

This presentation reflects on the cross-cultural challenges and personal growth experienced during my internship at Red Lodge Mountain, as a Japanese student navigating an English-speaking workplace for the first time. The central question guiding this reflection is: how does a language barrier shape the way we communicate, connect, and build confidence in a foreign professional environment?

Motivated by my firsthand experience of feeling linguistically and culturally out of place, this project explores how everyday interactions with customers and colleagues pushed me to develop new communication strategies beyond words — including attentiveness, body language, and the Japanese hospitality principle of omotenashi.

Through personal reflection and observation, I found that while language barriers created real challenges in delivering clear service and coordinating with teammates, they also became opportunities to listen more carefully, adapt more creatively, and grow more resilient. My key conclusion is that cross-cultural competence is not simply a language skill — it is built through repeated, real-world human connections.