A GLIMPSE AT THE UNITED KINGDOM
Its Land, People, Language and Culture

Hoshin Nakamura

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A. INTRODUCTION

This is a brief glimpse at the life, language and culture of the people in the United Kingdom (UK), where the author lived and studied during the academic year of 1996. A total of 29 items on the UK is introduced mainly for the Japanese readers who are interested in visiting the UK some day and learning the language and culture of the British people. The author wishes that this article would help the readers become aware of the culture and language of the UK so that they are able to communicate better with the people.
A WRITING SYSTEM

This is an article on the United Kingdom; therefore, a British spelling system is going to be used here as much as possible. For example, such terms as “center,” “tire,” “organize” are going to be spelt as “centre,” “tyre,” “organise,” and the like.

WHY I DECIDED TO GO TO NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND

Two universities in England originally offered me an invitation to visit them as a visiting scholar. One university was in London and the other was in the East Midland of England. I decided to go to the latter one. I chose the University of Nottingham as the site of my studies for two reasons. First, the Department of Education at the university has the Centre for English Language Education, called CELE, which offers excellent courses in ESL/TESL programme. Second, there is an easy access of transportation to the other parts of the country since it is centrally located.
LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY, WEATHER AND PEOPLE

The United Kingdom (UK) consists of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The UK is located between 50 and 60 degrees north latitude or about the same latitude as the middle of Sakhalin or Karafuto Island, off the North of Hokkaido. In spite of this, it is a little warmer than northern part of Hokkaido in winter because of the influence of the warm ocean current from the Gulf of Mexico. Hokkaido in August and September, however, is much warmer than the UK. Average January temperature in London is 4°C while average July temperature is 15°C. The average annual temperature is 10.5°C.

Often fogs appear suddenly. One winter morning a dense fog rolled over the town of Beeston where I lived; you can hardly see a few meters ahead of you; cars run with headlights on in the middle of the day. Fogs usually appear when it is very calm and quiet and when the winds completely halt.

We had an unexpected heavy snow fall on November 19, 1996. The editor of “Home News” of the TIMES, Kathryn Knight, stated in her article: “Two people died yesterday as blizzards swept much of the country, blocking roads, closing schools, and leaving thousands of homes without power.”(1)

However, warm spring breezes and rain bring various kinds of fabulous flowers until another winter begins. Snowdrops, daffodils, and tulips in April, cherry blossoms in May, azalea and roses in June and July, hydrangea in August, and so on.

PEOPLE

British isles were settled by the Celts, Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Anglo-Normans, etc. Over the centuries, interracial marriages have brought about a racial mixture. In recent years, interracial marriages are
frequently taking place in major cities where most immigrants and their descendants dwell.

There are about 5,800,000 people in the land area of 244,000 square kilometres, that are approximately 65% of that of Japan. England is the largest of the four, which is about 50% of the total area of the UK. The smallest of all is Northern Ireland, which is only 1/10 of the area of the UK.

Roughly 75% of the land area of Japan is mountains while most of the UK is lowlands and more than 75% of the land area is used for farming.

A Wheat Harvest, 1996

Steep mountains are found only in the northern and western parts of the UK, and they are not so high either. The highest mountain is 1,343 meters high; there are only five mountains that are over 10,000 meters
high, of which four are found in Scotland and Wales. This area is known as ‘highland’ covered with rocks and thin unfortile soils, whereas most of England is called ‘lowland’ that is rich in natural resources and that is extremely good for farming.

