

>>> **Transcript of “Mindset and Skills Necessary for Participation in a Global Society ~ Diplomats’ Session at the U.S. Embassy”**

This is a transcript of the video “Mindset and Skills Necessary for Participation in a Global Society ~ Diplomats’ Session at the U.S. Embassy”
While you are watching the video, you can use this transcript for your better understanding of the contents.

Introduction by Tina (the navigator)

0:09

Hello, everyone! My name is Tina and I’m the navigator today. I usually work at TGG.

The theme of today’s session is “Mindset and Skills Necessary for Participation in a Global Society.” The session was specially conducted for you by diplomats at the U.S. Embassy. Have you ever wondered about the work of diplomats?

There are more than 150 embassies in Tokyo. At these embassies, diplomats from different countries and the staff that support them work together. Diplomats are experts in working with people from diverse countries and regions, as well as people who have different languages, cultural backgrounds, and customs. As globalization progresses, there are more issues that countries cannot solve on their own, and actions that will be more effective when carried out with foreign countries. Diplomats are at the forefront of such global issues, especially at the national level, and work with foreign governments to negotiate, coordinate, and gather information. What are the challenges of collaborating with people from different cultural backgrounds? What are the difficulties?

Today, diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, Japan will have a discussion based on their experiences.

They will talk about how to build better relationships, what to keep in mind in order to survive in a more fulfilling modern society, and various other topics.

I think this session will be informative and meaningful for everyone, not only those who want to be diplomats, but also those who are looking to work abroad in the future. Let’s hear what experienced diplomats think and what they are doing. When discussion topics come up, please think for yourself and speak out with your opinions!

Before proceeding to the class, I’ll introduce some phrases as a warm-up.

assignment, you try

assignment

I went to Kuwait on a special assignment.

interact with, you try

interact with

We spent a lot of time interacting with young people there.

negotiation, you try

negotiation

We entered into negotiations with our counterparts in the country.

OK. Now you're ready! Let's experience the class. Please tell your classmates what you thought and felt in this class in English!

Join the session at the U.S. Embassy

03:33

Hello, everyone.

Welcome to our conversation today about diplomacy.

My name is Grace Choi, and I'm an American diplomat working at the U.S. embassy in Tokyo.

And I work on education and exchanges.

So today, I will talk to you a little bit about my experience as a diplomat and we'll get an opportunity to talk a little bit about what diplomacy means and what's important.

So let's get started.

So, one of my assignments was in a small city called Kuwait City in the country of Kuwait.

Have any of you heard of this country?

Yes.

Great.

In Kuwait, I was a public diplomacy officer, and I spent a lot of time doing cultural work.

And what that means is I interacted with Kuwaiti people and we spent a lot of time sharing about America.

About American music, about the English language and about other values that America prizes.

And so, this was an awesome opportunity for me to talk to Kuwaitis about America.

We spent a lot of time doing programs.

We spent a lot of time interacting with young people.

We spent a lot of time just talking about what America stands for and about American culture.

One of my assignments was also in Seoul, South Korea.

In Seoul, I was a consular officer.

And what that means is I worked in the consular section.

There are two main priorities in the consular section.

One is to issue visas, so some of you may have had experience going to an embassy or consulate and applying for a visa to travel to the United States.

The other, of course, is to take care of Americans.

There is a section in the consular section called the American Citizen Services unit.

And they make sure that they take care of Americans who are living overseas.

And so this is the work that I did when I was in Seoul.

I also had one tour in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Here, I was a press officer.

What that means is, I spent my day shaping the story that we told to the Pakistani people about what American foreign policy and what America is thinking.

So, I regularly met with journalists and also academics to talk about American ideas and about what America is doing in the world.

One important thing that American diplomats do is we spend a lot of time learning foreign languages.

And for me, before coming to Tokyo, I spent some time learning Japanese.

I learned Japanese in Washington D.C. , but also in Yokohama, Japan.

So while in Yokohama, not only did I study Japanese with Japanese teachers, but we also experienced many things of Japanese culture.

We had lunch near all of the cherry blossoms.

We went to go see sumo.

Some of these activities gave us an understanding of how to use Japanese, and a better understanding of Japanese culture.

So, let me ask you, what kind of image do you have about being a diplomat?

Well, I think a diplomat is someone who helps to facilitate and create stronger relationships with the country and the people that he or she is working with.

To help create educational opportunities.

