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## **Why do Japanese change their attitudes when they communicate with foreigners?**

According to website Madame Riri, many Japanese people don't have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners, so when they do, they tend to change their attitude a bit. Foreigners react in different ways to this — some feel they are being treated specially, while others are uncomfortable. Here are some examples from the website.

Belgian man: "I've been in Japan for 3 1/2 years. Generally speaking, Japanese people are prejudiced against foreign people who don't look like Japanese. Japanese people think that no foreigner can speak Japanese. Staff at a bento shop that I've visited for 3 years still treat me like I cannot speak Japanese."

American woman: "I think that the Japanese education system is the main reason why Japanese people cannot communicate with foreign people naturally. Japanese people don't study much about other races and cultures, do they?"

Australian man: "At first, I was happy when Japanese people gave me compliments like 'You are good at using chopsticks' and 'You speak Japanese very well.' However, now that I have been in Japan for a long time, these sort of compliments sound like they are looking down at me."

Dutch man: "I think that staff in shops and restaurants treat foreign people better than Japanese people. However, in some situations, I feel like I am being treated like a mascot."

Brazilian man: "I'm happy that Japanese people treat me as a foreigner. I think that foreign people don't have any pressure to practice speaking Japanese because Japanese people don't expect foreigners to do so."

Scottish man: "Many Japanese can't help it because foreigners in Japan are a minority."

American man: “Sometimes, when I see foreigners in Japanese dramas and animation, most of them seem stupid. It makes me uncomfortable if Japanese people think that foreign people are like that.”

American man: “Japan is not a country with many immigrants like America or Europe. I think many Japanese have a hard time communicating not just with foreigners but also with other Japanese who are outside their sphere. That’s the ‘soto-uchi’ concept.”

English man: “I think Japanese people change their attitude when they communicate with foreigners because they are interested in foreign countries and cultures.”

American man: “Not all Japanese change their attitude when they communicate with foreigners. Japanese people who have lived abroad as exchange students, for example, communicate with foreigners in much the same way as they interact with Japanese. Maybe it depends on their experience level in communicating with with foreigners.”

Questions:

1. Why do you think that Japanese treat foreigners differently? Why?
2. Are you treated like a foreigner when you visit other countries? Does it bother you? Why? Why not?
3. Do you treat foreigners differently to Japanese? Why? Why not?
4. In your opinion do you think that we should not treat foreigners differently? Why? Why not?
5. Do you treat your English teacher differently to how you would normally treat someone?
6. Is it true that we don't expect "foreigners" to be able to speak Japanese? Why? Why not?

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