People Visiting Newark, England

A large number of nonwhite immigrants from such ex-colonial countries as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Africa, the Middle East, etc. has settled down in the UK. Such immigrants consists of about 19% of the total population of the nation. Interracial marriage is taking place. The UK, like other European neighbours, is becoming a multiethnic society. These immigrants also brought their cultures and religions into the UK.
RELIGIONS

Christianity still remains as the major religion in the UK. The Queen is the head of the Church of England. Surprisingly, though, only about 13% of the population in England are church members. Approximately 1,200,000 people are said to be attending Anglican.(2)

Morning services have been held every Sunday, though the number of Anglican church members is rapidly decreasing in recent years. Non-conformist Protestants are Methodists and Baptists. About 5.7 million people are Roman Catholic. There are 1.5 million Muslims largely from Pakistan and Bangladesh, with over 1,000 mosques; there are also 385,000 Jews, 175,000 Sikhs, 140,000 Hindus as well as various sects of
Buddhism. (3) The UK is becoming more multiracial, multicultural, and multi-religious nation than ever before. Therefore, inter-religious and inter-racial marriages are not uncommon today.

ENGLISH CHANNEL TUNNEL

England and European continent are now connected by an undersea tunnel across the English Channel, which is nearly 50km long. The channel tunnel service has started between Waterloo train station in London and Paris/Brussels. It takes only about 20 minutes to cross the channel itself by Euro-Star train. My wife and I enjoyed taking the return/round trips between London and Paris/Brussels during our European journey in the summer of 1996. The Angro-French tunnel is the longest undersea tunnel in the world today; the tunnel is 69km long between Folkestone, England...
and Calais, France, this is longer than "Seikan" tunnel between Aomori and Hokkaido, Japan.

LONDON: POLITICAL, FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS CENTRE

London, the capital city of the UK with its 7.5 million people, is a political, financial and business centre of the nation. Queen Elizabeth II is the head of the government and the courts. Under the Queen is the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the Parliament. The Parliament consists of the Upper House (the House of Lords), made up of hereditary peers, life peers, bishops, and law lords. The term of the Lower House is five years. The general elections are held every five years.

Source: M.V. Rees, In Britain, 1995

London Bridge and Big Ben

Major banks, hotels, transport and communication companies, finance and insurance companies, other business offices are found in London. A number of tourists visit the British Museum, Bukiingham Palace, Hyde Park, London Bridge, the Tower of London, Parliament building,
Westminster Abbey, Big Ben, and so forth. London is indeed an attractive and fascinating city to do business, shopping, sightseeing, and so on.

POLITICAL PARTIES

There are two major political parties in the UK, conservatives and Labour parties. The Conservative party has transferred a number of government enterprises into private companies. There is also a middle-of-road party called the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); however, this seems to be only a small party at present. The UK has a big political problem over Northern Ireland where the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) wants to be free from the UK control. No one seems to know exactly when the struggle will come to an end. Tony Blair of the Labour Party was elected to new prime minister in 1997; however, both his party and Torry (Conservative Party) have been criticised because the policies of the two parties have come so close that people can hardly find much difference in them.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND LIFE EXPECTANCY

The unemployment rate in the UK used to be as high as 14 - 15% in mid-1980s. However, it is steadily decreasing. It was reduced to 8% in 1966, 7% in 1997, and 6% in 1998. International capital investments

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<td>78.7</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>87.2</td>
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</table>

Source: Social Trends, 1996 Edition

- 98 -
have been encouraged to create more job opportunities. There used to be quite a few homeless people and beggars asking for money from the passersby in every city corner. The life expectancy in the UK in 1996 was 74.4 years for men and 79.7 for women. Most of the people in the UK seem to be happy; they appear to be friendly when you get to know them. They seem to be more concerned about the quality of life than the quantity of life.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We flew to Manchester International Air Port, where we had to go through customs procedures. A customs officer asked three main questions that I answered one after another. Here is the conversation between the officer and me at the customs:

Officer: “How long are you going to stay?”
I: “I am going to stay one year, sir.”

Officer: “What is the purpose of your visit?”
I: “I am here as a visiting scholar at the University of Nottingham.”

Officer: “Do you have a return airplane ticket?”
I: “Yes, sir. Here it is.”

