

Bicolor Language

National Institute of Technology, Toyama College, Imizu Campus

A: Hello. My name is Aoi Ono.

B: My name is Nodoka Matsumoto.

C: My name is Komi Morita. One day, I visited Australia when I was in junior high school.

It was then when I first noticed the importance of pictograms. While I was in the airport, my friend and I had just gone to the restroom and were heading back to the waiting area for our flight. When we got back to the waiting area, our flight's gate and boarding area had changed because of a flight delay. Not courageous enough to ask the staff, we were in trouble. However, when we looked up, we could instantly see the arrow pointing to our new gate and the elevator we needed to take. Our ease of understanding was thanks to that pictogram. I was worried because the announcements were not in Japanese, but we were relieved.

B: Please look at this picture. Do you know what this means? It means "toilet" in Korea. We can easily understand what it means when we see it. These kinds of pictures are called "pictograms".

A: Recently, pictograms at the Tokyo Olympic Games got a lot of attention from people all over the world. Fifty different kinds of pictograms were on display there. The Tokyo Olympic Games had a much simpler opening ceremony than was first planned, because many of the participants declined to attend due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But, people overseas applauded the opening ceremony. We got interested in sports pictograms by watching this ceremony. We wanted tell you more about pictograms and how it involves Japanese culture. So, we decided on this topic for our presentation.

B: A pictogram is generally called an "emoji" or "etango". It's a sign used to quickly show some information or get people's attention. It expresses information by using two colors in the shape of a simple figure. It is used mainly at public facilities like train or subway stations and airports. Because they are very simple, we can understand what they mean intuitively, without the limits of language. The visual figures tell us their meaning, not words or sentences.

B: Sports pictograms were made in Japan in 1964 for the first time. Why were they made in Japan? Because in 1959, Japan was chosen to hold the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. Japan wanted foreigners to be able to visit Japan without any of the inconveniences caused by language differences. However, by the time Japan had decided to make sports pictograms, they only had three months to get it done. The difference between Japan and other countries was not only the language, but also the culture and habits. To solve this problem, Japan adopted designs that made important information easy to understand. Based on these designs, the sports pictograms used in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games were simple yet effective. They were not elegant, but they worked wonderfully. Behind the scenes, many Japanese people were working hard to make sure these pictograms turned out well.

A: The pictograms used at the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2021 were created by Hiromura Masaaki. He is a famous designer in Japan. They took about two years to design. Mr. Hiromura was at the center of designing pictograms for the Games. He provided many ideas. He decided on each respective pictogram to be used, and that each pictogram would be faithful to Japanese tradition and completed by adding something dynamic.

C: However, there were some difficulties in the production process. There were some newly adopted events at the most recent Olympic Games, like surfing and skateboarding. For these two events especially, dynamism was important, so it was difficult to come up with the right idea. In addition, events like cycling with five different types of races, made it difficult yet necessary to differentiate between similar events. But in the end, through careful planning, it was a success.

B: Sports pictograms often use motifs that represent the country. The Sydney Olympic Games, for example, used a pictogram of a boomerang to represent the Aboriginal peoples. Japan needed to think about what pictograms represent modern Tokyo. So, many people with different perspectives met to discuss it. The basic color of the pictogram for the Tokyo Olympic Games was indigo, which expresses Japan's individuality and is the color of its emblem.

A: The city's pictograms were also changed for the Olympics. Look at this.

C: Oh, is it udon?

B: No, it's a hot spring!

A: This is the old pictogram, and this is the new one. The new one is much easier to understand. There have already been pictograms made for our school, but we wanted to create a pictogram that was easier to understand. The tree departments at Imizu campus are Maritime Technology, International Business, and Electronics and Computer Engineering. Do you know which pictogram represents which department?

C: The first is the department of Maritime Technology, which has a navigation course and an engine course. Therefore, this pictogram shows an image of a sailing ship and a tool used to inspect the engine, also called the heart of a ship, to represent the two courses.

A: The second, International Business, which in addition to its English course, offers a second foreign language course in either Chinese, Korean, or Russian, as well as courses in economics and logistics. The people in the center of the pictogram represent students actively using the languages they have learned, and the globe in the background represents the Department of International Business with its awareness on globalization.

B: The third department, the Department of Electronics and Computer Engineering, teaches students about hardware, software, and communication networks and how to apply them to creative technological development. IT uses images and computers that remind us of creativity and inspiration and uses pictograms to express our own thoughts in a way that is easy to understand.

A: We came up with this pictogram because we want more people to become familiar with our college. Many of us International Business Department students will most likely go abroad in the future. I think that the pictograms in foreign countries will help us just as the pictograms in Japan are appreciated by many foreigners. I think that

pictograms can be thought of as a form of international cooperation.

- C: As you can see, pictograms are a very convenient way to convey meaning without using words. However, they take a lot of careful thought to make. It is estimated that there are 6,900 languages in the world. Pictograms are one of the tools that people can use to connect with one another. If pictograms hadn't been made, we would have one less tool to connect with people around the world. Pictograms have come to be used in all aspects of our lives.
- B: Through this presentation, we realized the importance of pictograms. From now on, we also want to contribute to connecting people from around the world. Thank you for listening. Thank you.