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## **A message from the counselor for international students No.9**

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### **The Rashomon Factor**

The Movie “Rashomon” begins with a scene of a timber merchant saying, “Who knows? I’m all in a muddle...”. This movie was based on the novel by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, “In a Grove”. A couple are deceived by a thief, and the husband murdered in a Grove. This story consists of testimonies from seven people.

Who murdered the husband? The truth is a mystery. Each testimony reveals how each individual perceives the case. Even if we have a shared experience, each story varies based on each individual’s perception of the situation. Nomura, a cultural anthropologist, called this phenomenon the Rashomon factor.

A man asks his girlfriend, “As I just got paid from my part-time job, I’ll treat you to dinner. What do you want to eat?” She answers, “Anything.” “How about going to a French restaurant?”, he suggests. She doesn’t agree. He says to her, “Let’s have Kaiseki ryori”, but she refuses his idea again. “Well, we’ll eat ramen. I know a good place.”, he says. She rejects this notion. As she has shot down all his suggestions, he gets frustrated and screams, “Give me a break!” Seeing his frustration she starts crying. He is at a loss saying, “Though I’ve made many suggestions, she doesn’t like any of them. Her responses make me angry and shout.” On the other hand, she says, “As I’m worried about his financial burdens, I’ve refused his offers. However, I’m disappointed he recommended ramen. It makes me sad to see he doesn’t understand my feelings.”

The man perceives the girlfriend’s rejection as selfishness and gets angry. The girlfriend becomes sad when he doesn’t understand her caring for him and proposing an inappropriate location for dating. Each Rashomon factor seems to cause anger and sadness. How can we understand each Rashomon factor? We could understand each situation by voicing our real concerns or troubles rather than showing anger or sadness.

After the rejection of ramen, if the man had admitted to his girlfriend, “I’m at a loss. What restaurant shall we go to?” she could have suggested a place which had reasonable prices and a good atmosphere. If she had said, “I’m at a loss to decide a perfect location for your price range and our date”, he wouldn’t have got angry.

We can grasp each perception more accurately by voicing our concerns or troubles in an appropriate way. We can show our empathy towards people with dilemmas.