Each individual may borrow up to 10 books and materials for 3 weeks. Children's books, as well as foreign picture books are located on the first floor. Approximately 150,000 books ranging from practical to technical books are lined up on shelves in the general materials room on the second floor with language study material as well. Approximately 8,000 books in various foreign languages are available in the reference material room that may be borrowed at the service counter on the first floor.



◇ Returning books

Books may be returned during hours of operation to each of the general, reference and children's material service counter. When returning books after the library is closed, you can drop books off in the return slot located to the left of the main entrance of the library, or to your local library.

*Please note, books borrowed at the Prefectural Library cannot be returned to Otsu Public Library or Kusatsu Public Library.

◇ Other services are available!

Other than searching and making reservations for books and magazines through the internet at home, books may also be requested if it is unavailable. Books may also be borrowed through mail delivery for those who cannot come to the library due to a disability. If you have any questions in your daily life or have something you want to research, consult the library staff for assistance. Books in the prefectural library can also be borrowed through your local library. Please make use of the different services available at the library for your learning and enjoyment!



Mimitaro Information

HAPPY NEW YEAR
*Looking forward to another
great year!*
Mimitaro



◆ Setsubun festival February 2nd

Setsubun refers to the end of the year according to the old Japanese calendar. On this day, bad spirits are cast away to help prepare for the new spring. Bean throwing events are held in various regions to drive demons away. For the first time in 124 years, Setsubun will be held on February 2nd this year. (Please confirm with the organization before making your visit.)



* Taga Taisha (shrine)

(604 Taga, Taga-cho, Inukami-gun)

TEL 0749-48-1101

* Minakuchi Jinja (shrine)

(3-14 Miyanomae, Minakuchi-cho, Koka)

TEL 0748-62-0231

* Zensuiji (temple)

(3518 Iwane, Konan)

TEL 0748-72-3730

◆ The novel coronavirus infection

~ **Coughing etiquette and hand washing!** ~

If you have a fever or other cold-like symptoms, call your local doctor and follow instructions.

◆ Caution when travelling overseas

- Various countries are strengthening quarantine measures at time of entry and restricting entry and visa issuance. Please check information about PCR testing before departure and the latest information regarding entry into the country of destination.
- Medical institutions issuing negative PCR test certificates
https://www.meti.go.jp/policy/investment/tecot/pdf/tourokubo_english.pdf (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry)
- When re-entering Japan from regions that are under refusal of landing, you must be tested for the novel coronavirus infection within 72 hours of leaving the country and submit a negative test certificate from a medical institution.
https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ca/fna/page4_005130.html (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
- Certificate format for negative tests
https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ca/fna/page25_001994.html (Word format)

Mimitaro News

◆ Do not forget to do your tax returns!

You must file a tax return if you are a sole proprietor, receiving income from 2 separate business operators, or paid high medical expenses and require correction for income deduction or have withheld tax payments. When applying for dependent deductions for overseas family, "family relationship" and "documents to support money transfer" must be attached to the documents. Tax returns may also be filed through your smartphone and my number card!

Period: February 16 – March 15

INQ regional tax offices

◆ Those who require name/address changes for your registered car

In early-May, a notice for automobile tax payment will be mailed to the registered address on the automobile certificate as of April 1st. If necessary, please update name or address change on the registration certificate as soon as possible.

Kei-car: Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization
Kei-Jidousha Kensa Kyokai

TEL: 050-3816-1843

Regular car: Transport bureau with jurisdiction over registered address (Shiga transport bureau for cars with a Shiga license plate, *Shiga Unyu-kyoku* TEL: 050-5540-2064)

◆ Don't worry about domestic violence alone!

There is a consultation desk where a specialized consultant will think with you about the various kinds of violence from your spouse or partner. Consultations in foreign languages are available through SNS or email.

INQ Domestic Violence Hotline Plus

SNS : <https://form.soudanplus.jp/en>

E-mail : <https://form.soudanplus.jp/mail>

TEL : 0120-279-889 (Japanese only)



Shiga Foreign Residents Information Center

(within Shiga Intercultural Association for Globalization)

Please contact us for any concerns or information.

Support is provided in multiple languages.

Free legal consultations also available.

Tel: 077-523-5646 Fax: 077-510-0601

E-mail: mimitaro@s-i-a.or.jp

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