

Unit 1 Change

変化を好まぬ国民性



A WARMING UP

In a small group, look at the photo above. Try to say five things about the photo. How do you think this photo is connected to the title of this unit?

B VOCABULARY MATCHING

Match each word on the left with its definition on the right. Connect them with a line.

- | | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| 1. flickering | · | · change one's behavior |
| 2. numb | · | · run in a weak manner |
| 3. adapt | · | · flashing on and off |
| 4. pessimist | · | · be happier as a result |
| 5. sputter | · | · be originated from |
| 6. prop up | · | · support |
| 7. conservative | · | · argue with |
| 8. be traced to | · | · without feeling |
| 9. be better off | · | · someone expecting bad things to happen |
| 10. confront | · | · reluctant to change |



C AN AMERICAN VIEWPOINT

In the 1980s there was a U.S. television commercial that I remember well. In the first scene, there is a car factory that had become the biggest. Next to their name they put a giant neon sign that flashed brightly and said ‘We’re Number 1’. In the next scene they show the company three years later with the factory shut down and part of the sign had fallen to the ground. What was left was the flickering neon sign stating ‘We’re Numb’. The point of the commercial was to show what can happen if your company or people fail to adapt or change. That commercial left a strong impression in my mind and reminds me how important change is.

After living in Japan for more than 15 years I have come to learn that most people are afraid of change. Why? What are they afraid of? I have repeatedly asked people over the years why Japanese people are so afraid of change. The answers vary, but the overall theme is that if the country changes things may get worse. These pessimists fail to see the other side of the coin. If you change, things MAY get better. They also fail to realize the most important point. If you do nothing, things WILL get worse. It’s sad to me that they prefer a stable, but bad situation to risking a chance to improve their lives. In a sense, Japan has become just like the factory in the commercial. The people and the country have become numb.

How bad do things have to get before people will accept change? After the bubble burst in Japan’s economy at the end of the 1980s it took about 15 years before the economy began to seriously recover. Meanwhile, the government had to pour billions of dollars into Japan’s failed banks and the economy sputtered along with very little improvement. Yet, the banks failed to change and again in 2008 the government had to spend millions to prop up Japan’s banks as a result of bad management (Shin Tokyo Bank) or bad investments in the U.S. mortgage meltdown. Had Japan fixed its banks in the 1990s, these problems would be less likely to cost taxpayers’ money today. But, they didn’t. And things indeed got worse for the Japanese public. The country still has not fully recovered from the problems of the 1980s.

In today’s economy, Japanese people are faced with high fuel prices, high food prices, increased taxes and a desire by the government to increase them more. If you fail to learn from past mistakes, you will repeat them again, just as Japan has done. So I ask again, how bad do things have to get before Japanese people will not only accept change, but expect it?

English synonyms flickering = flashing on and off numb = without feeling adapt = change one’s behavior pessimist = someone who always views things negatively the bubble burst = the market suddenly collapsed sputter = 《econ》 run in a weak manner prop up = support investments = putting money into something with the hope of making more money mortgage = house loan meltdown = breakdown

Japanese meanings flickering 点滅している numb 麻痺した adapt 適応する pessimist 悲観的な人、悲観主義者 the bubble burst バブル経済崩壊 sputter 《経済》停滞する prop up ～を支える investments 投資 mortgage 住宅ローン meltdown = 崩壊



D A JAPANESE VIEWPOINT

“Change” is a **magical** term that may sound positive and **appealing** to the general public but it is also misleading. Change does not necessarily mean improvement. Making a change is not a matter of good or bad, or right or wrong. When something changes, some will gain and some will lose. Americans have always stressed the importance of making a change and
05 believe that change generally makes things better. In contrast, Japanese people generally are more **conservative** and try to **preserve** what we are accustomed to.

Americans may be the most change-loving people in the world. Many business and political leaders in the past including successful presidential candidates all used the magical phrase **without exception** and American voters support change. Behind the Americans’
10 value for a change is an idea that there is always room for improvement. The origin of this viewpoint can **be traced to** their history of immigration. Their ancestors left their home countries to seek a better life. Some gave up on changing their homeland systems; some left because of poverty or **oppression**. Americans appreciate their ancestors who made the brave decision to come over to the land of hope and freedom. And this appreciation has led
15 many Americans to **assume** that people outside the United States will **be better off** if they follow American values and adopt social, political, administrative, economic and educational systems that they have developed.