Looking at several documents, the officer asked me if I wanted to stay a few weeks longer. It was a happy surprise for me to hear his unexpected remark, for I haven’t thought of being able to stay longer than the specified period. Suddenly the customs officer looked like an angel to me. I bought two single (one-way) coach tickets for the city centre of Nottingham at a booking office of the airport. The sales lady there was very friendly. My wife and I took a coach to the city centre of Nottingham. Looking white roaming sheep grazing in the green meadows,
I soon began to feel peaceful and comfortable at home. The coach became like a kind of a rocking cradle for me. I began to feel as if I were embraced by the Great Mother Earth of England. The first day of our England has thus begun.

SUMMER TIME
There is a great difference in the hours of the sunrise and the sunset between Nottingham and Naha city. In Nottingham, the sun doesn’t rise until 8:06 a.m. while it sets at 4:02 p.m. in midwinter. So, the drivers put the headlights of their cars on both on their way to and from their work. In midsummer, however, the sun rises as early as 4:48 a.m., and it sets at 9:21 p.m. It doesn’t get dark until about 10:30 p.m. in midsummer. No wonder it is necessary for the people in the nations closer to the North and the south poles to adopt summer time. On the last Sunday of March, British summer time is adopted by setting a clock/watch back one hour, and the summer time ends on the last Sunday of October by putting a clock one hour forward.

THE TIME CONCEPT OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE
The time concept of the people in the UK is much similar to that of Okinawan people. Public transportation such as trains, and buses are often delayed ten or fifteen minutes; but there is rarely an apology announcement made. Punctuality in the UK appears to be not as important as in major cities in Japan, that made me feel cozy and comfortable. The people in the UK appear to be more relaxed than most Japanese. They are not workaholic and so-called “karooshi” (deaths from overwork) is unheard of.
EDUCATION

The British education system started in a church to teach bible like Japanese "terakoya" education. Eton in Windsor was the first school to be built independently from church authority in the 15th century. The grammar school was the next school to appear, where Latin and Greek grammar was taught to children who could not attend independent school.

William Shakespeare attended grammar school in Stratford-Upon-Avon. The church-supported local village and town school was a third type of school that taught local children how to read and write.

Today, children in the UK must receive compulsory education from 5 to 16 years old. The UK school system is based on pre-school (3-5 years old), primary school (5-11 years old), secondary school (11-16 years old), Sixth Form (16-18 years old) and university or other higher education. Primary school consists of 95% of state schools and 5% of independent
schools; secondary school consists of about 94% of comprehensive schools and about 6% of independent fee-paying and grammar schools or secondary modern schools. (5)

Only 45% after 16 years old continue full-time education in Sixth form, 55% go to work or join employment training schemes. 15% of the Sixth Formers can pass “A” levels examination in two subjects or more, which allows them to enter a university. (6)

Expenditure on education per student in public institutions (1992 in ¥)

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<th>Elem.</th>
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<th>Higher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAPAN</td>
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<td>8,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3,800,000</td>
<td>5,400,000</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7,000,000</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>1,720,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Social Trends, 1996

Japan spends a little more money per pupil in primary education than the UK; however, the UK spends more in secondary and higher education. The United States is the highest in spending on education per pupil/student in all levels as it is shown in the graph. (7)
CLASS SYSTEM

Three major classes consist of British society—1) upper class, 2) middle class and 3) working-class. There are sub-classes within these three. The royal family and the aristocracy belong to upper class holding power in government through inheritance. They are only 3% of the population while 15% belongs to the lowest group that consists of pensioners, the unemployed, etc. Majority of the population belongs to middle class. Accents, clothes, school and family often become identification of people's class. Recently, however, upward and downward mobility of class is occurring by achievement in education or by success in business. Regardless of the place or birth of origin, people tend to acquire Received English or BBC English (the accent of Southeast of England) as they receive higher education.

