

Engagement key to eliminating prejudice: Uncovering the process of feeling understood

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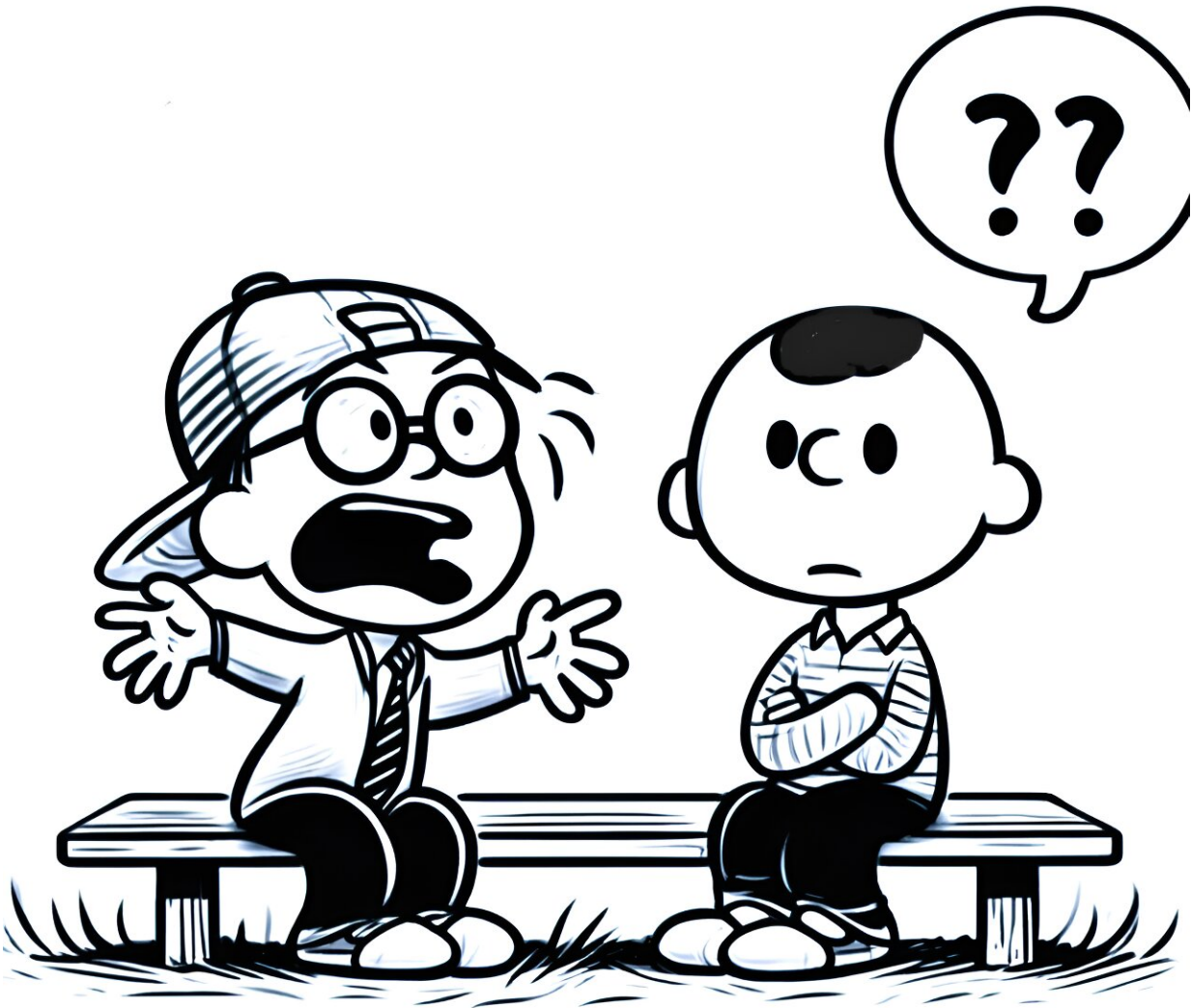


Image of a situation where a friend does not understand you. Credit: Tomohiro Ioku