Japanese people, on the other hand, have learned in the long history that getting along with neighbors and enjoying a calm and stable life is the best course of life. We have gone
20 through enough wars to learn that **confronting** others simply causes more trouble, and have come to realize that we have a lot more important things to pay attention to. **Consequently**, we have successfully enriched our culture, grown our economy and improved our **living standards** slowly. Japanese people are more conservative and wish to have less change.

In conclusion, Japanese people will accept whatever change is really necessary for all of
25 us. If one thinks that we have not noticed the necessity of change or are too slow to change, that means we simply believe that the current situation is not bad enough to make us change.

English synonyms magical = unreal appealing = likeable conservative = resistant to change
preserve = save without exception = in all cases be traced to = be originated from
oppression = ruling in a hard cruel way assume = think be better off = be happier as a result
confronting = arguing with consequently = as a result living standards = standard of living

Japanese meanings magical 魔法の appealing 受けが良い conservative 保守的な preserve ～を保存する、～を保持する
without exception 例外なく be traced to ～まで起源をたどる oppression 圧政
assume 思う be better off 暮らしが良くなる confronting 対立的な consequently 結果として living standards 生活水準

E READING COMPREHENSION: True or False.

Decide whether each statement is true or false.

- | | T | F |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The American author thinks Japanese people are afraid of change. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. According to the American author, if you don't change, things will get better. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Both the American and the Japanese authors think that if you fail to learn from history, you will make the same mistake again. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The Japanese author believes nothing needs to be changed in Japan right now. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The Japanese author attributes the American's preference for change to the history of their nation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



F LISTENING FOR COMPREHENSION: Multiple-Choice

Listen to the question and choose the best answer.

1.

- a. To show what happens if a company or business fails to adapt or change.
 - b. To show what should be done if a company or business fails to change.
 - c. To show how a company or business changes and fails.

2.

- a. Things will get better.
 - b. Things will get worse.
 - c. Things will get neither better nor worse.

3.

- a. If change is really necessary for all of us.
 - b. If change is the only option left to them.
 - c. If change is sure to bring a better outcome.



G LISTENING FOR PERCEPTION: Word Choice

Listen and choose the word or words you hear in each blank.

In ① a / the / ø 1980s there was a U.S. television commercial that I remember well. In the first scene, there is a car factory that ② has / have / had become the biggest. Next to their name they put a giant neon sign that flashed brightly and said 'We're Number 1.' In the next scene they ③ show / showed / shown the company three years later with the factory shut down and ④ a / the / ø part of the sign had fallen to the ground. What was left was the flickering neon sign ⑤ state / stated / stating 'We're Numb'. The point of the commercial was to show what can happen if your company or people fail to adapt or change. That commercial ⑥ led / left / lived a strong impression in my mind and ⑦ remind / reminds / reminded me how important change is.



H DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in pairs or a group.

- ① Why are Japanese people so reluctant to change?
- ② Do you think Japan really needs to change?

MODEL DIALOG

A: Why are Japanese people so reluctant to change?

B: I think Japanese are not used to being compelled to change. Changing does not always bring good results and we hesitate to take risks because we fear losing something important.

A: So, you mean changing involves losing something important?

B: Not necessarily, but we cannot always expect good results. It doesn't work that way all the time.

A: I see. Then when do you think Japan really needs to change?

B: Well, when our national security is really threatened, then we will wake up.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

I ERROR CORRECTION

Look at the picture below and try to figure out what the English says. Then write a correct version on the photo.



J VOCABULARY REVIEW

Fill in the blanks with the words or phrases used in the two essays to make sentences.

1. My fingers are n_____ from walking in the cold air.
2. We need to a_____ to the changes in our lives.
3. Her views on politics are very c_____.
4. You would be b_____ finding a different job.
5. The l_____ s_____ in this city is below the national average.