

Identity

“The official language of Japan will change to English from today.” After such a remark is made by Prime Minister of Japan, What will you do? Firstly, if we are able to speak English, we can communicate with foreigners with ease and it will be useful for our businesses and education. Secondly, most of latest information on the Internet is in English. If we are able to access and understand new information written in English, we can keep up with the other countries in the world. Then, is all we people around the world should do to speak English? No, I think that definitely different.

Something changed my mind. Last year, I joined the Skype project to talk with American students. My party's name is Nancy. She is a Korean and American half, a college student to study Japanese. One day, she asked me, “Do you want to speak English like American people?” “Yes.” I replied very quickly without any hesitation. In my mind, I was thinking to myself, The English textbooks I am using at school are all written in American English, and American English sounds so much cooler than Japanese English.

However, Nancy replied to me, “I don't think I want to talk like Japanese. I am American, even when I am speaking Japanese. I want to keep my accent so that I can keep my identity as an American.

To be honest, at first I could not understand her feelings on the matter. However, as I thought more about it, I realized that our accent is a part of our identities, and our mother tongue and identity are deeply intertwined.

In Japan, we've been treasuring our language as a big part of our cultures over many years. Japanese people can understand any situation better, and they are good at working as a team. This is probably why the term “KY” was created. In a positive way, we can say that Japanese people can be in harmony with anyone around them. But in a negative way, we could lack uniqueness as individuals. Comparing the personalities of Japanese people with those of native speakers of English, I've come to realize that we are very different between each other. Then I have started wondering whether we would lose our culture and personalities if English become one of our official languages.

Now in Japan, many companies are switching to English from Japanese as the official corporate language, which has both pros and cons. For example, it has the problem of communication between coworkers. Do you agree with the idea of switching English to the official language in Japan? If someone asked me this question a few months ago, I would have said, Yes. But I haven't knew the answer yet.

But when we face the situation where we have to decide how to manage English education, and how we use English in our society people our generation have the right to decide. What would you do, if you should become Prime Minister of Japan? If I were you, I would make a country where we can learn how to express ourselves as Japanese, and to share our identities, and promote communication in our society. That's my new answer.