QUEUES

Every vowel in Japanese is to be pronounced. In English, on the other hand, a series of vowels is pronounced differently. For example, "blue fish" in Japanese is made up by such consecutive vowels as "aoi uo"
that has 5 syllables. Although an English word "queue" consists of 4 vowel letters, which are pronounced in one long vowel sound as in [kju:].

Queues are seen everywhere in the UK, in post offices, in shops and stores, in the banks, at bus and taxi stops, outside cinemas, at restaurants, and wherever a lot of people are waiting for something. A person trying to go to the head of the queue will be stopped by others in the queue to go back. It is considered as very rude or uncivilized to go to the head of the queue.

NEWSPAPERS

More than 10 national daily newspapers and 10 national Sunday papers have been published in the UK. The newspapers are divided into quality papers and popular papers. The quality papers usually cover domestic and international news, which are read by intellectuals, business circles, politicians, and so forth. The popular ones are called 'tabloids' because of their size and they are written in simple or spoken language, and have lots of coloured photos in them, including semi-nude women; they include the stories and scandals of the Royal family, movie stars, famous people, and the like.
Most widely read quality papers are "The Daily Telegraph" and "Sunday Times" while most popular tabloids are "The Sun," "The News of the World" followed by "The Daily Mirror," "The Sunday Mirror," "The Sunday People," "The Sunday Express," etc. "The Evening Post" which can be purchased in the morning is considered to belong to the middle of the two papers.

DIETARY HABITS

Most families in the UK do not cook breakfast and lunch. More than 30% of the people do not eat breakfast simply because they want to sleep longer or because they have no time to eat. If they do eat, only some toast or cereal with a cup of milk tea or coffee, so-called Continental Breakfast, will be eaten in the morning.

Most people have a sandwich with a drink for lunch; others may eat
lunch at a canteen or a tea lounge. Dinner often consists of canned soup, ready-made frozen food heated up in an oven, roll bread with milk tea, etc. Many families may cook on Sundays or such special occasions as birthdays, Christmas, etc. The typical British fast food is “fish and chips” (fried fish and French fried potatoes). American fast food restaurants are found everywhere in the UK. There are also many ethnic foods served at Chinese, Indian, Turkish, or Japanese restaurants. Most people in the UK drink milk tea; tea with lemon is seldom served.

MONEY

Currencies of Scotland, Ireland and England
Source: C. Lavery, Focus on Britain Today, 1993

Current monetary system in the UK is based on the metric system. Money consists of coins and bank notes. Coins are made of copper and
silver. 1p and 2p are made of copper while 5p, 10p and 50p are made of silver. (100 pence is a pound) The bank notes are £5, £10, £20, £50 and £1,000. However, £1,000 note is not widely circulated. Coins are made at the Royal Mint in Wales while bank notes are printed by the Bank of England Printing Works in Essex. Interestingly, the Royal Bank of Scotland and Ulster Bank Limited in Northern Ireland issue the separate bank notes that are circulated within their regions as they are shown in the photos.

BRITISH PUBS

A British Pub in Beeston, Nottingham

Though most of the shops and stores are closed after five o’clock, many pubs, fast food and fish and chip restaurants, ethnic food
restaurants, etc. are open. You can enjoy meeting the local people and talking over a glass of lager in the pub that is found everywhere in the UK. Locally made beers are worth trying though Guinness of Ireland seems to be one of the most popular brands. You will enjoy some musicians singing and playing the woodwind, string and percussion instruments while you drink a mug of lager. If you are hungry, you can also order local food in the pub.

One evening, my wife and I were invited to an English language teachers' party in an old train-station pub in the town of Beeston, where we really enjoyed drinking, eating, talking, laughing, and so on. When we visited Stratford-upon Avon, we entered one of the pubs called "Red Lion." We sat at the table and waited for more than ten minutes but no one came to serve us. Just before we decided to leave the pub, one of the British customers, noticing we were foreign travellers, came to our table and advised us to go to the counter to place an order. I thanked him and went to the counter and tried to order our food. The cashier asked me, "What is your table number?" "I don't know," I replied. "If you don't know your table number, you can't place an order," he said. So, I went back to my table and checked and found the table number which I reported to the cashier. I wanted to order my dessert at the same time; however, the cashier said that I could not order the dessert unless I finished eating my dinner. Because I was in a hurry, I did not order my dessert. Rushing Japanese often make such a mistake. British pubs are where you take time, relax and enjoy our leisurely evening. From time to time you can enjoy listening to live music performed within. It is also the place where you can get to know the local people.

