

# What's New?

Niihama City

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## A Cross-Cultural Perspective and What I've Noticed

Scott Tamaki

Around this time two years ago, I started the cross-cultural experience that rerouted my life's direction. I was packing my bags, watching all the television-dramas I could, made spontaneous visits to Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, CA, all to prepare myself for entering the land of the rising sun. In September 2013, I entered Tokyo's Waseda University to begin a year-long study abroad experience through the international department. There, I was able to meet and study with people from many different countries, not to mention a myriad of Japanese people. By meeting and getting to know students from other countries I discovered that at our core, we as people are basically the same. Also, when we open our minds to understanding cultures different from our own, we can move forward in creating healthy relationships with other people.

At Waseda, thinking that I was about to take classes with "the best and brightest" from other countries excited me at first. What I didn't know was that there were not many new things to discover—just one thing. What I experienced from group discussions, projects, and simply being in class with international students, was that the environment was similar to the US. Not exactly similar, but enough to surprise me. Similar how you ask? Students from Iraq, France, Korea, Italy, Spain, China, Japan, Germany, the Philippines, and the US were: scared to ask questions, nervous about giving a presentation, insecure when unsure of an answer, using their cell phones in the back of class and so on. In contrast, there was always a small group of students (of every nationality) who led class discussions, provided insightful answers to questions, were generous, kind, outspoken, and eager to understand more about the world. I believe this range of students reflects the same demographic in most countries globally. By meeting and getting to know all these different students, it reminded me that, across cultures, there is not much preventing us from being friends. All of us is relatable to one another in some way, shape, form, or idea. The only thing preventing us from understanding people across countries is the insufficient amount of information and experience we hold of cultures unknown to us.

Human beings will never understand all there is to know about the world. That is for certain. Take a grain of sand for example, determining the number of tiny particles, minerals, and molecules that represent a grain of sand is an endless pursuit. Thus, if a grain of sand is hard to explain, how can we properly know all there is to know about the much larger and more complex, human being? As for myself, there is still a lot I don't know about the English language, and I'm an English teacher! Even more, the knowledge I have of my own country's history is embarrassingly insufficient. Ask me to sing America's "Star Spangled Banner," our country's national anthem, and I'd be struggling to utter the words. So if people wish to understand a culture different from their own, they need to first do the work. This kind of "work" does not end at using social media sites to gain information, nor local news stations, or word of mouth — it's an endless learning process. Why? Because both people and cultures are constantly evolving. What we can do, however, is gain enough understanding about a culture — and its people — to make a proper connection with it.

The connection process can start with being curious. Our curiosity can help us create the right questions needed to ask others things we don't know about their culture. We learn more by listening to others rather than speaking to others. And asking questions puts us in the position of a listener rather than a speaker. By asking the right questions it can help us develop a healthy dialogue with somebody we wish to understand. After a healthy exchange of ideas, I hope two people or a group of people will reflect on their new findings. Reflect on why their curiosity began, reflect on why some questions were asked, reflect on why somebody's culture works the way it works, and reflect on some commonalities between themselves and others. Only when we realize that our goal as human beings is to connect with, and make other's lives better, can we understand that each of us is much more similar than different in some way, shape, form, or idea.

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1st year ALT Blog: [tscottwaseda.wordpress.com](http://tscottwaseda.wordpress.com)

4th generation Japanese, 3rd generation Chinese, grew up in the US. Hobbies: learning Japanese, playing basketball, and traveling to better understand cultures and people.

## MOVIES

### TOHO CINEMAS Niihama (AEON Mall)

September 19 ~ Ant-Man 2D Dubbed  
October 9 ~ Fantastic Four 2D English • Dubbed  
October 23 ~ Maze runner : The Scorch  
2D English • 3D English  
October 31 ~ Pan 2D Dubbed  
November 6 ~ Everest 3D 3D English • 2D Dubbed  
November 6 ~ the Monuments Men 2D English  
November 14 ~ LAST KNIGHTS PG12 2D English  
November 20 ~ The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Parts 2  
2D English  
November 27 ~ Woman in Gold 2D English

#### Information Service

Internet: <http://niihama-aeonmall.com>

Tape (24 hrs): 050-6868-5019(in Japanese)

Movies might be changed without notice. Please check.

### November Events

Nov.22 (Sun.) The 39<sup>th</sup> Niihama Agricultural Festival

Time: 9:00 a.m. ~ 3:00 p.m.