To help facilitate trade or business.

And create better understanding of each other's cultures, languages, histories.

To help make the world, hopefully, a better place.

Great.

So, why do you think being a diplomat is so special?

I think it is a very special job to be a diplomat because you're representing your country and showing the best parts of your country to other people around the world who may not be familiar with it.

I think it forces you to, you know, show the best parts of yourself.

Because you're not just representing yourself, you're also representing a whole country of people.

And in that sense, it's a rare responsibility and opportunity that a diplomat has.

So that's why I believe the job of a diplomat is actually quite special.

Interesting okay.

So, I'll open it up to you.

Do you have any questions for me?

I do.

So what do you like best about being a diplomat?

That's a great question.

There are so many things that are amazing about being a diplomat.

Living overseas.

Getting to learn new languages.

But I think the best thing about being a diplomat is meeting new people.

And meeting people from different countries and from different cultures and being able to share and talk about America.

This is a great opportunity to talk about the things that are different as well as the things that are the same.

And for me, that's the best thing about being a diplomat.

Where do you see diplomacy in the next 10 to 20 years?

How do you see the work of a diplomat changing in the near future?

That's a great question as well.

I think the future of diplomacy is very bright.

And what I mean by that is I have a lot of hope.

And I think the future of diplomacy is very good and great.

Part of the reason I think that way is because we have so many shared resources around the world.

Because of things like the Internet, because of technology we have more opportunities to talk to each other.

If I am here in Japan I can easily call someone in the United States and have a conversation with them.

If someone lives in Europe they can easily have a conversation with someone in South America.

Similarly, when it comes to diplomacy, because we are able to communicate more, and because through communication we will have more opportunity to share our cultures, share our ideas, I think this will lead towards more successful diplomacy in the future.

So, some more questions for you.

The first question is what do you think are some of the important things to keep in mind when working with people with different cultural and language backgrounds?

The important things when working with people with different cultural and language backgrounds?

11:09

OK, let's think about the question Ms. Choi asked. She asked the staff, "What do you think are some of the important things to keep in mind when working with people with different cultural and language backgrounds?"

Let's listen to their discussion and think about this question.

Well, what do you guys think?

Yeah, so I guess we're going to discuss it, right?

So, well, I think people definitely need to be open-minded to hearing, you know, new perspectives and understanding something that is different from your own experience.

But what do you think?

Yeah, I think that you have to be able to embrace the unknown because if you go in to a situation either worried that you're not going to understand or thinking you already understand everything, you're going to be surprised by the fact that there's a lot we don't know.

And that every day we learn more from people.

And you know, each individual person you talk to has a different story and has a different experience.

And so, to your point about having an open mind, but also making sure that anything you think you might know about the people or the country or the language, you know, you might have learned about that in a book.

But until you see how people actually are, you really shouldn't make up your mind.

That's what I think.

I'm thinking maybe one of the challenges with working with people from different cultures and maybe speaking different native languages is they'll have different ways of seeing the same thing.

And it might be you know because of their personal experience and maybe even how they explain something in their language that will be different from what your kind of perspective is.

And it's important to understand why that is.

It's not because there is a right or wrong but just a different perspective.

And I think we have to keep that in mind when we're speaking with people from different backgrounds.

Yeah, I completely agree.

I think that when people are coming from different cultural and language backgrounds, so one, like shaking hands might be or how close you stand to somebody, to you might mean something different, but to the other person may mean something totally different.

And sometimes those encounters, if you keep an open mind like Kelsey said, then it's easier to share one another's culture and learn from each other.

But if you don't keep an open mind and you look at it specifically from your background only, and you immediately interpret and add meaning to that encounter, it might not be as smooth or as friendly.

So I think it's important to keep that open mind and to understand that people might interpret things differently because they come from different backgrounds.

I would actually add one kind of further thing that, following on your line of thought, Dawn, completely agree that there'll be different perspectives and different kind of ways of viewing certain things to the extent that not only do we have to be an open mind but we also have to be in a sense careful how we express ourselves.

Certain things don't translate very well.

I think maybe if you make a joke about something it might be offensive to somebody else.

Or you think that something is expressing your interest when actually it may come across as showing that you're being unfriendly.

So you have to be not only open-minded but also careful how you express yourself as well.

Respectful.

Respectful, yeah.

So, I'd like to again give you an opportunity to ask me a few questions as well.

I'll start here.

