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Japanese International Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education Classrooms: An Investigation of their Pedagogical and Epistemological Challenges and Supports

Miki Yamashita
Portland State University

JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS:

AN INVESTIGATION OF THEIR PEDAGOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL

CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS

by

MIKI YAMASHITA

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COMMITTEE APPROVALS:

Christine Cress, Chair

Janine Allen

Janet Bennett

Christine Chaillé

Suwako Watanabe
Representative of the Office of Graduate Studies

DOCTORAL PROGRAM APPROVAL:

Randy Hitz, Dean
Graduate School of Education

ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Miki Yamashita for the Doctor of Education in

Educational Leadership: Postsecondary Education, presented January 30, 2009.

Title: Japanese International Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education

          Classrooms: An Investigation of Their Pedagogical and Epistemological

          Challenges and Supports

International students have long been an important part of the U.S. higher

education community, but generally they have received inadequate attention in the

classroom. Also, American teaching and learning strategies have not taken full

advantage of international diversity. The purpose of this narrative study was to

qualitatively understand the experiences of Japanese graduate students in U.S. higher

education classrooms. The study highlights the challenges that Japanese graduate

students faced due to cultural differences, pedagogical differences, and language

problems and provides a number of suggestions for faculty, domestic students, and

institutions to help create a more welcoming environment for Japanese graduate

students.

DEDICATION

To

My beloved parents, Tomoko and Seiji Yamashita

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

International students come to the U.S. not only to attain their educational degrees,

but also to develop their professional careers. International students attend more than

2,500 U.S. institutions of higher education, and the U.S. has the highest annual

enrollment of international university students of any country in the world (Kilinc &

Granello, 2003). According to Guo (2005), in the early 1980s, Japan sent one of the

highest numbers of international students to U.S. higher education institutions. Guo

(2005) stated that the rapid educational expansion was correlated with Japan's

tremendous economic growth based on technological innovation and productivity

improvement between the end of World War II and the mid-1980s. The population of

Japanese international students in U.S. higher education institutions increased rapidly at

that time because of Japanese economic growth.

According to the International Institute of Education (IIE) (2008), Japan is still

among the leading countries of origin for international student populations in U.S.

higher education institutions, and the population of Asians is growing among

international students in the U.S. Out of the 623,805 international students in the U.S. in

2007/2008, the top countries of origin for those students were India (1st), China (2nd),

South Korea (3rd), and Japan (4th). Among all the foreign students, about 45% were

enrolled in graduate programs. Japan has been continuing to send students to study in

U.S. higher education institutions to keep learning from the U.S. in order to survive in this age of globalization. Japan is, of course, an Asian country and culturally very different from the U.S. These differences provide challenges as well as opportunities for students from both countries to grow. As Ting-Toomey (1999) stated, "[f]rom a human creativity standpoint, we learn more from people who are different from us than from those who are similar to us" (p. 8). This statement is worth remembering as we explore how Japanese students experience the classroom climate in U.S. universities. This idea can bring their different cultural perspectives into American classrooms so that faculty as well as domestic students can benefit.

In this age of globalization, it is crucial for educational institutions to take advantage of the opportunity to work with international students to enhance global citizenship for all students. Failure to develop a broader worldview may damage not only U.S. society but also the U.S. economy. Most U.S. universities have an economic need to increase international student enrollment (Cooper, 1983; Kaplan, 1987; Light, 1993; Selvadurai, 1992). According to the IIE (2008), international students contribute approximately $15.5 billion to the U.S. economy through their tuition and living expenses. More than 70% of international students pay full tuition, directly benefiting host universities and their students.

Problem

In spite of the advantages of having international students in U.S. higher education

)

institutions, extensive literature indicates a lack of attention to international students in

U.S. classrooms (Andrade, 2006; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Trice, 2001),

suggesting that international students lack quality support in their study abroad

experiences. In the past decade in U.S. higher education, researchers have focused

attention on the impact of the American classroom environment on non-dominant

groups such as international students. For instance, many scholars indicate that faculty

do not always take seriously the significant impact of international students' presence in

classrooms (Cooper, 1983; Kaplan, 1987; Light, 1993; Selvadurai, 1992); and faculty

are not always familiar with ways to resolve problems that international students present

(Trice, 2001). Ward (2005) argued that, "[a]lthough the presence of international

students has been assumed to be enhancing the potential for internationalization, there is

no widespread evidence that the content of curricula has changed significantly"

(Changes in the Classroom section, ¶ 5).

This perspective suggests that faculty and U.S. students tend not to appreciate,

understand, and/or respect international students, creating a "chilly climate" in

classrooms. According to Sandler, Silverberg, and Hall (1996), the term "chilly

climate" was coined by Hall and Sandler in 1982 to describe many small behaviors that

make up an inhospitable situation for women in academia, such as: yielding to the

influence of internalized stereotypes; excluding women from class participation;

treating men and women differently when their behavior or achievements are the same;

giving women less attention and intellectual encouragement; discouraging women

through politeness; singling out women; and defining women by their sexuality.

For international students, this sense of a chilly climate takes many forms, including apathy toward them, exclusion, and their being ignored in classrooms by faculty members as well as domestic students (Lee & Rice, 2007). International students frequently perceive that they are stereotyped by U.S. peers and faculty (Ward, 2005), resulting in perceived prejudice and discrimination (Scott, 1998). For example, an Asian international student at University North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported her experience in the classroom:

> The teacher could have encouraged the students to accept other people's ideas.
>
> They should do that because the other students, maybe it's because of race, they
>
> don't want to welcome your ideas because maybe they think you're Asian, you're
>
> not a native speaker. I felt that sometimes I was set aside because I was not a native
>
> speaker. I don't think the teacher was aware [that he/she was shutting me out].
>
> (The Center for Teaching and Learning, 2001)

This student wanted to connect with her teacher and her peers in class, and be acknowledged and accepted by them. Paige (1993) contended that one of the stress factors of international students is their being treated as invisible and being ignored in group settings. Cress (1999) argued that, "[i]n the collegiate environment, students must believe that they matter and that others (peers, faculty, staff) care about them. They must have a sense of belonging if they are to grow, develop, and succeed in college" (p. 10).

The chilly climate is magnified by culture shock that most international students

encounter in their cultural transition. Albert and Triandis (1994) stated that when

"individuals from one culture are forced to adopt a very different cultural pattern [...]

they are likely to experience high levels of stress, a reduction in positive outcomes,

lower self-esteem, anomie, and general demoralization" (pp. 426-427). These are all

symptoms of culture shock.

There are considerable number of studies that focus on culture shock and cultural

adjustment of international students (Adler, 1975; Albert & Triandis, 1994; Barna,

1983; Bennett, 1998; Oberg, 1960; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Ward, 2001). The

term "culture shock" was coined by the anthropologist Cora DuBois (as cited in Landis,

Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). Kalvero Oberg (1960) described culture shock as being like

a disease, complete with symptoms of irritability, anger, hostility, indecision, frustration,

unhappiness, sadness, and illness. Oberg described it as being precipitated by the

anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.

Oberg articulated several adjustment issues that international students go through in

their study-abroad experiences. These include: social isolation; lack of language skills;

not knowing norms; social norms; overcoming stereotypes; learning how to use

transportation; adjusting to weather and food differences; conducting oral presentations;

and managing personal finances.

It is, therefore, crucial for us to investigate international students' challenges and

opportunities in American classrooms and to acknowledge and learn about their cultural

backgrounds in order to support international students' transition into their new learning

environments. Consequently, this may enhance domestic students' awareness and curiosity toward different cultures, and help broaden their international perspectives.

All international students face challenges in U.S. higher education institutions, but in this study, I will focus on Japanese graduate-level international students (hereafter referred to generally as "Japanese students") because the literature suggests that Asian international students (hereafter referred to generally as "Asian students") have relatively more cultural adjustment challenges when studying in the U.S. than, for example, many European international students (Zang, Dixon, & David, 2001) or other non-European cultures (e.g. African) that may share similar educational systems. Faculty members indicate that international students from Asian countries in particular have problems related to language difficulties, while students from European countries often arrive with a better command of English and some shared cultural patterns that allow them to develop relationships with domestic students more easily (Trice, 2001).

As we saw in this previous quote from Ting-Toomey (1999), "we learn more from people who are different from us than from those who are similar to us" (p. 8). Japan is very different from the U.S. and these differences provide challenges as well as opportunities for students from both countries to grow. Thus, it is crucial to explore how Japanese students experience the classroom climate in U.S. universities.

Background and Overview

There are a variety of reasons why the classroom climate may appear culturally unresponsive to Japanese. Wong (2004) pointed out that "[t]he three main difficulties

highlighted by Asian international students are cultural differences, different learning

styles, and language problems" (p. 154). These difficulties lead to great intercultural

challenges for Japanese students in American classrooms.

Cultural Differences

Culture is defined by a number of contexts. Bennett (1998) categorized culture as

either objective culture or subjective culture. He defined objective culture as a social,

economic, political, and linguistic system, including art, literature, drama, classical

music, and so on. These are visible cultures and "the kinds of things that are included in

area studies or history courses" (p. 3). Bennett suggested that "[a] good working

definition of subjective culture is the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors,

and values of groups of interaction people" (p. 3). In this study, I discuss subjective

culture rather than objective culture, in order to explore Japanese students' subjective

experiences in the U.S. graduate level classroom context. Cornes (2004) provided

another definition of culture:

> Culture is the acquired learning of a group that gives its members a sense of who
>
> they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be
>
> doing; culture makes that group recognizably different from other groups. (p. 103)

Subjective cultural differences pose a huge challenge for Japanese students when

they study in American classrooms. As an example, this challenge can be illustrated by

Hall's (1976) communication styles, low-context and high-context. In a high-context

communication system, the listener knows what is expected in the given context.

Therefore, indirect verbal mode such as self-effacing talk, nonverbal subtleties, and interpreter-sensitive values is expected. By contrast, in a low-context communication system, the listener knows very little and needs background information for communication, thus, direct verbal mode such as straight talk, nonverbal immediacy, and sender-oriented values is expected (Hofstede, 1976). In high-context society, "there is a heavy investment in socializing members so that information does not need to be explicitly stated to be understood," whereas in low-context society, "information about rules and permissible behaviors are explicitly stated" (Gannon, 1994, p. 9). In Hall's (1976) high-context and low-context continuum, Japan is placed on the extremely high-context side; by contrast, the U.S. is placed on the opposite, low-context side of the continuum. This is just one of the cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan, but when Japanese students from a high-context culture study with American students from an low-context culture, the different communication styles appear to collide in the classroom and it requires substantial effort for Japanese students to make the transition within the U.S. system of education.

Different Learning Styles

Faculty may not be fully aware that international students have different perspectives and learning styles (Trice, 2001; Weinstein & Obear, 1992). Chan (1999) pointed out that Western educators still lack the understanding that Asian students, among them Japanese students, tend to be less spontaneous and are more likely to conform to their teachers. Japanese students are perceived to "rarely debate issues in

class, disagree with the opinion of a classmate or instructor, or challenge the status quo"

(Thompson & Thompson, 1996, p. 55). "Learning styles are characteristically cognitive,

affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how

learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment" (Keefe, 1979,

p. 4). It is reported that cultural and learning style differences of this student group often

conflict with American practices in academic programs (Bennett, 1995).

Peoples' preferred modes of learning are shaped by their country's culture through

socialization (Hofstede, 1997). As explained previously, members of high-context

cultures such as Japanese culture tend to use indirect and status-oriented styles of

communication that are manifested in their learning style. As an example, according to

Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Nishida (1996), members of collectivistic Japanese

culture tend to be sensitive to nonverbal communication such as subtle gestures, voice,

eye contact, spacing, and touching. This communication style is manifested in the study

of Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995). Oxford and Burry-Stock observed that in language

learning, Japanese students tend to take a reflective, concrete approach. In this manner,

it could be said that Japanese students' preferred modes of learning including reflective

observation and concrete experience are shaped by their cultures, and these learning

styles represent a difference from active, risk-taking, and abstract American learning

styles (Watanabe, 1993).

Language Problems

In addition to cultural and learning style differences, the lack of language

proficiency was identified as the major source of stress for Japanese and other Asian

students, and resulted in much frustration for them (Chen, 1996; Lin, 1998; Parker,

1999; Pinheiro, 2001; Sun & Chen, 1997; Wan, 2001). Language barriers limit their

participation in class discussions and activities. For all non-native English speaking

students, and especially for Japanese students, it takes time to become fluent in the

English language. The School of Language Studies of the Foreign Service Institute

(1973) reported the approximate time periods necessary to become fluent in various

languages. According to the Institute, while 2400 to 2760 hours of intensive training are

required for American students to be fluent with Asian languages such as Chinese,

Japanese, or Korean in speaking and writing, only 720 hours of intensive training were

required for them to be equally fluent with Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, French, Haitian

Creole, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese Romania, Spanish, Swahili, or Swedish. These

data also suggest that, in turn, mastering English could be more challenging for

Japanese students than students from many other countries.

Some faculty members who want institutions to evaluate language skills more

effectively when admitting international students have stated that "the TOEFL (Test of

English as a Foreign Language) scores do not seem to be indicative of whether the

students can speak English or not" (Trice, 2001, p. 22). Lin (2006) argued four types of

difficulties for Chinese students regarding language: (a) difficulty following discussions

and participating in fast-paced graduate seminars; (b) difficulty speaking and writing in

English; (c) difficulty keeping up with readings and being critical; and (d) difficulty

writing academic papers to the accepted standard. These difficulties apply equally to

Japanese students. Writing academic papers and critical thinking are especially hard to

measure in the TOEFL, which focuses on listening comprehension, a reading skill, a

basic writing skill, and grammar. Studies by Hwang and Dizney (1970), Mestre (1981),

Mulligan, (1966), and Stover (1982) all seemed to suggest no correlations between

TOEFL scores and academic success. An interactive classroom discussion approach

requires a high level of language proficiency, such as: answering challenging questions

posed by instructors and students; having a strong ability to ask challenging questions

based on reading; clearly justifying one's argument; and clarifying one's assertions and

reasoning (Lin, 2006).

Additionally, writing academic papers in English is very challenging for Japanese

students because of grammatical differences and writing style differences. Several

empirical studies by Kobayashi (1998) indicated that American university students tend

to take the general-to-specific (deductive) pattern whereas Japanese university students

tend to use the specific-to-general (inductive) pattern. According to Hinds (1987), in

academic writing in English, it is the writer's responsibility to ensure that the message

of the text is clear to the reader whereas in Japanese writing, it is the reader's

responsibility to discern the writer's meaning. Dennett (1988) contended that Japanese

technologists' writings tend to include elements such as beauty and surprise to engage

the emotions of the reader. Kubota (1998) also said that sometimes in Japanese writing,

the main idea of writing does not appear until the end of the paragraph. This baffles

American readers who "skim or speed-read a text that they expect to move from premise

to conclusion through readily identifiable patterns of inductive or deductive reasoning"

(p. 116).

Dennett (1988) articulated that there is an influence of *ki-sho-ten-ketsu*, the model

of skillful Japanese writing. In narrative writing, Japanese compositions tend to take the

framework *ki-sho-ten-ketsu*, which originates in classical Chinese poetry in seventh

century. *Ki* is the introduction of a discussion, *sho* develops what has been introduced,

ten turns to a subtheme that is not directly connected to the major theme, and *ketsu* is a

surprise conclusion (Kubota, 1998). As an example, a poem written by San Yo Rai

(1780-1832) presents the form of *ki-sho-ten-ketsu:*

> *Ki* (state subject): *Daughters of Itoya (yarn shop) at Gojo, Kyoto,*
>
> *Sho* (building on it): *Older sister is sixteen and younger sister is fourteen,*
>
> *Ten* (twist): *Feudal lords kill people with bows and arrows,*
>
> *Ketsu* (surprise conclusion): *Daughters of Itoya kill with their eyes.*

Dennett (1988) pointed out that "[a]lthough differing rhetorical structures may be

seen obvious, their influence may [be] subtle" (p. 119). The influence of this writing

structure can be seen in news articles. Hinds (1984) introduced an interesting

experiment in the *Asahi Evening News*. In the newspaper, English-speaking readers and

Japanese-speaking readers were asked to evaluate essays from the column "Tensei

Jingo" for "unity," "focus," and "coherence." "Tensei Jingo" used the *Ki-Sho-Ten-Ketsu*

principle as a writing structure, and it was translated into English in the *Asahi Evening*

News. English-speaking readers gave the essays lower marks than the

Japanese-speaking readers did. This shows that people in Japan are familiar with this

writing style and do not have doubts about it.

Merely acquiring English speaking ability alone does not help prepare Japanese

students for participating in class discussions or writing qualified academic papers.

Cultural differences, learning style differences, and language barriers are all related to

one another. Clearly, a better understanding by faculty members and domestic students

of Japanese students' challenges and needs in American classrooms may enhance their

intercultural sensitivity and empathy skills for helping people from different cultures.

This, in turn, would support Japanese students' transition into U.S. classrooms.

Purpose and Significance of Study

The ultimate goal of this study is to help Japanese students have successful study

abroad experiences. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the specific challenges

that graduate-level Japanese international students (hereafter referred to Japanese

graduate students) face in U.S. classrooms and what kinds of support they need to adjust

to U.S. classrooms. This study eventually will help faculty as well as domestic students

learn international perspectives from Japanese graduate students and create a bridge

between American and Japanese perspectives in classrooms.

My focus is on Japanese graduate students, instead of undergraduates, since

graduate students are frequently expected to conduct cooperative research projects that

require richer interaction with domestic students than typical undergraduate courses.

Japanese graduate students must work in their respective fields with their domestic

peers and faculty in researching and publishing academic works, which requires

Japanese graduate students to build relationships with them. It is, therefore, worth

focusing on graduate-level students to see what kinds of challenges they face in

classrooms and what kinds of support they may need to help them adjust successfully in

their U.S. graduate classrooms.

Additionally, as previously stated, according to IIE (2008), Japan is still among

the leading countries of origin for international student populations in U.S. higher

education institutions, and the population of Asians is growing among international

students in the U.S. Because Japanese represent a large portion of Asian students in the

U.S., they are important stakeholders in the success of international students. In

2007-08, the population of students from East Asian countries including Japan, China,

and South Korea was 184,225 out of the total population of 623,805 international

students in the U.S. In other words, students from East Asian countries made up almost

30% of total enrollments of international students in U.S. higher education institutions.

Hollins (1996) asserted that U.S. schools serve the purpose of maintaining

Euro-American culture. However, in our globalizing society, Japanese students can

bring international and specifically Eastern perspectives into American classrooms. In

this way, Japanese students can play a role in U.S. education creating more diverse

teaching and learning classroom environments.

Important research has already been completed on challenging issues that

Japanese students face when they study in U.S. higher education such as cultural

differences (Albert & Triandis, 1994; Barnlund 1989, 1973; Gannon, 1994; Hall, 1976;

Ho, 1987; Hofstede, 1997; Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998; Singleton, 1993;

Ting-Toomey, 1999; Lebra, 1976; Liu, 2001; Nakane, 1970; Watanabe, 1990, 1993);

different learning styles (Bennett, 1995; Chan, 1999; Hofstede, 1997; Gudykunst,

Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996; Keefe, 1979; Liu, 2001; Oxford and Burry-Stock,

1995; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Trice, 2001; Weinstein & Obear, 1992); language

problems (Chen, 1996; Dennett, 1988; Hinds, 1987; Kobayashi, 1998; Kubota, 1998;

Lin, 1998; Liu, 2001; Parker, 1999: Pinheiro, 2001; Sun & Chen, 1997; Wan, 2001).

Other important researches which have already been completed on challenging

issues that international students in general face in U.S. higher education are transition

issues (Adler, 1975; Albert & Triandis, 1994; Barna, 1983; Bennett, 1998; Kim &

Gudykunst, 1997; Ladd & Ruby, 1999: Lee, 1997; Lin & Yi, 1997; Mori, 2000; Oberg,

1960; Parr, Bradley, & Bing, 1992; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000;

Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Wan, 2001; Ward, 2001); and

socializing issues with faculty members and professional development of international

students and in graduate programs (Blackburn & Fox, 1976; Kulik, 1985; Reinharz,

Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). However, still,

research on intercultural classroom interaction other than ESL classrooms is relatively

scarce, and only a few researchers have examined the college classroom as a special

social context. Moreover, few empirical studies address the learning experiences of

Japanese students in American graduate classroom settings and the impact of these experiences on learners, especially focusing on the challenges they face and the support they need from their faculty as well as domestic students to succeed. In order to fill the gap in the literature, a qualitative study was conducted on the learning experiences of Japanese international graduate students in an urban college (UC) in the United States of America. In order to protect the privacy and identity of my research participants, I will call the institute a generic urban college (UC).

I seek to promote quality educational and leadership experiences that lead to internationalization and cultural sensitivity on campus. I believe that this study contributes to the enhancement of cultural sensitivity on campus. This study also satisfies my desire to better understand myself as a Japanese international student and my future professional development needs as an instructor of diverse learners. I hope this study adds to the body of knowledge in education, and increases faculty members' understanding as well as domestic students' awareness, understanding and interest toward international students.

Research Questions

Considering both the purpose of this study and my hope of filling the research gap noted above, the research questions guiding this study include the following:

(a) What are the challenges that Japanese graduate students experience related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms?

(b) What kinds of support have Japanese graduate students needed or appreciated in

learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in their graduate-level

classrooms?

Definitions of Keywords

Culture

Culture tells us how to see, feel, think, and behave. Culture is defined by

intercultural communication scholar Bennett (1998) as "[t]he learned and shared values,

beliefs, and behaviors of a group of interacting people" (p. 3). Bennett said that

"cultures are different in their languages, behavior patterns, and values. So an attempt to

use one's self as a predictor of shared assumptions and responses to messages is unlikely

to work" (p. 3).

Intercultural Communication

Bennett (1998) defined intercultural communication as "communication of people

of different cultures" (p. 2). Cultural frameworks provide recognizable dimensions

against which different cultures may be compared.

Cultural Generalization

Bennett (1998) suggested that each different culture has a preference for some

beliefs over others and engages in certain patterns of behavior. "The description of this

preference, derived from large-group research, is a cultural generalization" (p. 6). We

cannot apply cultural generalizations to everyone in every situation, but "[a] cultural

generalization offers a good 'first guess' as to why a person may behave as he or she

does" (Weaver, 2000, p. 2).

Stereotype

Weaver (2000) suggested that "[c]ultural stereotypes are also generalizations, but they do not allow for exceptions or individual variation...Furthermore, both positive and negative cultural stereotypes are almost always false or misleading and thus are not useful for understanding others" (p. 2). Ward (2005) witnessed that international students frequently perceive that they are stereotyped by U.S. peers and faculty.

Intercultural Misunderstanding

Bennett (1998) suggested that intercultural misunderstanding comes from ignorance about different cultures or ethnocentric views, such as ignoring cultural differences or interpreting events as negative or disrespectful.

Intercultural Competence

Bennett (2000) suggested that the ability of intercultural competence allows us to communicate effectively and appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts; it requires culturally sensitive knowledge, a motivated mindset, and a skill set.

Chilly Climate in Classrooms

The term "chilly climate" was coined by Sandler and Hall in 1982 to describe many small behaviors that make up an inhospitable situation for women in academia (Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996). For Japanese students, this sense of a chilly climate takes many forms, including apathy toward them, exclusion, and their being ignored in classrooms by faculty members as well as domestic students (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Japanese Students

I refer to Japanese graduate-level international students as Japanese students. They received their Bachelor's degrees in Japan and have work experience on U.S. campuses with faculty members, administrators, or students. In the research population section, I explain in more detail about why I sought these elements in the research.

Domestic Students

Domestic students include those who grew up in mainstream American culture and who are members of the majority group. They are sometimes referred as American students, U.S. students, or peers, depending on the context. While these students vary greatly in race/ethnicity and other cultural backgrounds and experiences, their familiarity with American cultural norms and expectations are used collectively to contrast with those of Japanese graduate students.

Summary and Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In chapter I, the introduction section, discusses general trends of international students and demographic information; the problem section discusses a lack of attention to international students in U.S. classrooms and lack of quality support in their study abroad experiences; the background and overview section argues the three main difficulties (cultural differences, different learning styles, and language problems) that Asian international students tend to encounter; the purpose and significance of study section; research questions; and definitions of keywords.

Chapter Two is the review of theoretical perspectives and literature. Theoretical perspectives present constructivism in order to discuss the contrast between U.S. higher education pedagogy and pedagogy that Japanese students experienced in their country. The literature review presents intercultural communication concepts; learning style differences between U.S. and Japanese students; the impact of Confucian philosophy on Japanese students' learning styles; cultural transition, adaptation, the socialization issues of graduate students; the developmental model of intercultural communication; and intercultural competence are discussed in order to understand the experience of Japanese students in their different learning style context in the U.S. graduate-level classrooms.

Chapter Three, Methodology describes the qualitative research perspective and narrative perspective; the role of the researcher; research design, the data analysis procedures; the ethical issues; validity and credibility; as well as limitations. Chapter IV describes the Findings. This chapter introduces my research participants, presents their profiles that include backgrounds of interviews, and their responses to interview questions. Chapter Five, Analysis of Findings, presents further analysis of findings by referring to intercultural concepts from the literature review. Chapter Four, Discussion and Conclusion, states the summary of the results, organized in terms of how the problem statement was posed; analyses where the challenges that the Japanese graduate students experienced came from intercultural perspectives; suggestions for faculty

members, domestic students, institutions, and Japanese students; the study's

contributions; and implications for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proposed study is guided by various perspectives from available research

literature. At the theoretical level, constructivism informs my study in order to review

teaching and learning processes and paradigms in U.S. higher education institutions and

see the contrast between U.S. higher education pedagogy and pedagogy that Japanese

students experienced in their country. Intercultural communication concepts and

theories and Kolb's learning style model also provide further conceptual frameworks for

this study, which will build on the pedagogical contrast between U.S. and Japan. In

addition, influence from Confucian philosophy on Japanese students' learning styles

needs to be reviewed to understand the experience of Japanese students in their different

learning style context in the U.S. graduate-level classrooms. Finally, I will touch upon

the literature of cultural transition, adaptation, the socialization issues of graduate

students, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence.

Theoretical Perspectives

Constructivism

Beginning in the 1960s, pedagogy in the U.S. has started shifting from objectivism

to constructivism (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). Constructivism is a philosophy of

learning as a process where learners reflect on their experiences and construct their own

understanding of the world in which they live. We generate our own rules and mental

models, and these are based on our experiences. In other words, learning is the process

of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences (Phillips, 2002).

Constructivist-based pedagogy encourages a learner to actively participate and

construct reality through his or her own perception and meaning making (Dabbagh &

Bannan-Ritland, 2005). The teacher's role is to be a facilitator, coach, sense-maker,

guide, or mediator in this transformative education (Gergen, 1995; Mayer, 1996).

Students also take responsibility for conducting this collaborative work.

In contrast, "[b]ehaviorism is the doctrine that regards psychology as a scientific

study of behavior and explains learning as a system of behavioral responses to physical

stimuli" (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 8). Behaviorist pedagogy holds that humankind is

capable of knowing one reality that exists independent of anyone perceiving it only by

the faculty of reason (Peikoff, 1993). Because of its reliance on this objectivist

epistemology, the term behaviorism is used synonymously with objectivism. "The role

of education is to help students learn about the real world. The goal of designers or

teachers is to interpret events for [learners] (Jonassen, 1991, p. 28). In this

objectivist-based education, the teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority, focused

on transmitting knowledge to learners. "Learners are told about the world and are

expected to replicate its content and structure in their thinking" (Jonassen, 1991, p.28).

Thus, students are affected by reinforcement (Skinner, 1953).

The work of Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1983), Dewey (1938), Freire (1972, 1999),

and many others provided models for constructivist learning theory. A pioneer of

constructivism, Vygotsky (1978), contended that people construct knowledge through

interaction with the world around them. He emphasized the influence of culture and language in the construction of knowledge. Another proponent of constructivism, Piaget (1983), advocated that this process begins in childhood when we are constantly constructing cognitive structures, or schema, through active exploration of the environment. The master of experiential learning, Dewey (1938), supported both Vygotsky's and Piaget's claims in a learning context; learning occurs through communication and interaction with the teacher and classmates through purposeful activities or investigations. Freire (1999) argued for the importance of radical emancipatory learning, called pedagogy of the oppressed, and criticized the traditional banking concept of education, whereby the teacher transmits knowledge to students to guide them toward an instructional goal. Freire asserted that learning requires a more complex involvement in social and individual life.

Furthermore, constructivism is defined as "not a theory about teaching…it is a theory about knowledge and learning… the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. vii); "[t]he central principles of this approach are that learners can only make sense of new situations in terms of their existing understanding. Learning involves an active process in which learners construct meaning by linking new ideas with their existing knowledge" (Naylor & Keogh, 1999, p. 93); and "[c]onstructivists of different persuasion [hold a] commitment to the idea that the development of understanding requires active engagement on the part of the learner" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 601). In the

constructivist view, therefore, it is clear that active experimentation in learning is encouraged.

Pedagogical Perspectives in U.S. and Japanese Higher Education

Many U.S. graduate classrooms are influenced by the constructivist approach, and are still trying to change their pedagogical paradigm toward constructivism (Brooks & Brooks 1993). As an example, Malcom Knowles (1984), who is also one of the most influential constructivist thinkers, stated that andragogy (adult education), a term coined in 1833 by the German teacher Alexander Kapp, is based on the idea that adults are self-directed and experiential learners. Knowles (1984) suggested that adult education is based on elements of: (1) self-concept; (2) prior experience; (3) readiness to learn; (4) learning orientation; and (5) motivation to learn. The idea of andragogy represents elements of self-directed learning, adult experiences, autonomy, self-efficacy, and personal growth. These elements are articulated and elaborated by constructivists such as Baxter Magolda (1982), Brookfield (1993), Candy (1991), De Corte (1990), Gibbs (1979), Kegan (1994; 1982), Kichener & King (1991; 1994), Lukes (1973), Perry (1968), Säljö (1979), Smith (1992), Usher (1985; 1989), and Weathersby (1981).

In contrast, Japanese students are educated in a framework similar to objectivist-based rather than constructivist-based pedagogy. Many researchers (Chan, 1999; Chu, 1990; Ho, 1991; Wong, 2004) argued that constructivist-based pedagogy is rarely used in classrooms in East Asia, which are referred to as "Confucian-heritage" (Ho, 1991) cultures, hereafter referred as CHC. Japan as a CHC typically has large

classes with up to 40 or more participants until recently, and teaching is conducted in a

highly authoritarian way, which sharply focuses on lecture and preparation for

examinations. Learning is based on repetition. Teachers disseminate information to

students and students are passive rather than active. Assessment is through tests and

observations (Briggs, 1996; Monane, 1990). The curriculum is preplanned and strict

adherence to fixed curriculum is valued. This is an objectivist and behaviorist view of

teaching and learning. This contrast creates conflict for Japanese students as they

engage in constructivist graduate-level classrooms in the U.S.

Attention needs to be drawn here to how students in the U.S. and Japan act

differently in a behaviorist-based pedagogical learning environment. From a cultural

contrast viewpoint, even in the traditional teacher-centered learning environment,

American students ask questions, make comments on the lecture, challenge the status

quo, and each individual as a member of an individualistic culture can work in a

task-oriented way in group work. American students are encouraged to have public

argument and debate. By contrast, Japanese students are educated to sit quietly and

listen to the lecture, and when they are told to, they work in a group. Japanese culture is

heavily influenced by Buddhism. According to Andersen and Powell (1991), it is

believed that knowledge, truth, and wisdom come to those whose silence allows the

spirit to enter in Buddhism teaching; therefore, they tend to withdraw from public

debate and argument. They as members of collectivistic culture tend to work in a

relationship-oriented way. This cultural element cannot be ignored when examining the

contrast between U.S. and Japanese learning environments.

