Cross-Cultural Humor: 
English Speakers’ Gaffes in Japanese

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Published in Global Missiology, www.globalmissiology.org, October 2018

From personal acquaintances and experience:

- Ordering “circumcision” (katsurei) in a restaurant instead of the intended breaded deep-fried pork and egg on rice (katsudon).
- Pregnant (ninshin) woman in hospital: “I’m a carrot” (ninjin).
- Next-door neighbor (in Nagoya) politely inquires, “Is your wife at home (miemasu ka)?” Answer: “Yes, she can see (miemasu kedo), but why do you ask?”
- Confusing chopsticks (hashi) and bridges (hashi).
- Misunderstanding polite refusals (ii desu) as enthusiastic acceptances (ii desu).

From “50+ Funny and Embarrassing Japanese Language Mistakes”:

- Calling babies and children “scary” (kowai) instead of “cute” (kawaii).
- Calling people carrots (ninjin) instead of “human beings” (ningen).
- Preacher commends “sexual” (seiteki) experience, not “spiritual” (reiteki) experience.
- Saying, “My stomach is a watermelon” (onaka suika) instead of “I’m hungry” (onaka suita).
- Actually discussing “earthquakes” (jishin) while assuming the topic was “confidence” (jishin).
- When making a cold-call visit, misunderstanding “Go home!” (Kaere) as “Come on in!” (Haire).
- Asking a woman to marry you (Oyome ni narimasu ka) while intending to ask her to read something (Oyomi ni narimasu ka).
- Asking, “How are the eggs?” (Tamago-tachi wa dou desu ka) instead of the intended “How are your grandchildren?” (Omago-tachi wa dou desu ka).