Oh, great.

Do you often as a diplomat work in a team?

That's a very interesting question.

I think often when we see diplomats on TV, when we see them in movies, we see one person or one individual and it seems like that one person is in charge of everything and does everything.

But in reality, as you all know, it is very important in diplomacy and working as a diplomat to work in teams.

The better you are with working with each other, whether you're on the same side or on opposing sides, the more successful you will be as a diplomat.

Whether it's working together for a specific program.

Whether it's negotiations, whether it's interacting with journalists.

Whether it's meeting your counterparts from a foreign government.

All of that requires working together with other people which is the definition of working on a team.

Thanks.

Thank you.

So, Gracie, you had mentioned earlier that you'd studied Japanese and that it's important to be able to understand other cultures as a diplomat.

Is it important to have had the opportunity to study abroad in order to become a diplomat?

I'm glad that you asked about studying abroad.

In the American foreign service which is what we call American diplomats, it is not required that people study abroad.

But I think if people study abroad, it's such a great opportunity.

And I highly, highly encourage young people in particular, but not just young people.

I encourage everybody to take advantage of the chance and try to study abroad.

Especially by studying, for example, in the United States, it gives you an opportunity to

see a perspective that is different from your own.

You get to see new cultures, you get to meet new people.

You get to try new foods and studying in the U.S., for example, gives you an opportunity to practice your English which I think is also very important.

So I think studying abroad is something that you should definitely consider, especially if you are looking into a career in diplomacy.

But really for everybody.

So you mentioned learning Japanese, speaking of foreign languages.

When you're in negotiations and meetings you're using language.

And so, how important is it to know a foreign language as a diplomat?

And would you say that English is the most useful language to learn?

You know, I'm glad you asked this question because this is something that I think about a lot.

I think there are so many benefits from knowing a foreign language.

As I was studying Japanese, as I mentioned, not only was it an opportunity for me to learn a new language, of course, and to be able to talk to other people in Japanese, but it was a great opportunity for me to learn more about the Japanese people.

About the Japanese culture.

About the Japanese history.

About how Japanese people think.

I'm not an expert, but because I was learning the language, it gave me this opportunity.

And so for that reason I think learning foreign languages is very important.

As you learn foreign languages, you have an opportunity and you have the chance to see other people from their perspective.

And to get a little bit more background on the individuals that you interact with and that you meet with probably on a daily basis.

Now, when it comes to speaking English, whether you like it or not, the common international language that is spoken not just in the diplomatic world but in so many

different fields is English.

And so it's very important of course to be able to read and write.

But I think it's also very important to be able to speak and to listen.

Because when it comes to communication, when it comes to teamwork, when it comes to collaboration, it's all about speaking what you think and listening to other people's ideas.

So I definitely encourage you to study your English and to continue pursuing the ability to communicate, and communicate effectively, in English.

Yes.

In terms of having international experience beyond just study abroad, was there an ideal time when you should get that experience?

Should it be when you're young or can it really happen at any point?

That's also a really great question.

I think, for me for example, I had a great opportunity to experience the world at a very young age.

That's not the only way, but I think the more exposure the more opportunities, the more we see of this world, the easier it will be for us to have different perspectives and for us to collaborate and work with other people around the world.

We talked a little bit about how because of the internet, because of technology, it is much easier now to communicate with people all around the world.

I think that kind of experience is also a part of the international experience.

But of course, I think the best is to travel to different places if you can.

To see how people live in different places around the world.

To see what people eat on a daily basis.

I think it's good if you can do this at any time in your life because this is so important.

I think if people are able to start at an earlier age, it just gives them more time to see more of the world.

So now let me ask you, in the world where various information comes and goes, how do you collect information?

How do you analyze it accurately?

And how do you make decisions?

The important things when working with people with different cultural and language backgrounds?

How do diplomats collect information, analyze it accurately and make decisions?

22:16

OK, let's think about the question Ms. Choi asked. She asked the staff, "In a world where various information comes and goes, how do you collect information? How do you analyze it accurately? And how do you make decisions?"

Let's listen to their discussion and think about these questions.

Those are really good questions.

Yeah, it's hard to say.

I think that especially with everything that you can find on the Internet, it's definitely a useful tool to collect information and research.

But I think talking to people is also very valuable, because sometimes reading something and seeing and talking to somebody about something else, about that same topic, or that same item is very different.