Intercultural Communication Theories and Concepts

In the years since intercultural perspectives have appeared in education theory, useful distinctions have been identified among learning resources brought to the classroom by students from different cultural groups. Differences in communication styles, for example, certainly exist within cultural groups, but more significantly, they provide valuable perspectives on cultural orientation. Bennett (1986) and Pusch (1979) defined intercultural communication as the study of the communication process between people of significantly different cultural backgrounds. Communication styles are the habitual patterns of self-expression that are normative in various cultures. Yet communication styles from different cultures are often seen as inappropriate in American graduate classrooms. These communication style differences can be a major part of the hardship that Japanese students face in American classrooms.

Reviewing the contrast between U.S. and Japanese communication styles is crucial for increasing cultural general understanding for educators, which will explain how U.S. higher education and culture are viewed and experienced by Japanese students in their U.S. graduate classrooms. In other words, culture that is viewed as very individualistic by Japanese students may not be understood as individualistic as by American students. Thus, intercultural communication concepts need to be reviewed in order to understand Japanese students' cultural perspectives. The cultural general approach to analyze cultural phenomena can be misunderstood if someone sees it as a

dichotomous classification of intercultural concepts such as individualism and

collectivism by ignoring each individual difference; however, grouping common

elements together to form logical categories gives us ideas why a person behave as he or

she does in intercultural communication. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) explained

that culture is a value-laden meaning system that helps us to make sense of and tell us

what is going on and what to do in our every intercultural surroundings. Members of a

group of culture share a particular sense of identity and solidarity. Generally speaking,

. from the Japanese collectivist perspective communication styles and ways of interaction

in the American classroom context are viewed as individualistic, which is on the other

end of continuum from collectivism. The intention of my study is not to dichotomize the

cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan in order to blame American

communication styles in classroom context. The investigation is intended to examine

chilly classroom climate factors for Japanese students and analyze them from an

intercultural perspective to better understand their subjective experiences using an

objective conceptual framework.

Ward (2001) argued that "[t]wo dimensions that exert strong influence on

classroom communication and interactions are individualism-collectivism (I-C) and

power distance (PD)" (p. 156). Closely related to collectivism, the concepts of

uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980) and "facework" (Ting-Toomey, 1999) help

explain Japanese graduate students' experience in U.S. graduate classrooms. In addition,

the concepts of in-group and out-group and *honne* (true feelings) and *tatemae* (white lie

or pretense), and *enryo* (self-inhibition, reserve; reservation; restraint; difference; coyness; discretion; hesitation; deference; regard) and *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability; conjecture; surmise; guess; judgment; understanding; consideration; considerateness; sympathy) provide insights into the characteristics of Japanese communication, which may not be appropriately understood by American faculty as well as American students. I review these intercultural communication concepts next.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

The individualism-collectivism is one of the four cultural dimensions that Hofstede (1980, 1991) has empirically generated from his large-scale study of a U.S. multinational business corporation. Other three cultural dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masuculinity-femininity. The individualism-collectivism was complemented by Hall's (1976) classification of high-context and low-context cultures. Individualistic cultures emphasize personal right over group right and self achievement over group achievement; so "attention is paid to people's self-concept in terms of self-identity, self-awareness, self-image, and self-expression" (Liu, 2001, p. 20). By contrast, "collectivist cultures endorse a more rigid social framework in which self-concept plays a less significant role in social interactions. In-group and out-group members are clearly differentiated, and only in-group needs and views are emphasized" (Liu, 2001, p. 21). Therefore, in collectivistic cultures, people are expected to maintain group harmony and to be consistent with the group's norms and values.

Gudykunst (1998) stated that "[i]ndividualism and collectivism exist in all

cultures, but one tends to be predominant" (p. 111). The constructs of individualism and collectivism provide significant insights into cultural orientations. This cultural general understanding is also very crucial to understand how Japanese students view American culture and vice versa. Gannon's (1994) insightful statement also needs to be highlighted here. He said:

> [T]he individualism-collectivism dimension must take into account different types of both individualism and collectivism and is subdivided into more precise dimensions so that behavior that might appear totally collectivistic also can be understood as individualistic (although within the context of the collectivity), and behavior that might seem to be totally individualistic can be comprehended as collectivistic (within the context of individualism). (pp. 341-342)

Researchers, therefore, need to be aware of U.S. or Japanese cultural standpoints. Although the individualism-collectivism framework is often cast in dichotomized terms, Bennett (1998) warned that it is essential to avoid stereotypes when employing cultural generalizations, and to apply such generalizations tentatively as working hypotheses in order to recognize cultural patterns. Taking this into consideration, exploration of generalizations about Japanese graduate student experiences in the U.S. graduate classroom context follows.

American Classroom Context

American classroom culture tends to be low-context in style (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Faculty most often focus on individualism, emphasizing the importance of the "I"

identity over the "we" identity, and rewarding behavior that draws attention to the self, such as asserting individual rights and needs over group needs within social settings such as a formal college classroom; also generally speaking, the culture encouraging an individual to use direct verbal styles (Samover & Porter, 1997) so that a "straight shooter" is culturally more preferable to "beating around the bush." In addition, U.S. proverb that says "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" explains that who complains or protest the loudest attracts attention and service. This proverb articulates a U.S. value which emphasizes assertiveness over passiveness.

Individualism promotes self-efficiency, individual responsibility, a person's unique qualities, personal initiative, personal achievement and personal autonomy (Samovar & Porter, 1997). In the American classroom context, Ward (2001) emphasized that "in the broadest terms students from individualist cultures are more likely to want to 'stand out' in class, to ask questions, give answers and engage in debate" (p. 156). This cultural characteristic encourages students to argue and challenge the status quo. It could be said that when members of individualistic cultures work together, they tend to emphasize task-orientation rather than relational-orientation when they work in a group. Gannon (1994) explained an example by using a business context: "Americans tend to huddle together in a business meeting specifically to address and solve the problem at hand, after which they scatter to complete other work-orientated activities" (p. 312). He also added that each individual is able to shine within the group context.

Ho (1987) suggested that European Americans tend to have individualistic relationships that promote autonomy and emphasize differentiation, and appreciate the unique qualities of the people in the relationship. When members of an individualistic culture such as the U.S. are told to do a collaborative group work in a higher education classroom, they form a temporal group to get the work done, and the "I" identity members of individualistic cultures are not buried under the group culture. The process of forming a group and how each member of the group works together are very different in the U.S. compared to Japan. The next section will explain more about that difference.

Japanese Students Communication Patterns in a Classroom Context

In contrast, collectivistic cultures value "interdependence, reciprocal obligation, and positive face need" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 225), so that students from Japanese countries tend to be more willing to sacrifice personal interests, needs and goals for the group's purpose. "In fact the word 'I' has negative connotations in Chinese and Japanese...From both the Chinese and Japanese perspectives, the individual exists or is someone only when he or she is a member of a group" (Gannon, 1994, p. 324). According to Singleton (1993), the collectivistic group consciousness and belongingness are conveyed in Japan through "the family, neighborhood, schools, corporations, and university student clubs, especially the sports clubs" (p. 12). Barnlund (1989) explained that Japan resisted invasions and immigrations for thousand of years, which may have "cultivated a society that, with only slight variation, shares the same values, norms, language, and aesthetics" (p. 38).

In collectivistic cultures, such as Japanese culture being a "stand-in" is preferable to being a "standout" (Barnlund, 1973). A Japanese proverb, "The post that sticks up gets pounded down," reflects the important Japanese cultural concept of the virtue of being inconspicuous. It is, therefore, culturally unacceptable to draw attention to the self in social settings such as the classroom even if he or she wanted to do so. Ward (2001) observed that Asian students are usually unwilling to draw attention to themselves and are less likely to be verbally interactive in classes. As an example, Japanese proverbs, such as "silence is gold" or "He who knows does not speak," also reflect that Japanese culture does not heavily rely on verbal communication. Hofstede (1991) explicated further:

> For the student who conceives of him/herself as part of a group, it is illogical to
>
> speak up without being sanctioned by the group to do so. If the teacher wants
>
> students to speak up, she or he should address a particular student personally.
>
> Collectivistic culture students will also hesitate to speak up in large groups
>
> without a teacher present. (p. 62)

In this quote, Hofstede also articulated that Japanese students expect a teacher to direct and create a structure or form. Gannon (1994) argued that when a form of new activity does not exist, Japanese may have difficulty completing the activity. In other words, it takes time for Japanese to be able to use the new form, for example, in case studies, simulation games, or problem-based learning where students are given a problem as a group and are expected to solve the problem together. Watanabe's study

(1990, 1993) found that Japanese expectations of interactions in a group discussion are different from those of American. Japanese students tend to expect a teacher to provide a structure and they follow the structure, such as each individual's role, expectation and responsibility, when they do group projects or activities; and when they work together, they take collateral-based relationships, which value the role obligation and in-group interdependence (Ho, 1987).

Therefore, "just like the water droplet, the individual is significant only in so far as he or she represents the group" (Gannon, 1994, p. 264). Everybody is in the same pool of water, so each individual's responsibilities are "[c]ooperativeness, reasonableness, and understanding of others" (Gannon, p. 264). Students from collectivistic cultures tend to take relational orientation rather than task-orientation when they work together. This creates a perception gap between Japanese and American students, so that cultural differences could be interpreted as Japanese "submissiveness" by American students and American "aggressiveness" by Japanese students.

In a high-context society with a collectivistic culture, a strong leader to whom everyone else expresses submission or at least great respect is necessary (Hall, 1976). But at the same time, Japanese value egalitarianism within one's same age or status group (Singleton, 1993).Yet from my experience, in any Japanese community, if someone is not a group leader, that person stands out in the group, expressing too much of his or her individual opinion. But as with the Japanese proverb, the others pound down the post that sticks out, usually by ignoring or excluding the person.

These arguments help us understand why Japanese students from a high-context and collectivistic culture, which emphasizes group harmony and collaboration, have a hard time doing collaborative work with American students in constructivist-based pedagogy. American students can create a temporal group and get things done by being task-oriented. However, Japanese students are relationship-oriented and have a hard time getting work done before they get to know each other's personal boundaries, personality, age, and other important elements related to the hierarchical society of a collectivistic culture. In fact, Watanabe's study (1990, 1993) found that Japanese students established their personal boundaries before they began group discussion. The next concept will explain more about the cultural tendencies of the social hierarchy of Japan as they relate to Japanese studying in the U.S.

Power Distance

Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 28). "Most collectivistic cultures also maintain large power distances, and their education tends to be teacher-centered with little two-way communication" (Hofstede, p. 62). Hofstede (1980) pointed out that collectivists tend to be attentive to group members so they and their instructors do not lose face, especially in hierarchical situations. "Collectivism is strongly related to power distance, and those students who are from large [power distance] cultures are also less likely to question and debate" (Ward, 2001, p. 156).

According to Chen (1999), Chinese students, who respect the wisdom and knowledge of their teachers, preferred teacher-centered styles of teaching and accept the power distance between teachers and students. This applies to Japanese culture as well. In many Asian countries, especially in Japan, the teacher controls the power in the classroom, so that students hesitate to assert their opinions and challenge the instructor. In larger power distance cultures such as Japan, students tend to hesitate to express their doubts and disagreements with teachers because they view teachers as symbols of authority, whom they learn from in a passive manner (Biggs, 1996; Yuen & Lee, 1994), as well as transmitters of knowledge, role models and the focus of educational practice (Pratt, 1991).

In contrast, "[t]he desirability of having students speak up in class is more strongly felt in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 62). According to Pratt (1991), from an American's perspective, teachers are regarded as facilitators who promote learner autonomy. Cortazzi and Jin (1997) also noted that students who are from what is categorized as a small power distance culture, view the teacher as a facilitator and organizer. "People in small power distance cultures such as the U.S. tend to value equal power distributions, equal rights and relations" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 71).

In addition, Pun (1992) stated that in China, "[c]ritical thinking is discouraged and challenge to authority suppressed. Hence, who says what to whom in what manner becomes more important than what is said" (p. 171). This is exactly the same in Japan.

This may be due to "[t]he hierarchical structure of the society [that] shape[s] the people

in East Asian countries including Japan to be dependent rather than autonomous

learners" (Pun, 1992, p, 171). Namely, collectivism encourages relational

interdependence, group harmony, group collaboration and consensus, and these cultural

characteristics may make students avoid uncertain situations and risks.

Differences in teacher and learner roles may preclude Japanese students from

questioning their faculty. Consistent with the scholars' observations cited above,

hierarchical concern is an important and integral part of collectivism in traditional East

Asian countries including Japan (Biggs, 1996; Chen, 1999; Hofstede, 1980; Pratt, 1991;

Pun, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Ward, 2001; Yuen & Lee, 1994). It makes sense that

Japanese students face unique challenges in adapting to classroom norms completely

opposed to their native cultural approaches to teaching and learning.

Uncertainty Avoidance

The strong uncertainty avoidance tendencies of members of collectivistic cultures

are related to the high power-distance tendencies that we find in these cultures. The

concept of uncertainty avoidance informs my study about the challenges Japanese

students face in graduate-level classrooms in the U.S. Hofstede (1983a) defined

uncertainty avoidance as "the degree to which the members of a society feel

uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, which leads them to support beliefs

promising certainty and to maintain institutions protecting conformity" (pp. 226-337).

According to Hofstede's (1991) research, the United States is categorized in a weak

uncertainty avoidance group, whereas Japan is categorized in a strong uncertainty

avoidance group.

Similarly, Berger and Bradac (1982) asserted that "uncertainty is determined by

the number of alternatives that could occur in a given situation and the relative

likelihood of their occurrence. As the number of alternatives increases, uncertainty

increases" (p. 6). For international students, especially for Japanese students,

classrooms are filled with unfamiliar and alternative cues because of the Eastern and

Western cultural difference. One of the most important ways of uncertainly reduction is

by making assumptions about the people we are talking to. As an example, when we

begin talking to someone, we try to speak to them in a language we know they will

understand. In Japan, that is rarely a problem for Japanese students because they can

speak in Japanese verbally and nonverbally, but in the U.S. it may be challenging for

them to do so due to language and cultural barriers. On top of that, Japanese culture is a

strong uncertainty avoidance culture, students many hesitate to take a risk and to ask

questions in a class.

In an American classroom, which is categorized as a weak uncertainty avoidance

culture, students are encouraged to take risks and challenge the status quo, which is

often uncomfortable for Japanese students. Ting-Toomey (1999) argued that "weak

uncertainty avoidance cultures encourage risk taking, whereas strong uncertainty

avoidance cultures prefer clear procedures and guidelines in directing members'

behavior in an organization" (p. 71). Hofstede (1980) also noted that cultures high in

uncertainty avoidance such as Japan are intolerant of deviant behavior. It is

understandable since unexpected behavior may increase an individual's anxiety and

uncertainty and the possibility of making a mistake that would cause the individual to

lose self-face. Barnlund (1989) stated that "differences appear to be minimized or

suppressed in Japan in the interest of preserving the harmony of the group" (p. 137).

Therefore, exhibiting a different behavior in the group may have caused anxiety and

uncertainty for other group members because of their intolerance of unexpected

behavior. This cultural contrast may present challenges at school because they tend to

hesitate to be assertive in the classroom, because assertiveness could violate not only a

respectful hierarchical relationship but also cause lose of face for self and entire group.

Facework

The concept of face is not new to Asians. Face, *mentsu* in Japanese, carries a

range of meanings based upon a core concept of honor (Scollon & Scollon, 1995), so

that face "is an unwritten set of rules by which people in society cooperate to avoid

unduly damaging one another's prestige and self-respect" (Gannon, 1994). A Chinese

anthropologist Hu in 1944 first introduced the face concept, and later an American

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1967) developed his work on interpersonal relationships

on the concept of face. Since the 1980s, an intercultural communication scholar, Stella

Ting-Toomey based much of her work on conflict resolutions and intercultural

communication studies. Ting-Toomey defined facework as the specific communication

behaviors that save self-face or other-face. To save our own self-face or another person's

face during communication or conflict requires what is called facework.

The concept of "facework" (Ting-Toomey, 1999) is essential to grasp how Japanese students experience their new cultural environment. According to Ting-Toomey, the concept of facework is different across cultures. For example, Augsburger (1992) stated that high-context cultures, such as, Eastern cultures, tend to take face as esteem for others' solidarity, honor and shame. Since people from high-context Japanese culture tend to be group-oriented, they consider it vitally important to try to fit into the group and tend to be self-conscious and avoid causing loss of face for their teachers, peers, and themselves.

This last statement supports the hypothesis of Hofstede (1991) that people from collectivistic cultures tend to have higher apprehension or are more cautious about speaking out in public than people from individualistic cultures because they want to avoid losing face. Yamaguchi (1994) supported Hofstede's argument in research indicating that "the Collectivism Scale was found to be positively correlated with the Public Self-Consciousness subscale. This finding is not surprising, because collectivists are assumed to be attentive to group members, and group members are part of the public" (pp. 183-184).

Singleton (1993) also argued that interpersonal competition within the group may be seen as destructive to group harmony by international students from collectivistic cultures. In collectivistic cultures, to disagree and compete with someone in public is an extreme insult, causing both people involved to lose face (Ting-Toomey, 1999). For

example, Japanese people tend to take criticism and objections to their ideas as personal attacks (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

A Japanese graduate student in a Business Administration program in the U.S. shared his experience:

> In my business program, when we do a group project, American students
> comment on each other's work and do brain storming with their group members,
> but when I did a group work with my Japanese colleagues in my college in Japan,
> we did not interfere each other, we just worked on our own. Japanese students may
> hesitate to go into others' personal boundaries. (Murakami, personal
> communication, April 6, 2007)

Japanese students, who value relationship-orientation above task-orientation, tend to respect personal boundaries and hesitate to comment on others' projects until they build relationships and make sure it is alright to have direct communication with members in their group otherwise it may lose others' as well as self-face.

The custom of face saving is rooted to a Japanese historical aspect of samurai during the Japanese Middle Ages (12th century to 19th century). This face saving custom was established to protect oneself under the power of Samurai warriors. Nobilities employed warriors to keep peasants under control. Samurai warriors took advantage of their position of direct control over the farmers and greatly expanded their power until late in the twelfth century (Nippon, the Land and Its People, 1990). Gannon (1994) noted that:

Most of the population, however, had only limited rights, and a samurai could kill any commoner on the spot if he failed to abide by the many rules and practices pervasive throughout the society. Under such conditions it is little wonder that the Japanese sought to achieve harmony and to protect "face." (p. 256)

Gannon's additional comment is insightful, so that "even today Japanese tend to apologize in advance before making a critical comment on another person's project so as to avoid the loss of face for either party; many begin formal speeches the same way" (pp. 256-257). In addition, even before the samurai period, Confucianism and some Taoism from China brought philosophical beliefs to Japanese society. Becker (1986) reported that Chinese people reject debate and argumentation in the process of communication, which may come from Confucian and Taoist thought. Typical of the culture are sayings like, "The superior man acts before he speaks, and afterwards speaks according to his actions" (from Confucius) and "He who knows does not speak, he who speaks does not know" (from Lao Zi). These are characteristic of how Chinese culture discourages the use of speech in interactions (Chen, 1996). Japan, as one of the Confucius-heritage cultures and having received some influence of Taoism, follows the same ideas.

Consistent with these historical as well as philosophical perspectives, there is no doubt that Japanese students' communication styles in a classroom are very different from those of American students. There is another intercultural communication concept that needs to be discussed to explore Japanese perspectives referring to human

relationships, specifically in-group and out-group, because Japanese group dynamics as well as facework will change depending on whether group members are communicating with in-group members or out-group members.

In-Group vs. Out-Group

The concept of in-group vs. out-group is crucial to understand more about Japanese communication. As Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) asserted, "[c]ulture creates comfort zone in which we experience ingroup inclusion and ingroup/outgroup differences" (p. 55). In-group and out-group are defined by Ting-Toomey and Chung as:

In[-]group are groups with whom we feel emotionally close and with whom we share an interdependent fate, such as family or extended family, our sorority or fraternity, or people from our own cultural or ethnic group. Outgroups, on the other hand, are groups with whom we feel no emotional ties, and, at times, we may experience great psychological distance from them and even feel competitive against them---they can be our rival fraternity, our wartime enemy or simply individuals who belong to another cultural or ethnic group. (p. 55)

According to Samovar, Porter, & Stefani (1998), collectivism is affected by a strict social framework that separates in-groups and out-groups; and people from collectivistic cultures tend to expect their in-group members to look after them and are expected to return loyalty to the group. Condon (1977) pointed out that the importance of understanding collectivistic aspect of being an in-group member. He said that the language of "we" discourages a distinction between "I" and "you." "We" relationships

may celebrate the oneness of a group, which provides a sense of timelessness or changelessness and a very high predictability of expressions. Condon suggested that "[a]lthough this quality serves the members' feeling of closeness, it also serves to emotionally separate those who are outside of the group. Hence any celebration of 'we' implies the existence of 'they'" (p. 59). In this case, "we" will be the in-group and "they" will be the out-group.

People in Japanese culture where Confucian ideology and principles are deeply influential tend to be sensitive about their communication styles and behaviors when they interact with in-group people as well as out-group people. In accordance with the Buddhist influence in Japan, the self is a part of nature (Sun, 1991), and it is crucial to keep a harmonious relationship with those who are higher in social status, for example, a superior at work, teachers or older members of one's extended family. This is also true in the classroom context, and Japanese students hesitate to oppose or argue with classmates because this may end up causing estrangement with his or her peers or exclusion from a group.

Collectivists tend to think that being excluded from the in-group might mean losing support and becoming powerless and weak, so that people in collectivistic cultures tend to respect others' boundaries to give face to others, especially to those who have greater power than they do. This phenomenon encourages members of collectivistic cultures to maintain harmony and efface themselves when working collaboratively by being relationship-oriented rather than task-oriented as we see in

mainstream American culture. Japan has a strong collectivistic culture. However, issues surrounding the Japanese concept of in-group and out-group communication and face saving are hard to notice in American classrooms and may not be interpreted culturally appropriately by faculty or domestic students unless they are addressed in classroom and discussed from the different perspectives.

Honne and Tatemae

In a classroom context, Japanese students behave consistently with the general cultural information presented above as they try to build relationships with other students first before engaging in group work. Moreover, they "often suppress their true feelings; if open conflict erupts, it is kept within the confines of the group" (Gannon, 1994, p. 270). However, this attitude could be taken as dishonest by American colleagues. This cultural misunderstanding can be explained by referring to the concept of *honne* (an individual's true feelings and opinions) and *tatemae* (pretense). Relating to the concept of in- and out-groups, *honne* and *tatemae*, which Japanese use often as a way to communicate smoothly. *Honne* and *tatemae* need to be reviewed because they relate to Japanese group ethics, which are hard for Americans to recognize or understand and may lead to misunderstanding in communication between American and Japanese students.

Japanese use *honne* (an individual's true feelings and opinions) and *tateme* (pretense) (Lebra, 1976). Doi (1986) asserted that *honne* is one's real inner wishes which are covered up behind by *tatemae*. In contrast, *tatemae* is not one's true feeling

but is the outward face that agrees with others' opinions and tries to maintain harmony

within a group. Doi explained that this does not mean that *tatemae* is morally good and

honne is morally evil. *Honne* is truth and *tatemae* is pretense. It may seem that *tatemae*

is dishonest, because generally speaking, pretense is considered to be negative in an

individualistic and low-context culture, but it functions well to maintain harmony

within collectivistic relationships. It is understandable for people in high-context

cultures to use public face, *tatemae*, instead of showing their true feelings, *honne*. For

example, an individual may try to hide *honne* (e.g. anger) in order to state an opinion

indirectly while using *tatemae* (e.g. a smile); an individual may try to suppress *honne*

(e.g. jealousy) in order to obey the other who is higher in status by using *tatemae* (e.g.

polite words); an individual may use *tatemae* (e.g. humbling oneself) to efface oneself

instead of presenting *honne* (e.g. showing off) so as not to stand out, thereby

maintaining equality and harmony in the collectivistic group. All of the above examples

depend on the context and the social relationships between the participants, and *tatamae*

is commonly used to make others feel good. In addition, sensitivity in recognizing and

distinguishing between *honne* and *tatemae* from nonverbal communication, inference

or irony, depending on various contexts, is not only valued but a necessary survival skill

in Japan. However, these subtle nuances are hard to interpret by members of

low-context cultures, such as in the U.S., which heavily relies on verbal communication.

Doi (1986) contended that the Japanese first begin to develop their abilities of

knowing and using *honne* (an individual's true feelings and opinions) and *tataeme*

(pretense) at home during infancy and childhood, and become increasingly competent as they mature. Doi also contended that *tatemae* and *honne* overlap with other psychological and sociological concepts. In other words, "*tatemae* is precisely a product of socialization, and *honne* is the expression of self-consciousness" (p. 46). Mead (as cited in Doi, 1986) argued that "to be self-conscious is essential to become an objective to one's self in virtue of one's social relations to other individuals" (p. 46). Social relations between each individual in high-context and collectivistic cultures tend to be tighter than in low-context and individualistic cultures. Therefore, *honne* (an individual's true feelings and opinions) and *tatemae* (pretense) are important tools to acquire in order to function in Japanese society. It should be noted that *honne* and *tatemae* are not specific to Japanese or other high-context collectivistic cultures. It is likely that people in most, if not all, cultures make occasional use of "little white lies" to avoid embarrassment or hurt feelings. Literature in this section says that *honne* and *tatemae* are simply more dominant in high-context collectivistic cultures, but Americans also have some familiarity with these concepts, such as with "white lies," so that incorporating those similarities into intercultural understanding may help Americans understand and relate to their Japanese counterparts more readily.

Enryo and Sasshi

In the above section, *honne* (an individual's true feelings and opinions) and *tatemae* (pretense), the importance of sensitivity in recognizing and distinguishing between *honne* and *tatemae* in nonverbal communication cues such as gesture, eye

contact, silence, proximity, or tone of voice was discussed. *Enryo* (self-inhibition,

reserve; reservation; restraint; difference; coyness; discretion; hesitation; deference;

regard) and *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability; conjecture; surmise; guess; judgment;

understanding; consideration; considerateness; sympathy) (Ishii, 1998) help to explain

more about the sensitivity to *honne* and *tatemae.* (as cited in Klopf, p. 25). Ishii also

asserted that "The *Enryo* and *Sasshi* Communication Model," represents

communication between two Japanese people who think and act very much alike. Ishii

noted that Japanese tend to try not to disturb the general atmosphere of harmony, and

use *enryo* (self-inhibition) by being modest and caring about others' feelings so that it is

shameful and degrading to express one's thinking freely and openly in Japan. Ideas of a

speaker must go through the filter of inhibition to eliminate any messages that might

disturb the atmosphere in a conversation. Ambiguous messages may be safer to send.

The attitude, *enryo* (self-inhibition), may make Japanese behavior seem quiet, timid and

awkward in public.

Ishii also discussed the concept of *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability). He explained

that a listener who has good *sasshi* can catch hidden messages from the speaker's verbal

and nonverbal cues. Even if the message sounds ambiguous, the ambiguity is only on

the surface for the listener who has sharp *sasshi*, and he or she receives a clear message

from the speaker. The listener can thus handle the verbal and nonverbal message

appropriately and respond to the other in an appropriate way. Ishii stated that in

homogeneous culture like Japan's, the person with *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) is

a treasure. Good *sasshi* keeps interactions harmonious. People who have no sensitive

guessing ability are described by the phrase "*sasshi ga warui*" (his/her *sasshi* is bad).

For example, suppose a host or hostess asks a guest if he or she would like to stay for

dinner using *tatemae* (not true feeling and pretending to be nice in order to be socially

appropriate). If the guest has sharp *sasshi*, he or she will recognize that the speaker is

using *tatemae* and decline the invitation, showing *enryo* (self-inhibition). If, on the other

hand, the guest has a poorly developed sense of *sasshi*, he or she might misinterpret the

message by assuming that the host or hostess is expressing her or his true feeling

(*honne*), rather than *tatemae*, and subsequently accept the invitation. Paying close

attention to the aforementioned verbal and nonverbal cues is critical if one is to correctly

interpret the intended meaning of a message. Other contextual factors such as *ba* (place),

ma (space or timing), and *wa* (harmony) must also be taken into consideration when

attempting to interpret the meaning of a potentially ambiguous message. The Japanese

people unconsciously use *enryo* and *sasshi* in their daily communication.

Intercultural communication concepts explain why and what kinds of challenges

Japanese students experience in American classrooms. Learning style differences

between U.S. and Japanese students need to be reviewed for future investigation of

Japanese students' experience and their process of learning in American classrooms. In

order to dictate the process of learning, we should focus not only on the content of what

is to be learned but also individual learning styles (Dunn & Giggs, 2000). Students from

different cultures learn in different ways, and they differ in cognitive styles,

self-expression and communication styles (Bennett, 1995). In next section, I will apply

Kolb's experiential learning model in order to explore the diverse learning styles in an

American classroom from an intercultural communication perspective.

Learning Styles of Japanese Students

As with communication styles, Japanese students' learning styles are different

from American students. As Hofstede (1997) articulated, our countries' cultures shape

our preferred modes of learning, so it is crucial to explore the learning styles of Japanese

students. Various researchers in the field of higher education as well as English as a

Second Language (ESL) (Bennett, 1995; Dunn, Gemake, Jalali & Zenhauser, 1990;

Hyland 1994; Nelson, 1995; Reid, 1987; Smith, 1987) have emphasized that students

from different cultures tend to bring different learning styles; and these researchers

found that learning styles of students from Japanese culture tend to be reflective

observers or concrete experimenters rather than active experimenters or abstract

conceptualizers. This Japanese cultural tendency can be explained by a statement of

Scollon and Scollon (1995). They noted that "Japanese culture places a very high value

on the communication subtle aspects of feeling and relationship and much lower value

on communication of information" (p.151). Generally speaking, when they are having a

discussion with someone and trying to avoid a conflict, they would observe the situation

first and try to understand the other's perspective rather than thinking critically in order

to assert their opinions, so it make sense that Japanese students from a collectivistic

culture tend to be reflective observers or concrete experimenters. Smith (1987) showed

significant differences between American and Japanese students with the greatest

frequency and degrees of difference occurring in the abstract and active modes. These

modes are a reference to the work of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, which

is explained below.

Kolb's Learning Style Model

A pioneer in the development of learning style theory, David Kolb (1976),

proposed a model which suggests that learning style is a result of heredity, experience,

and present environment. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model holds that learning

involves the totality of human activities: feeling, reflecting, thinking, and doing. Kolb

(1981) postulated that "most of us develop learning styles that emphasize some learning

abilities over others" (p. 237). In his model, he described four distinct learning

references: concrete experience (CE), abstract conceptualization (AC), active

experimentation (AE), and reflective observation (RO). Kolb explained that we

internally decide whether we wish to watch (RO) or do (AE), and at the same time we

decide whether to feel (CE) or think (AC). When we process our emotional response to

the experience, "transforming experience" (Kolb), we fall into either feeling (RO) or

thinking (AE). When we approach a task, "grasping expereince" (Kolb, 1984), we fall

into either watching (CE) or doing (AC). See Figure 1 of the next page for a visual

description of Kolb's learning style model.

Concrete Experiment (CE)

Feeling

Active Experimentation (AE)

Doing

Transforming experience

Grasping experience

Reflective Observation (RO)

Watching

Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

Thinking
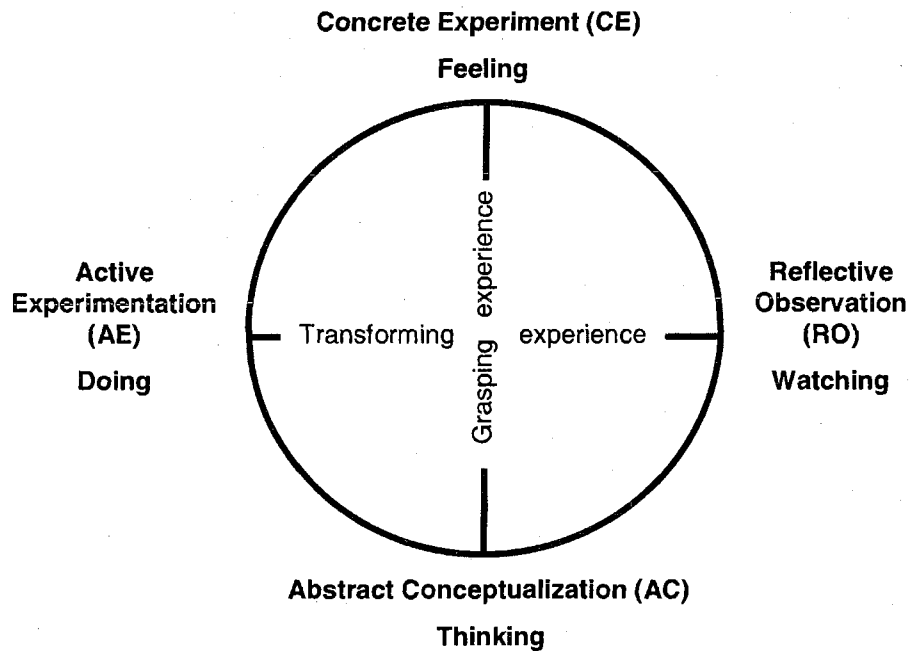
Figure 1. Kolb's learning style model.

