

## My Identity

I did not know who in the world I was. It is because everyone says that different cultures are important, but in my case, I myself am what is called 'a different culture' .

I am Chinese who was born and raised in Japan. Since my parents are Chinese, we sometimes speak Chinese at home, but once I get outside I live just like other Japanese people using the Japanese language. Though I am almost the same as Japanese, I am sometimes criticized just because I am Chinese or I will not be able to go to vote even when I become 18 years old.

Who am I? Am I Chinese or Japanese? I could not find my identity.

However, one experience changed me. I went to Australia and stayed with a local family last summer. I took classes with local students on weekdays, and spent time with the family after school and on weekends. In this country, there are many people who come from other countries, so I talked a lot with students from 'different cultures' there. My host family was from India. My host mother usually made Australian food at home, but she sometimes cooked traditional Indian dishes.

One weekend, when I walked along the beach with my host mother, she said to

me,” This country is very nice. It is good to live in for a family with children because everyone is relaxed in this city. She also told me about “flextime” , a system where parents can finish their work early and pick up their children at school. “Australia has a lot of nature, so when my children were younger, we often went fishing on this beach and had lunch together. “ she said with a smile.

Listening to her talk, I thought that they are proud of both of the cultures they have, Indian culture and the Australian one.

Also, at the local school I had a chance to introduce Japanese culture to the students who live in Australia. I made a presentation and held a workshop about unique traditional games like origami and unique culture like hot springs. They were really interested in Japan, and knew a lot about our country. When I saw them asking happily about Japanese games and animation, I strongly felt that we got our hearts closer together.

Then, I noticed something. My host mother was proud of the position and culture that she had, and students in Australia were interested in other cultures as well as their own culture.

How about me? Am I proud of the cultures that I have? Am I interested in foreign cultures?

After this experience, my thoughts and actions changed. Every time I visited somewhere or saw someone from foreign countries, I researched the country to know about its culture and asked the local people about their life. I tried to talk to a Chinese mother holding a baby in her arms in Chinese on the train, or when I was asked for directions by foreign people, I tried to reply in English. I had been very passive in everything, especially with foreign people, but through the experience I decided to be more active. As a result, I have felt my heart filled with happiness and I have become able to see things from various aspects much more than before.

It does not matter if I am Japanese or Chinese.

The most important thing is to try to understand each other, even if they have different cultures or if one has more than two cultures like my host family and me. Therefore, I want to be proud of my position of having Japanese and Chinese cultures, and through both cultures I want to get along with people from all over the world. It may be difficult, but if we take the first step, I believe that the day will surely come when there will be no prejudice or discrimination and people all over the world will be able to live in peace. [665 words]