TYPES OF HOUSES

It is fascinating and surprising to find various types of houses that
have been constructed over past hundreds of years; different types and styles of buildings coexist side by side though they may be constructed in different ages. It is amazing to find a Roman bath, a Norman church, a Tudor manor house, an Elizabethan house, a Victorian terraced house, Georgian houses, and modern high-rise buildings; the UK is indeed a nation of historical museum itself. Most of these old historical buildings still have been used today. Most people live in one of the following buildings--a bungalow, a suburban semi-detached house, a housing estate, a terrace house, a council house and a tower block (a kind of condominium). The owners of semi-detached houses and terraces often paint the exterior of
their houses in different colours to claim the right of the ownership or to maintain their personal identity. As a result, half of the same house can be white while the other half may be yellow.

Bungalows

Some upper class people live in a fancy castle-like mansion in the countryside with a spacious garden. Many middle-class people live in a detached house with a large yard in the suburbs. Most of the working class live in a bungalow, a semi-detached house, a terrace, a condominium, or in a rental flat while low-income or elderly people usually live in a council house provided by the local government office.
BED AND BREAKFAST

A “B and B” stands for “Bed and Breakfast” that is a kind of Japanese “minshuku,” however, it is much fancier than Japanese “mins huku.” A “B & B” is much cheaper and friendlier than a hotel, though you may have to share a bathroom with other house mates. Some B & B’s have a private bathroom, which is a little more expensive than the rooms with a shared bathroom. Breakfast at the B & B usually consists of a hot dish of bacon and eggs, sausages, baked tomato preceded by cereal or porridge and fruit or tomato juice and followed by toasts and butter or marmalade with tea or coffee. You can enjoy a family-like atmosphere that can rarely be experienced in a big hotel.
POLITE PEOPLE

It is wonderful indeed to find that the most people in the UK are polite, reserved, and friendly at the same time. They often say, “Sorry!”, “Thank you,” “Cheers!”, “Are you all right?”, and so forth, which I heard around me every day. Is this because they live very closely to one another in semi-detached houses or terraces partitioned by a wall? Or is it because they live on islands like Japanese people? Or is it because of the family discipline they receive from childhood? What do you think?

On 28 January, 1997, I happened to meet my neighbour on the street. He greeted me and said, “Thank you for your Christmas present for my grandchildren.” I was really surprised by hearing this; I couldn’t believe my ears, because Americans would seldom thank for something that had passed by. However, he remembered it for more than one month and he did thank me. He was just like a Japanese person.

ENGLISH AND LOCAL DIALECTS

Received English or BBC English has been spoken widely among younger generation and the educated throughout the United Kingdom today. However, various dialects have been spoken in the rural areas, that are much different from Received English. When I was travelling Wales in January 1997, I saw a group of the young Welsh participating in a discussion in Welsh on TV, which was utterly unintelligible to me. Welsh is spoken by 500,000 people in Wales. Welsh and English are both official languages in Wales. Gaelic is spoken in the Republic of Ireland and in Scotland, where English is thought to be their second language. Therefore, most Gaelic speakers are bilingual; many signs seen in the public places are bilingual. There are various local dialects spoken in many parts of the UK.
More than ten local dialects are found for the word "alley or lane," i.e. "guinell," and "entry," in Nottingham ( "twitchel" in Beeston, Nottingham), "ginnel" in North Leeds, "jitty" in Derby, "close" in Scotland, "snicket" in North Yorkshire, "dingle" in Manchester, "jigger or jowler" in Liverpool, "alleyway" in Bourne Mouth, etc. Furthermore, "Bread rolls" are called "baps or buns" in general but "bamcakes" in Lancashire, "bread cakes" in Yorkshire, "batches" in Coventry, "cobs" in Midlands, "softies" in Northeastern Scotland, "stotty" in Durham, etc. A list of these words was placed on the notice board at the Centre for English Language Education of the University of Nottingham so that international students can get acquainted with the local dialects.