As described by Kolb, reflective observers (RO) prefer to understand meaning by carefully watching and listening, reflectively understanding how and why things happen. They tend to observe before making a judgment, appreciate different opinions, and value patience and impartiality. In contrast, active experimenters (AE) prefer to be involved in actively influencing people and changing situations. They learn by doing, focus on practical applications, and are willing to take risks and responsibility. Concrete experimenters (CE) prefer to be involved in specific experiences and to relate to people. They learn by feeling, intuitively understanding their present reality. They think it is important to be sensitive toward other people's emotions and values. In contrast,

abstract conceptualizers (AC) prefer logic, ideas, and concepts, learn by thinking and analyzing, and are good at creating systematic plans and building general theories.

There are controversies about Kolb's learning model, such as: it may result in false conclusions (Miettinen, 2002); most diagnostic tests are based on learners' self-reports (Kelly, 1997); the empirical support for the model is weak (Jarvis, 1987; Tennant, 1997); and in reality, these learning experiences (CE, RO, AC, RE) may be happening all at once (Jeffs & Smith, 1999). However, among learning theories, Kolb's model has been widely utilized in studies of international programs as well as cross-cultural/intercultural communication (Auyenung & Sands, 1996; Barmeyer, 2004; Fridland, 2002; Hayashi, 1999; Hoppe, 1990; Hughes-Weiner, 1986; Jackson, 1995; Kayes, 2002; Katz, 1988; McMurray, 1998; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004; Yuen & Lee, 1994). Even though Kolb's experiential learning style model has been developed by Western perspectives, it has a history of successful application in Japanese settings. In fact, there are numerous Japanese websites that show how Kolb's experiential learning style model and inventory have been extensively used in training as well as education fields in Japan. For example, Aoki (2005) introduced learning management systems, which have been developed in the U.S. and use Kolb's learning style model in an important role. Aoki argued that Kolb's learning style model would help by considering Japanese cultural tendencies.

Japanese Students' Cultural Learning Tendencies

When Japanese students approach a task, which learning ability do they fall into, watching (RO) or doing (AE)? Yamazaki (2005) focused on this question and discussed the conceptual similarity between weak uncertainty avoidance and the AE learning ability. Yamazaki noted that "[t]hose with strong uncertainty avoidance culture such as Japan tend to learn through reflective observation (RO), whereas those with weak uncertainty avoidance culture such as the United States tend to learn through those of active experimentation (AE)" (p. 528). Intercultural communication concepts that I presented above can verified his hypothesis. Hofstede (1997) statement also supports Yamazaki's hypothesis. Hofstede asserted that members of strong uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to feel anxiety or fear when encountering unfamiliar risks, deviant ideas or conflicts; by contrast, members in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to feel less uncomfortable in unclear circumstances and are more likely to take risks in unfamiliar situations when encountering deviant and innovative ideas and few rules. As Yamazaki assumed, Japanese students may prefer the RO style rather than AE style because of their strong uncertainty avoidance tendency.

In fact, Japanese students feel uncomfortable taking risks in class such as speaking up about their opinions, and they do not know how to participate in certain class activities in culturally appropriate ways (Hayashi & Cherry, 2004). Watanabe (1994) stated that "group discussion in American classroom, in particular, is challenging for Japanese students because it assumes active involvement by the participants" (p. 68).

Cultural values and learning styles probably explain these behaviors. With the influence of Confucianism, which I will discuss further, "students tend to value quietness, be less opinionated, and believe that they learn from elders and wiser persons who are usually represented by a teacher in class" (Lim & Griffith, 2003). Cultural values strongly influences each individual's learning style.

Another hypothesis by Yamazaki (2005) was that "[t]hose with high-context cultures tend to learn through concrete experience, whereas those with low-context cultures tend to learn through...abstract conceptualization" (p. 525). This statement supports previous observations that Japanese students' learning styles tend to fall into CE rather than AC when they process their emotional responses. Yamazaki (2005) observed that members of high-context cultures such as Japanese tend to become sensitive to immediate environments, and to nonverbal behaviors and meanings of messages conveyed in nonverbal communication. This skill relies on their CE ability. By contrast, in low-context cultures such as the United States, explicit verbal messages are more important than nonverbal messages in interpreting meanings, and members must think logically and develop AC abilities in order to deal with the concepts that serve as key communicative knowledge (Yamazaki, 2005). Japanese students, therefore, tend to fall into the learning styles of CE rather than AC because Japanese culture and education system tend to stress developing skills first through conversation and interpersonal approaches. This means that for Japanese students, abstract thinking is the next stage after they have learned cognitively and affectively. In contrast, the Western

education system tends to value critical thinking and understanding through speculative

and questioning approaches, followed by the development of skills (Biggs, 1996; Kirby,

1996; Chan, 1999). These Yamazaki's hypotheses articulate Japanese learning patterns,

and explain how challenging for Japanese students to do critical thinking.

Influence from Confucian Philosophy on Japanese Students' Learning Styles

In addition to the cultural dimensions of strong uncertainty avoidance and

high-context culture, the influence from Confucian philosophy needs to be reviewed to

understand the experience of Japanese students in their different learning style context

in the U.S. Even though post-World War II education systems in Japan have been

developed under Western influence, teaching and learning are rooted deeply in

Confucian philosophy (Chan, 1999; Guo, 2005; Lee, 2004). Confucian philosophy also

can be seen in East Asian, including Japanese, students' learning styles (Chan, 1999;

Lim & Griffith, 2003; Wong, 2004). Wong (2004) stated that "Confucian Heritage

Culture (CHC)…[supports the] students' choice of using a repetitive strategy in

learning" (p. 156). Chan (1999) believed that the CHC is still very much influenced by

Confucianism that is dominated by rote learning and the application of examples.

Wong (2004) explained that rote learning is defined as learning without

understanding, but repetitive learning has the intention to understand its meaning. In

repetition work, people do reflection. Chu (1990) stressed the importance of reciting in

the process of learning:

Learning is reciting. If we recite it then think it over, think it over then recite it, naturally it'll become meaningful to us. If we recite it but don't think it over, we still won't appreciate its meaning. If we think it over but don't recite it, even though we might understand it, our understanding will be precarious. (p. 138)

Reciting and memorizing have never been regarded as an end in itself, but merely as a vehicle for better understanding. Still, the process of learning is to memorize first, then understand what is in the books, and finally incorporate what one gets from the books into one's own experience (Chiang, 1924). In addition, DeMente (1990) noted that memorizing an amazing number of Chinese characters called *kanji*, which were brought to Japan from China, is required to master the Japanese language. There are said to be about fifty thousand different symbols or logograms in total. Through elementary school to university level, at least in my experience, Japanese students are frequently required to take kanji quizzes during homeroom or after lunch time. This repetitive work may influence the study habits of Japanese.

It could be said that typical strategies of American faculty are contradictory to the Japanese students' experience. The challenge of learning in overseas settings that is incongruent with one's cultural learning approaches must be especially challenging for Asian students (Bennett, 1986). For instance, in American classrooms and U.S. culture generally, in order to display knowledge by using Kolb's learning model, reflective observation (RO) is often not valued as much as the activities of active experimentation (AE), abstract conceptualization (AC), or concrete experimentation (CE); in other

words, what is expected of students in a classroom is "doing" rather than "being" (Pusch, personal communication, November 1, 2006).

Transition from one's home culture and learning environment to a different culture and learning environment is not easy for anybody, especially for adult learners. As adult education constructivist Brookfield (1995) suggested, it is important for educators to respect and acknowledge individuals' experience and value the learners as knowers. It is not too much to say that this statement is suggesting that instructors respect and acknowledge cultural differences and utilize the cultural differences to learn from them rather than simply expecting Japanese students to adapt. This learning, eventually, contributes to creating an environment of mutual understanding among teachers, domestic students and Japanese students. In order to explore how Japanese students transition into American graduate-level classrooms, I will now review relevant literature on transitioning in higher education institutions.

Transition to American Graduate School: The Need for Support

Transitions are crucial to international students' success in their study abroad programs. Tinto's (1975, 1986, 1987, 1993) integration model, which is based on Durkheim's (1951) treatise on suicide, provides influential frameworks to understand the transition to college and student persistence. Tinto claimed that college students need to be separate from their past associates and cultures to successfully integrate into the social and academic systems of the institution, and college students who fail to do so

may leave the institution like individuals who commit suicide due to a lack of

integration into society.

However, when we focus on international students' transition issues into

American graduate programs, there are many environmental variables that we cannot

ignore such as culture shock (Adler, 1975; Albert & Triandis, 1994; Barna, 1983;

Bennett, 1998; Oberg, 1960; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Ward, 2001), cultural,

language, educational system transitions and financial difficulties (Ladd & Ruby, 1999:

Lee, 1997; Lin & Yi, 1997; Mori, 2000; Parr, Bradley, & Bing, 1992; Robertson, Line,

Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Wan, 2001). Janet Bennett (1998)

explained that:

> Transition shock often leads to communication problems as well. When we are
>
> anxious, lonely, and disoriented, our communication skills degenerate. Isolation
>
> and tension are exacerbated, producing barriers and defensive communication. In
>
> the intercultural context, disorientation is particularly lethal, for it only serves to
>
> further isolate us from our environment. We block out the new forms and styles of
>
> communication available to us in order to preserve the old. Culture shock is thus a
>
> major obstruction in intercultural communication. (p. 217)

Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, these issues have received little attention in

academic programs. Yet research has shown that international students have greater

challenges in transition but less social support than American students

(Hechanova-Alampay, Beer, Christiansen, & van Horn, 2002). Tierney (1992) disputed

Tinto's assumption that immigrants as well as international students need to undergo cultural suicide to avoid an intellectual suicide. Tierney suggested that this assumption ignores the experiences of minorities on predominantly white campuses.

In fact, there are controversies about Tinto's model as not representing the experiences of minority students (Attinasi, 1989; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora 2000; Tierney, 1992). Tierney (1992) argued that, rather than blaming students who cannot integrate and assimilate into the dominant culture institution by rejecting their home culture, institutions should take a responsibility to admit their "inability to operate in a multicultural world" (p. 615). Tierney also asserted that it is important to provide supportive environment for students from diverse backgrounds such as international students for their adaptation to American classrooms to make their transition smooth. Elkins, Braxton and James' (2000) study of first-semester retention indicated that strong support increases student retention. Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that Latino students' strong sense of belonging to their home cultures and support they receive from their home culture help them feel comfortable in the university community.

It can be said that international students from Japan especially need to receive support and be included in-groups as well because of their cultural characteristics of relational and group orientation. As Kim and Gudykunst (1997) pointed out, "[c]ultural adapting is the long-term process of adjusting and finally feeling comfortable in a new environment" (p. 209); so that as Tierney (1992) contended, in one semester or so, it is harmful to individuals who are not from the dominant institutional culture to force

themselves to separate from their former communities, beliefs, cultures, values and

attitudes to adopt those of a different culture and perspective in order to be successful.

From a constructivist perspective, it is necessary to support the integration of

Japanese students as international students into their American graduate classrooms by

co-constructive efforts with faculty and domestic students. These kinds of learning

environments will also help teachers learn how to adapt their teaching styles to the

needs of all international students. As a part of transitioning in higher education

institutions, graduate students especially have to work on professional development by

socializing with faculty members on campus. I will review one of the challenging

factors for Japanese graduate students next.

Professional Development of International Students:

Challenges and the Need for Support

Graduate students in general coming into the academic program experience its

culture and socialize with faculty and peers in their professional fields (Weidman, Twale,

& Stein, 2001). Graduate education is about educating students and socializing them to

become future faculty in some professional programs, which makes graduate courses

and interactions with faculty unique from undergraduate education. This "socialization

is not merely the transfer from one group to another in a static social structure, but the

active creation of a new identity through a personal definition of the situation"

(Reinharz, 1979, p. 374). This transformation from student to professional could also be

another challenge for Japanese graduate students in their professional education.

Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) argued that "professional education is clearly meant to prepare individuals for a set of social and intellectual roles, the performance of which reflects an advanced level of specialized knowledge and skills" (p. 34). Merton, Reader, and Kendall (1957) stated that students "learn a professional role by so combining its component knowledge and skills, attitudes and values as to be motivated and able to perform this role in a professionally and socially acceptable fashion" (p. 41). Graduate students in general are required to start accumulating professional experience in higher education. This professional development is likely to evolve from on-the-job training and real-world experiences rather than in the classroom (Blackburn & Fox, 1976). There are some exceptions, but international students are typically not allowed to work off campus; consequently, many international students serve as graduate teaching assistants on campus. According to Kulik (1985), in some major research institutions, more than half the graduate assistants are not from the U.S. However, some domestic students do not like having international students as graduate teaching assistants. Domestic students complain about their poor pronunciation of English words, their inability to comprehend students' questions and their lack of an American style of organization when presenting materials (Bailey, 1984; Fisher, 1985; Jacobs & Freidman, 1988).

In fact, in the late 1970s, there was a public outcry against using international graduate teaching assistants (Smith, Byrd, Nelson, Barreit, & Constantinies, 1992). According to Smith et al. (1992), legislatures have responded to the outcry by

mandating English proficiency testing for international graduate teaching assistants and sometimes for international faculty as well. By 1992, 18 states had such legislation (California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, Georgia, Kansas, and Oregon). In an effort to bridge this educational gap, many institutions have now developed professional development programs for international graduate teaching assistants.

These professional development programs are crucial for graduate students. Kuh and Whitt (1988) said, "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus" (p. 12). Along these lines, international students, generally, need extra support not only from institutions but also from faculty and peers to shift their perspectives toward their professional image, as well as how to act, talk and socialize with faculty members in a professional manner. Students are required to learn "changes in students' self-images, attitudes, and thinking processes" (Egan, 1989, p. 20) through socialization to professionalism, and faculty-student roles and interactions are transformed.

Faculty members design the socialization process to support the student's current role as student or the student's future role as professional (Baird, 1990; Golde, 2000). However, Smith (1993) contended that because of the difficulty of dealing with cultural

differences in communication with international students, some faculty concentrate on academic matters rather than on other aspects of professional socialization. Trice (2001) quoted a faculty member's concern about this, "one main issue is communication. If we could do something to improve it, we would be much better off… But we don't really have a good way of doing that" (Trice, p. 28). Consequently, international students are often forced to turn to peers for support and encouragement to adjust to their new academic as well as professional environments (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). Several studies suggested that the adjustment of international students to American classrooms is enhanced by interacting with domestic students (Surdam & Collins, 1984; Yang, Yang, Teraoka, Eichenfield, & Audas, 1994; Zimmerman, 1995). Supports from peers could be very helpful for Japanese students, but not only that giving culturally appropriate support for international students may enhance intercultural awareness and sensitivity among domestic students as well.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

"Intercultural communication involves multiple goals, and the goals people have are largely dependent on how they define the interaction episode" (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). With a mindful approach of listening to and understanding their different values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors, we can conscientiously choose appropriate actions to support international students. People in a dominant group, however, could be in denial about seeing differences in individuals in a minority group, or minimize those differences and instead impose stereotypes of his or her minority

group onto an individual. International students may do this as well. When they are in

cultural transition or culture shock, they may look at people in the host culture with their

old frames of reference, and judge the host culture and individuals negatively. Milton

Bennett's (1998) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) helps to

discuss the frames of reference of faculty, domestic students, and Japanese students.

This model is based on a constructivist view point and addresses how people in different

stages of intercultural sensitivity respond to cultural difference (Bennett, 1993). This so

helps us think about how to promote intercultural and international learning

environments. See Figure 2 for a visual description of the DMIS.

EXPERIENCE OF DIFFERENCE

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Denial　Defense　Minimization　Acceptance　Adaptation　Integration

ETHNOCENTRIC STAGES　ETHNORELATIVE STAGES
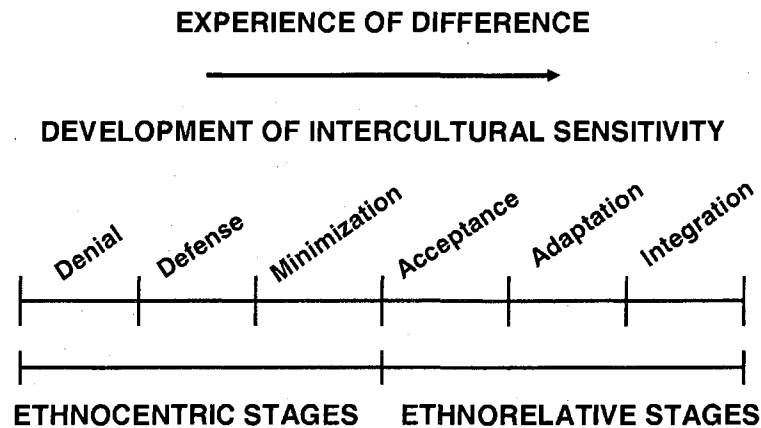
Figure 2: The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity

DMIS is divided into three Ethnocentric Stages and three Ethnorelative Stages.

The first stage is *denial.* People at this stage cannot interpret cultural differences in

complex ways or do not recognize cultural differences. They are either living in relative

isolation from other cultures or they choose not to perceive cultural differences at all.

People in this stage do not experience cultural differences because they do not have categories for understanding differences; therefore, "people are less likely to recognize differences among Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamiese" etc (Bennett, 1998, p. 31). The next stage is *defense*. People at this stage have more ability to construe cultural differences, but perceive them negatively. They tend to declare their own culture to be superior. They see the world from their worldview and do not want to change it. People in this stage possibly have "reversal" issues, which is "a denigration of one's own culture and an attendant assumption of the superiority of a different culture" (Bennett, 1993, p. 39).

The third stage is *minimization*. This is the final stage of ethnocentrism. At this stage, cultural differences are acknowledged and not negatively valued, but focus is on similarity while difference is ignored. Bennett (1998) suggested that people at this stage recognize superficial cultural differences such as eating customs and other social norms, but they assume that "deep down all people are the same" (p. 27). People, for example, at the minimization stage may believe that we all have the same physical needs and emphasize that we all have philosophical similarities (Bennett, 1998, p. 27). Thus, people at this stage still have a view, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This is known as the *Golden Rule* of Christianity, but it implies that others want the same thing that you want. Actually, a better concept is what is called the *Platinum Rule*, "Do unto others as they would do unto themselves," but people at the minimization stage have not yet achieved the level of this statement.

The fourth stage is *acceptance*. This is the first ethnorelativive stage. Bennett (1998) suggested that "[t]his is the first stage in which people begin to think about the notion of cultural relativity" (p. 28). People at this stage are aware of their culture and enjoy exploring cultural differences, but they may not yet have developed ethnorelative principles for taking action in culturally appropriate manner, thus, "acceptance does not mean that a person has to agree with or take on a cultural perspective other than his or her own. Rather people accept the *viability* of different cultural ways of thinking and behaving, even though they might not like them" (Bennett, 1998, p. 28).

The fifth stage is *adaptation*. People at this stage are culturally sensitive and use knowledge of their own and other cultures to behave appropriately depending on the context. According to Bennett (1998), people in this stage "can empathize or take another person's perspective in order to understand and be understood across cultural boundaries" (p. 29). However, Bennett suggested that even though people in this stage are good at shifting into a different cultural frame of reference, "in some cases people have become 'accidently bicultural'" (p. 29), for example: only between Japanese and American cultures. These people can shift their cultural frames of reference between the two cultures, Japanese and American; but they cannot apply the same adaptation skills toward groups that they do not consider cultures, for example, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

The final ethnorelative stage is *integration*. Bennett (1998) suggested that people at this stage know that "worldviews are collective constructs and that identity is itself a

construction of consciousness" (p. 29). According to Bennett, people in this stage may exhibit other qualities of "constructive marginality" (p. 29). Janet Bennett explained that "[a] constructive marginal is a person who is able to construct context intentionally and consciously for the purpose of creating his or her own identity" (p. 113). They are "inclined to interpret and evaluate behavior from a variety of cultural fames of reference, so there is never a single right or wrong answer" (pp. 29-30). I believe that only a few people can achieve real integration; however, the DMIS model gives us a lens to be aware of our own level of cultural sensitivity and encourages us to develop ourselves to be more compassionate to one another in intercultural contexts.

Intercultural Competence

Studying intercultural competence helps us to know how we can develop our intercultural sensitivity. Intercultural competence has been variously discussed as a significant factor in many disciplines such as cross-cultural adjustment, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural effectiveness, cultural learning, global learning, multiculturalism, and intercultural effectiveness (Benson, 1978; Dinges, 1983; Hammer, 1987; Hannigan, 1990; Hovland, 2006; Kim, 1991; Paige et al., 2002; Ruben, 1989; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; McTighe Musil, 2006; Spitzberg, 1989, Taylor, 1993). Intercultural competence that relates to these wide areas of communication studies is definitely indispensable for everybody on campus to promote inclusive, respectful, and collaborative learning environments.

In an attempt to define intercultural cultural competency, Margaret Pusch (1981)

presented series of related personality characteristics:

> An effective cross-cultural communicator is often described as a person who has
>
> rather vague boundaries of self, who tolerates ambiguity well, and who is
>
> adaptable to new stimuli, social conventions and behavioral demands. The person
>
> is skillful at observing and interpreting the cultural features of behavior and
>
> displaying respect for other cultures and their people. Finally, this person is able to
>
> accept his or her failures, understand his or her cultural roots and their effect on
>
> personal behavior. (Pusch, 1989, p. 110)

Janet Bennett (2008) defined the illusive intercultural competencies most

effectively by dividing them into three categories (*the mindset: cognitive competences;*

the skill set: behavioral competencies; and *the heart set: affective competencies*). *The*

mindset: cognitive competence includes "culture-knowledge, culture-specific

knowledge, identity development patterns, cultural adaptation processes, and the first

priority: cultural self-awareness" (p. 18). This skill allows one to think appropriately for

the target culture. *The skill set: behavioral competencies* includes "characteristics and

skills as the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive

accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflict, and manage

social interactions and anxiety" (p. 19). This skill allows one to adapt his or her emotion

to the target culture and judge events in alignment with the target culture. *The heart set:*

affective competencies includes "first and foremost, curiosity, as well as initiative, risk

taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural

humility, and resourcefulness" (p. 20). This skill allows one to behave appropriately in

the target culture.

It takes time and effort to develop intercultural communication competence.

Howell (1982) conceptualized the process of developing intercultural communication

competence along the following stages. See Figure 3 for a visual description of the