And for me, when I talk about it with someone, I feel like I gain a deeper understanding of that topic.

And that helps me to, like you said, see things from another person's perspective.

Absolutely.

So, when it comes to analyzing and making appropriate decisions, I think that we can all analyze or at least try to evaluate information with limited information and try to make a wise decision.

I think it's hard to always be 100 accurate depending on what that decision is that we're trying to make.

But it's important to communicate to people around us, ask for their advice and, you know, ask what would they do in our situation.

Right.

And that is also another way to learn from another person's perspective what he or she would do.

If I may add to that, I think, you know, especially you mentioned the Internet.

There's a lot of information on the Internet, but there is also a lot of misinformation or disinformation on the Internet.

And I think a way of evaluating that information is to develop a few trusted sources that you rely on.

Sources that have a track record of being accurate, and following up and producing information.

And news, for example, that is known to be accurate.

And then when you, when you come across new news, when you come across something that doesn't seem right, try to see what those voices or those outlets are saying about that issue.

And that's sort of what I've done to make sure that, you know, there's just so much information out there.

But you know I always go to my trusted sources to see what their view is on it because they haven't steered me wrong in the past.

I have a question.

So, is there a trusted resource or a trusted site then, if I want to study in the U.S.?

So, studying in the United States can sometimes be complicated.

But there are lots of resources that are available to you.

The one that I would encourage you to take a look at, is to take a look at our Education USA information that's online.

Looking up Education USA, we have offices here in Japan.

They are available to advise you and walk you through the process.

To give you information about universities and colleges in the United States.

To give you some idea of what your English level needs to be.

To give you a sense of what study in America is like altogether.

And to connect you to alumni, others who have also studied.

So please do look us up.

americancenterjapan.com

There's more information on that website.

Now, does your team have counselors we can talk to if we're interested in studying in the U.S.?

As a matter of fact, we do.

So we have Education USA advisors and they are ready and willing to speak with you and answer all of the questions that you have about studying in the U.S.

I actually had a question about going to the United States.

So is there like one right way to go?

Like, you can only go through this particular application process and only through these particular schools?

And what is that right way?

That's also a really great question.

And I wish I had one answer for you.

But the answer is no.

Of course, there are multiple different ways that you can go to the United States, especially to study.

Whether it's to study at a language school because you want to focus on English.

Whether it's going for a short-term exchange program through your school and a sister school in the U.S.

Whether it's to apply to a two-year community college, or to apply to a four-year university or graduate school or something in between.

This is one of the great things about studying in the United States.

There are many opportunities and many different variations.

There are different ways and different roads that you can take to get to the U.S.

That's great, it sounds like we have a lot of choices then.

And support.

Yeah, I know that a lot of Japanese diplomats have studied in the U.S.

Yes, they have.

Including the former foreign minister, Kono.

He was actually at Georgetown.

Yeah, absolutely, cool.

Well thank you all for joining me today in talking a little bit about diplomacy, to talk about how to communicate and collaborate with other people.

Especially those who have different cultures and backgrounds from your own.

And also in our discussion, talking a little bit about information and also a little bit about studying in the United States.

Thanks.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Closing by Tina (the navigator)

29:17

How was today's session?

Multicultural coexistence is currently a difficult issue, but the stories of diplomats based on their experiences were very real and profound. In interacting with people who have different languages and cultural backgrounds, the importance of meeting and talking with people was mentioned, as well as the importance of being open-minded. And at that time, the importance of being aware of cultural differences, such as how to distance yourself and express yourself, how to avoid humor which may be unpleasant for the other person even if you think it is funny yourself, and respecting the other person are all important. Respect for others and tolerance for differences are important for building pleasant relationships with others and building a prosperous future together. For example, in Japan there is a spirit of "*omotenashi*" - hospitality.

We also heard valuable stories about gathering information. Now we can easily collect large amounts of information on the Internet. However, it was pointed out that there was a lot of misinformation on the Internet. It is very important to have reliable sources of information. In this case, we found that interaction with people is still essential. And I think that English is an international language, so English skills are essential for interacting with people who speak different languages. Let's keep on studying in order to improve our English communication skills!

Finally, I think the diplomats' effective presentation and group discussion was helpful for us. How did the presenter respond when asked questions by the audience? How did they comment on other people's opinions? What did they say when they disagreed with other people's opinions? If you have overlooked these points, try to pay attention to them next time. Well done!