The teaching staff of the English language appear to be tolerant to the "Englishes" spoken outside the UK; however, some ordinary British people seem to react differently and sensitively. For example, when I was taking a leisurely walk in a park one fine sunny holiday, I happened to
meet a lovely elderly British couple who looked around 80 years or so. The old man appeared to be happy as long as I greeted him saying, “It’s a lovely day, isn’t it?” However, no sooner than I said to his wife, “Have a nice day, Ma’am,” he began to upset and shouted at me swinging his walking stick, “That is American! That is American!”

Bilingual Sign in Wales

Regional dialects are still spoken in many places in the UK. Cockney is spoken in London; Gaelic, the Celtic language in the Highlands, in the western coastal regions of Scotland and in Ireland; Welsh, a kind of Celtic language, in the north and west of Wales. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see bilingual traffic signs in these districts. However, standard British English, so-called received English, is very widely spoken by educated people and by the younger generation throughout the UK. While I was in Nottingham, I found a number of differences between British and American English. Here are some examples:
Some Differences in the Use of Words and Phrases

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<td>subway</td>
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<tr>
<td>post code</td>
<td>zip code</td>
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<tr>
<td>subway</td>
<td>underpass</td>
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<tr>
<td>bap</td>
<td>bun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flat</td>
<td>apartment house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry!</td>
<td>Excuse me!</td>
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<tr>
<td>have a bath/shower</td>
<td>take a bath/shower</td>
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Some Differences in Spelling

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Some Differences in Pronunciation

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<td>[rəut]</td>
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<td>water</td>
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CHARITY ORGANISATIONS

Approximately 50 kinds of charity organisations have been established in the U.K. today. They usually run shops and stores operated by volunteers to support such organisations as Abbeyfield home, Alcohol Concern, Amnesty In., Christian Aid, Help the Aged, Lions Club, Institutes...
for the Blind and the Deaf, Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, Cancer Society, Red Cross, and so on. Even in a small town in Beeston, Nottingham where I lived, about seven such charity shops were open. They usually sell recycled items, such as clothes, electronic appliances, furniture, and the like. In almost every town square where people gather during weekends are found the volunteers with a charity box to collect a donation of money. The U.K. is indeed a nation of charity. One of the greatest contributions of such work in the U.K. might have been ex-Princess Diana’s land mine eradication programme.

Source: M.Vaughan-Rees, In Britain, 1995
ELECTRIC WHEEL CHAIRS

Elderly and physically handicapped people in their electric wheel chairs can be found in every town and city centre, who are doing some shopping, simply enjoying the outdoor breezes, appreciating the sunshine, etc. You will see an elderly man/woman pushing his wife/her husband in a wheel chair; a number of handicapped people also come out for the same reasons in their electric wheel chair whenever and wherever they want to go out, which is not very common in Japan yet. What makes it possible for them to do that in the U.K.? Almost all the roads and public places are structured in such a way that electric or pushing wheel chairs as well as buggies can go through making gentle slopes. Not only the handicapped but also ordinary people riding bicycles are using these slopes. Japan is still far behind of the U.K. in providing environmentally friendly infrastructure for the handicapped.