process of developing intercultural communication competence.

```
                              ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                              │  Unconscious Competence Stage     │
                      ┌───────┤                                   │
                      │  Conscious Competence Stage               │
              ┌───────┤                                           │
              │  Conscious Incompetence Stage                     │
      ┌───────┤                                                   │
      │  Unconscious Incompetence Stage                           │
      │                                                           │
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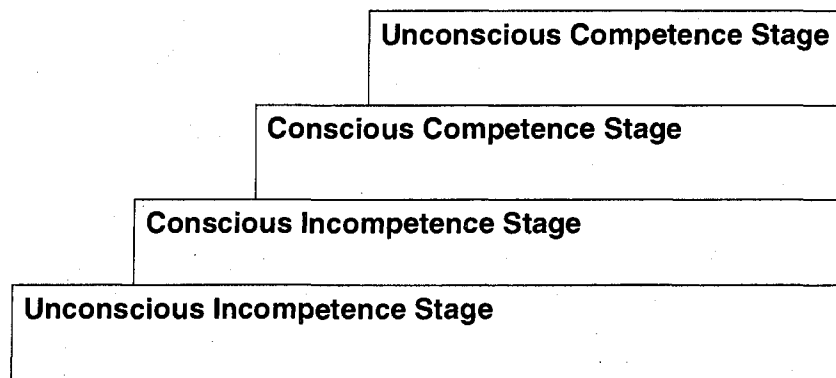
Figure 3: Four-stage intercultural communication competence: A staircase model

This four-stage intercultural communication competence model is explained

proficiently by Ting-Toomey (1999), Ting-Toomey & Chung (2005). The first stage is

unconscious incompetence. In this stage, an individual is unaware of his or her

incompetency of communicating with people from different cultures. The second stage

is conscious incompetence. In this stage, an individual is aware of his or her

incompetency of communicating with people from different cultures but does not

change his or her behavior to communicate appropriately with the counterpart. The third

stage is conscious competence. Ting-Toomey (1999) defined the second stage as "full

mindfulness phase" (p. 52). In this stage, an individual has actively learned intercultural

knowledge and is able to communicate appropriately with cultural strangers, but is still

trying to be fully mindful of the communication process itself. The fourth stage is

unconscious competence. Ting-Toomey called this stage as "mindlessly mindful phase"

(p. 52). In this stage, an individual does not have to be fully mindful of the

communication process anymore. He or she can communicate with people from

different cultures smoothly and appropriately without being conscious of intercultural

communication techniques.

Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva Chung (2005) warned that "[i]f an individual stays

in the unconscious competence stage for too long without a humble attitude, cultural

arrogance may set in without notice. The individual may easily fall back into the

unconscious incompetence stage because of overconfidence or cultural condescension"

(p. 21). Even though the process of developing intercultural communication

competence requires feelings of discontent and tremendous effort to transform our

frames of reference, it is worth trying because it will broaden our worldview and

enhance mutual understanding and respect with people who are from different cultures

and have different perspectives.

Summary

International students have long been an important part of the U.S. higher

education community, but generally they have received inadequate attention in the

classroom. Also, American teaching and learning strategies have not taken full advantage of international diversity. Challenges faced by Japanese students are partially due to different pedagogical paradigms and systems between the U.S. (constructivism) and Japan (behaviorism); individualistic versus collectivistic cultural traits; and how power distance, uncertainty avoidance, face work, in-groups and out-groups, and *honne* and *tatemae* relate to each culture. Learning style differences between Japanese and American students also are a big factor for Japanese students in American graduate classrooms. Kolb's experiential learning model helps illuminate Japanese students' learning style tendencies, which may present challenges for them in American graduate classrooms. Intercultural transition shock is an important element as well. They go through not only transition to American graduate classrooms but also to professional development in their academic experience in the U.S. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity helps us to discuss the stages of each individual: faculty members', domestic students', and Japanese students' intercultural sensitivity. Finally, the concept of intercultural competence gave me insight on how to enhance our intercultural sensitivity.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I will present the research

questions and discuss the rationale for qualitative research, the narrative approach and

researcher's role. Then, I will explore the research design, data collection strategies,

data collection procedures, back-translation, data analysis, reporting findings and

research population. Third, I will discuss the ethical issues, validity and credibility, and

limitations of this study.

Research Questions

Japanese students seem to have unique challenges because of their language

barriers, learning style differences, and cultural differences so that they need support in

their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms. The literature review

led to the following research questions: (a) What are the challenges that Japanese

students experience related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level

classrooms and; (b) What kinds of support have Japanese students needed or

appreciated in learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in their

graduate-level classrooms?

Rationale for Qualitative Method

For this study, I utilized a qualitative interview method in a narrative approach

because the objective of this study is to gather data about Japanese students' experiences

in their American graduate classrooms. From an "ontological perspective" (Guba &

Lincoln, 1990), this study took a constructivist perspective rather than a positivist

perspective since the aim of this study is to learn how Japanese students are

"constructing knowledge about realities, not constructing reality itself" (Shadish, 1995b,

p. 67). I believe that the realities about Japanese students' experiences are multiple and

constructed in context, which is a constructivist perspective rather than a single reality

that exists apart from their perceptions or interpretations of the real world, which is a

positivist perspective.

Finch (1986) claimed that while quantitative research is often experimental

research in which independent variables are manipulated and hypotheses are typically

tested, qualitative research employs observation and/or in-depth interviews. In other

words, Johnson (1992) argued that more likely in quantitative studies, researchers

employ objective and value free approach, while in qualitative studies, the researcher

cannot be separated from the subject of the research endeavor. Choosing a qualitative

rather than quantitative approach for this study was, in part, based on the fact that I

could not distance myself from my informants because I am a Japanese graduate

international student with similar experiences in U.S. classroom contexts.

Accordingly, from an "epistemological perspective" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990),

qualitative research allowed me to uncover the meaning subjectively experienced by

Japanese students. Qualitative approaches are concerned with subjects and their

experiences and are "based on the assumption that an understanding of cultural patterns

flow from immersing an investigator in the subject's natural environment" (Shuter, 1984, p. 197). Bogdan and Taylor (1975) argued that qualitative methods consist of:

> ...research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior. This approach, as we see it, directs itself at settings and the individuals within those settings holistically; that is, the subject of the study, be it an organization or an individual, is not reduced to an isolated variable or to a hypothesis, but is viewed instead as a part of a whole. (p. 4)

Listening to their stories and rewriting their stories together promoted my interest in a holistic exploration of Japanese graduate level students' experience in U.S. academic culture rather than focusing on one aspect of their lives, culture, or language development. Hoopes (1979) asserted that "we not only must know the facts but must also imagine what the facts meant to the human beings who lived them" (p. 4). Qualitative methods allowed me to look for perspectives subjectively experienced by graduate-level Japanese students in their American classrooms as described in their own terms in great depth with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance; and this was my intentions and my expectations for this study. For this study, I also used Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI) for the purpose of facilitating my interviews, which I will discuss later on in this thesis.

The Narrative Perspective

Riessman (1993) argued that the study of narrative is not the providence of any single scholarly field, and called it a "narrative elaboration" in the social sciences.

Errante (2000) contended that narrative research methods are still developing. Also,

Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly provided a convincing rational for narrative

modes of knowing, interpreting and researching in 1990. In their recent book titled,

Narrative Inquiry (2000), they advocated "what narrative researchers do" (p. 48).

Narrative research focuses on a single person telling a story in detail (Connelly &

Clandinin, 1990) and collecting data by honoring an individual's story as data that is

based on his or her pure description of experience, and analyzing connections between

the psychological, sociological, cultural, political, and dramatic dimensions of human

experience (Bochner, 2001) rather than the broader picture of cultural norms as in

ethnography or in grounded theory research (McCarthey, 1994). Fundamental questions

of narrative inquiry are, "What does this narrative or story reveal about the person and

world from which it came? How can this narrative be interpreted so that it provides an

understanding of and illuminates the life and culture that created it?" (Patton, 2002, p.

115).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argued that the aim of narrative study is to capture

and investigate experiences as human beings lived them in time, in space, in person and

in relationships. Kramp (2004) stated that "narrative inquiry serves the researcher who

wishes to understand a phenomenon or an experience rather than to formulate a logical

or scientific explanation. The object of narrative inquiry is understanding" (p. 104). The

narrative perspective allows researchers to capture and investigate the process that

organizes and ascribes human experiences into meaningful episodes with a beginning,

middle and end (Leitch, 1986). Narrative designs are appropriate for this study because a narrative perspective allowed me to investigate and analyze the process of Japanese students' individual experience of meeting challenges and receiving supports for their transition into their graduate-level American classrooms.

Furthermore, the narrative approach is appropriate for this study because the key characteristic of narrative designs are reflected in the elements of this study: the experiences of an individual, the chronology of the experiences (past, present and future), the life stories, retelling or developing a meta story, coding the field texts for themes or categories and incorporating the context or place into the story or themes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). In this study, I explored Japanese experiences in American graduate classrooms by having them recall and analyze their past and present experiences. For analyzing narrative data, I segmented the data into themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) by referring to the intercultural communication concepts. In this narrative study, I described in detail the context of Japanese graduate students' experiences as the central phenomenon.

In the procedures for conducting this narrative inquiry, I followed Creswell's (2005) seven steps in conducting narrative research:

(1) Identify a phenomenon that addresses an educational problem.

(2) Purposefully select an individual from whom you can learn about the phenomenon.

(3) Collect stories from individual that reflect personal and social experiences.

(4) Restory or retell the individual's story (build in past, present, future; build in

place or setting; describe their story; analyze their story for themes).

(5) Collaborate with the participant/storyteller in all phases of research.

(6) Write a story about the participant's personal and social experiences.

(7) Validate the accuracy of the report. (pp. 484-487)

In the next section, I provide more detail about the research design.

The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection

and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Marriam, 1998). I, as a research instrument, have

to acknowledge my biases, assumptions, values, attitudes and feelings before beginning

this study. Based on information in the literature and my experience as a Japanese

international student, the expectations, biases and assumptions I brought to this study

include the following:

(a) Because Japanese students are not encouraged to share their cultural backgrounds

by faculty, they may be hesitant to share their opinions in class, and this silences

their voices;

(b) Japanese students want to adapt to American classroom culture, but they do not

know how to do this;

(c) Japanese students prefer small group discussions to class discussions because they

become less nervous to speak up in small group discussions than in class

discussions.

(d) At the beginning of their U.S. educational experience, Japanese students do not

know what is appropriate in their interaction with their faculty. This may discourage

them from interacting with faculty members;

(e) There are dominant patterns of learning styles among Japanese students that may

hinder their experience in American classrooms.

These expectations, biases and assumptions mandated an emic perspective, in

which the basis of the research is an "insider's" view of reality and which assumes the

acknowledgement of multiple realities. In this research, I was aware of these

expectations, biases and assumptions by keeping a reflective journal and from member

checking by asking my research participants to reflect on what we had discussed in the

first and second interviews during the third interview.

Research Design

Research design includes population and research site, design strategy, data

collection, interview preparation and interview site, transcript, analysis strategy and

reporting findings.

Sampling Strategy

For this study, I used "purposeful sampling," which is appropriate for "studying

information-rich cases" (Patton, p. 230). Patton (2002) defined purposeful sampling as:

Cases for study (e.g., people, organizations, communities, cultures, events, critical

incidences) [that] are selected because they are "information rich" and

illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of

interest; sampling, then, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical

generalization from a sample to a population. (p. 40)

"Purposeful sampling is sometimes called purposive or judgment sampling" (Patton,

2002, p. 230). LaRay Barnard (2000) explained that "[i]n judgment sampling, you

decide the purpose you want informants (or communities) to serve, and you go out to

find some" (p. 176). Purposeful sampling, therefore, informs this study's insights and

in-depth understanding of Japanese graduate students' experiences in American

classrooms. This study of their experiences, in turn, will help U.S. higher education to

create a more inclusive learning environment.

For my sampling strategy, I chose "intensity sampling" (Patton, 2002), which is

"information-rich cases [selected] strategically and purposefully; specific type and

number cases selected depends on study purpose and resources" (p. 243). In this study, I

seek a "sample of sufficient intensity to elucidate the phenomenon of interest[s]" (p.

234), which are what kinds of challenges Japanese students face in graduate-level

classrooms in the U.S., and what kinds of supports help Japanese students transition

successfully to American graduate-level classrooms. In this study, intensity sampling

strategy is suitable in order to collect rich information from informants who have

experienced culture shock and challenges in their transition into American gradate level

classrooms. Hence, I chose Japanese graduate students at UC who could provide their

specific issues or situations from their experiences in UC graduate-level classrooms. I

identified my informants from people whom I had conversations with before and who I

judged had rich information and stories of their transition into U.S. graduate classrooms. My substantial experience of living in the U.S. as an international student from Japan told me that I should select Japanese graduate students who have been studying in the U.S. at least one year. In addition, I sought other elements in my informants such as those who received their bachelor's degrees in Japan and have work experience on U.S. campus with faculty members, administrator or students. I will explain more details about why I sought these elements in the research population section.

I needed to find one more research participant who was in a Ph.D. program after I interviewed four research participants because three out of four were in a Masters program. Then, I used a snowball sampling strategy. Snowball sampling is a form of purposeful sampling where, after a study begins, new samples are found by asking research participants to recommend other individuals to study (Patton, 2002). Through informal conversations with individuals at the research site, I asked an interviewee to recommend other individuals who might be interested in participating in this research, and I found Jiro who was in the Ph.D. program of social science.

Sampling Size

My research participants included five Japanese graduate students (three male and two female) at an urban college (UC) in the United States of America. Patton (2002) argued that quantitative methods focus on larger samples, which are purposefully selected, but qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in depth and detail so that qualitative research does not lend itself to a large sample population or attempts to

control and predict the causal relationships of variables, and he continued that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry," and "[s]ample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 244). It is typical that qualitative research involves a small number of participants (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 1999; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) "even single cases (N=1), selected purposefully" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). "Narrative researchers focus on the experiences of a single individual" (Creswell, 2005, p. 492). In this study, I kept my sampling size small, but studied in-depth with each of my research informants.

Research Population

For this study, intensity sampling insures the provision of rich information regarding Japanese students' specific experiences in their American graduate-level classrooms. "Population is people or objects that have some common characteristic" (Rubin & Rubin, 1996, p. 324). The common characteristics that I sought from my research participants are graduate Japanese students (Master and Doctoral-level) who have been studying in their graduate program more than one year, received their Bachelor's degrees in Japan, and have served as a graduate teaching assistant or a graduate assistant or other work experience on UC campus with faculty members, administrator or students. I will explain why I choose these characteristics next.

Graduate-level classes are generally smaller in size, thus international students are more compelled to participate than in undergraduate classes. Graduate students are also

expected to bring and share their expertise and professional experience into classes.

Also graduate-level students are frequently expected to conduct cooperative research

projects in their respective fields and publish their work, which can pose major

challenges for Japanese students. Along these lines, my research participants should be

a rich source of information on Japanese graduate students' experience in academic life

in the U.S.

I also focused on Japanese graduate students who have been in the U.S. for at least

one year. The period of cultural adjustment is different depending on people and the

environment, but from my substantial experience, it takes more than one year to adjust

to American classroom environments and be able to participate. I also wanted my

research participants to have had sufficient intercultural experience. This is especially

true for students who had bachelor's degrees in Japan and are new to the U.S. university

culture. Those who have attained their undergraduate degrees in Japan are newer to U.S.

culture and more likely to have more cross-cultural adjustment challenges than those

who have been living and studying in the U.S. since their undergraduate days.

Another common characteristic shared by of my informants was that each of them

had served as graduate teaching assistants or graduate assistants or had work experience

on U.S. campus with faculty members, administrators or students. Professional

programs of doctoral-level graduate education is especially about educating students to

socialize with their faculty members and peers to become future faculty or researchers.

This makes graduate courses and interactions with faculty unique from undergraduate

education, and gives Japanese students more opportunities to interact with their faculty

as well as students as graduate teaching assistants or graduate assistants.

Research Site

I chose the urban college (UC) as my research site. UC is a comprehensive public

university located in a major metropolitan area in the United States. UC is a rapidly

growing urban college. It serves 1,500 international students from 97 countries out of

25,900 total enrollments (reference information withheld to protect anonymity of

institution). The UC President (September, 2005) reported that:

> For years, international education has been a foundation of the educational
>
> experience at [UC]. [UC] has had a strong international student enrollment,
>
> partnerships with international universities, and a focus on area studies,
>
> particularly the Middle East. However, it is my sense that, for many [UC] students,
>
> their exposure to international cultures and customs has come largely from
>
> studying with international students, through coursework that emphasizes an
>
> international perspective, and working with faculty who have a passion for
>
> connecting theory to the world (reference information withheld to protect
>
> anonymity of institution).

In 2002, UC formed an Internationalization Action Council (IAC). The following

four goals are the basis for the Internationalization Action Council's work as of June

2003:

Goal #1: Increase opportunities for every [UC] student to have meaningful contact with other cultures and environments through: (a) our academic curriculum, (b) study abroad opportunities, (c) distance learning through the use of technology, (d) international students, (e) faculty visiting our campus, (f) all other aspects of the campus environment, and (g) community-based learning opportunities. Goal #2: Develop university policies and procedures that encourage leadership and innovation in the creation and delivery of a world class international education. Goal #3: Increase opportunities for [UC] faculty, academic professionals and staff to incorporate international dimensions into their teaching, scholarship, and professional development. Goal #4: Build on region's emerging sense of themselves as places with an international character and critical links with the rest of the world. (reference information withheld to protect anonymity of institution)

As a part of internationalization on campus, the International Student Services at UC provides international students with helpful programs such as a coffee hour, international mentorship program, career search and resume writing, visa options after optional practicum training, immigration (F1 visa/J1 visa) information, academic excellence workshops, [UC] health clinic services, international student scholarship, study abroad opportunities and representatives of our international students and cultures (reference information withheld to protect anonymity of institution).

The reasons I chose to focus on UC are that:

(a) UC offers easier access from Asian countries, so the number of Asian international

students is growing. This should make it easier for me to access international

students from Japan to study.

(b) Japan sends one of the highest number of graduate students to UC, India is 1st, China

is 2nd, Japan is 3rd, and Korea is 4th (Office of International Services, February,

2007).

(c) UC has been actively encouraging faculty and staff members to promote

internationalization on campus. It is necessary to explore the experience of

international students who are key players in this internationalization movement.

As Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggested, "site selection and sampling begins

with accessible sites" (p. 77). I took their suggestion and selected the UC for my

research site.

Data Collection Strategies

Interview

There are some advantages to conducting interviews rather than using a

questionnaire for collecting data. In-depth interviews uncover information we cannot

directly observe such as feelings, thoughts and intentions (Patton, 2002). Written

questionnaires do not allow interviewers to use a complex questionnaire format, while

qualitative in-depth interviews yield the richest data, details and new insights by

allowing interviewers to have face-to-face contact with respondents. Qualitative

in-depth interviews also allow researchers to be flexible in administering interviews to

particular individuals or circumstances, probe for more specific answers, ask different

questions for different interviewees and observe nonverbal behavior to assess the

validity of the respondent's answer (Bailey, 1994). The presence of an interviewer

generally may prevent questions from being unanswered, and if the respondent

misunderstands a question, the interviewer can clarify matters, thereby obtaining

relevant responses that questionnaires do not allow (Babbie, 2001).

There are some disadvantages in qualitative interview studies such as cost and

time for travel, interviewer's bias and interviewer's effects (Bailey, 1994). Bailey stated

that an interviewer can cause errors since she may misunderstand the respondent's

answer due to her biases. Furthermore, an interviewee can be affected by the

interviewer's sex, race, social class, age, dress and physical appearance or accent. In

addition, there is less anonymity since interviewers know the respondent's name,

address and telephone number. Patton (2002) also argued that well-qualified, highly

trained interview skills are required to avoid distorted information through recall error,

selective perceptions or desire to please the interviewer, and that collecting too large a

volume of information may be difficult to transcribe and summarize.

In order to minimize the interviewer's bias, I, as a researcher, acknowledged my

biases, assumptions, values, attitudes and feelings before beginning the research. I

stated the expectations, biases and assumptions that I brought to this study on page

78-79 (Researcher's Role section). I was fully aware of and guarded against the danger

of imposing my biases and guiding questions while interviewing and interpreting the

data by looking back the statement of expectations, biases and assumptions. In order to minimize the interviewer's effects, I created a comfortable space for my interviewees and help them open their minds and share their personal experiences and perspectives by listening to them mindfully. Lack of anonymity could be a problem, but confidentiality was promised between the researcher and the participants.

Despite the drawbacks, I believed that interviews were more appropriate than questionnaires for this research because the goal was to explore Japanese students' personal feelings and experiences in American classroom contexts, and narrative analysis "can be applied to....an in-depth interview" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 86). Personal feelings may be more likely to be revealed through interviews than questionnaires. In order to enhance my interview skills, I conducted a pilot study and practiced conducting an interview with a graduate-level Japanese student at UC before interviewing my research participants. This gave me a time to modify my interview questions or rephrase them if necessary. For the interviews, I used Japanese to interview my informants because it was easier for both the interviewees and me to communicate in our first language, and we could have a more authentic conversation than we could in English. Interviewees also could think and explain their emotional experience and their feelings better in their first language.

Multiple Interviews

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommended that the best way to gather the story is interviewing the individual about his or her experience. For collecting data, I

conducted multiple interviews (three) of approximately 90 minutes each with each of

the five Japanese graduate students (three men and two women) to hear their stories by

separating the interviews (see attachment: Appendix C, Interview Protocol). I will

discuss more specifically about each interview in the interview section later. Using

multiple interviews with the same participant to gather more in-depth data led to a

smaller sample size (Lee, Woo, & Mackenzie, 2002; Troiano, 2003). By conducting the

multiple interviews over time, I also developed rapport with my interviewees and made

the experience more comfortable for them. It was important to develop rapport with

research informants as Creswell (2005) articulated. He said that narrative researchers

need to collaborate with research participants to get more information from them.

Building Rapport and Collaborating with Participants

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pointed out that narrative research requires

collaborative work between researcher and participant to lessen the potential gap

between the narrative told and the narrative reported. By collecting data through

multiple interviews with my research informants, I, as a researcher and my informants

became open to each other and make "a good working relationship" (Elbaz-Luwisch,

1997). However, Maxwell (2005) warned that "[c]onceptualizing your relationships in

terms of 'rapport' is also problematic...A participant can be very engaged intellectually

in an interview, but not be revealing anything deeply personal, and for some studies this

kind of relationship may be ideal" (p. 83). Maxwell also contended that "the research

relationships you establish can facilitate or hinder other components of the research

design, such as participant selection and data collection" (p. 83). With Maxwell's

statements in mind, I conducted data collection in multiple individual in-depth

interviews with my research informants.

Interview Protocol and Interview Guides

Lofland and Lofland (1995) stated that the interview guide is an instrument, which

is considerably less formal or structured than the questionnaire or interview schedule

used in survey research or opinion polling, and its production requires serious thought.

Patton (2002) suggested that there are four approaches to collecting qualitative data: the

open-ended interview, which offers maximum flexibility to pursue information; the

informal conversational interview; the general interview guide approach, which is a

semi-structured interview instrument; and the standardized open-ended interview,

which is a fully structured interview instrument.

I used "the informal conversational interview" (Patton, 2002) approach in my

research (see attachment: Appendix C: Interview Protocols). It is also called

"unstructured interviewing" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 652). "The conversational

interview offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction

appears to be appropriate…within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and

ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject" (Patton, p. 342).

Patton explained that the strength of the informal conversational method is its

"flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and situational

changes" (p. 343) whereas the weakness of the informal conversational interview is that

it "requires a grater amount of time to collect systematic information" (p. 343), also this

approach requires interview skills such as the ability to "generate rapid insights,

formulate questions quickly and smoothly, and guard against asking situation by the

structure of the questions" (p. 343). Patton (2002) warned that "this go-with-the-flow

style of interviewing may be susceptible to interviewer effects, leading questions, and

biases, especially with novices" (p. 343).

Despite the weakness, this approach is appropriate for this narrative study because

in narrative research, "a holistic view invites a collection and reflection through telling,

hearing, and understanding the stories that shape a shared reality. The narrative form of

inquiry is flexible, innovative, unpredictable, and full of rich details" (Wilson, 2007, p.

28). By using this conversational interview method, "[q]uestions can be personalized to

deepen communication with the person being interviewed and to make use of the

immediate surroundings and situation to increase the concreteness and immediacy of

the interview questions" (Patton, p. 343). The conversational interview became a part of

building a partnership with my interviewees. Three of my interviewees gave me

feedback that they enjoyed talking about themselves and being listened to attentively.

In the first interview of multiple interviews, I asked my interviewees to tell their

stories about their experience in order to learn what were challenges they have

experienced related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms;

and what kinds of support they have needed or appreciated in learning and socializing

with their faculty and peers in their program. I listened and did not interrupt them during

the session, except when they needed to know in what context they should tell stories; I then asked them probing questions, which I prepared in advance. Theories and concepts that I discussed in the literature review section were integrated into those questions.

Questions numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 are related to research question (a) What were the challenges that Japanese graduate students experience related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms? Questions numbered 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 were related to research question (b) What kinds of support have Japanese graduate students needed or appreciated in learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in their graduate-level classrooms? (see attachment: Appendix C: Interview Protocols). Questions which related to language problems were addressed by questions numbered 1, 7. Questions which related to learning styles were addressed by questions numbered 2, 3, and 8. Questions which related to culture shock, intercultural experience, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, facework, in-group vs. out-group were addressed by questions numbered 4, 6, 9, and 12. Questions which related to socialization as professional were addressed by questions numbered 5, 10, and 11. A question which related to pedagogy and Confucius are addressed by questions numbered 6. A question which related to pedagogy and culture were addressed by questions numbered12. I kept at least one week between the first and second interviews.

By the second interview, I transcribed the first interview. The second interview is an attempt to clarify issues raised in the first interview and to ask for more examples and descriptions. In the second interview, I developed questions and prompts based on

topics and events described by the participants in the first interview. I adapted some

parts of interview protocol by Wilson (2007). The presenting statement to begin the

second interview is:

> Today, I would like to reconstruct details of your experience—stories about your
>
> experience on the particular happenings, incidents, or events in your U.S.
>
> graduate-level classrooms. I do have some prompts for you based upon the
>
> transcript of our first interview together. Please tell me when you are ready to
>
> begin. (see attachment: Appendix C, Interview Protocol)
>
> Prompts and questions were designed to elicit more information about the topic or

event, such as, "Can you tell me more about…?" "What was it like when…?" "Can you

remember any examples of …?" "What was it like?" "Can you remember any events

involving…?" "Was there some particular crucial time or situation you recall?" (Wilson,

2007, p. 38). I integrated theories and concepts that I discussed in the literature review

section into these questions. I kept at least one week between the second and third

interviews.

By the third interview, I transcribed the second interview, and I created an edited,

combined transcript of both first and second interviews and presented it to my

interviewee in the third interview. I encouraged the participant to add or delete

information from the document in presentation for the third interview. The presenting

statement to begin the third interview is:

> Thank you for participating with the third interview to fully develop your input to

the story of Japanese students experience in U.S. graduate-level classrooms. I

transcribed the second interview and edited, combined transcript of both first and

second interviews. In this interview, I will present and explain what I transcribed

and edited to you, and next I will ask you some questions to explore your

interpretation and explanation of important moments or events in your

study-abroad experience in your U.S. graduate program. This will help me to

check and edit the transcript with you. If I miss something significant, please be

sure to include it during the interview. (see attachment: Appendix C, Interview

Protocol)

In the concluding questions, I asked their advice for faculty as well as new

international students who will be coming from Japan. This question became a summary

of their answers and key points they wanted to assert in their experiences in their

American graduate classrooms (see attachment: Appendix C: Interview Protocols).

Finally, I asked them if they had anything else to add. If not, I l thanked them for their

cooperation.

Maxwell (2005) argued that "there are some cultures, settings, and relationships in

which it is not appropriate or productive to conduct interviews, or even to ask questions,

as a way of gaining information" (p. 93). In this study, I created my interview questions

by being culturally sensitive to my Japanese interviewees. I translated the interview

protocol in Japanese and ask questions in Japanese (see attachment: Appendix C:

Interview Protocols-Japanese translations). In the interview guide, I asked questions of

my interviewees carefully. My prior studies in my Master's thesis about a Japanese

student group study-abroad experience revealed that the Japanese interviewees were not

accustomed to talking about themselves and reflecting their experience objectively, so

many of them had a hard time answering open-ended questions (Yamashita, 2002).

Prompts and questions for the first interview and second interview gave them context to

encourage them to start telling their stories

One of the reasons for this problem was that they were afraid of giving "a stupid

answer" or an answer out of context and not relevant to the question. However, they

talked and shared their experiences when I gave them the context for my questions. In

addition, in this study, Japanese students' cultural tendencies such as strong uncertainty

avoidance, face saving and their learning styles tendencies (concrete experiment and

reflective observation) led me to believe that I should ask them prompt and probing

questions to help them uncover their experiences and feelings (Yamashita, 2002). The

questions that I prepared in advance in the first and second interview were helpful to

elicit more information from them, but I was careful not to give them leading questions.

In this study, when opening my interviews, I asked introduction questions instead

of conducting pre-interview questionnaires. From my experience interviewing Japanese

informants, this served as an important icebreaker. McCracken (1988) suggested that

"construction of a set of biographical questions with which to open the interview"

allows interviewers to "ascertain the simple descriptive details of an individual's life" (p.

34). I also gave them the context for the main questions and time to think and prepare answers.

Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI)

Besides the interview, in a narrative study, researchers gather texts from the individual's journal, letters sent by individuals, photos, film and art (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this research, as a part of data collection, I had my research participants take "Kolb's Learning Style Inventory" (LSI). In 1971, Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre developed the LSI to measure a person's strength/weakness in the four learning abilities. Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre (1971) explained that:

> The LSI measures an individual's relative emphasis on the four learning abilities described earlier, concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE), by asking him several different times, to rank order four words that describe these different abilities. For example, one set of our words is "Feeling" (CE), "Watching" (RO), "Thinking" (AC), "Doing" (AE). The inventory yields six scores, CE, RO, AC, and AE, plus two combination scores that indicate the extent to which the individual emphasizes abstractness over concreteness (AC-CE) and the extent to which an individual emphasizes active experimentation over reflection (AE-RO). (p. 30)

I conducted the LSI before the interviews. The purpose of using the LSI inventory was not to use the LSI data to develop my interview protocol, but to learn the interviewee's learning style and have my research informants acknowledge their

preferred learning style objectively, which was helpful for them to reflect and discuss

their experiences in their American graduate classrooms. By introducing this inventory

to them and having them take it, they learned about different learning styles. This gave

them an opportunity to think about how their learning styles affect their experience of

studying in American graduate classrooms. This opportunity also became an incentive

or inducement for participating in my research.

Data Collection Procedures

Interview Preparation, Process and Site

First of all, before I contacted the informants or collected any data, I submitted an

application to the Human Subject Resource Committee at UC and receive approval.

Next, in order to access the research participants, I emailed to selected individuals

referring to intensity sampling strategies and explain my research to them in order to

recruit participants with a strong emphasis on voluntary participation. My target

research informants were Japanese graduate students who have been studying in

graduate programs at UC, received their Bachelor's degrees in Japan and have work

experience as a graduate assistant, graduate teaching assistant, or staff member on UC

campus. Once they agreed to participate in this research, I set up the date and place by

asking them to name a convenient day, time and place.

Next, I looked for interview sites where my interviewees could relax and where

there would be no interruption. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested finding a quiet and

suitable place for conducting the interviews. I found a place where I could talk and

audiotape without interruption. I booked a small classroom with windows on campus

that was convenient for both me and my informants to access. I also created a

non-threatening environment in which participants feel comfortable by bringing a cup

of coffee. A week before the interview, I sent my interviewees an introductory script

(see attachment: Appendix A: Introductory Script) via email to explain my research

purpose and ultimate goal of my study. I also let them know at that time that I would like

to audio tape record the interview. This helped my interviewees prepare for the

interviews.

Before I conducted the interview, I thanked them for participating in this study,

and I showed them an informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B) and explained

and asked them to sign it if they agreed with the process. I verbally asked their

permission to audio tape record the interviews, and told them the audio tapes used to

record the interviews would be kept in a safe and locked place where they were only

accessible to me. I also told them they were free to skip any questions or withdraw at

anytime. After the first meeting, we set up the second interview date and time; and after

the second interview, we set up the third interview date and time.

All interviews were conducted in Japanese as I stated earlier and were audio

tape-recorded verbatim, which allowed me to focus on the specific details of what

participants said. Patton (1990) argued that tape-recording is crucial for qualitative

studies because the interviewer who tries to write down every word has a difficult time

responding appropriately to an interviewee. Tape recorders do not "tune out"

conversations, nor change what has been said because of interpretation. Patton (2002) recommended note taking during the interview. Note taking "helps the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview moves along," and "note taking helps pace the interview by providing nonverbal cues about what's important, providing feedback to the interviewee about what kinds of things are especially 'noteworthy'" (p. 383). I kept notes during interviews especially about nonverbal cues such as gestures, changing tones of voice, taking a pose, eye movement, etc. This was very helpful when I analyzed data.

All of the Japanese students whose narratives were presented herein in interviews shared unique stories about what kinds of challenges they faced and support they needed in their American classrooms. Although each story was distinctive, certain themes appeared across most interviews. Answers to the interview questions were obtained in all interviews, but different questions were answered spontaneously by different interviewees, so that those asked verbatim were not always the same. The order in which questions were asked also varied to fit each particular interview flow.

Transcript

"Transcription is a chore" (Agar, 1996, p. 153) but "the social sciences frequently overlook transcription as an important methodological step" (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, section of transcription in practice, ¶ 3). Moreover, transcriptions are an important part of researchers' data and "a selective process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions" (Ochs, 1979, p. 44). Many scholars in linguistics (Ochs, 1979),

linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 1997) and other diverse disciplines (Lapadat &

Lindsay, 1999; Mishler, 1984; Sandelowski, 1994) have begun to discuss the pivotal

aspect of transcription in qualitative research (Poland, 2002).

Oliver, Serovich, & Mason (2005) argued that there are two dominant approaches

for transcribing, *naturalized* and *denaturalized*. In *naturalized*, every utterance or

nonverbal cue (tone of voice, space between words, silence, accents) is transcribed in

detail, so researchers work for a full and faithful transcription. On the other hand,

denaturalized, which has been used in grounded theory research and discourse analysis,

has less to do with transcribing those nonverbal parts. For example, in *denaturalized*,

"grammar is corrected, interview noise (e.g., stutters pauses, etc.) is removed and

nonstandard accents (i.e., non-majority) are standardized" (Oliver et al., 2005, ¶ 1).

Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005) argued that both approaches have drawbacks.

A naturalized approach that provides detail could be interpreted inaccurately. A

denaturalized approach could remove the important features of the data. For example,

eliminating nonverbal cues, which are a huge part of communication especially for

people from high-context cultures, represents a critical loss of data or information.

Since my informants are from high-context Japanese culture, and tend to rely on

nonverbal communication such as pose, silence, gesture and eye contact, I used a

naturalized approach for my transcription despite its particular drawbacks.

To ensure that I interpreted the data correctly, I conducted a reflection of the

transcription. Schön (1983) discussed the idea of reflection of the transcription, which

includes reflection-in-action (the ability to think-while-doing) and reflection-on-action (the ability to think about one's practice after the fact). "Taken together, the practitioner develops a repertoire of practices and frames of reference that help in making informed decisions" (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, section, toward reflection in transcription, ¶ 2). I could prevent them from forcing my assumptions and values into the transcriptions.

I immediately started to transcribe data to analyze promptly upon data collection because I used the transcript for my second and third interviews. Analyzing and gathering data simultaneously allowed me to structure future data collection efforts based on emerging themes, while avoiding collecting unfocused, repetitious and voluminous data (Merriam, 1998). However, in the process of transcribing data, as I previously mentioned, I was fully aware of the danger of imposing my thoughts while interpreting the data, and was guarding against doing so by reporting statements of my interviewees accurately, and acknowledging my assumptions and biases before beginning the research. As Seidman (1998) asserted "the danger is that the researcher will try to force the excerpts into categories, and the categories into themes that he or she already has in mind, rather than let them develop from the experience of the participants as represented in the interviews" (p. 110).

In order to ensure proper transcription, I conducted "cross-checking" (Klockars, 1977). Klockars argued that a researcher should impose cross-checks on the informants' stories. Cross-checking can be done by paying attention to informants' statements for

consistency and seeing if interviewees are covering the same events several times over

the course of the interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In narrative research, one of the

potential problems is "the participant's voice lost in the final narrative report" (Creswell,

2005, p. 484). In order to re-story or retell the individual's story without losing my

interviewee's voice, I conducted "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When I

conducted the multiple interviews, I did member checking by asking my research

participants to reflect on what we had discussed in the first and second interviews during

the third interview.

<center>Back Translation</center>

Since all of the interview data was in Japanese, the translation of these texts was

the next crucial step in the procedure because this study is written in English.

Translation is a key variable that affects the validity of any translated data gathered for

intercultural studies (Banks & Banks, 1991), and a comparison of the original Japanese

language texts with the English translations was useful in checking the accuracy of the

translation (Go, 1984).

Techniques of back translation were used in this study. I translated key sentences

from the Japanese transcripts into English, and another translator, who was also fluent in

both Japanese and English and had her doctoral degree, conducted a back translation

from the English to Japanese. This translator's back translation and the original data

were compared, and the accuracy was assessed to ensure validity of the data. Brislin

(1973, 1986) noted that if the same types of errors were found in the back translation, then it could be assumed that the errors were a result of the original transcript.

As Ting-Toomey (1999) contended, "translation problems and jokes that involve different semantic understanding abound on the global level...Intercultural misunderstandings arise when we decode the literal meanings of the words but not the connotative meanings of the messages" (p. 89). Ting-Toomey stated that the goal of translation is to ensure equivalence of cultural meaning while maintaining the meaning of the native view as well. In order to do that, it is essential to pay close attention to the two-leveled cultural meanings that complicate our understanding of semantics and other emic/etic meanings. Denotative meanings of key terms in Japanese and English was discussed and compared carefully with relevant literature to fill the translation gap.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers utilize various strategies and methods to analyze a variety of empirical materials (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). For example, Tesch (1990) identified no less than 26 analytic strategies that can be applied to qualitative data. Narrative is not the providence of any single scholarly field and narrative analysis methods are still developing (Riessman, 1993; Errante, 2000), making data analysis particularly difficult; but what is clearly stated about narrative analysis methods are that "stories are at the center of narrative analysis...how to interpret stories and the texts that tell the stories, is at the heart of narrative analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 118). This statement advocates that preliminary data manipulations must be done carefully to avoid biasing the result.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) explained that "[a] nalysis is not about adhering to any one correct approach or set of right techniques; it is imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive, it should also be methodical, scholarly, and intellectually rigorous" (p. 10). In addition, on the process of rearranging the data into categories, "narrative analysis takes as its subject of investigation the story itself" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1). Still, these statements did not give me a clear direction for analyzing the data, but Maxwell's (2005) following comments gave me an idea for how to start. "The main categorizing strategy in qualitative research is coding," (p. 96). Maxwell wrote that "[i]n qualitative research, the goal of coding is...to 'fracture' (Strauss, 1987) the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts" (p. 96). In narrative analysis, researchers retell the story (Creswell, 2005).

In order to conduct the intellectual and mechanical work of analysis, I followed the procedure of analyzing data by Patton's (2002) method of "coding data, finding patterns, labeling themes, and a developing category system" (pp. 462-467). For coding data, I began by reading the interview transcripts and making comments in the margins. Cortazzi (1993) explained that a researcher might identify an abstract of the events or action by focusing on the plot.

In the next step, for labeling themes, I employed the suggestion by Patton (2002). When I was coming up with topics, I named the topic and label it for a file system. I used shorthand code (e.g., JCT for Japanese cultural tendencies). I also used colored

highlighting pens to make it visually distinctive. After that, in order to find patterns, I

used a matrix introduced by Yin (1994), with techniques including putting information

into different arrays, making a matrix of categories, and placing the evidence within

such categories. After considering several arrays, participants' names were placed in

horizontal cells at the top of the matrix and responses which were coded to shorthand

codes were placed in vertical cells in order of the frequency. This matrix helped me find

patterns of each interviewee and compare the patterns across the four interviewees. I

focused on patterns for each individual separately rather than comparing across all

interviewees, but it was also necessary to find similarity among the homogenous group

of Japanese graduate students in American classrooms to analyze data from intercultural

perspective.

Finally, when I developed categories, I used the idea of "context sensitivity"

(Patton, 2002). This analysis strategy recommends that we should be sensitive with "a

social, historical, and temporal context" (p. 41). I also used intercultural concepts for

analyzing data, which provide culture general view points. This approach is important

when I analyze Japanese students' cultural experience because interpretations may

change depending on context, and "how to interpret stories and the texts that tell the

stories, is at the heart of narrative analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 118). Qualitative inquiry

elevates context as critical to understanding, unlike quantitative inquiry which generates

findings that are context free (Patton, 2002). Thus, narrative researchers need to

describe the setting of a context such as time, place, plot and scene (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). Portraitist Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) also emphasized the

importance of being sensitive with context:

> By context, I mean the setting---physical, geographic, temporal, historical cultural,
>
> aesthetic---within which action takes place. Context becomes the framework, the
>
> reference point, the map, the ecological sphere it is used to place people and action
>
> in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say and do. The
>
> context is rich in clues for interpreting the experience of the actions in the setting.
>
> (p. 41)

In the process of analyzing data, I did a "hand analysis of qualitative data" where

"researchers read the data, mark it by hand, and divided it into parts" (Creswell, 2005, p.

234) rather than using computer software because I was afraid of losing data by

accidental deletions. I took an ATLAS/ti (Scientific Software Development) seminar

focusing on this contemporary software for qualitative data analysis, but it seemed to

take time and effort to get used to using the tool effectively, and there were cases where

users' deleted their data accidentally.

Analytic Memo

I also used "analytic memos" (Maxwell, 2005) in order to reflect on my

research throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data. Janesick (2004)

emphasized the importance of journal writing for qualitative research in order to: refine

the understanding of the role of the researcher through reflection and writing; refine the

understanding of participant responses; and use a journal as a tool for learning the

researcher's own thinking and reflection patterns. Analytic memo and journal writing

helped me organize ideas and insight that I received from interview data as well as

literature that could use when reporting findings.

Reporting Findings

When a researcher reports findings, Patton (2002) suggested maintaining a

balance between description and interpretation; and being aware of using metaphors and

analogies and drawing conclusions. First, in order to maintain a balance between

description and interpretation, "[s]ufficient description and direct quotations should be

included to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people

represented in the report…, but it should stop short" because "[e]ndless description

becomes its own muddle" (Patton, 2002, p. 503). The following suggestion of Bullough

and Pinnegar (2001) was also helpful for writing my data analysis of data. They argued

that we must not only reveal but also interrogate the relationships, contradictions and

limits of the views presented.

I kept in mind that "[n]arrative is a tool of the researcher for gathering the stories

and for the subsequent representation of the stories to the reader" (Wilson, 2007, p. 27),

and "[w]hen a story is reinterpreted it becomes not just a new story but a new

experience" (Pinnegar, 1996, p, 13). Moreover, "[o]nce a story is created, it opens up

new possibilities for understanding" (Bullough & Baughman, 1998, p. 487). As Wilson

(2007) contended, "the researcher, acting as a narrative inquirer" (p. 27) needs to

recognize ethically the reconstructing story is the process of reflecting the researcher's

frame of reference to avoid the problem of imposing that for retelling the story, and in

order to ameliorate the problem, use "extensive participants quotes and the precise

language of the participants and carefully constructing the time and place of the story"

(Creswell, 2005).

Next, I know that metaphors and analogies vary depending on culture, so it was

important to check with my interviewees the meaning of any metaphors and analogies

they used. Patton (2002) argued:

> Metaphors and analogies can be powerful ways of connecting with readers of
>
> qualitative studies, but some analogies offend certain audiences. Thus, metaphors
>
> and analogies must be selected with some sensitivity to how those being described
>
> would feel and how intended audiences will respond. (p. 504)

Finally, drawing conclusions from qualitative studies is challenging. As Patton

(2002) articulated, we should be careful "not to take anything for granted or fall into

following some recipe for writing" (p. 506). These quotes suggested to me that what I

analyzed was just a part of the Japanese students' individual realities and that I should

not take for granted that what I found represents the whole of them.

Ethical Issues

There were a number of ethical issues that I had to consider. I followed the ethical

issues checklist by Patton (2002), which includes ten elements to consider in qualitative

interviewing: (a) explaining purpose; (b) promises and reciprocity; (c) risk assessment;

(d) confidentiality; (e) informed consent; (f) data access and ownership; (g) interviewer

mental health; (h) data collection boundaries; and (i) ethical versus legal (p. 408-409).

I explained the purpose of the study and the inquiry by using Japanese and in culturally appropriate ways. I also told my research informants that this study will be contributing not only to Japanese international students but also other international students, and to faculty and schools. For promises and reciprocity, I explained to my research informants that they may not receive any direct benefit from participation in this study, but their participation may help to increase knowledge which could benefit others in the future. I also told them that they could take Kolb's LSI for no charge and learn about their preferred learning styles, but if they did not want to take it, they did not have to.

Regarding risk assessment, I told my research informants that this study would not affect their course grade or their relationship with their instructor in their programs. For promising confidentiality, I told tell them that the audio tapes used to record the interviews would be kept in a locked safe place where they would only be accessible by the researcher and these audio tapes would be destroyed after the study is completed. I asked their permission if I could use the interview data by using pseudonyms. For informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B), I gave them a copy of the form before the interview and received their signatures on both my and their copies if they agreed with that. For data access and ownership, I explained to my informants that the raw data was only accessible by the researcher.

For interviewee mental health, I checked their feelings and willingness to

participate with the interview, and told them if they felt uncomfortable with some of the questions, they would be free to skip any questions or withdraw at any time. For data collection boundaries, I respected my informants' personal boundaries and checked with them often during the interview to see how they were doing. Finally, for ethical and legal issues, I submitted the documents to the Human Subject Research committee in order to ensure that my research was ethical and legal.

Validity and Credibility

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) contended that the reliability and validity of findings were important in all fields that engage in scientific inquiry. However, in qualitative research, the meaningfulness of studies is emphasized to demonstrate validity (Deutscher, Pestello, & Pestello, 1993). It does not mean that "qualitative researchers are unconcerned about the accuracy of their data" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 9), but I made sure that I attended to: (a) the credibility (internal validity) of my findings; (b) the transferability or how well my working hypotheses would "fit" in another context (external validity); (c) the dependability (reliability) or testing for consistency by a second evaluator; and (d) the conformability of the data (objectivity) (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For Guba and Lincoln (1989), credibility can be verified by: (a) prolonged engagement; (b) persistent observation; (c) peer debriefing; (d) negative case analysis; (e) progressive subjectivity; and (f) member checks. In order to ensure credibility, I conducted "member checking" (Patton, 2002) by asking my research participants to

reflect on what we had discussed to check the accuracy of the account at the end of an interview.

Credibility (Internal Validity)

Credibility (internal validity) refers to the extent that measurements are representative of reality, whereas external validity concerns the degree that the representations of reality can be compared legitimately across groups (LeCompts & Goetz, 1982). Adler and Clark (1999) also argued the idea that in a qualitative interview, the interviewer is another validity concern. A participant's response can be affected by the way in interviewer asks questions, responds and acts. The "interviewer effect" refers to the change in a respondent's behavior or answers that are the result of being interviewed by a specific interviewer" (Adler & Clark, p. 218). I tried my best to be aware of my interviewer effect by monitoring my tone of voice, how I interacted with my interviewees, and how my interviewees reacted to me.

Additionally, McCraken (1998) asserted the importance of viewing the researcher as a kind of instrument. Acknowledging the advantages and disadvantages of the researcher's status as a Japanese international student, the same status as her subjects, is crucial. Sharing the same Japanese culture and similar experience as an international student increases the researcher's understanding and allows for a more accurate interpretation of the subjects' experiences. As LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggested, I have identified my biases, expectations, and prejudices in relation to the research in order to enhance internal validity (see page 78-79: the role of the researcher).

Triangulation

In addition, triangulation was used in this research to enhance internal validity. It

was one of the most important elements in establishing trustworthiness of the study

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation refers to the combination of methods or data

resources in a single study (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002). Taylor and Bogdan (1998)

noted that "[t]riangulation is often thought of as a way of checking out insights gleaned

from different informants or different sources of data." In this study, observing or

interviewing a different population than Japanese students did not occur, but I

conducted multiple interviews that ensured triangulation. Conducting multiple

interviews (three times) with each of them helped reduce the potential bias in data

collection. Moreover, since all interviews were conducted in Japanese, back translation

of collected data and analyzed data were necessary. To enhance internal validity, the

researcher translated key sentences from the Japanese transcripts into English, and

another translator, who was also fluent in both Japanese and English, conducted a back

translation from the English to Japanese.

Transferability

Transferability is described as external validity or generalisability (Guba &

Lincoln, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that "[t]he trouble with generalizations

is that they don't apply to particulars" (p. 110). Generalization is not a goal of a

qualitative study. The goal, instead, is an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon as

experienced by the study participants (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Guba and Lincoln

(1981) proposed the concept of "fittingness" as a substitute for "transferability" for

qualitative findings. They stated that "[t]he degree of transferability is a direct function

of the similarity between the two contexts what we shall call 'fittingness'" (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985, p. 124). In order to enhance the applicability of this study to other studies

about Japanese students in different U.S. higher education institutions, I provided a

thorough and detailed description of the research setting and context (Maxwell, 2005).

Dependability

Dependability is defined as the reliability and stability of the data over time

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I provided the rich data with a thorough and detailed

description of the research. This ensured stability of the data, which a second researcher

will test for consistency. As a qualitative research methods, narrative inquiry allowed

me to provide a rich description of contextual understanding, and an explanation of the

person, or event.

Confirmability

Confirmability is described as objectivity. Objectivity was also ensured by

enhancing credibility, transferability and dependability. Patton (2002) asserted that:

    In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument. The credibility of

    qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence,

    and rigor of the person doing fieldwork---as well as things going on in a person's

    life that might prove a distraction. (p. 14)

I described and interpreted data by being sensitive with contexts, and objective as much as possible while keeping in mind the Patton's suggestion.

Limitations

As with all research, one's methodology poses some potential limitations. It is useful to point out some of the limitations of this study before continuing on to present the research findings and analysis of findings. It is also helpful to identify limitations of this study before conducting further research. First, in this qualitative narrative study, my research sample was small, and I was unable to make generalizations about Japanese students' experiences in American classrooms. However, this study was not designed to lead to generalization in the statistical sense. This research was intended to be purely qualitative in nature, so the limitation of sample size does not harm my research focus. In this study, I sought a sample of sufficient intensity rather than size to collect rich information from informants who had experienced culture shock or other challenges in their transition into American gradate-level classrooms.

I used the conversational interview as my guide, which offered me maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appeared to be appropriate. This informal conversational interview also gave my interviewees freedom to tell their stories, to explore their memories that sometimes stirred their emotions. As Patton (2002) warned, "this go-with-the-flow style of interviewing may be susceptible to interviewer effects, leading questions, and biases, especially with novices" (p. 343). I was aware of these potential issues with the unstructured and flexible interview style,

but still found it challenging to maintain the right balance of control during the interviews. One of the interviewees started to share experiences that were not related to the American classroom context. Additionally, some of my interviewees became emotional when they were talking about their most painful memories. There were also feelings of anger at times. Memories from before they came to the U.S. also appeared during the interviews. I see now that I could have trained myself better to be able to find the right balance of how much I should guide the direction of the informant's comments during that interview.

Another potential limitation of this study was that my interviewees' comments sometimes went back and forth from past to present, which was difficult later on when processing the data. I also had data from multiple interviews, which was challenging to compile in chronological order and sort through, given the repetition of stories. However, when I conducted the multiple interviews, I did "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) at the start of the final interview by asking my research participants to reflect on what we had discussed in prior interviews. This helped me to re-story or retell the individual's story without losing my interviewee's voice, and to make sure I understood the flow of their stories. Additionally, my familiarity with the subject, since I am a Japanese international graduate student, may have decreased my critical awareness in this research. In response, I carefully monitored my expectations, assumptions, values, and feelings toward the interviewees and their stories when analyzing the data. Even so, I noticed my assumptions had some effect on categorizing

data in the analysis section. I revised the outline of the analysis section until I deemed it

was sufficiently objective and valid.

In summary, although this study had some limitations, I believe I derived

sufficient data to answer the research questions without compromising validity.

Summary

International students face challenges and opportunities when studying in the U.S.

But students from Japanese culture seem to have unique challenges that are culturally

related because of their language barriers and cultural differences. My intention of this

study is to allow Japanese the opportunity to tell their stories. I made an effort to

reconstruct the interviewees' stories without imposing my own perceptions and feelings

about Japanese students' experiences in American classrooms. No individual researcher,

however, can be entirely neutral either in quantitative or qualitative research as Brown

(1987) pointed out, "there is still a tendency for us to believe that our own reality is the

'correct' perception" (p.123). I was extra cautious not to manipulate of the interview

process. As an example, I attempted in all aspects of the study and data collection that

have directly involved my informants to allow the informants to speak for themselves,

direct the content of the interviews, and to respond to questions in their own way or not

to respond at all. I also paid extra attention not to impose my assumptions and values to

reconstruct the interviewees' stories. In the next chapter, I give a full account of each

research participant's responses that emerged in this study. These findings are derived

from their classroom experiences in UC as revealed in their own words through their

communicative events in their classes and some outside of their classes.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I introduce my research participants and present their profiles. In order to conduct a narrative study, I am following Creswell's (2005) process. I re-story or retell the individual's story: build in past, present, and future; and build in place or setting; describe their story in this chapter; then analyze their story for themes in the next chapter. Their profiles include backgrounds on the interview settings (for the purpose of replicability or transferability of this research), and backgrounds of interviewees and their responses to interview questions (for the purpose of retelling their individual stories). I grouped their responses under the two research questions: (a) What are the challenges that Japanese students experience related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms? (b) What kinds of support have Japanese graduate students needed or appreciated in learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in their graduate-level classrooms? The research questions become headings and themes that emerged from interviews become sub-headings. For confidentiality, interviewee names and the names of people mentioned in the interviews have been changed.

Due to focusing on their challenging experiences in American classroom contexts, my research participants' comments on their experiences and perspectives toward American classroom contexts may sound rather negative; however, my intention in conducting this study is not to insist that faculty and domestic students are wrong or that

pedagogy in American classrooms is inappropriate. Instead, the purpose of this study is

to investigate the challenges that Japanese graduate-level students experienced and

support that they needed or appreciated in order to enhance intercultural competence of

everyone in the classroom—faculty, domestic students, and Japanese and other

international students. The ultimate goal of this study is to enhance cultural sensitivity

on campus at U.S. higher education institutions.

Research Participants

I interviewed five Japanese graduate-level students at UC in Fall 2007. They were

from different departments. I masked their department names and used pseudonyms to

protect their identity and other people who were mentioned in the narratives. The first

interviewee is Mari, a 35-year-old female, first year doctoral student in education. She

has been living in the U.S. for nine years and working as a graduate assistant in the

Office of International Student Affairs at UC for one year. She has also been teaching at

a local community college as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor for two

years. The second interviewee is Yuji, a 27-year-old male, fifth year master's student in

social science. He has been living in the U.S. for nine years as well. He has been

working as a graduate assistant in the Department of Public Affairs at UC for more than

five years. The third interviewee is Taro, a 27-year-old male, second year master's

student in humanity. He has been living in the U.S. for two years and teaching Japanese

for two years in UC. The fourth interviewee is Asami, a 27-year-old female, third year

master's student in social science at UC. She has been living in the U.S. for six years,

and working as an assistant for international programs at UC and as an intern at a local

nonprofit organization. The fifth interviewee is Jiro, a 27- year-old male, third year

doctoral student of social science. He has been living in the U.S. for six years. He

worked as a gradate assistant in the Department of Public Affairs at UC for one year and

he currently works with a local nonprofit organization as a researcher. My research

participants' information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Information.

Name	Gender	Age	Years in the U.S.	Kolb's LSI Result	Status and Department	Professional Responsibilities
Mari	Female	35	9 years	Reflective observation	1st year doctoral Student in education	Graduate assistant, ESL instructor
Yuji	Male	27	9 years	Reflective observation	5th year master's student in social science	Graduate assistant
Taro	Male	27	2 years	Reflective observation	2nd year master's student in humanity	Japanese instructor
Asami	Female	27	6 years	Reflective observation	3rd year master's student in social science	International program assistant, intern at a nonprofit organization
Jiro	Male	27	6 years	Abstract conceptualization	3rd year doctoral student in social science	Researcher at a nonprofit organization

All of my research participants received their bachelor's degrees in Japan. With the

exception of Jiro, I interviewed each of them three times. Due to scheduling conflict,

Jiro could not meet for a third interview, but we extended the second interview to make

up the time. I followed the interview protocol (see attachment: Appendix C) with each

participant, but depending on their responses, I inserted probing questions to ask more about what each interviewee said.

Profile #1: Mari

Background of Interview

I met Mari in 2002 when she started working at the Office of International Services as an assistant at UC. I knew that she started her doctoral program at UC in 2007, so I asked her by email (see Appendix A) if she would participate in my research. She agreed and we made an appointment by email for the first interview. On Saturday afternoon, September 29, 2007, I interviewed Mari in the Office of International Services where she works as graduate assistant. Nobody else was in the office. I brought a cup of coffee for each of us, and we sat at a coffee table and talked for a few minutes, which made us both relaxed. I set up a microphone and tape recorder while we were talking. Once they were set, I explained my research to her, and asked her to read the informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B). She signed two copies of the form. I kept one and I gave the other one to her. Next, she took Kolb's Learning Style Inventory and I scored her result. Her learning style was reflective observation. After taking the inventory, she said, "I am ready to start," so we began.

In the first interview, Mari shared experience of her master's program with me. She also talked about the first term experience in her doctoral program. Our second interview took place on Saturday, October 6, 2007, at 1 p.m. for one and a half hours. Mari brought bread for me and I brought a cup of coffee for her. We used the same space

that we used for the first interview. Nobody else was in the office. We started the interview right away. In the second interview, Mari told me mainly about her background, which included her study and work experience in Japan before she came to the U.S. The third interview was conducted on Monday, October 15', 2007, at 5 p.m. for one hour at the same place. This time, I asked her to read transcripts of the first and second interviews in order to do member checking and to receive permission to use the data. She took about 10 minutes to read and edit them. After that, I asked Mari to reflect on the first and second interviews to see if there was anything she would like to add and if she had any advice for study abroad newcomers.

Background of Mari

I had acute nephritis when I had just started my master's program at UC. I emailed my professor to tell him that I will miss his class due to the sickness. After I recovered, I went to the class, and the professor said to me, "Haven't you dropped this class?" in front of everybody! I could not believe it. I was humiliated by him.

Mari told me that she went through many hardships in her master's program. She did not receive enough support from anybody, failing to be included in class by her peers and instructors. After she finished her master's program, she entered a doctoral program in UC in Fall 2007 at the same university. Mari felt much more comfortable in her doctoral program. In our three interviews, she focused mainly on her traumatic experiences in the master's program rather than in her doctoral program because she had

just started the doctoral program, and so far she had experienced a much more severe

chilly classroom climate in her master's program.

Reflecting back on her difficult experience in the master's program, Mari said that

the experience helped her because she gained confidence by overcoming challenges in

the program. Mari's advisor in her master's program was not supportive of her applying

to a doctoral program, telling her one day, "I won't write a reference letter for you to

apply for a doctoral program. You won't be able to go to a doctoral level program!" Her

advisor told her to give up trying to apply for a doctoral program. This motivated Mari

to apply for a doctoral program to prove to her advisor that she could do it.

During the first and second interviews, Mari became emotional, and tears came to

her eyes as she was thinking of her difficult experience. She also said that she did not

enjoy her life in schools in Japan. Generally speaking, in Japanese schools teachers are

authority figures and force students to do rote learning. Mari's unique talents and

creativity were not appreciated by teachers in Japan. She said that faculty members in

her Japanese university used distancing techniques to maintain power distance between

professors and students. The faculty members simply gave lectures to students in order

to communicate their knowledge. If students could not understand what the professors

were teaching, it was the students' fault. Mari never liked her educational experience in

Japan.

She described herself as a rather emotional person. She told me that she has an

especially strong desire to be acknowledged. She did not receive respect from her

teachers in the Japanese education system, where teachers do not appreciate each

individual's uniqueness. She could not affirm her identity in Japanese culture, which

often expects everybody go move forward on same path: graduating, getting a full-time

job, and then getting married. When she was in her early 20s in Japan, she had an eating

disorder, but overcame that with her parents' support. After she finished her bachelor's

degree, Mari worked in Japan for five years as an instructor at a preparatory school for

college entrance examinations, and also worked as a waitress in a coffee shop.

When she was 27-years-old, she decided to study abroad in the United States of

America. In 1999, she entered an ESL program at a university on the west coast, and

studied there for one year. During that time, she was also a part-time student in the

Anthropology Department. In 2000, Mari transferred to UC to study in a

post-baccalaureate program for a year. In 2001, she entered a master's program. She

finished that program in 2005 and applied for an ESL teaching position at a local

community college. Mari found her dream job there, teaching English to immigrants to

the U.S. The entire experience in her master's program was challenging for her, but she

told me that she grew from it and she is now more confident in herself and satisfied with

her doctoral program.

Response to Research Question One: What are the Challenges that Japanese Students

Experience Related to Their Intercultural Transition into U.S. Graduate-Level

Classrooms?

In her interviews, Mari mainly shared her challenging experience in her master's program. Two themes emerged from her responses to the first research question. The first theme is a chilly climate in the classroom, and the second theme is a lack of knowledge of American cultural references.

Chilly Climate in the Classroom

Mari experienced a chilly climate in the classroom in interactions with her instructors and her classmates. She told me that she received no attention or respect from her faculty in her master's program. She always felt that she was treated as an outsider, as a minority, or as a guest from overseas in a group of white students.

Mari said that building good relationships with her professors was not easy because it was hard to know how much distance she should keep between herself and them. Because of her past experience in a traditional university, she was very conscious about the power distance between herself and her faculty. Calling her professors by their first names like her American peers were doing was challenging for her. She thought that this created a barrier between herself and the faculty.

Mari felt that she was a burden or nuisance to her professors, which made her feel miserable. One time, her professor told her in class with a look of annoyance not to make a grammatical mistake. Another time the instructor told her to come to his office.

When she visited the instructor, he had totally forgotten about their appointment, and gave her a look of annoyance and asked her what she needed, and told her that he was busy writing a grant letter. Mari could not believe that her instructor treated her like that. It hurt her feelings. In addition, sometimes her professor had no empathy with international students. In a class presentation, when Mari was giving her presentation, she was cut off abruptly by her instructor when time was up. This cold treatment by her professor created an extremely chilly climate in her experience.

Interactions with peers were another element of the chilly climate in the classroom. Mari had feelings of discontent toward her peers because they were not sensitive enough toward people from different cultures. For example, when Mari was presenting in a small-group in class, one of her peers in the group was eating an apple very loudly, and the student used a handout that Mari had given to her to wrap the apple core and throw it away in a garbage can. Mari could not believe what her peer had done to her; this was a very traumatic experience for her.

Another traumatic incident occurred when Mari was excluded from other members of her group during a small-group project. She did not know when they would get together to work on their project. She was not notified by her peers about any meetings. After they finished the project, one of them told their instructor that they did not have any contribution from Mari. Because of this bad experience, Mari still does not like small-group discussions or activities. These experiences forced her to be more introverted and be quiet about her feelings. She said that her peers were very privileged

as European Americans who speak English as their mother tongue, but they did not know how privileged they were. That was why they could not understand international students' feelings. Mari wanted to cry, but she did not because if she did, she knew that she would be in "big trouble."

In spite of these humiliating experiences, Mari still made a tremendous effort to participate in class discussion. However, when she was pointed out by an instructor and received attention from her peers, she felt very uncomfortable because every time she would speak up in class, her peers would give her a little bit of a shocked look as if they were looking at a talking panda bear. Some of them did not even pay attention to her and their eyes began glazing over. The harder Mari tried, the more difficult the experience she had.

Another cause of the chilly climate for Mari was working with peers in her master's program. She told me that they were quite competitive. Students in the program were younger and did not have much teaching experience, but they criticized one another as if they knew a great deal about teaching English. They had textbook knowledge rather than substantial teaching experience, but they asserted their opinions confidently. Some students who had a little study abroad experience or experience teaching outside of the U.S. boasted that they knew the cultures very well and they believed that they were culturally sensitive and competent. At one point in our interview, Mari became emotional and raised her voice and said that how they could say that they knew Japanese culture and spoke the language well with such little experience in Japan.

Mari said that her peers in the program would not believe that she could speak Spanish. She thought that they didn't believe that international students could be fluent in a third language. In the program, native English speakers were the majority and they considered themselves to be teachers, but international students who were studying English as a second language were only considered to be students. Mari's peers in the program wondered how a student who was learning English could be an English teacher and could study at the same level as the native English speaking American students. Mari never felt welcomed in her master's program and she always felt that she was labeled as an international student, a member of an outside group.

Lack of Knowledge of Cultural References

As a survival strategy in her master's program, Mari took many courses from one professor to learn the professor's expectations of students and her particular way of evaluating students in her classes. The more classes she took from the same professor, the more comfortable she became with participating in class. Mari also studied each syllabus very carefully to know the objectives, content, expectations, and policies of that class. However, she still had challenges because she did not know much about American cultural references. She told me that one of the biggest obstacles and a cause of the chilly climate in the classroom was not knowing American cultural references. She did not grow up in the U.S., so she was not familiar with some topics that were related to American TV dramas, history, or many other cultural events. Nobody in her class explained those to her. When she got stuck on those references, it was hard for her

to keep up with a rapid class discussion because discussion topics kept changing. This resulted in her being left behind, far out of the discussion circle.

Another challenge Mari had was studying under a professor whose conceptual map was not clear. The professor gave too much background when explaining a subject, with confusing cultural references that Mari found hard to follow. It was challenging for her to understand and connect several points that the professor made in her lecture to see the big picture. Mari said she preferred to learn from a professor who gave clear instructions and expectations for grading.

Response to Research Question Two: What Kinds of Support Have Japanese Graduate Students Needed or Appreciated in Learning and Socializing with Their Faculty and Peers in Their Graduate-Level Classrooms?

Three themes emerged in this section: the role of reflection papers as a good tool to receive feedback from a professor and connect to a professor; invitation and inclusion in an in-group; and the importance of connecting to the International Student Office.

Reflection Papers as a Good Tool to Receive Feedback from a Professor and Connect to a Professor

Mari's learning style was reflective observation, and she is typically very quiet in class. She assumed that her instructors in her master's program hated students who were quiet in class. She wanted her faculty to understand her style and acknowledge her even if she did not actively engage in class activities or discussions, but there was not a good way to connect to her professor in class. She said that her reflection paper was very

helpful for sharing her feelings and opinions. In her doctoral program, reflection papers

are a big part of the assignments, and she was very happy that she could express her