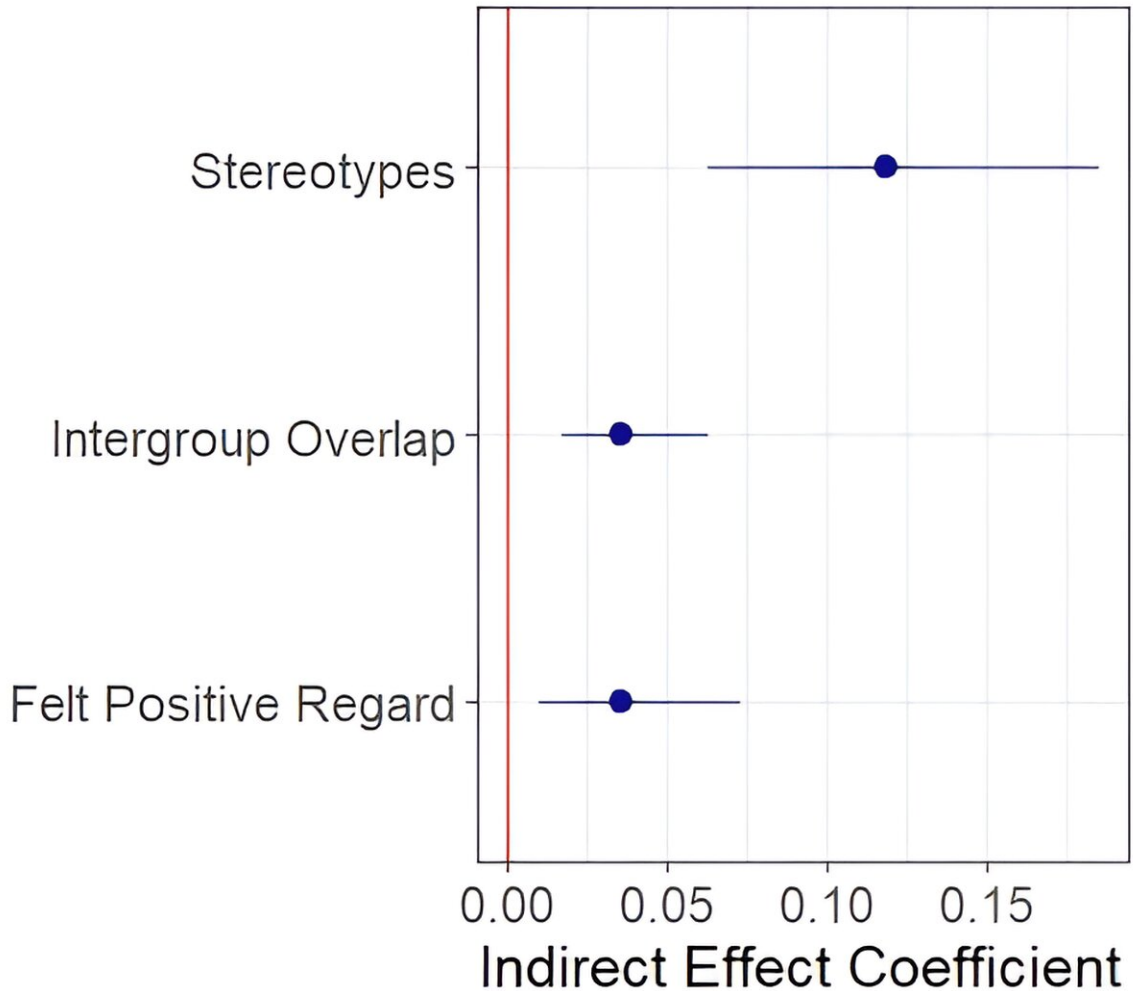
A research group at Osaka University has uncovered how the view of other people and groups changes when individuals feel that they are understood by others by conducting an experimental study on the relationship between Japanese and Chinese people. The study shows that the role of felt understanding largely derives from a reduction in prejudice toward the other person.

Feeling understood by other people is a crucial determinant for positive interpersonal and intergroup relationships; however, the psychology behind this determinant was not well understood.

In this study, Drs. Tomohiro Ioku and Eiichiro Watanabe at Osaka University manipulated psychological processes of felt understanding in the context of East Asia, more specifically between Japanese and Chinese people. The findings are [published](#) in the journal *Scientific Reports*.



The extent to which Japanese people want to approach Chinese people when they read an article describing Chinese understandings about Japan (vs. misunderstandings). The higher the dots, the stronger the intention to approach Chinese people. Credit: Tomohiro Ioku



Estimated indirect effects via felt positive regard, intergroup overlap, and stereotypes. The further to the right, the larger the indirect effect. Credit: Tomohiro Ioku

The results showed for the first time that in intergroup relationships, people are more willing to engage with their counterparts when they feel understood, primarily because it reduces their prejudice.

The issue of discrimination against foreigners is often discussed in media. Based on the results of this study, such discrimination problems

could be reduced if foreigners learn the local language and communicate their understanding of the country.

For example, the Center for International Education and Exchange at Osaka University runs J-ShIP programs for learning Japanese (https://ciee.osaka-u.ac.jp/en/short-term_programs/new-short-term-programs/). More media features on similar programs and initiatives could help reduce [discrimination](#) issues in the long term.

More information: Tomohiro Ioku et al, An experimental study of the process of felt understanding in intergroup relations: Japanese and Chinese relations in Japan, *Scientific Reports* (2024). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-024-63227-0](#)

Provided by Osaka University

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