Even some taxis have high roofs so that they can carry the customers in wheel chairs. They are called “London Taxis” or “black cabs” because they are painted black most of the time.
QUALITY OF LIFE

The people in the U.K. appear to be more concerned about the quality of life than the quantity of life. Mass consumption seems to be avoided; they do not throw things away easily simply because they have become old. No matter how old the item may be, they will keep using it as long as it lasts. Some towels in the B & B where we stayed had holes and a carpet looked 30 years old but they were still being used; a twenty-year old toaster was still in use; a hundred-year old table and chair had been used by repairing and repainting. People also enjoy gardening growing seasonal flowers and vegetables. Many of the people in the U.K. spend quiet Sundays reading, listening to music, walking in the park, attending a concert, visiting museums and theatres, attending church, and the like. Many people in the U.K. seem to be having a frugal and prudent life, which most Japanese are forgetting these days.

Quality of life seems to be based on how much leisure time you can get for enriching your life, how much green area and clean environment you can have for healthy life, how much you can get involved in charity and volunteer activities, and the like.

TEA

The U.K. is famous for its tea. The people in the U.K. drink more tea than coffee. Tea is not grown in the U.K., but tea is drunk at various occasions, such as breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, parties, and so on.

Tea time often means a meal time and a light meal is eaten in the afternoon or in the early evening. There are so-called a “low tea” and a “high tea”. The “low tea” is called so, because it is held at a low table at around 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. while the “high tea” is held at a high table at about 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. I was invited to both “low tea” and “high
tea" by British families. At the "low tea" homemade cakes, ginger bread, scone or biscuits are served. Lemon is seldom used in tea. Instead, cream or milk is added to tea and drunk with or without sugar. I was served by a hundred-year old silver pot; the host proudly told me the story of the silver pot. I enjoyed a wonderful conversation over the tea. At "high tea" a meal instead of snacks is served; therefore, in the U.K. tea often represents a meal. She is indeed a tea-loving and tea-drinking nation.

A High Tea
The UK has long suffered high unemployment in the past. In past few years, however, she has made an amazing economic recovery. Although the unemployment rate used to be over 10% in the late 1980s, it came
down to about 6% in 1998. It appears that more jobs are being created. Many foreign investors have been invited to invest to create more job opportunities. The homeless and beggars are gradually decreasing. People seem to have been gaining confidence and self respect. Whatever work they may be engaging in, they seem to be working diligently and seriously without losing human dignity. The people in the U.K. do not seem to despise "dirty, dangerous, difficult/hard" work (3Ds) while Japanese people do by labeling them as "3Ks."

FOREIGN VISITORS TO THE U.K.

The visitors and tourists to the U.K. from other countries have been increasing substantially. In 1992, 17.5 million visitors come to the U.K. spending 7.89 billion pounds (approximately ¥1,578 billion). In 1996, however, 26 million foreign people visited the U.K. spending about 12.67 billion pounds (or about ¥2,534 billion).(8) There was an 8% increase over the previous year in the number of the visitors and 5% up in spending. More than 17 million visitors were from the European nations, 3.7 million from the USA, and the rest from the other areas.(9)

Visitors to the UK and their spending  
(visitors by million; spending by billion pounds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>visitors</th>
<th>spending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources: Britain in Focus, 1992 & Financial Times, March 1997
GUIDED TOURS

Visitors to the U.K. can enjoy various kinds of guided tours wherever they may want to visit. Most panorama tours are conducted by double-decker, the top of which is usually open so that tourists can enjoy the views and take photos without difficulty.

Double-decker Sight-seeing bus
Interestingly and surprisingly, the tour guides are, in most cases, retired senior citizens in their 60s or 70s. Many of them are retired school teachers who once taught geography, history, sociology, languages, and the like. Therefore, they have an ample knowledge of their country. This is true not only in the U.K. but also in the rest of Europe. Only exception was a tour in Denmark when we were taken to see the lovely "mermaid" poised on a rock in the harbor of Copenhagen. Very beautiful young ladies in their early 20s escorted and guided us. It was a very rare case to find such young ladies as tour guides in Europe. What an excellent idea it is to use the rich knowledge and skills of senior citizens to meet the need of our society. Furthermore, it is not unusual to find women bus drivers and men tour guides in Europe.