experiences intellectually by referring to theories and concepts that she learned in a

class, then have her professor give her feedback. That became emotional support for her.

Unfortunately, in her master's program, there were no refection papers. Instead,

students were evaluated by discussion, presentations, and examinations.

Invitation and Inclusion in an In-Group

In the classroom, isolation or feeling invisible is one of the elements of a chilly

climate for any student. By not understanding cultural references and being left behind

in class discussion, Mari never felt that she was an in-group member of the class. She

wanted to be treated as an in-group member, not as an international student outsider. She

wanted a supportive, caring, and inclusive environment, to be acknowledged by her

professor and peers in class. In small-group activities, she wanted a more inclusive

atmosphere where her peers would ask her opinions and thoughts.

At her job teaching English for foreign students at UC, Mari felt strongly that

other faculty members in the ESL program were saying that non-white teachers are not

qualified to teach because international students do not want to learn English from an

Asian or other non-native English speaker. Actually, one of her faculty told her that

Japanese students do not want to learn English from a Japanese instructor when they are

in the U.S. There were white teachers from Europe in the program who spoke English as

their second language, but Mari was only the faculty member who was an Asian

non-native English speaker. She wanted her ESL colleagues to wipe away the stereotype that non-white teachers cannot teach English. Mari said that it is important to consider Asian faculty as in-group and talk about how they can use their ethnic background to support international students from many different countries.

Importance of Connecting to International Student Office

As a support outside of the classroom, Mari said that international students need to know that the International Students Office is there to help them. Too much stress made her sick in the first term of her masters' program, and she really wanted to drop her classes. Her classmate, who used to work at the International Student Office, warned her that if she dropped her classes, she would be violating a regulation for international students and she would be in big trouble. Because she was scared by her classmate's words, she would not go to the International Student Office to ask for help. When she started to work at the office, Mari found out that the classmate had been wrong. She said that the Office of International Students Services should tell international students that they help prevent them from violating their regulations and to keep their status current, not to screen them and send them back to their home country. Now, in international student orientation, the International Student Advisor assures international students that the office is there to protect them.

Profile #2: Yuji

Background of Interviewee

I have known Yuji since 2002. I emailed him to ask if he was interested in participating in my research (see Appendix A). He agreed to be my interviewee. We conducted three interviews in different rooms in the Education building on the UC campus. Each room was small, holding about 15 people. I brought coffee for the three interviews. The first interview was held on Tuesday, October 9, 2007. We had not seen each other for a more than year, so we caught up with each other for a few minutes before starting the interview. I set up a microphone and tape recorder while we were talking. I then explained my research project to him and asked him to read the informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B). Yuji signed two copies of the form. I kept one and gave the other one to him. After that, I asked him to take Kolb's Learning Style Inventory. The inventory indicated that his learning style was reflective observation. Compared to the other interviewees, his score leaned the most toward reflective observation. When he said that he was ready for the interview, we began.

The first interview took one and a half hours, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. In the first interview, he gave demographic information and talked about his past experience by focusing on challenges he had in the first year of his master's program and the support he received from his colleagues and faculty. Our second interview took place a week later on Tuesday, October 16, 2007, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. for one and a half hours. I began recording when he was ready. In the second interview, Yuji told me about his

background, which included his work experience as a graduate assistant in the

Department of Public Affairs, and some of his strategies for surviving in his master's

program in social science. The third interview took place on Tuesday, October 23, 2007,

from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. for one hour. This time I did member checking of the

transcripts from his earlier interviews. I also received Yuji's permission to use the data.

He read and edited the transcripts very carefully for 15 minutes. He also asked me to

give him a copy of those transcripts, which I agreed to do. After that, I asked Yuji to

reflect on the first and second interviews to see if he wanted to add anything or had any

advice for newcomers.

Background of Yuji

In my first class, the most surprising thing to me was to meet a young graduate

teaching assistant... The classmates were also very diverse. In class, we had

different generations, races, and ethnicities. I found out later that there were

single mother students as well in class.

Yuji is a 27-year-old male student of social science at UC. He grew up and spent

his whole life in Hokkaido before coming to the U.S. He was not so excited about

leaving Hokkaido. Actually, he did not think about study abroad at all; however, many

of his friends studied abroad and they pressured him to do it for his personal growth.

One day, he talked to his parents and asked if they would support his going to a one

month program in San Francisco, California. He expected his parents to say "no" to him,

which would have been a good reason not to go. But his parents said, "Yes, you may

go," so he could not take back his request. In his study abroad program in San Francisco, he had a good host family and had a great time there. This positive experience led him to do longer term study abroad later.

After Yuji came back from San Francisco, a friend at his university told him about UC. This became an opportunity for Yuji to come back to the U.S. and he entered the master's program at UC in 2002. At the very beginning of his program, he seldom spoke up in class. Because his learning style leans toward reflective observation, he learns by reflecting on what he hears from others and what he thinks in class. It was challenging for him to keep up with the fast pace of conversation in class, but he fought through challenging situations rather than be frightened. He kept looking for opportunities to contribute to class.

Actually, his past experience studying under a professor in Japan helped mitigated his cultural transition stress in the U.S. When he was in Japan, he took a class from a professor who received his doctoral degree in the U.S. As is common in the U.S., the professor used a syllabus in his classes, which clearly explained how he graded students' performance; also he had presentations and discussions in his classes. Usually professors in Japan do not use a syllabus in class. Many of his friends avoided taking a class from this professor, but he liked the class and learned a lot from the professor.

Fortunately, from the beginning at UC, Yuji had support from his Japanese colleagues and graduate teaching assistants in class as well as in his private life. He received great deal of advice and many suggestions from them about which classes he

should take, what kinds of requirements faculty expected from students, and how to get good grades. He also built another support community outside of class. He created tennis and badminton clubs with his Japanese friends on campus.

Yuji said that he was always looked for opportunities to contribute in class as well as at work. When he could not contribute to a class discussion, or in a small-group activity, he volunteered to help his professor or peers by doing miscellaneous work for them. When he took a class from the department chair, his behavior caught his attention. The department chair thought highly of him and recommended him for a graduate assistant position in the Department of Public Affairs, where he is currently working as an international program coordinator. In his interview, he reflected on his challenging experience in his master's program in social science and his graduate assistant experience in the Department of Public Affairs as, ultimately, good memories.

Response to Research Question One: What are the Challenges that Japanese Students Experience Related to Their Intercultural Transition into U.S. Graduate-Level Classrooms?

Four themes emerged from Yuji's response to this first research question: adjustment to American style turn-taking; language barriers; working with a partner in class; and not knowing what is appropriate to say.

Adjustment to American Style Turn-taking

Yuji said that American students were very good at commenting spontaneously on what others would say and developing their own ideas and opinions. It was

challenging for him to shift his reflective observation learning style to active experimentation and be more assertive in class, even in small-group discussion and activities. He did not like small-group discussion. In class discussion, he would write down what he wanted to say and practice saying it in his mind; only then would he finally raise his hand. In small-group discussion, he did not have time for reflection because his peers kept talking and discussion topics kept changing. There was no space for him to jump in and contribute, and he felt it was rude to interrupt others who were talking.

Yuji said that the pattern of turn-taking in a conversation is different for Japanese students. They wait until others finish talking, but in American classrooms, when he was waiting for his turn, he did not get it even if he sent nonverbal cues such as making eye contact, opening his mouth, or changing his posture. He said that you have to speak up even if your voice overlaps others', especially in a competitive classroom context.

Language Barriers

On top of Yuji's adjusting to the different learning styles and communication styles in American classrooms, he also mentioned how reading and writing assignments challenged him. Due to his language barrier, it took too much time to get through a big volume of reading assignments. Only after he spent a whole week finishing his reading assignments could he finally get to work on his paper, but it sometimes took all night to finish. He had to give his paper to a proofreader before class began, but there wasn't really enough time for proper proofreading, which frustrated him.

Working with a Partner in Class

Another challenging experience for Yuji was when he had to work with a domestic student partner on an in-class presentation in his Advanced Interpersonal Communication class during the second term in his master's program. Yuji and his presentation partner were supposed to work together to prepare a presentation about friendship, but Yuji did all the work. He wrote the presentation plan, but his partner did not do anything except show up on the presentation day and read what Yuji had written. Each pair had only seven minutes to present. When it was he and his partner's turn to present, his partner gave the first part of their presentation and used up most of their presentation time, and Yuji had only a minute to present his part. He spoke so fast that people could not understand him.

After the presentation, his professor made a comment, "Yuji, you should speak much slower. Your presentation was too fast, so I could not get what you said, but your partner spoke slower, and it was very clear and good." He got very upset at the situation. He had done most of the work, but his partner who did not do anything received a good evaluation from the professor. Tears came to his eyes after he received this comment from his professor, but he did not say anything to the professor in class. He went to the professor's office later and she apologized to him when she understood the situation. He reflected on the experience and found that he learned a great deal from a situation even though he did not earn an A, but instead a B+.

Not Knowing What is Appropriate to Say

Yuji always wanted to contribute to class discussion, but he was not sure when it was appropriate for him to give opinions or ask questions. Students were competitive when presenting their experience and knowledge in class, and discussion topics kept changing so he found it difficult to get involved. He went to see his professor after class to ask if it was appropriate to ask or say during class what he had on his mind, and he found out that his professor welcomed him to do so. Yuji also learned that if he missed a chance to speak up in one part of a discussion, it was fine to say, "Going back to that topic, I have something to share with you," even after the subject had changed.

Response to Research Question Two: What Kinds of Support Have Japanese

Graduate Students Needed or Appreciated in Learning and Socializing with Their

Faculty and Peers in Their Graduate-level Classrooms?

Yuji had great deal of support from his graduate teaching assistants and Japanese colleagues on what classes he should take, and what to do in a course. Before he started taking one of the tougher core courses, his friend who had previously taken the course shared the readings and writing assignments with him and showed him the course syllabus, so he could read the readings and learn about the professor's expectations of students before the course started. This helped him not require extra help or attention from his professor because he was an international student. He wanted to be treated as same as other domestic students.

Yuji said that students in his U.S. classrooms were more open than students in Japanese classrooms, so he found it easier to engage in small group discussions in the U.S. than he did in Japan. He said he was the one who excluded himself from group work, not the other group members. When he excluded himself, it was due to his own lack of confidence. When he could not keep up with class discussion or contribute enough in class, his confidence level went down and he felt distance from the group; however, he did not want to get extra attention from his professor and peers and be singled out as a poor student and pitied.

<div align="center">Profile # 3 Taro</div>

<div align="center">*Background of Interview*</div>

Yuji introduced me to Taro and gave me his email address. I emailed Taro to ask him if he was interested in participating in my research (see Appendix A). He agreed to be a research informant. We made an appointment by email for the first interview. I conducted three interviews with him, all in a small meeting room that holds 20 people. I brought him a cup of coffee each time. In the first meeting on Monday, October 15, 2007, we introduced ourselves, and I asked about his background. I learned that he and I both used to work in the Tokyo metropolitan area before we came to the U.S. I set up a microphone and tape recorder while we were talking.

Next, I explained my research project to him and asked him to read and sign the informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B), which he did. I kept one copy of the form and I gave the other one to him. After that, he took Kolb's Learning Style

Inventory. His learning style was reflective observation. I asked him to let me know when he was ready to the start interview. When he indicated he was ready, we began. This first interview lasted for one and a half hours, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., during which he talked about his observations of both U.S. and Japanese classrooms. In the second interview, on Monday, October 22, 2007, he went into deeper analysis of class dynamics (between professor and students) and group activities in class. This interview also lasted for one and a half hours. In the third interview, on Monday, October 29, 2007, I did member checking. Taro carefully read and edited transcripts from the first and second interviews for nine minutes. I asked if he had any advice for newcomers from Japan who were starting their master's programs, and for additional comments or questions that he might have about my project. This final interview took one hour.

Background of Taro

I was very much ready for experiencing an interactive classroom style before I started my master's program in the U.S. because I had done enough research on American classroom styles by reading blogs from individuals who were studying in the U.S. Yes, I was more than ready to face that [difficulty of participating in class discussion]. However, only when I actually joined a class in the U.S. did I get how challenging it is. I really felt it was difficult [to participate in class discussion].

Taro is a 27-year-old male who majors in Japanese in humanity at UC. He received his master's degree in English Literature from a university in Tokyo, Japan. He said, "It

was my dream to come to the U.S. to study, and I made it!" The purpose of his coming to the U.S. was very clear, which was to teach Japanese and study teaching methodology. In order to prepare for coping with culture shock, he had done research about living and studying in the U.S. by reading blogs of Japanese students' lives in U.S. colleges and universities. In order to learn about U.S. culture, he also worked as a security guard for a U.S. large corporation in metropolitan Tokyo for a year before he came to UC. He received a scholarship to come to the U.S., which required that he teach in a Japanese language program at a U.S. university. Thus, he teaches Japanese professionally at UC.

In order to have a successful study-abroad experience, Taro understood the importance of creating a support system around himself and keeping good communication with teachers, fellow students, and people in the community. Fortunately, he found a pleasant host family who were very curious about different cultures. In addition to himself, several foreign students were living in the family's house, so Taro was never alone. He received social support from those international students, in addition to his professors and other colleagues.

Taro started his second master's program in Fall 2005 after he finished his two month summer program to be a Japanese language teacher at UC. He has been doing well and did not have culture shock in the two years since he came to UC. Taro described his experience in his American classrooms rather objectively. He analyzed himself and said he does not have particular expectations of his professors and peers. He set his goals low and that decreased his stress. He was satisfied with himself if he was

simply able to understand a class discussion. In our interviews, Taro shared his

insightful observations of the challenges his Japanese peers faced in class.

Response to Research Question One: What are the Challenges that Japanese Students

Experience Related to Their Intercultural Transition into U.S. Graduate-Level

Classrooms?

Three themes emerged in Taro's response to this first research question. The first

theme was class participation and different discussion style. The second theme was his

not knowing what was appropriate to say in the classroom. The third theme was

uncertainty avoidance.

Class Participation and Different Discussion Style

When Taro first started his master's program, he did not expect to be able to

participate in class discussions. Taro was satisfied if he could simply understand what

his peers were discussing in class because it was hard enough for him to keep up with

the fast pace of discussion, with topics changing continually. Taro said that class

discussion styles are different in Japanese and U.S. classrooms. In American classrooms,

a professor does not point to a student and ask his or her opinion like a professor in

Japan does, so students in American classrooms have to be assertive to contribute their

opinions. Taro felt the difference keenly. American students can have heated discussions

without any help from an instructor, while Japanese students need to be assigned by

their instructors to voice their opinions.

Taro even felt more pressure in small-group discussion than in regular class discussion because, if he did not speak in small groups, he would stand out. In small-group discussion, he was obligated to speak up, but even then he could not do so because his peers kept talking. He said that Japanese students including him could not join the discussion and one of his Japanese colleagues who has been studying at UC longer than him complained about her professor, because her professor did not give her opportunities to speak up in the class. Taro tried to make eye contact with each member of the group, and showed that he was listening to them and participating in that way. He said that he appealed himself by listening attentively. He made eye contact with speakers and nodded instead of speaking, and that was a good enough achievement for him.

Not Knowing What is Appropriate to Say

Taro also said that it took time for him to process his ideas before he spoke up in class because he first translated what he thought and made sure that his opinion was appropriate to share with his classmates in the classroom. He said that Japanese students tend to do this. In contrast, American students tend to speak up spontaneously when they have something to say. This Japanese tendency may make it difficult for them to join activities like brainstorming. Taro said that the concept of brainstorming itself is very American, but he had heard about brainstorming when living in Japan. In a brainstorming session, any ideas or suggestions are welcomed, but Japanese students tend to hesitate to say something that does not relate to the discussion because that may

cause them to lose face. Taro said that brainstorming may not work for Japanese students, and even if Japanese students have a brainstorming session, it would not happen the same way that American students do it. In Japan, students present their opinions only after they consider them fully and make sure that they are appropriate to say in context. Taro continued that it is not welcomed to say anything that you have in your mind in Japan, especially if it is not related to the context. Japanese people always think about context. On the contrary, in the U.S. it is important to say honestly what you feel and think, and people share different opinions.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Clear instructions and a syllabus are very helpful for international students to learn and attain good grades. Taro said that a syllabus is like a contract between a teacher and the students. He could learn a professor's expectations in class and check how many points he earned by referring to the syllabus. But one professor's syllabus was not clear. The professor told the class that he will create the syllabus by listening to students' opinions and ideas. Taro had no problem with the professor's style, but his Japanese peers in class did not like the style. Not knowing how he would grade students gave other Japanese students anxiety. Taro had taken a class from the professor before and he knew about the professor's ambiguous and unstructured way of grading students, but he liked the professor anyway. Taro said that it was very helpful that he could visit his professor and ask his advice about how he was doing in class and with the assignments and what he needed to improve to receive a better grade. He said that he could not do

this in Japan. Taro was also happy with the professor's interactive way of conducting class, but his Japanese colleagues were not. They had strong uncertainty avoidance.

Response to Research Question Two: What Kinds of Support Have Japanese Graduate Students Needed or Appreciated in Learning and Socializing with Their Faculty and Peers in Their Graduate-Level Classrooms?

Two themes emerged in Taro's response to this question: empathy toward international students; and socializing with professors.

Empathy Toward International Students

Taro said that a warm atmosphere helps international students to be comfortable and feel like they are part of the group. Most of the faculty members in his department had intercultural experience, and several of the American faculty members also had experience living and teaching abroad, so they could empathize with international students. In Taro's department, half of the faculty and student assistants were minority or foreigners. Many of them were interested in different cultures, and they talked to him in Japanese. He liked that his American peers greeted him in Japanese and he felt that he was liked by them. Taro was pretty comfortable giving a presentation in class because the other students were engaged and nodded their heads as they were listening to him. Taro said that it was encouraging, and he especially liked that he had time to present his study, and nobody interrupted his speech as they would in a discussion session.

Socializing with Professors

Taro had a professor who was his advisor and mentor. Taro respected his advisor very much because she was an expert in Japanese language and culture. The professor had extensive experience living and teaching in Japan. She also knew how to communicate with Japanese students. She was very busy, but spent time with her students and even gave them emotional support. The professor was his neighbor and gave him her bicycle, which he used for commuting to school. She sometimes hired him to work in her yard. When she talked to him in a professional context like sending a group email to other teachers, she used the term "Mr.," but when she hired him to do her house chores, she called him by his first name in a friendly manner. Taro built trust with this advisor. He also had good communication with other faculty members as well as with his colleagues in the department. This really helped Taro do well in his master's program.

<div align="center">Profile #4: Asami</div>

<div align="center">*Background of Interview*</div>

I met Asami when she was in a nine-month study-abroad program with her Japanese college in 2001. After she finished the program and returned to Japan, I did not see her until early 2007 when I saw her on campus and found out that she was in her master's program in social science. I asked Asami if she would be my research participant. She accepted and I later made an appointment with her by email for the interviews (see Appendix A). We met in a small study room in the university library on

Friday, November 9, 2007, for the first interview. It took one and a half hours, from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The second interview was held in a meeting room in an office building on campus for one and a half hours on Tuesday, November 13, 2007, also from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The third interview was held in a classroom for one hour on Friday, November 16, 2007, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Before our first meeting, we walked to the library together after buying a cup of coffee. In the interview room, I first set up a microphone and tape recorder while we were catching up with each other. Next, I explained my research project to her, and asked her to read the informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B). She signed two copies of the form. I kept one and gave the other one to her. Next, I asked her to take Kolb's Learning Style Inventory. The inventory indicated that her learning style was a reflective observation. I asked Asami if she was ready to start interview, and she said, "Yes," so we began. In the first interview, she shared her memories of the time after she went back to Japan following her one year study abroad program at UC, and her experience in her master's program. In the second interview, she talked more about her challenging experience in her master's program and the social support she had at that time. In the third interview, I did member checking of the first and second interview transcripts. Asami read the transcripts very carefully for 10 minutes. After that, I asked Asami to reflect on those interviews to see if there was anything she would like to add, or if she had any advice for newcomers. She did not have anything to add, but she did

give me some advice to help newcomers make the most of their study abroad experience.

Background of Asami

In my program, we have many discussions, but they are more like debates. I was shocked to see people use swear words in class....Some students even patronize our professor in front of everybody. One student said to a professor, "Mary, you are so cute!" In my program, students have more power than an instructor. The average age of students is rather high like in my department. There are students in their 60s. Everybody projects their strong opinions against the professor and criticizes articles she chose. Also, students in my program do not like power distance, so we call professors by their first names. I resisted calling my professors by their first names at the beginning, but now I can call them by their first names...

Asami is a 27-year-old female student. In her master's program of social science, she said that the departmental culture was very individualistic, low power distance, and argumentative. There were only two international students in the program, Asami and an African student, in a group dominated by white students. Her transition from her homogeneous Japanese culture to a completely different cultural environment was a shocking experience for her. Asami came to UC in 2000 as an ESL student with a group from her college in Japan. After the one year program at UC, she returned to her college in Japan and graduated in 2002. She had two different jobs in the first two years after graduation. The first job was in sales in the cosmetics section of a large department store.

She quit that position after one year, and found another job in local government as an office assistant where, she served tea for senior male colleagues, made copies, and shredded documents. Her senior male workers sometimes asked her disreputable questions, such as "Did you gain weight?" or "Haven't you gotten married yet?" Asami told me that, in local government, they still hire young women assistants to serve tea for male employees to make the men think that they are important. She had much better computer skills than the men, but they did not let her touch a computer. However, they did ask her a lot of basic questions about how to use the computer. She thought that it was meaningless to stay there because there was no growth for her in that job.

This experience made her think about taking a Women's Studies program, but she did not after some consideration. Asami is strongly influenced by Che Guevara, who was a Cuban political figure, leader, and author. She read his stories and watched films to learn what he had done for peace, and she was inspired to do something for world peace. Asami came back to UC in 2004 and started in an ESL program. She also happened to be surrounded by activists at UC and chose the master's program. She started it in Fall 2005. She shared stories of her cultural surprise, stress, and culture shock in her program with me in each of her three interviews.

Response to Research Question One: What are the Challenges that Japanese Students

Experience Related to Their Intercultural Transition into U.S. Graduate-Level

Classrooms?

Three themes emerged from Asami's responses to this first research question. The

first theme was the chilly climate in the classroom. The second theme was strong

individualism. The third theme was cultural stereotypes.

Chilly Climate in the Classroom

In Asami's master's program, teaches students cultural awareness and active

listening, but Asami thought none of them had much cultural awareness or active

listening skill. Some students who had study abroad experience, were Peace Corps

volunteers, or had U.S. Military service experience in foreign countries believed that

they were culturally competent and had cultural awareness, but Asami did not think they

were aware of their privilege as European Americans. Most of the faculty members in

her department were also European Americans. Asami said that her peers as well as her

faculty members could not understand international students' feelings.

One student who traveled in Saudi Arabia as a veteran boasted that he traveled in

Saudi Arabia, and he knew the culture very well. From Asami's point of view, he only

stayed on a U.S. Army base in Germany, but he said that he adapted to German culture

very well. Asami heard that the student said that he hated intercultural communication

class because he already knew what culture was, and that it was something people learn

from experience. Asami asked him how he could know German or Saudi Arabian

cultures if he only lived on U.S. Army bases. The student got angry with her and said that she don't know anything. She was shocked by his naïve attitude.

Asami said that even one of her professors did not have empathy with her. She learned that she had to participate in class discussions to get credit, so she kept her hand raised for more than twenty minutes, but some students dominated the class conversation and her professor never called on her. She visited the professor's office and told him that she raised her hand for a long time, and asked him why he did not give her a chance to talk. The professor said to her that he did not see her raising her hand, and she should have said, "Excuse me," to get his attention. Asami said to the professor that it was a big effort for her as an international student to raise a hand; and how someone like him who was teaching cultural awareness could you say such a thing. Then, the professor said to her that she was so naïve to expect help from others in a graduate level class in the U.S. He also said to her that if he were in Japan, he would follow Japanese ways, so Asami should follow American ways, like 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.'" Asami still disagreed with her professor, but she thought there was no use trying anymore.

Strong Individualism

Asami said that in her program, everybody had strong opinions. They must, or else they could not participate in heated arguments in class. She was sometimes disappointed with people who only asserted their own opinions, without listening to others. For example, an elderly woman in a wheelchair always started telling her story by saying, "I

am an old lady with a disability and I have Native American blood..." She victimized herself, and she kept talking about how poor she was at least for thirty minutes. Asami said that it was like a therapy session for her. She also did not accept different beliefs, but instead criticized them strongly. One day, the elderly woman criticized an international student from Africa. He shared with the class his strong belief as a fundamentalist Christian. The elderly woman in the wheelchair said to the African student that people who believe in a religion like that must be stupid. They were brainwashed. Asami could not believe what she said to the African student. She was also shocked to see that people in her class used the "F" word in class discussion to criticize others. However, once they stepped outside of the classroom, those who criticized one another like enemies in class would talk like friends. That was strange to Asami.

In addition, she said that there were five students who dominated conversations in class, so the instructor made a rule so that each student could only talk for five minutes per class. Those five students who dominated conversation got angry with the instructor and went to the ombudsman's office to complain. These experiences caused Asami a lot of stress, which increased her culture shock.

Cultural Stereotypes

Asami tried very hard to share her opinions in philosophy class, but people laughed at what she said. Her peers treated her as a young Japanese woman who could not speak English and did not know anything about international affairs. From her point

of view, however, they were shallow and naïve. She said that they relied completely on mass media that gave only a U.S. point of view. They did not even consider different points of view and did not take her opinion seriously. Her political views were different from theirs, but when she said something opposing their point of view, she was defeated with counterargument. Many times, she shed tears after class, but her friends listened to her and helped to calm her down.

Asami's culture shock caused insomnia, and she sometimes did not want to go to class. Occasionally, before she went to sleep at night, memories of class discussions would come back to her mind, which made her upset. She felt too many constraints in class and it frustrated her. When somebody verbally attacked her or imposed Japanese stereotypes on her, she wanted to talk back to the person spontaneously, but it was not easy to do in English. For example, one day, Asami's classmate who worked in customer service at Intel said to her, "Japanese customers complain too much. They are even more awful than Chinese customers! You must be like them because you are Japanese." She was shocked that someone who studied intercultural communication would stereotype her that way. Even her professor sometimes suggested that she should focus on Asian issues because she was the only Asian in class. Her professor would say, "You are Asian, so you should focus on affairs between Japan and other East Asian countries, not problems between the Israeli and Palestinian." She felt that her professor was telling her to not participate in the discussion about the Israeli and Palestinian.

Response to Research Question Two: What Kinds of Support Have Japanese Graduate

Students Needed or Appreciated in Learning and Socializing with Their Faculty and

Peers in Their Graduate-Level Classrooms?

Asami mentioned three points about the support that she would have liked to

receive in class. The first point was about listening to international students and

understanding them. The second point was about American's ritual talk. The third point

was about social support.

Listen to International Students and Understand Them

Asami wanted to have a supportive environment in class where people gave her

time and listened to her when they discussed issues like politics, economics, and

military affairs. Asami found that her points of view were different from her peers'

points of view. When she said something against their opinions, the others would cut her

off and verbally attack her. But she could not talk back to them spontaneously in English

like they did. English was their first language, so they had much more advantage in an

argument, but her peers did not seem to recognize that or did not care.

Asami said that her peers who had study abroad or work experience outside of the

U.S. might not be able to understand the humiliation that she experienced because they

were privileged as citizens of a powerful country. They might have been treated better

abroad than people who come to the U.S. as international students or immigrants. She

wanted her peers to at least acknowledge her different point of view and accept that

difference. She believes it is an important skill to be able to empathize with people from different counties.

American's Ritual Talk

Asami said that in her master's program, it was a virtue to help people who had difficulty. However, she felt that some of her fellow students patronized her as a poor girl, but did not actually give her help when she needed it. She once asked someone to help proofread her paper. The person said, "Yes," at that moment, but later when the due date of the paper became closer, the person said, "I am sorry. I am too busy now, so I cannot help you." She learned that she could not trust what was promised. The other students were just saying they would help her, but they wouldn't follow through. Before she understood that, the experience stressed her out and her culture shock became worse.

In addition to the situation with proofreading her paper, she described an incident when she was moving to a new apartment. Her classmate promised to help her move, but on moving day, she did not show up. Asami said that, "in Japan, once you say you are going to help someone, it means you've made a promise that you will not break. But here in the U.S., people change their minds easily. They just say, 'I am sorry that I cannot help you.'" After this experience, she decided not to expect her American friends' help anymore.

Social Support

Asami had many challenges in her classes, but she had a strong social support

network outside of class, including an owner of the coffee shop, international friends,

and staff members at her part-time job on campus. She especially learned much from the

coffee shop owner. He was originally from outside of the U.S. and he read articles about

international affairs not only from U.S. sources, but also those from outside the U.S. He

had strong political views, and Asami said that she learned more about critical thinking

from him than from her classes. She also had a great deal of opportunity to create

networks at the coffee shop for her academic as well as professional development. The

coffee shop customers were university faculty members and students from many

different departments and different countries. They gave her advice for writing her

master thesis and applying to a doctoral program. Looking back on the past few years in

her master's program, she had come to understand the importance of having social

support in order to survive in the program, for herself and for other international

students as well.

<center>Profile #5: Jiro</center>

<center>*Background of Interview*</center>

Yuji introduced me to Jiro in October 2007. Jiro and Yuji knew each other from

working previously in a same office. Yuji gave me Jiro's email address in November

2007, and I asked Jiro by email (see Appendix A) if he was interested in participating in

my research. He agreed, and we found a date and time that worked both of us for the first

interview. I visited his workplace at 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 15, 2007, for the first interview. First, I thanked him for being my research informant. All staff members in his office were gone for the day, so it was very quiet. He invited me into the office, and he and I sat in his cubicle. We introduced ourselves first, and then Jiro explained his work at the company. After I got his permission to record the interview, I set up a microphone and tape recorder. Next I explained my research project to him, and asked him to read through the informed consent (see attachment: Appendix B). He signed two copies of the form. I kept one copy and I gave the other one to him. Next, he took Kolb's Learning Style Inventory. His learning style was abstract conceptualization. I asked him if we could start interview, and after he said, "Yes," we began.

The first interview took one and a half hours. He shared his background in Japan, including where he was from, where he received his master's degree, and where he worked before he came to his doctoral program at UC. Our second interview took place on Wednesday, October 5, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. for two hours. We had the second interview in a meeting room at a building on the UC campus. Jiro came to the second interview after his class. Since he was not available for a third interview, I asked him to read the transcript from the first interview at this point. He took about ten minutes to do member checking. He read through the transcript and said it was fine as is. I started recording the second interview when he indicated he was ready. In the second interview, Jiro told about his challenging experience in class at UC. He also compared the support

he received at UC to his experience at the institution where he received his master's

degree in California.

Background of Jiro

I wish we had more communication in the classroom...Students in my Ph.D.

program [at UC] are not traditional students. They are older than I am and have

families and jobs, so we do not have time and opportunities to get to know each

other so much...I would be more motivated to come to class if we got to know one

another better.

Jiro moved to UC from Hawaii in 2005 to get a Ph.D. degree in social science. In

Hawaii, he had a very positive work experience. He was a researcher at an institution

there for two years. Before he moved to Hawaii, he received his master's degree from a

California institution where international students were more than sixty percent of the

population. Domestic students who came there were interested in studying with

international students, and many of them had experience studying abroad or as Peace

Corps volunteers. He perceived the study environment at UC as much less diverse

compared to the California institution.

Jiro chose to come to UC to earn his Ph.D. because the social science program was

related to work he used to do and was still interested in; however, subjects and contexts

that were used in this program were new to him and very much American-oriented. Jiro

grew up in Japan, so he did not understand what was being discussed in class. His

cultural transition stress, therefore, came from his unfamiliarity with the subject matter

and context of his studies. Also, course requirements such as two comprehensive examinations before his dissertation proposal defense gave him stress. After consideration, Jiro transferred to another similar Ph.D. program where there were fewer requirements and the workload was more manageable.

Response to Research Question One: What are the Challenges that Japanese Students Experience Related to Their Intercultural Transition into U.S. Graduate-Level Classrooms?

Four themes emerged from Jiro's response to this first research question. The first theme was superficial relationships. The second theme was difficulty of switching from high-context to low-context communication style. The third theme was being an out-group member. The last theme was a lack of aggressiveness

Superficial Relationships

Jiro had only superficial relationships with his cohort members, but he really wanted to have heart-to-heart communication with them. Before he came to the Ph.D. program, he was looking forward to getting to know his cohort members and learning from them. But in reality, he developed no close friends in his program. Most of his peers had jobs and families, so when class was over, they left right away. He also felt that his cohort members were not expecting to make friends with their colleagues in the program. He observed that his American peers were not curious about him as a Japanese student.

Difficulty of Switching from High-context to Low-context Communication Style

Jiro has been living in the U.S. for six years and has work experience in America, but he said that it is still difficult to think and act like an American in the classroom. He uses a high-context communication style, which means that he first thinks about the appropriateness of his idea and when to voice it before speaking up. In class, people mainly discussed domestic rather than international issues. He did not have enough knowledge about American culture and historical events to participate very much. What he could do was to share his Japanese perspective, but he hesitated to do that because he was not sure if his American peers would appreciate it. He also was not sure when it might be an appropriate time to do that.