Place: Aeon Shopping Center

Agricultural Products Fair and Sale

Nov. 29 (Sat.) The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Niihama Local Arts Performance

Time: 12:30 p.m. ~

Place: Middle Hall (chu-hohru) next to the Bunka Center

Admission Fee: Free

SGG would welcome any suggestions, questions or ideas for monthly articles.

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\*The editors for this month are E. Okada & Y. Okame



## Hints about Hits

### **Magic Japanese Pancake Mix**

(from Ehime Shimbun June 1, 2015)

Showa Sangyo's Japanese Pancake Mix enables even a novice to make "Okonomi-yaki" as delicious as the ones cooked by pros because it contains the special combination of flour and seasonings. "Okonomi-yaki" is a kind of Japanese pancake and is one of the most popular home cooked dishes, especially in the Kansai area. But most people don't know whether their home cooked okonomi-yaki is as delicious as the ones at specialty shops. This pancake mix allows even novice chefs to make delicious ones as long as proper ingredients are used.

Even if the grill temperature or amount of water is different from what is recommended, you can make delicious okonomi-yaki that is crispy on the outside and soft on the inside.

It comes in small plastic bags (100g for 2 pieces), so you don't need to measure ingredients. A detailed illustration explaining how to cook is printed on the back of the package. Eye-catching big, red numerals tell you how many times to stir the flour and ingredients. A scale is also printed on the package, so that you can measure the size of okonomi-yaki.


## **English Library**

Check out the English Library in the library at Women's Plaza. Feel free to borrow a book, or drop off any books you are willing to lend.

## **Information in English & Chinese on the Web**

**\*What's New?**

**\*How to sort garbage and trash**

Visit  <http://www.city.niihama.lg.jp>

**Clair:\*Multilingual Living Information**

<http://www.clair.or.jp/tagengorev/en/index.html>

# ONE POINT JAPANESE

## 楽しい・楽しむ・楽しみ

A : 本格的な紅葉のシーズンになりましたね。

Honkakuteki na koyo no shizun ni narimashita ne.

(It's the peak of the season for autumn leaves, isn't it?)

B : ええ、実は連休に、京都へ行こうと思っていますんです。

Ee, jitsuwa renkyu ni kyoto e iko to omotte irun desu.

(Yes. Actually I'm thinking of visiting Kyoto during the holiday.)

A : 京都の紅葉は最高ですよ。Kyoto no koyo wa saiko desu yo.

(Kyoto's autumn colors are the best!)

B : 初めて行くので、とても楽しみです。

Hajimete iku node totemo tanoshimi desu.

(It's my first time to go, so I'm really looking forward to it.)

A : たっぷり楽しんできてくださいね。

Tapuri tanoshinde kite kudasai ne.

(Be sure to enjoy yourself thoroughly.)

(一週間後) (One week later)

A : 京都は どうでしたか。Kyoto wa do deshita ka.

(How was Kyoto?)

B : 紅葉はきれいでしたが、人が多すぎて、疲れしました。

Koyo wa kire deshita ga, hito ga osugite, tsukaremashita.

(The fall colors were beautiful, but there were too many people. I got tired.)

A : 今度の連休、みんなでキャンプに行きませんか。

Kondo no renkyu, minna de kyanpu ni ikimasen ka.

(This coming holiday, why don't we all go camping?)

B : 天気もよさそうだし、バーベキューをしてもいいですね。

Tenki mo yosasō da shi, babekyū o shite mo ii desu ne.

(It looks like the weather will be fine, so it should be good for a BBQ.)

C : 私はうちでゆっくり読書を楽しもうと思っていたんですが・・・。

Watashi wa uchi de yukkuri dokusho o tanoshimō to omotte itan desu ga.

(I was thinking about enjoying reading at home leisurely...)

A : そんなこと言わないで。一緒に行けば、きっと楽しいですよ。

Sonna koto iwanaide. Issho ni ikeba, kitto tanoshi desu yo.

(Don't say that. If you go with us, it's sure to be fun.)

B : 空気も新鮮だし、夜は星がたくさん見えて、きれいですよ。

Kuki mo sinsen da shi, yoru wa hoshi ga takusan miete, kire desu yo.

(The air is fresh, and you can see a lot of stars at night; it's beautiful!)

C : じゃ、今回は、一緒にキャンプを楽しむことにします。

Ja, konkai wa, issho ni kyanpu o tanoshimu koto ni shimasu.

(OK. This time I've decided to enjoy camping with you.)

< by Niihama Nihongo no Kai >

**NNK** also provides Japanese lessons for foreigners living in Niihama.

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