While bigger buses are used for panorama tours, mini buses are often used for short city tours. Walking town tours are also popular among the tourists to visit historical monuments, museums, cultural sites, and so on, which lasts about a couple of hours or so.

Special discount tickets are available for senior citizens, retired people, the disabled, children, students, and the like. All sorts of necessary information, such as leaflets on hotels, B and B's, a purchase of tour tickets, etc. at tourist information centres are found in every city and town.
ENGLISH AS A MEANS OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

There are more than 100 nations and regions where English is used as a major or official language. It is possible that approximately 2.5 billion people are using English around the world today. When I travelled through 16 European nations in 1996, I did not find much trouble communicating at train stations, travel centres, hotels and other public places, where people spoke English. English is becoming a means of international communication today.

Source: C. Lavery, BRITAIN TODAY

I met a great number of students on the campus of the University of Nottingham from France, Spain, Italy, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, Russia, and elsewhere. Japan is sending scholars and
students to the University of Nottingham every year. I had a privilege to participate in Japanese high school English teachers’ training course offered annually at the university sponsored by the Ministry of Education (Monbushoo) of Japan.

As an interpreter I was also given an opportunity to take part in summer study programme, in which one of the Japanese senior high schools participated in at the University of Nottingham. In this programme they learnt English by attending lectures and workshops on British history and culture, and computer science and application as well as field trips.
A number of English Language institutes and the centres for English language have been established throughout the U.K. English language teachers have been trained and many English language textbooks have been written and compiled by Oxford, Cambridge universities and other institutions.

Japanese High School Teachers
At the CELE, University of Nottingham, UK

English is taught at elementary schools in many Asian nations, too, and a large number of students go to English-speaking nations to learn English. Even in Japan many parents send their children to English “juku” (private/cramming schools). Why is the English language so important for us? Here are some possible reasons:
1. English is replacing Esperanto as an international language and has become one of the most widely used languages as a means of international communication by passenger plane pilots, flight attendants, international trading companies, students and scholars to read and write research papers
or to give presentations at international conventions, etc.
2. Many travellers find that English is an extremely useful and convenient language whatever country they may be travelling.
3. There are many jobs available as an immigration officer, an interpreter, a translator, an English teacher, a tour conductor, an international hotel clerk, town and city clerk, and so on.
4. An increasing number of students going abroad to study or for home stays find it necessary to learn English.
5. We need to learn English to understand computer language.
6. It is advantageous for those who take high school and college entrance examinations and who take TOEFL, STEP, TOEIC, U.N. Association's Test of English, and so forth to succeed in them.
7. Some people may study English simply because they like it, and because they want to communicate with people around them.

C. CONCLUSION

The UK has a rich cultural history. The British Isles were invaded many times in the past, which in turn enriched their culture and language. She also went out to conquer the other parts of the world and expanded her territories until about the middle of the 20th century. The UK's colonialism has come to an end with the return of her last colony, Hong Kong in July 1997.

Meantime, the English language has spread in most parts of the world. We now need a large number of people who can communicate in English to go into international partnership and peaceful coexistence while expanding mutual trust and friendship. In order to carry out this task, we will surely need a great number of multilingual and multicultural people in the world of 21st century.

The United Kingdom is one of the most ideal places to learn English,
its people and culture, where an enormous number of students from round the world have been studying English. It is not only the home of English but also the place where there are well trained English language teachers as well as a wide variety of teaching materials available for all levels of learners.

NOTES

(1) The Times, 19 November 1996, p. 9
(2) Britain Explored, Longman, p. 47
(3) Ibid., p. 48
(4) Social, Trend, p.130
(5) Ibid., pp. 62-63
(6) Ibid., p. 66
(7) Social Trend, p. 79
(8) The Financial Times, 6 March 1997, p 10
(9) Ibid., p. 10
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