When he observed other members of his class and saw that their communication styles were aggressive, he found that they did not hesitate to voice their opinions even when they were not related to the class discussion. Since people wanted to talk about themselves, the discussion topics kept changing. He considered himself to be Americanized and doing well in this culture, but he knew that deep inside of him, his communication style was still Japanese.

Jiro wanted to express himself and elaborate on his opinions relating to the discussion topics, but it was challenging for him because he did not resonate with the discussion rhythm in the American classroom. He mentioned that the rhythm of turn-taking in class discussion was very different in the U.S. from Japan. In Japan, students stick with one topic and have deeper discussion about it, but in the U.S.

discussion topics keep changing and people keep talking with almost no pause. As a consequence, he kept missing his chance to jump in and participate.

Being an Out-group Member

The more he missed the opportunity to speak up in class, the more distance he felt between himself and his American peers. This resulted in Jiro's feeling alienated from the discussion circle. He said that every time he missed a chance to contribute to a discussion, he felt that he received small jabs to his stomach, and stress accumulated within him. He also felt like he was pushed away from the center of the circle. He said that just observing his American peers around him, he wondered how they could pop out so many questions so easily; and he said that he tended to draw back when he was pointed out by a professor because he first had to organize his idea in his mind and think if his opinion made sense and was appropriate in the context.

Lack of Aggressiveness

Jiro wanted to be more confident in himself and be more aggressive in class. He said that he had been a group leader of a sport club at his university in Japan, but he was not aggressive enough to do that with a group of Americans. He said his preconception that the U.S. is a powerful nation would hinder him from being aggressive in class, and that this kind of preconception was socially constructed in history. He wanted to free himself from this image and be more aggressive in a group of Americans, otherwise the image of Asian people and society wouldn't be improved. He wanted to assert his leadership ability in the U.S. When he was in Japan, he was more aggressive than others,

but in the U.S., he knew he had to be much more aggressive to take the initiative. He

said that aggressiveness has negative connotations in Japanese culture, but it is a part of

the cultural norm in the U.S. and you have to have it in your nature when you are living

in the U.S.

Response to Research Question Two: What Kinds of Support Have Japanese Graduate

Students Needed or Appreciated in Learning and Socializing with Their Faculty and

Peers in Their Graduate-Level Classrooms?

Jiro mentioned several themes in response to this research question. The kind of

support Japanese students want include: more understanding from American students;

networking with the local Japanese community; meeting domestic students and faculty

members who have international and intercultural experience; more opportunities for

domestic students to help and interact with international students; and greater awareness

of their privilege as Americans.

More Understanding from American Students

Jiro wanted his peers to acknowledge him and understand the challenges he had as

a non-native English speaker, but he felt that there were cultural barriers to getting to

know them better. Yuji said that Americans are very good at initiating communication

and enjoy conversation with strangers in a first meeting, but it is not easy to get closer to

them or get to know them personally. He said that, "in Japan, we would go out for drinks

and alcohol would help open the mind, but students in the Ph.D. level were very busy, so

we did not have a chance to go out for a drink together." At the time of our interviews, Jiro still had not found a friend with whom he could really connect at UC.

He thought that he was well adapted culturally, and he thought that people around him thought the same about him. But he wanted others to know that he was Japanese, not Asian American, and he was going to maintain his Japanese learning style in the classroom. He wanted his peers to acknowledge that even though he looked quite Americanized and had no problem jumping into a class discussion, he would appreciate it if they made eye contact with him or other gestures to include him in their group discussion.

Networking with the Local Japanese Community

Jiro said that in the process of adapting to American culture, it is necessary to keep networking with the Japanese community. As he has been adapting to his new identity in the U.S., He sometimes needs to be with a group of Japanese to acknowledge his Japanese identity. This helps him reconnect with his roots and refresh himself, so he has found it important to have Japanese friends as a support system.

Meeting Domestic Students and Faculty Members Who Have International and Intercultural Experience

The institution in California where he earned his M.A. recruited American students who had Peace Corps experience, or it encouraged its students to become Peace Corps volunteers or study abroad to gain international and intercultural experience. Jiro said that, as a result, many American students there had experienced what it is like to

live as a minority in a foreign community, and sympathize or empathize with international students. According to Jiro, domestic students at that institution were interested in interacting with international students. This also helped international students get to know American students. He said that people won't understand how minority group of people feel until they experience that, and society won't change until a group of majority people experience that. He also said that he saw more cultural awareness or sensitivity in his colleagues at the institution in California than in his colleagues at UC. He also mentioned that in his Ph.D. program at UC, there were not so many international faculty members. He said it is important to bring in faculty who are internationals or who have international and intercultural perspectives.

More Opportunities for Domestic Students to Help and Interact with International Students

Jiro said that his institution in California was much smaller than UC, with only about 700 students compared to UC's total of 26,000. When the institution in California had a big event, every student was involved, so the community was rather cohesive compared to that of UC. He said that the size of UC was big, so it may have been difficult to create a cohesive international community there.

However, he also said that there must be something a large institution like UC can do to encourage international students and domestic students to interact in the classroom. In his California institution, there was very good support for international students, with two graduate assistants in each class. One of the graduate assistants helped international

students or other students having trouble keeping up in class. It is very helpful for international students to have a graduate assistant to ask for help. A dedicated graduate assistant would also get to know international students' situations and needs.

Greater Awareness of Their Privilege as Americans

Jiro said that when Americans visit Japan, Japanese people are very polite when they find out you are American. When Americans are in Japan, they are in a minority category in Japanese society, but people still treat them as the first class citizens and they speak in English as much as possible. English is the most powerful and common language in the world and people want to learn it, so he assumed that the experience that a U.S. citizen has in study abroad program is different from the experience a Japanese has in a study abroad, and he wanted Americans to know that they are privileged in that way.

Jiro assumed that UC campus is a predominantly white community, and there are many people who are unaware of the privilege they have, compared to the community he experienced in California. Jiro wanted people in his class to know the kinds of privilege they have in the global society, but he thought that it was taboo for him to bring up a topic like that in class. He said it is something that people learn from their experience, so it cannot be taught in a class. He thought that doing study abroad or being a Peace Corps volunteer would be a very effective way for learning how international students view their peers in the majority group, particularly in mainstream U.S. culture.

Summary

All Japanese students whom I interviewed went through their journeys full of adventure. As we have seen, the perceptions generated from the stories of five Japanese students in this study regarding challenges they faced and support that they needed in their classrooms at UC are complicated. These findings, however, highlight some factors that were evident in each student's interview. Individual-level factors that have been found to influence intercultural transition challenges include: (a) Culture shock caused by chilly climate factors in the classroom, such as feelings of being isolated from the group of domestic students and faculty because of superficial relationships with classmates, strong individualism, competitiveness in the classroom, learning style differences, and international students' lack of self-confidence; (b) Cultural and language barriers, such as different communication styles and a lack of knowledge about American historical and cultural references, which are used frequently as examples in class discussion.

Support that these students needed from faculty members and peers include the following: (a) More communication with their American peers and faculty to learn more about them as Japanese students, and empathy for them by inviting and including them as in-group members, not as foreigners. From a pedagogical perspective, one of the students mentioned that writing reflection papers was a good tool for receiving feedback from a professor and connecting to the professor; (b) Social support from their classmates and faculty, as well as members of their home culture. The Japanese students

had difficulty finding native English speakers who were really committed to helping them with things like proofreading assignments. One of the interviewees said that the institution needs to give more opportunities for domestic students to help and interact with international students, or attract domestic students who have Peace Corps volunteer experience and hire faculty members who have international and intercultural experience. This will help domestic students to be aware of their privilege as Americans and may help them empathize with international students in the classroom. The interviewees also mentioned the importance of maintaining a network of Japanese natives where they could receive mental support and practical information for living abroad including job opportunities on and off campus; (c) The importance of being connected to the International Student Office. In order to keep their immigration status current, international students need to connect to the International Student Office because faculty do not specialize in that and may not have the correct information in case of a problem.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In this analysis section, I aggregate the challenging factors in American

classrooms from each of my informants, and categorize them into three sections:

cultural factors, pedagogical factors, and *language factors.* I discuss the themes that

emerged from these Japanese international students by referring to intercultural

communication concepts explained in my literature review, to help see where those

students' challenges stemmed from. For each of the themes discussed below, students'

direct quotes are excerpted from the interview transcripts.

Using dichotomous intercultural values such as individualism versus collectivism

may be taken as oversimplifying the complex nature of culture, which can lead to

stereotyping, which may sound critical of American cultures, domestic students, and

faculty members, but it is not my intention. The theoretical analysis utilizing

intercultural concepts provide us cultural general view points. Additionally, this study

focused on challenges and chilly classroom climate that Japanese students experienced;

therefore, it tends to sound negative rather than positive. However, I would like readers

of this dissertation to know that those students had many positive experiences and

support from people on and off campus. Hopefully, this theoretical analysis presents

alternative perspectives so readers can understand Japanese students better, and this

analysis will provide readers with some ideas for helping Japanese students in their

academic life in the U.S.

In Chapter One: Introduction and Background, I presented Wong's (2004) statement about the problems that East Asian international students encounter in higher education institutions in the U.S. Wong suggested that *cultural differences, different learning styles,* and *language problems* are their three main challenges. I used those categories to analyze the findings, but I modified slightly those categories to *cultural factors, pedagogical factors, and language factors. Cultural factors* include cognitive and affective elements that may cause challenging situations for Japanese students participating in American classrooms. *Pedagogical factors* include both teaching and learning style differences between Japan and the U.S. *Language factors* include language problems that Japanese students encounter in American classrooms. These categories allow me to discuss logically the role of cognitive variables such as knowledge of the host culture (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984), attitudes toward hosts and hosts' attitudes towards sojourners (Gudykunst, 1983a), cultural identity (Gudykunst, Sodetani & Sonoda, 1987), and language competence (Gudykunst, 1985), which are important issues that Gudykunst and colleagues have considered in the process of intercultural adaptation.

With respect to these categories, I conducted theoretical analysis. This theoretical analysis shows readers the challenges that Japanese graduate students faced in American classrooms and their need for support. In this chapter, I present my research informants' direct quotes in order to discuss the challenges they encountered, and examine both their negative and positive affects on the students. Some quotes overlap

with stories in chapter four, but for the purpose of theoretical analysis of their experience, I use their direct quotes in this chapter.

Cultural Factors: Cognitive

Most international students face challenges related to cultural differences (Constantinides, 1992). The findings indicated that my research participants had three major challenges, which related to cognitive problems such as understanding, comprehension, or knowledge about general American culture and, specifically, American classroom culture. The first is the lack of American cultural reference points. The second theme is the lack of knowing American cultural appropriateness. The third theme is the importance of a support network inside and outside of class.

Lack of American Cultural Reference Points

All of my research participants experienced challenges participating in class that came from a lack of knowledge about American objective cultures such as arts and history, or pop-culture like movies, TV dramas, and popular expressions, which faculty and students use frequently in a class. All research participants grew up in Japan, in a collectivistic and strong uncertainty avoidance culture, and received their undergraduate degrees there. They therefore did not have native knowledge of American cultural references. This limited their oral classroom participation. Jiro, who was in a Ph.D. program in social science, shared his experience of struggling in class due to a lack of knowledge of American cultural references. He said:

Usually, discussion topics were U.S. domestic issues...and I did not know how I could contribute for the discussion. I could not participate with the class discussion that was not because of lack of [oral presentation] skill, but lack of American cultural references and that became a barrier to participate with the discussion. I want people around me to understand [my situation].

Due to their lack of American cultural references, my informants would often guess in high uncertainty situations what their classmates were discussing. However, "when uncertainty is above our maximum thresholds, we do not have confidence in our predictions and explanations of other people's behavior" (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Sudweeks, Stwart, 1995, p. 105). Mari described her frustrating experience not being able to keep up with class discussion, which kept her from asking questions in class. She said:

From a cultural perspective, I have not watched or read TV dramas or novels so that I could not understand [the class discussions], then I became quiet. Nobody explained to me about the background of the story. I could not ask them for some reason.

One of the reasons that Mari could not ask questions was her perception of the large power-distance between her and her professor. She is from the Japanese culture, where strong uncertainty avoidance tendencies are observed. According to Yamazaki (2005), the strong uncertainty avoidance tendencies of members of collectivistic cultures are related to the high power-distance tendencies. "Asking questions or

speaking up in the middle of the lecture is considered inappropriate and disrespectful" (Liu, 2001, p. 195) to teachers in Asian schools. In her research on the classroom interaction patterns of students in a community college composition course, Losey (1997) found out that, out of politeness and respect to instructors and peers, no Asian students would participate in discussions even if they wanted to, while 81% of Anglo American students asked questions or otherwise participated. Therefore, it is understandable that Japanese students from a collectivistic and strong uncertainty avoidance culture tend to hesitate to take the risk of asking stupid questions or disturbing the flow of class discussion. They think that doing so may not only cause them to lose face, but also cause their instructors to lose face.

Lack of Knowing American Cultural Appropriateness

Not knowing what is or is not appropriate to say in class discussion and when to speak up limited the Japanese students' participation, and this made them feel like out-group members. Students have to know when to share their knowledge within the classroom context, based on the accepted rules of interaction in the classroom. There are tacit rules about what one can say and when to say it, but not knowing these rules limited the Japanese students' oral participation in classes. Taro, who was in a master's program in humanity, shared his experience of not being able to speak up in class because he did not know if it was appropriate. He said:

I was confused if it was the appropriate time to speak up or not in class and could not say [my opinion]…generally speaking, Japanese people tend to organize their

thoughts and consider if it is appropriate to say that in the context. When they are sure that it is all right to say, they finally express their opinions...People here [Americans] may not think so seriously about appropriateness in the context like Japanese people do.

In a classroom in Japan, it is common that students just listen to a professor's lecture. By contrast, in a U.S. classroom students tend to feel uncomfortable with silence and feel a responsibility to speak to assist a professor. Accordingly, Japanese students' silence in the classroom sometimes was taken as unwillingness on their part to participate, or that they have nothing to contribute (Liu, 2001). According to Liu, American students have been taught that in-class oral participation is important. Their enthusiasm to participate in class discussion ends up monopolizing classroom discussion. Jiro felt left behind and isolated. He shared his experience of creating a barrier between his classmates and himself because he could not figure out if his opinion was appropriate to say or not, and he could not work through what he wanted to say. Jiro said:

> I sometimes wondered if what I was going to say was appropriate to say or not, or if people understood what I wanted to say. I sometimes can elaborate what I want to say and sometimes cannot. When I cannot elaborate what I want say, [I felt shame and] my feeling was hurt. It was like receiving small jabs. This created barrier between them and I.

People from collectivistic cultures such as Japan tend to be concerned about social interaction (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Both Jiro and Taro were very careful about what to say in class discussions and when and how to say it. They used *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to sense what, how, and when to speak up in the class. Then, Jiro decided not to speak up because he used *enryo* (self-inhibition), which limited his oral participation in class. Jiro said that he had to work through what he wanted to say. While he was using his cultural filter of *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to elaborate his idea to eliminate any messages that might disturb the atmosphere in a conversation, he miscalculated when to speak up. In this way, Japanese students' culturally biased filter of *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) and *enryo* (self-inhibition) did not always work appropriately in the culture of the American classroom context .

Support Networks Inside and Outside of Class

All of my research participants made the effort to interact with domestic students inside and outside of the classroom to learn American objective (history, art, TV drama, pop-culture, etc) and subjective (values, beliefs, assumptions, norms, ethics, etc.) cultural knowledge. Yuji created strong networks with groups of domestic students and Japanese students, and he used his Japanese student networks to get to know more domestic students. He had strong support from his Japanese colleagues and graduate teaching assistants in his department. He said:

> I received most of the support from graduate teaching assistants...I had a lot of
>
> support from senior students from Japan...I looked at writing samples that they

wrote. I also could ask questions directly to them, so I had much more advantages than others and could prepare for my study...I already had reading materials before the class started [from my friends].

Asami also created networks outside of the classroom. She received strong support at the coffee shop on campus, from the coffee shop owner and university students and faculty who visited the coffee shop. She said:

His [the coffee owner's] support is very big!...He is not from here, he is from outside of the U.S. and he has very strong political views. He also does research about international affairs...I learn a lot from him...I also learn many important thing about our daily life at the coffee shop from the customers. I see more diverse population at the coffee shop than in classroom. In class, I am exposed to only white, middle class, activists' and hippies' point of views, but the coffee shop owner teaches me cutting edge information from news.

Both Yuji and Asami started their networking with small groups. Yuji started with his Japanese community on campus while Asami started with her international student community and the coffee shop on campus. This buffered them from the need to build networks from scratch, and reduced their apprehension of initial interactions with new people. This also added to the possible reasons why Yuji and Asami were successful in creating networks more quickly than other students. Generally speaking, "most Japanese people are not friendly with strangers" (Nishiyama, 1989, p. 177) in Japanese culture, so that Japanese tend to hesitate to form new relationships in comparison to

westerners, which may come from their strong uncertainty avoidance (Seward, 1961).

Japanese students seek out social support outside of classroom, but due to their cultural

tendencies, they sometimes do not know how to start creating networks in a new place.

Taro had great support from his academic advisor and professors as well as others

outside of the classroom. Taro's host father taught him a lot about American culture,

history, political views, and cultural trivia. He and others were accessible to Taro and

always provided him knowledge and information that he needed. Taro stressed that

social support enhanced his knowledge about American cultures.

Cultural Factors: Affective

Intercultural adjustment requires emotional experience. All of my research

participants grew up in Japan so they all have strong Japanese cultural identities. Some

of them had professional work experience in Japan where they nurtured their Japanese

sociological identity and acquired ethics that are very different from U.S. values. Thus,

affective factors as cultural challenge were a big part of the Japanese students'

experience in American classroom contexts. Some themes emerged, including the

themes of impatience to differences, superficial relationships, miscommunication about

making appointments and asking a favor, the importance of listening mindfully to

Japanese students, and pre-departure research.

Impatience to Differences

My research participants reported that they experienced a chilly classroom climate

due to impatience to differences of their American peers and faculty members. My

research participants: Mari, Asami, and Jiro all reported about their peers' apathy

toward them, and their feelings of exclusion and being ignored in classrooms by

domestic students and by faculty members. Mari had a traumatic experience in a small

group activity in a class of her master's program. She said:

> I gave my handouts to my group members in a small group activity. A girl was
>
> sitting next me was eating an apple with making CRUNCHY NOISE [while I was
>
> presenting] and said, "hmm." Then, she finished eating her apple and wrapped her
>
> apple core with my handout and threw it away to a trash can. I was really PISSED
>
> OFF!

It was hard to know if this classmate's action came from her naiveté or

insensitivity toward Japanese culture in general, or if she acted that way intentionally to

hurt Mari's feeling. This behavior would be considered rude in Japan because the

handout reflected on Mari's effort. In a relationship-oriented culture like Japan, the

person and materials made by the person are not separate, so throwing away her handout

was throwing away her work. Additionally, in Confucian culture, how you handle

course materials is very important. Teachers teach small children from nursery school

through grade school to take good care of school materials such as books, notebooks,

and handouts, to not step on them or put them in their backpacks upside down.

Mari reported that this incident definitely caused her to lose face in public. Saying

or doing something inappropriate and not being accepted by the group results in a loss

of face (Liu, 2001). The Japanese concept of face is deeply related to social

relationships and communal interdependence (Liu). Japanese people tend to be

concerned about being accepted by members of the same group (Masumoto, 1988).

In-group members try to create harmony and support one another in Japanese

collectivistic culture. When Japanese students work together, they make

collateral-based relationships, which value in-group interdependence (Ho, 1987). In this

fashion, Mari felt that she was not only humiliated but also excluded from the group.

She did self-reflection and felt that she had not done a good job, accusing herself of

being at fault.

According to Singleton (1993), one of the Japanese school management styles is

self-reflection. If the result of self-reflection does not fit the group standard, in other

words, if one becomes inappropriate or different from others in the group, he or she

tends to receive a negative impression from teachers and other members of the group.

The action of throwing Mari's handout by using it to wrap garbage was insulting for

Mari. Being insulted in front of her peers in class meant being pointed out as an odd and

different one, which isolated Mari from the group. She, therefore, felt that she was not

admitted by her peers and not welcomed in the small group. Mari said:

> I was taken as a burden, and I was not good because I was different. I felt that in
>
> interactions with my peers and faculty members. I wanted them to accept that, but
>
> they said "Don't make grammatical mistakes" or "I don't understand what you are
>
> talking about." I know that it was extra work for them [to have me in their
>
> classes]...I felt that it is a big disadvantage to be a non-native speaker of English

in my master's program, and I felt very insecure in the program. It seemed like my classmates thought about me as a burden or bothersome, and my teachers thought about me as useless.

In order to lower the degrees of tolerance for ambiguity, we sometimes refer to stereotypes of groups of people. "Stereotyping is an exaggerated set of expectations and beliefs about the attributes of a group membership" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 161). It could be either positive (Chinese are good in math) or negative (Koreans are too aggressive) (Ting-Toomey), but in Asami's case, as a participant in her class, she felt that she was viewed negatively. Asami said:

I was seen as "A GIRL" from Japan, and people implied nonverbally and verbally that I am "A GIRL who cannot do ANYTHING, cannot get ANYTHING, have not seen ANYTHING in the world." Yes, [it happened] MANY TIMES! For example, I was laughed when I spoke up in a class.

It was hard to know if her peers intended to humiliate her or not. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) argued that "Intercultural communication involves the simultaneous encoding and decoding of verbal and nonverbal messages in the exchange process" (p. 44). Asami's peers encoded (the senders chose the right words or nonverbal gestures to express their intentions about Asami) and she decoded (as the receiver who translates the words or nonverbal cues into comprehensible meanings). She decoded her peers' verbal and nonverbal cues and took them to be insulting rather than inclusive of her. She had another negative experience when she was stereotyped by a classmate. She said:

It was last spring, when I was talking with my classmate who was working in a

customer service department of Intel. He said that Japanese customers complain

too much. They are even more awful than Chinese customers! You must be like

them because you are Japanese. I tried to talk back to him, but he did not give me

a moment to speak.

Being stereotyped, misunderstood, and ignored are stress factors for anybody.

Being discouraged to speak up by a professor was an even harder experience for Asami.

She said:

When we were talking about the Israeli and Palestinian issue in a class, I tried to

speak up my opinions, but my instructor cut off my opinion and told me that You

are ASIAN! so you should focus on affairs between Japan and other East Asian

countries, not problems between the Israeli and Palestinian.

She took this incident as discrimination because, as an Asian, she was not

welcomed to join the discussion about the Israeli and Palestinian issue due to her

nationality and ethnicity. She told me that the mindless approach or misplaced

assumptions of domestic students and faculty toward her hurt her feelings.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) stated that:

When we communicate mindlessly, we do not notice the distinctive qualities of

the cultural person with whom we are communicating. Rather, we fall back on our

stereotypes to reduce our guesswork and, perhaps, emotional vulnerability

level...If we are unwilling to question our rigidly held stereotypes, our intergroup

relationships will stay only at a superficial level of contact. Stereotyping, together

with an ethnocentric attitude and a prejudiced mindset, can often perpetuate

misinterpretation spirals and intergroup conflict cycles. (p. 44)

Mari and Asami represented what many international students experience in

American classrooms. American students' impatience to differences may cause a loss of

face, feelings of exclusion, stereotyping, and discrimination in what are diverse learning

environments.

Superficial Relationships

Japanese students along with virtually all international students seek friendships

with people in the host culture. However, Japanese students seldom create close

friendships with domestic students. Is this due to the busy lives of domestic students

who have to support themselves to pay tuition, or different perceptions of friendships

and different communication styles between Japanese and U.S. cultures? Jiro, a Ph.D.

student, observed that domestic students of UC are relatively older than traditional

research institutions, and many of them have jobs and families to take care of. He was

seeking friends in his program, but he did not make any. He said:

I was looking forward to making friends with domestic students in my cohort, but

I have not developed good friendships with faculty or especially with

peers...Many students in graduate and doctoral level programs are older and have

families, so we do not have much chance to have fun together outside of the

classroom and develop friendships.

Taro also reported that he did not make any intimate friendships with his colleagues in his class. He said: "I have not become close friends with American peers in my classes. We just greet one another in class. We do not have a committed relationship." Cultural differences between Japan and the U.S. that affect how we develop friendships were discussed by Barnlund (1989), who taught in Japan. He indicated that the most important characteristics of friendships for Japanese students are togetherness, trust, and warmth, and that Japanese emphasize the importance of relational harmony, interdependence, and collectivism while Americans emphasize the importance of honesty, independence, and individuality. The common assumption is that American friendships are often characterized by a hesitancy to become deeply involved and interactions of short duration; in contrast, Japanese friendships tend to involve lifelong responsibilities to each other (Barnlund). This cultural difference may cause misunderstanding between Japanese students and domestic students. In particular, Japanese students who were educated in the Japanese education system from kindergarten through high school are used to making friendships that involved long-term commitment. In that education system, students usually stay in their homeroom, and teachers visit their homeroom to teach different subjects. Accordingly, students tend to form strong relationships among one another as they study together for an entire year.

Additionally, the metaphors that are often used to contrast Japanese and American personalities are a coconut and a peach. The coconut has a tough and not very appealing

shell, but once you break through the exterior, it is soft inside so that people share even their personal issues with you. The peach, on the other hand, is soft and inviting and easy to get into, but it has a hard core that is difficult to penetrate. These differences could also cause cultural misunderstanding. Japanese students who see friendly American smiles and receive what seems to be a sincere invitation to have a cup of coffee might wonder, when the invitation goes nowhere, if they did something wrong.

Americans friendliness in a first meeting can sometimes be misunderstood by Japanese students and taken as superficial. American students might say, "We should go out for coffee sometime!" after even a first conversation if he or she enjoys talking with you. That means that they are interested in getting together with you, but it is not guaranteed (Personal conversation, Sandra Garrison, November 3, 2008). Japanese students who are looking for friendship are disappointed when that next meeting does not happen, and they may infer that Americans are superficial. Americans sometimes use "ritual" talk, which does not really mean anything more than a greeting (Personal conversation, Janet Bennett, November 25, 2008). "We should go out for coffee sometime!" is not really a guaranteed invitation. American people from low-context cultures tend to use small talk to warm up a conversation. When they say, "Let's go out for coffee sometime," that means that interest is there, but obligation is not there. American culture is a mobility culture and people enjoy communicating, even with strangers (Personal conversation, Ting-Toomey, October 17, 2008). A stranger said to me, "I like your hair!" in a public restroom in Indianapolis. This was just small talk and

the stranger did not intend to be closer to me. It just means "Hello," but this small talk

may be taken as superficial by people from high-context cultures.

By contrast, Japanese students from high-context and relationship-oriented

cultures, especially those who are looking for friendships with domestic students, might

take the words, "We should go out for coffee sometime" as a guarantee. Certain

Japanese words that are related to interpersonal relations, such as "*on* (obligation), *giri*

(indebtedness), *ninjo* (humanity), *kao* (face), *sekinin* (responsibility), and *gimu* (duty),

all emphasize dependence on others and the importance of adapting one's actions to the

needs of others (Barnlund, 1989, p. 41). In the sense of Japanese emphasizing the

importance of others' needs, American's ritual talk was viewed as superficial by Asami.

Miscommunication about Making Appointments and Asking a Favor

In a view of ritual talk, Asami said that verbal agreements for making

appointments with her American peers was not reliable. Asami was confused by her

peers in her master's program who did not really seem sincere when they said, "Let me

know when you need help." She told me:

I was disappointed so many times, especially when I asked for help for my writing

assignment! My peers say, "I will proofread for you," but when I sent an email

asking them to help me, nobody replied to me for more a month. This is my

assumption, but I am Japanese and it is virtue for my peers to engage with an

Asian [as a minority member] in the department...I cannot urge them so much

because I am asking them a favor...I have been waiting for help from my friends

[with proofreading] for three months. I had to find somebody else to help me after all that time.

Asami's hesitation can be described as *enryo* (self-inhibition, hesitation), which hindered her from being assertive and ensuring that she receives help from her peers. Japanese students from a high-context culture tend to use *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to pick up on another's needs or intentions from their nonverbal cues such as tone of voice and gestures, which are manifestations of indirect communication. Thus, Asami felt that it was too much to keep asking and reminding them to help her with proofreading. In contrast, American students from low-context cultures tend to be direct and verbalize what they need because low-context cultures tend to value verbal rather than nonverbal communication. Along these lines, it likely wouldn't have offended anyone if Asami had asked for their help again. But intercultural communication is complicated and individuals easily misunderstand each other.

Yuji, who worked as a graduate assistant in the Department of Public Affairs, said that when he worked with a Japanese professor, he used *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to know how busy the professor was in order to make sure he never asked for too much help at the wrong time. But when he worked with his American professor, he did not use *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability), and he ended up bringing the professor a lot of work at the last minute. Yuji had to tell him his situation in a direct manner using his *honne* (true feelings). When we communicate with people who have less *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability), we have to use our *honne* (true feelings) to avoid

misunderstandings. What Asami should have done was to check with her friends repeatedly to see if they would still help her.

Mindful Listening to Japanese Students

My research participants reported that they needed and appreciated support from faculty and domestic students for their cultural transition and adaptation. Taro had great support from his peers and faculty in a warm atmosphere. In his master's program, half of the faculty members were internationals, and most of American faculty members had living experience overseas. Taro said:

> There was sympathy toward international students and I think they understand that
>
> international students struggle in their study abroad experiences. They are friendly
>
> to us…I am Japanese, so they [domestic students and teachers] say *Ohayo* (good
>
> morning) or *Konnichiwa* (hello) to me in Japanese…[Everybody is] very friendly.

Simply greeting Japanese students in their native language can make them smile and provide a sense of welcoming and inclusion. Taro received great support from his advisor as well. He received not only advice on his academic life and career development, but also social support. Taro said:

> I have a strong connection to my advisor. She helps me a lot…Her house is only
>
> three blocks away from the house where I am staying, so I housesat for her in the
>
> summer while she was gone, watering her yard, etc. She gave me her bicycle, too.
>
> She is very nice. She is very fluent with Japanese, and very sensitive with
>
> intercultural communication.

Asami made an effort to have a good connection with her faculty members in her department, because she knew that it was a key to success in her academic life in the U.S. She said:

It is crucial to have good connections with faculty members, so I visit instructors often and make sure they remember my face. American students are very good at doing that. They make appointments with faculty. If you don't have connections with faculty, you cannot get a job or even a practicum.

Asami tried to get her faculty to know more about her, to build good relationships, and to receive the help that she needed. This is also very important for reducing intercultural stress. Japanese students also want more communication with domestic students to help understand one another better. Jiro wanted domestic students to get to know him better. He felt that domestic students misunderstood his ethnic identity. Jiro assumed that his peers took him to be Asian-American due to his fluency in English and his behavior, but he told me that on the inside he was very Japanese. He wanted his peers to recognize his complex identity, or else he had to keep pretending to be the person they assumed he was. He said:

My peers think that I am adjusted completely to the U.S. culture because I am not a traditional Japanese, and I don't have Japanese delicacy and sensitivity (laughed)…but I don't want my peers to approach me as they talk to Americans (laughed). Then, I have to respond back to them as they expect from me…I think that there is a big gap between my identity, how I see myself, and their

assumptions about my identity, and I am hoping they come to understand that. I

want them to know that I am not an American.

It is stressful for individuals when their ethnic identity is not acknowledged.

Ting-Toomey (1991) noted that the primary identities/self-image domains -- cultural,

ethnic, gender, and personal identities -- exert an important, ongoing impact throughout

our lives. As a consequence, it was stressful when Jiro's Japanese identity was not

recognized by his American peers. This forced Jiro to behave more like an American

because he felt that this was what his classmates expected of him.

Pre-departure Research

Preparation for cultural transition before coming to the U.S. and setting lower

expectations for themselves helped the Japanese students mitigate their transition stress.

All students except Taro experienced culture shock as they lived and studied in the U.S.

Taro did research on the internet about academic life in the U.S., such as teaching and

learning styles in U.S. higher education institutions, requirements, projects in classes,

and culture shock, before he came to the U.S.. This information helped prevent him

from experiencing culture shock. Taro said:

> I did not have culture shock. I prepared [before I came to the U.S.] to prevent
>
> culture shock, and I tried to absorb American culture from TV and other media as
>
> much as possible before I came to the U.S. I also worked for an American
>
> corporation as a security guard.

Taro told me that he did not feel pressure to do well in his master's program in order to advance to a doctoral program. He also set expectations low for himself in his program. He said:

> I told myself that I will not be able to get good grades until I speak better English. It gave me a buffer. I did not pressure myself to get top grades to get into a Ph.D. program. I did not expect that much of myself, so that was good…What I expected is that, if I can understand what a professor is talking about, that is good enough. This might have helped me to not be stressed out.

Students who do not intend to stay in the U.S. upon graduation may require less overall commitment to the target culture, but they still need to meet the demands of life in the U.S. both on and off campus (Liu, 2001). Taro's pre-departure research and setting low expectations for himself in his program mitigated his transition stress.

Pedagogical Factors

According to Opper, Teichler and Carlson's (1990) study on the impacts of study abroad programs with 439 students from the U.S., United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Sweden, differences in teaching/learning methods were rated second highest among potential difficulties that international students face. This is true for Japanese students who study in U.S. graduate programs. Relating to the pedagogical challenge, the following themes emerged: low-context classrooms; interactive class activities; domestically focused content; mutual respect; and past experiences with American classroom style.

Low-context Classrooms

The findings indicate that my research participants all faced the challenge of being competitive or assertive in American classrooms. Generally speaking, American students participate actively in class; they are encouraged to do so. According to Liu (2001), however, Asian students feel intimidated by the heated discussions with their American peers, which results in their missing opportunities to speak up in class. But in order to participate with American students' enthusiastic class discussions, the Japanese students in my research had to be aggressive. Asami was overwhelmed by the competitive attitude of domestic students. She said:

> I have a hard time participating in class discussions in my program…All of them have really strong opinions. They always see things as black or white. It is not a discussion, it is a debate...Everybody in my class is active and thinks that they are right. When others say a word, they try to shut them up. They are activists, and I sometimes doubt what I hear them say in my philosophy class.

Asami's peers used direct manner of speech and sometimes they went against their professors. In a Japanese learning environment, students expect to learn from teachers who are perceived as the authority. Asami was shocked to see students criticize a professor's choice of reading materials in front of everybody. She also perceived that students had more power than professors in her classes, and she thought that the professors were not doing their job managing the classroom. Nemetz Robinson (1988) stated, "The American value of directness is contrasted with the Japanese value of

maintaining harmony. Japanese use a variety of conventions to avoid direct disagreement" (p. 57). In this manner, Japanese students from a collectivistic culture tend to be intimidated or even offended when their peers use a direct manner of speech against their opinions. Asami felt uncomfortable receiving direct disagreement from her peers, so she sometimes hesitated to speak up in class. She said:

> We have very few international students in my program. Most of my peers have the same ways of thinking. I am very unique in the program [and have different opinions], so I wonder if I should speak up or not. I gave up trying to speak up because I may be verbally attacked by my classmates... They never give me time to speak up. It was my challenge to find a moment to speak my opinions.

Additionally, Japanese students tend to hesitate to oppose others' opinions in class because it may ruin friendships. As Barnlund (1989) indicated, "to Japanese eyes one of the most shocking features of American social life is the way friendships survive frequent and even violent confrontations" (p. 43). Japanese tend to take criticism and objections to their ideas as personal attacks (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). For Japanese, even a small inappropriate phrase or nonverbal cue may ruin a friendship (Barnlund). Thus, it was shocking for Asami to see that her peers still remained friends even after they argued in class. She said: "We always have arguments in class discussion. It is amazing, but after [the American students] step out from the classroom, they forget about that."

For people from a collectivistic culture the conflict issue and the conflict person

tend to be the same. In contrast, members of low-context culture tend to separate the

conflict issue from the person involved in the conflict, and they can still remain friends

even after they disagree with one another over an issue (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The basic

communication goal in collectivistic cultures is to avoid embarrassing others and being

embarrassed. Asami could not understand how people keep fighting with one another

and yet remain friends in that uncomfortable environment. From this stressful

experience, she had insomnia. It was a symptom of culture shock. In one interview, she

reflected on her vexing experience of not being able to talk back immediately to others

in class discussion and said:

> I could not sleep at night. I also did not want to go to the class. The hardest thing
>
> was not being able to sleep at night. My eyes were wide open and could not sleep.
>
> I remember that I could not react spontaneously to others in class. The memories
>
> would flash back in the middle of the night, which made me emotional. Then, I
>
> suffered from the anger.

It is a big challenge for Japanese students to be aggressive and speak up in class.

My research informants, however, still had to take the risk of being assertive in order to

be recognized by faculty. It doesn't always work out well. Mari took a risk and spoke up

one day in a small-group discussion, but she was humiliated by her peers. She said:

> We were given an assignment by an instructor of a class to think about research
>
> questions, so I presented mine in a small group. I know that my thoughts were not
>
> refined enough, but it was brainstorming, so I posed my ideas. Then, a graduate

student verbally attacked me, saying "You cannot say that is a research question! It is not articulated and you DON'T understand what a research question is!" I was shocked to be attacked verbally like that. I assumed that the student was a first-year student and wanted to show off what she knew about research questions. I did not talk to her after that.

The student's direct speech in opposition to Mari hurt her feelings. People from Asian cultures seem to frown on direct speech and explicit language, so that asserting the opposing view in an argument tends to be taken as one person becoming a personal rival and antagonist of another (Becker, 1991). In high-context cultures, to disagree with someone in public is an extreme insult causing both people involved to lose face (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Therefore, people of collectivistic cultures tend to be more concerned about not hurting other people's feelings or imposing on them than members of individualistic cultures are (Yamaguchi, 1990). Mari was humiliated in public, and this experience was traumatic.

Asami also tried to participate in class discussion and raised her hand, but she felt that she was totally ignored by her professor and was not included in the discussion circle. She said:

I urged myself to speak up, and I kept raising my hand, but I was not called on by my professor…about five students dominated the class discussion, and they talked about things that were not related to the class topic at all.…I went to my professor to ask him why he did not call on me. The professor said to me, "Oh, I did not see

you, you should have said, excuse me." I was shocked because he teaches cultural

awareness, but he does not have any. He also said, "well, you are too naïve to

expect such a help in graduate school in the U.S…If I were in a graduate school in

Japan, I would follow what they do, like 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.''

It is accurate that what her professor said to Asami was sympathetic, which is

imaginatively "placing of ourselves in another person's position" (Bennett, 1972, 66)

rather than empathic, which is to imagine the thoughts and feelings of other people from

their own perspectives" (Bennett, 1998, p. 197). He did not think about Asami's cultural

background, but saw the situation through his worldview.

In addition, it is hard to know if her professor ignored her intentionally or just did

not notice her. However, according to Sato's (1982) study in two university-level ESL

classes, teachers tend to call on more non-Asian students (60%) than Asian students

(48%). This suggests that the teachers believe that Asian students are less willing to

participate in class, or there may be an assumption that Asian students won't oppose

teachers' points of view, so they first call on others who tend to be more aggressive, and

Asian students come next. This idea may connect to the chilly classroom climate for

women. Sandler, Silverberg, and Hall, (1996) argued that many small behaviors

combine to create an inhospitable environment for women in academia, such as:

yielding to the influence of internalized stereotypes; excluding women from class

participation; and giving women less attention and intellectual encouragement. In a

chilly climate classroom, many female students may be overwhelmed by the

domination of male students. Japanese students as a minority population in the classroom seem to experience a similar situation.

Jiro shared his feelings that he tried to be more aggressive in American classroom discussions, but because he had a subconscious image of U.S. white Americans being so powerful, he was intimidated. He said:

> I am not being aggressive enough in the classroom... Aggressiveness has negative connotations in Japan, but in U.S. culture, aggressiveness is not considered to be negative. It's a cultural norm in the U.S. isn't it? I take aggressiveness positively. I was seen as aggressive in Japan, but not in the U.S. I find that I cannot be aggressive enough in the U.S. because I feel intimidated subconsciously when I think that I am surrounded by members of the most powerful nation in the global society. My image of the U.S. is "overpowering and white" and it makes me hesitate to be aggressive. I would call that a "cultural barrier."

Generally speaking, Japanese students tend to be overwhelmed and intimidated by domestic students' aggressiveness. In graduate programs at UC, the majority of the population is white and there are only a few students of color, according to my research participants' experience. Jiro and Asami used the term "white privilege" to interpret American students' assertiveness and self-affirming attitudes. Perhaps, Americans would call it "internalized racism." He has believed the dominant culture is all powerful (Personal conversation, Janet Bennett, February 25, 2009). Jiro used the word "overpowering" to explain his peers' attitude and his feeling of inferiority to them. Liu

(2001) discussed that for Japanese who are relationship oriented, age and rank become the unquestioned basis for distinction of inferior and superior. They may also position themselves high or low depending on their cultural and language competencies, and self-confidence. If their self-esteem and self-confidence is low, for example, they may position themselves low. It is a big challenge for Japanese students from a high-context culture to study as a member of a minority group in a low-context and competitive culture using their second language. They had to keep trying to enhance their cultural and language competencies, and maintain their self-esteem as well.

In order to maintain their self-esteem, Japanese students have to be confident and be able to praise themselves. However, Mari, being from a collectivistic culture where people are raised to be humble, was disgusted with her peers' verbally praising themselves. Japanese students have been taught that humbleness is a virtue, which comes from Confucian philosophy. As a result, American students' positive statements about themselves such as "I am very good in this!" sound competitive and boastful to her ears. This cultural difference causes intercultural misunderstanding. Mari said:

> My American peers say that they can speak Spanish, but actually they cannot from
>
> my Japanese perspective...I was shocked by their naïve attitude...they were so
>
> proud of what they could [do] and were positive about it. From my perspective,
>
> their speaking level is too low [to claim that they can speak Spanish].

Lebra (1976) pointed out that Japan is a homogeneous culture where, as a characteristic of homogenous cultures, there is "social relativism," which is one's

comparison of him- or herself to others in the group or society; so that Japanese by comparison tend to say they are good in something when they really are, measured by how they compare to others. Maynard (1997) stated that Japanese tend to suppress their individuality within their concept of society, while Americans tend to have faith in themselves and assert themselves. Based on Maynard's point it could be said that American students tend to think they are absolutely good in Spanish even if they are not compared to others, but that it doesn't really matter as long as they are happy with what they think about themselves. This self-confidence of American students may also be taken as aggressive by Japanese students.

Interactive Class Activities

Brainstorming and improvisational speech and performance in small-group activities are challenging for Japanese students because they require high English proficiency and the ability to join the rhythm of rapid turn-taking in class discussion. Interestingly, Japanese students in my research did not like small-group activities. Taro said that he was less nervous in a small group, but because small groups required quick responses, they were more intense than regular class discussion where more people are in the group and there is less pressure on any one individual to participate. He said:

> I was not the only one who did not speak up in [regular] class discussion, so it felt
>
> easier. [But] if you don't speak up in a small group, you stand out, so I felt more
>
> pressure in small-group discussion.
>
> In small-group discussion, it is required to insert your opinions spontaneously.

That was challenging for Japanese students. Japanese students told me that American students are very good at brainstorming by adding their ideas to other's ideas, and they can learn by talking. Taro said:

> The concept of brainstorming itself is very American. I had heard the word "brainstorming" as a technical word [when I was in Japan], but I don't think it'll take root in Japanese culture...In Japan, we have to present ideas that are well considered...it is not welcomed to say anything that pops up into your mind, but in the U.S., it is important to present anything what you think.

This quote from Taro and other sources in the literature indicate that Japanese students employ *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to behave in socially appropriate ways depending on context, such as *ba* (place), *ma* (space or timing), *wa* (harmony). In Japan, the contents of your speech must be related to the discussion topic. Consequently, he said that brainstorming may not take root in Japanese culture. He said:

> In my master's program in Japan, I remember that the person who was in charge of the day presented what he or she prepared in advance. Then a professor would make a comment and, if they had any, students made comments as well.

In Japan, therefore, discussion style is different and there is not an emphasis on spontaneous presentation. Students are always assigned what they are going to present in advance. This discussion style helped students to avoid surprises and the potential loss of face. Referring to Kolb's learning style, this structured and teacher-oriented style of pedagogy helps to create reflective observers. By contrast, constructive and

student-oriented pedagogy creates active experimenters. From intercultural

communication theory, as Yamazaki (2005) said that people from strong uncertainty

avoidance culture such as Japan tend to learn through a reflective observation, people

from weak uncertainty avoidance culture such as the United States tend to learn through

those of active experimentation. Active experimenters tend to speak up and learn by

doing in a group project, while reflective observers tend to observe people and learn

through perception. Four of the Japanese students Yuji, Mari, Asami, and Taro, were

reflective observers, and Jiro was as an abstract thinker, which was very close to a

reflective observer. Therefore, all of them needed a time to reflect before they spoke up

in class. Taro explained the process of his preparing for his presentation:

> I cannot participate in discussion [easily]…it takes time to think in English…even
>
> when I got an idea, I urged myself to summarize the idea rather than just present it
>
> as is. It takes twice as much effort compared to speaking up in my own language. I
>
> tried, but I could not, and then I was stressed out [because] this will affect my
>
> grade and my participation will be evaluated low.

Yuji shared his process of his putting his ideas together before he presented. He

said:

> I had many lecture class in Japan, so that I was bewildered by the discussion
>
> style…I did not like small-group discussion. Ha ha…I would write down what I
>
> have in my mind first, and I would read it over, and then I would raise my hand…I
>
> have no time to think in small-group discussion.

Yuji was eager to speak up in small-group discussion, but his turn never came because his peers kept talking. His hesitation to be assertive and insert his voice in the on-going discussion was *enryo* (self-inhibition), because it is rude to stop conversation in Japanese culture. He said:

> Turn taking! Three of my group members talked a lot and I had no time to speak. They speak too fast, so I don't know when I can talk. Japanese people wait for a space, don't we? But there is nothing like that, ha ha. I had to jump in and cut into the discussion...I wanted to speak up, but I also did not feel confident with my English, and I did not know what to do. I felt that it was rude to insert my comment when they were speaking, but there were no time for me.

American students are encouraged to participate in class discussions and give their opinions to demonstrate what they have learned and show their self-confidence. What is expected of students in a classroom is "doing" rather than "being" (Pusch, personal communication, November 1, 2006). By contrast, many Japanese students from a collectivistic culture first tend to think how they should participate and what role they should play as a member of the group in a classroom context, rather than thinking how they want to present themselves as individuals.

Another challenging skill for Japanese students to acquire is critical thinking, which is sometimes required in brainstorming. Jiro said:

> I think that I'm still very Japanese. I took a learning style inventory before we started this interview, do I? and I thought that I am REALLY Japanese (Smiled).

There is a receptive or passive part of me on the inside. It may look like I'm used to American society, but I have dilemma inside of me. My Japanese identity won't ever be taken away. I still lack active participation and critical thinking skills. I still believe what is written in a text and do not doubt it (Laughed).

Asian students often believe that teachers impart truth to students (Sheehan & Person, 1995), and there is the same idea toward textbooks. Critical thinking skills are not so much required or taught in the Japanese education system. On top of those differences, as Liu (2001) indicated, free thought and individual expression are discouraged in Asian culture. They are sometimes taken as rude. Practice is required for Japanese students to be able to think critically.

Beside the challenges of participating in brainstorming or small-group discussion, these Japanese students encountered challenges related to a pair work or a group work. They found working with a partner to be sometimes much more difficult than working individually. Yuji was partnered with a domestic student who did not contribute at all to their project, so he wrote a paper and presentation script for their presentation. On the presentation day, his partner used up most of the presentation time, and he had only one minute to present his part. He spoke very fast, but could not finish his part. When the professor gave them feedback, she praised his partner's speech for being clear, but said Yuji spoke too fast to understand. His hard work was not acknowledged, but his partner who did not do anything received a good evaluation. He said:

I got so upset and I did not know how to express what I wanted to say to my

professor, and I cried. It was very vexing. Really, it was miserable. I worked so

hard, but my professor did not understand me. I called my friend, ha ha…I visited

my professor later, and explained to her. She understood the situation and

apologized to me. Now I think that it was a good experience.

Yuji told me that depending on who you work with, your work experience as a part

of team will be different. Another challenging example of group activity is about Mari's.

She had a traumatic experience in a small-group activity. She felt that she was excluded

from her group. She said:

A graduate teaching assistant told each group to create a handout. My group

members said that we didn't have time to get together, so each of us should make

our own handout, which I did. But, I then received an email from one of the group

members who wrote that I hadn't contributed anything at all. I did not know what

was going on! When I asked the group what that meant, nobody answered me. I

went to class, but I had no idea what was going on (Laughs).

In this activity, each group was evaluated by other groups, and her group received

a negative evaluation and feedback. Mari emailed her professor that it was not her fault

and complained about the grade she received, but the grade was not changed. Since then,

she hasn't liked group projects. Yuji and Mari encountered challenging experience

through pair or group work. However, the diverse nature of American classrooms offers

both domestic and international students many opportunities for exploring and

understanding cultural differences and complexities.

Domestically Focused Content

Jiro and Asami both pointed out that the most of the articles and readings in their programs were published in the U.S. In Jiro's Ph.D. program, class discussion was only about domestic issues, not international issues. He wanted his professors to refer at least a few to international topics in classes. He said:

> At UC, it depends on the professor, but I assume that almost none of them in my department refers to internationally related topics in class. I guess that the reason that I cannot participate with class discussion is that discussion topics [are geared for] people who grew up in American culture. In a data analysis class in my graduate program [at another institution], we used data that even non-American students enjoyed.

What Jiro suggested was that even a program focused on a purely domestic American topic still needs an international perspective, such as how the world outside the U.S. sees this topic. He was not saying that faculty are wrong by focusing mainly on domestic American examples. The focus of the study is on American urban development, that there might not be international perspectives at all, but this was Jiro's opinion as an international student to have a feeling of inclusion in a classroom.

Asami said that her professors brought international issues into the classroom, but not international perspectives. She thought that domestic students' points of view were single-minded. She said: "They [my peers] are very superficial and they don't know how shallow their cultural perspectives are." In addition, she said that her peers did not

accept her international perspectives in class discussions, which made her think that her peers were so affirmative about their own perspectives that they did not accept outside perspectives. Her class discussion became like a debate rather than discussion, so she felt that her peers just insisted their opinion and did not listen to others. She was intimidated by her peers' persistent attitude to stick with their opinions based on U.S. news resources in the discussion.

Mutual Respect

Respect is one of several universal human needs. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) noted that "[w]hen a person received authentic and positive identity validation, she will tend to view self-images positively" (p. 112). Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) also stated that, for flexible intercultural communication, identity validation skill is crucial, and "[b]y conveying our respect and acceptance of group-based and person-based differences, we encourage intercultural trust, inclusion, and connection" (p. 112). Japanese students appreciated their professors and domestic students when they validated their personal identities, not as internationals but as individuals. Taro felt that he received respect from his academic advisor, and he appreciated it. He said:

> My advisor treats me as a professional...for example, when she sent a mass email
>
> to all Japanese instructors, she referred to me as "Mr." But when she speaks to me
>
> in private settings, she calls me by my first name. She is fluent in Japanese, so she
>
> is conscious about how to refer to people depending on the situation.
>
> Yuji, Mari, Asami, and Jiro also appreciated when their personal and professional

identities were validated in both classroom and professional contexts.

On the other hand, Mari felt that she was disrespected by her peers in her master's program. She said:

> They [my American peers] claim that "I speak Spanish, I speak German, I speak Japanese!"...but when I claim that I speak Spanish, most of them do not believe it because I am an international student. They were so rude to think that Asian people cannot [speak Spanish]. There are Spanish Departments in Japan as well. Spanish is a second language for both Americans and Japanese at this point...This kind of incident happened a lot in the program.

Mari felt that her peers stereotyped international students, that they were incompetent with any language. Mari was not the only one who felt disrespected. Taro heard similar things from his Japanese friends who were taking the same program as Mari. He said:

> I heard from my Japanese said that American students in their program are not so supportive of international students. American students in the department seem to be harsh on international students. I don't know why they are so harsh on them, but I think that those American students who are studying their own language [English] feel pressure to work with foreigners and non-native English speakers...and they take it for granted that non-native English speakers cannot do well and they become negative to the Japanese students who are not native English speakers.

This chilly climate may come from cultural misunderstanding. Japanese students tend to see American classroom as competitive when they introduce themselves and assert their opinions. People from collectivistic cultures such as Japan tend to see this competitiveness as negative and not inclusive. Additionally, because of their experience growing up in a large power distance culture, Japanese students sometimes hesitate to approach to their professors, which creates distance between their professors and themselves. Jiro felt comfortable talking with his professor of a class where he participated well; but he did not feel comfortable talking with his professor in a class where he did not participate well. He said:

> I still feel a much larger power distance between my professors and me compared to American students. Like, American students talk to professors like they talk to their friends. I don't talk to my professors about what happens in my daily life. I have not had a relationship like that with my professors.

Students like Jiro may appreciate that professors talk to them and show them caring attitudes, such as making eye contact or asking "how are you doing?" rather than waiting until they approach the professor. In U.S. higher education institutions, students are encouraged not only to develop academic competence but also "to demonstrate interactional competence in social settings in order to do well in school" (Gilmore, 1985, p. 139). However, the large power distance cultural tendency made Jiro hesitate to approach his professors or domestic peers in class. From a cultural cognitive and affective perspective, I have discussed that all of my research participants wanted their

professors and domestic peers to understand and get to know them by paying more attention to them and showing an interest in learning about their culture.

Past Experience with American Classroom Style

The class that Yuji took in his undergraduate program in Japan prepared him for his study abroad experience in the U.S. The American-educated Japanese professor used a syllabus and an American-style grading system, so Yuji was already familiar with American grading and expectations of faculty. He said:

One of my professor 's class used a syllabus which stated grading percentages for each class assignment and activity, and there was a [required] presentation. We were required to read a lot and to write papers in English. We even had a lot of work in class, but that was not reflected on our grade…but thanks to the class, I could adjust to [U.S.] culture easily. I can appreciate the hard experience now.

Japanese graduate students who have experienced American teaching and learning styles have an easier transition to American classrooms. To help students who don't have previous experience in American-style classrooms, university departments can offer a meeting for new international students, facilitated by experienced international students in order to share their experience with the new students and share tips on how to be successful in their American academic life.

Language Factors

English language proficiency is one of the most important factors affecting international students' academic success in American graduate programs (Chapman,

Wan, & Xu, 1988; Reinick, 1986). English language proficiency is crucial for international students' success in their academic performance, social interactions, and general adjustment (Spaulding & Flack, 1976). Lacking language proficiency is the biggest obstacle in American classrooms where active involvement and oral presentation are required. All Japanese students encounter this challenge. From a language perspective, the following themes emerged: a lack of language proficiency; instructions; warm invitation and inclusion by faculty members and domestic students; reflection papers for connecting to faculty members; and opportunities for domestic students to help international students.

Lack of Language Proficiency

In the American academic environment of constructive pedagogy, students are encouraged to interact with their peers and faculty members to promote their learning in constructive ways, which is learning from one another. As Lin (2006) stated, students have to have a high level of language proficiency to answer challenging questions posed by instructors and students, to ask challenging questions based on readings, to clearly justify one's arguments, and to clarify one's assertions and reasoning. An interactive classroom discussion approach requires a high level of language proficiency. In order to be successful in the American academic environment, merely having grammatical competence is not at all good enough.

My research participants had challenges participating in interactive class activities such as brainstorming, discussion, debate, presentation, and group activities, especially

early on in their graduate programs. Yuji had a hard time keeping up with speedy

conversation in the classroom, but over time got better with participating. Yuji said:

> I wanted to contribute in class discussion, but I could not. The class discussion's
>
> speed was too fast. Now I reflect on the experience, it took time to think and
>
> understand…Everybody raised a hand, and the instructor facilitated and pointed
>
> out students. I asked the instructor if I could go back to the former topic. Gradually,
>
> my response time became shorter.
>
> Taro also said: "if you are not fluent with English, you have to do extra work, even

for an easy project, because of language and cultural barrier." According to Liu, "Asian

students, especially the less self-assured, less competent, and less experienced, need

time to prepare their comments or questions and need a supportive classroom

environment" (p. 197). Japanese students who just started their graduate program

needed extra time before they felt comfortable raising their hands and participating.

Domestic students who actively participate in class discussions sometimes cannot

tolerate Japanese students' slow speaking pace; and Japanese students sometimes can be

intimidated to speak up in class because they may be ridiculed by domestic students,

particularly in nonverbal ways such as by yawning or reading books while the Japanese

student is talking.

Mari and Asami were laughed at by domestic students because of their accents or

grammatical mistakes, so they became extremely self-conscious. Mari talked about her

experience of being laughed at for her English. She said that international students do

not have native speaker intuition, like knowing correct grammatical structure, so their unnatural English sounds funny to native speakers. Despite her fear of losing face, she fought with this anxiety and made a commitment to speak up in the classroom. Still, Mari felt very uncomfortable with her peers' reaction to her. She said:

> Everybody was exchanging their opinions [in class]. When I opened my mouth,
> suddenly everybody became quiet. This happened in one of my classs. I thought,
> why are people so surprised when I speak up? Is that so unexpected? Or did they
> think a PANDA BEAR spoke up? They gave me merciless reaction.

This chilly classroom climate continues until Japanese students acquire better language competencies. Language competencies mean not only grammatical competence but also other communicative skills. Canale (1983) stated that to be successful in U.S. higher education, international students need competencies, in which there are four major components in the communication process. The first component is grammatical competence, which includes knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, and syntax. The second component is socio-linguistic competence, which includes rules of appropriateness governing the use of forms and meanings in different contexts. The third component is discourse competence, which includes the knowledge required to combine forms and meanings to achieve unified spoken and written discourse. The fourth component is strategic competence, which includes knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies. It takes time to acquire these language competencies.

In addition to these four components, having prior major-related study experience can help a Japanese student in the U.S. Taro earned his M.A. in English literature in a university in Japan, and he said that he was already familiar with some content of a class, which he took in his master's program at UC because he had studied literature theory in his master's program in Japan.

Instructions

Japanese students who are in the process of acquiring language proficiency always appreciate clear instructions. However, if a professor gives stories which are not so much related to the main point of his or her lecture, Japanese students get confused. Mari sometimes had a hard time knowing which part was chatting and which part was lecture; and how those different stories the professor told were connected to one another. Mari said:

> I took a class from a professor whose instruction was very circular and very conceptual, so I did not know which direction she was going or when she came back to a particular topic. I could not keep up with her in her class. Other professor, who gave me a C-, was very conceptual, and I did not know when he was making small talk and when he was addressing the class subject. That made me very nervous.

Taro also shared his Japanese peer's frustration with a professor's organization style. He said:

I was not so frustrated with the professor's teaching style, but my Japanese

colleague was very frustrated...The professor's syllabus was not clear. He was

process oriented and decided how he would conduct his class depending on the

situation, so students did not know if he would give an assignment or not. When

we agreed to do projects, it became our assignment. The class was not organized at

all...I enjoyed the professor's style, but my Japanese colleague did not.

Taro's Japanese colleague wanted to attain good grades but were often not

confident enough to speak up to gain understanding about the instructor's course plan or

expectations. Taro said that a syllabus is like a contract between an instructor and the

students, so it has to be clear. Japanese students, coming from a strong uncertainty

avoidance culture, appreciate receiving a clearly described syllabus and hearing their

professors' expectations about when assignments are due and if there will be extra

assignments.

Reflection Papers for Connecting to Faculty Members

Reflection papers allowed Mari to express her feelings and difficult experience in

her doctoral program with her professor. They became an outlet for her because she

could tell her professor about her feelings. Japanese students appreciate emotional

support from faculty members. Leong and Sedlacek (1986) stated that the support from

faculty in meaningful relationships and interaction and students' professional

development can provide protection for international students from stress and

depression in their U.S. academic experience. Mari liked the reflection paper as a tool to

express her emotions. She said: "I like reflection papers. I like that my doctoral program classes use them. We do our projects and discuss them, then do readings. Then we write reflection papers by reflecting on our experience."

Mari said that projecting her emotions and feelings in her reflection papers was good because they are an academic assignment, so she won't just complain about what happened in her class. Instead, she had the chance to discuss her issues and problems by referring to theories and concepts that she learned in class. She and other research participants were reflective observers, so that reflection papers were their favorite assignment. Writing reflection papers also helps enhance their critical thinking skills because the students have to think about their experience objectively and subjectively by referring to theories and concepts from class. This also helped her to reflect inwardly and learn about herself as well as American culture. Reflection paper assignments also helped Mari's professors understand about her and her transition stress in her doctoral program.

More Opportunities for Domestic Students to Help International Students

Jiro suggested that American institutions should provide more opportunities for domestic students to help and interact with international students. He said:

I wish we had more resources for international students, and that professors were aware of how they use American cultural references, which people who did not grow up in the U.S. do not understand. The institution where I received my master's degree has very high awareness in that sense. They provide graduate

teaching assistants or tutors for international students, so there are two graduate

teaching assistants per class. For example, there are two or three graduate teaching

assistants in a statistics laboratory.

Several studies suggested that interacting with domestic students enhances

international student adjustment to American classrooms (Surdam & Collins, 1984;

Yang, Yang, Teraoka, Eichenfield, & Audas, 1994; Zimmerman, 1995). Some domestic

students are also interested in working with international students, but they do not know

how to begin to interact with them. By providing domestic students a system to involve

them with international students, for example, tutoring and mentoring both international

and domestic students can receive benefit from it. Faculty can select domestic students

who are willing to work with international students and who regularly do well to help

them in order to provide quality support for them.

Summary

In summary, the findings were discussed in three categories: challenges that

Japanese students experienced and support that they needed from a *cultural factors,*

pedagogical factors, and *language factors*. In *cultural factors*, I discussed cognitive and

affective elements. In cognitive elements, three themes emerged, including: (1) lack of

American cultural reference points; (2) lack of knowing American cultural

appropriateness; and (3) support networks inside and outside of class. Japanese students

from a collectivistic and strong uncertainty avoidance culture became self-conscious

when they were in a group where people discussed what those Japanese students did not

know. This made them quiet and intimidated, because they did not know what was or was not appropriate before they took action, so they became quiet. In response, those Japanese students stressed the importance of creating supportive networks to learn cultural references and communication skills. They learned those from their friends, especially those outside of the class.

In affective elements, four themes emerged, including: (1) impatience to differences; (2) superficial relationships; (3) miscommunication about making appointments and asking a favor; (4) mindful listening to Japanese students; and (5) pre-departure research. Intercultural transition sometimes resulted in pain for Japanese students who have a low tolerance for ambiguity. Their expectations for making good friends were sometimes violated by intercultural misunderstanding. The Japanese students appreciated their faculty and peers' mindful listening to them to get to know them not as international students, but personally, beyond common stereotypes of foreign students.

In *pedagogical factors*, five themes emerged, including: (1) low-context classrooms; (2) interactive class activities; (3) domestically-focused content; (4) mutual respect; and (5) past experience with American classroom style. Japanese students who grew up in teacher-centered pedagogy, where students were expected to memorize what they were taught from their professors, faced challenges when they studied in student-centered pedagogy, where faculty tried to enhance students' assertiveness, self-motivation, autonomy, and self-efficacy. Japanese students sometimes lost face,

which lowered their self-esteem due to not being able to participate in class discussions or by making mistakes. But those who felt respected by their faculty and peers were better able to motivate themselves in their challenging new cultural experience.

In *language factors*, five themes emerged, including: (1) lack of language proficiency; (2) instructions; (3) reflection papers for connecting to faculty members; (4) more opportunities for domestic students to help international students. Due to their lack of language proficiency, Japanese students sometimes could not keep up with speedy conversations in class, and they were intimidated from participating in class activities and discussions. It was also challenging for them to understand lectures when their professor used a circular approach when giving lectures. They tended to be confused about what the point was in a lecture, and what they should focus on. In situations like that, Japanese students appreciated warm invitations to joining small-group activities and discussions. One Japanese student liked reflection papers as a tool for communicating with her professor. She used it as an outlet for sharing her feelings and anxiety with her professor. Japanese students always appreciated receiving more support from domestic students, and one of the Japanese students commented that it would be great if a graduate teaching assistant could help him as a tutor.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was designed to address two research questions: (a) What are the

challenges that Japanese students experience related to their intercultural transition into

U.S. graduate-level classrooms? (b) What kinds of support have Japanese graduate

students needed or appreciated in learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in

their graduate-level classrooms? Data were collected through individual interviews with

five students (three interviews with all but one informant). This concluding chapter

discusses further the research findings and analysis of findings. It includes theoretical

analysis of intercultural misunderstandings, which are the primary cause for the sense of

a chilly classroom climate by Japanese students studying in American classroom

contexts. It also offers potential ways to mitigate the chilly classroom climate.

The nature of culture is complex, and utilizing dichotomous classification of

intercultural concepts such as individualism and collectivism may seem oversimplified

and stereotypical. Japanese and Americans have similar values, and variations of

cultural values exist in both cultures, which are manifested differently depending on

context. From a general perspective, Japanese culture leans toward high-context and

U.S. culture leans toward low-context. Thus, using cultural values like high-context,

which depends heavily on nonverbal expressions, and low-context, which depends

heavily on verbal expressions, helps to discuss cultural misunderstanding in diverse but

generally low-context American classrooms. Considering the potential risk of

contributing to stereotypes with my analysis, I conduct further discussion below about

cultural misunderstanding in American classroom contexts. Following the discussion, I

present suggestions for faculty members, domestic students, higher education

administrators in U.S. institutions, and Japanese students. This chapter concludes with

contributions of the study and areas for future research, and a conclusion.

Discussion of Analysis of Findings

Introduction

In Chapter One, I argued that the three main difficulties highlighted by Asian

international students are cultural differences, different learning styles, and language

problems (Wong, 2004). From the findings, in chapter four, more specific factors

emerged about the challenges that Japanese students encountered and the support that

they needed or appreciated; then from the analysis of findings, in chapter five,

intercultural misunderstanding emerged as a significant factor of the chilly classroom

climate. Intercultural misunderstanding comes from ignorance about different cultures

or ethnocentric views, such as ignoring cultural differences or interpreting events as

negative or disrespectful. I also saw that warm support from faculty and domestic

students can mitigate the challenges of Japanese students. In this discussion section, I

look further into cultural misunderstanding by following the diagram below. Then, I

summarize the support that Japanese students really wanted. Finally, I present how to

enhance mutual understanding and cultural competencies.

Intercultural Misunderstanding

When different cultures meet, misunderstanding happens. As Barna (1991)

suggested, there are a variety of sources of misunderstanding, such as "assuming

similarity instead of difference, language problems, nonverbal misunderstanding, the

presence of preconceptions and stereotypes, the tendency to evaluate, and the high

anxiety that often exist in intercultural encounters" (p. 343). In this research I found that

the cultural misunderstanding that Japanese students experienced in American

classroom contexts were caused from a lack of language competencies and a variety of

factors related to culture shock. The next figure 4 summarizes a process of intercultural

misunderstanding of Japanese students in American classroom contexts.

Low-context American cultural classroom	High-context Japanese students' cultural lenses	Japanese students saw U.S. domestic students as:	Japanese students felt:
●Individualistic communication style	●Collectivistic communication style	●Confident	●Intimidated
●Direct communication style	● Indirect communication style	●Aggressive	●Offended
●Task orientation	●Relationship orientation	●Risk takers	●Loss of face
●Small power distance	●Large power distance	●Participating actively	●Humiliated
●Student centered learning style	●Teacher centered learning style	●Knowledgeable about American cultures & cultural norms	●Ignored
●Taking initiative & seizing opportunities	●Virtue of *enryo* (self-inhibition)		●Isolated
●Weak uncertainty avoidance	●Strong uncertainty Avoidance		●Low self-esteem
●Knowing & sharing American cultural reference	●Lack of American cultural reference		●Inferior
●Knowing American cultural norms & appropriateness	●Limited Understanding of American cultural norms & appropriateness		●Fear of the unknown
			●Quiet/silenced

(Looking at American cultural values through Japanese cultural lenses)

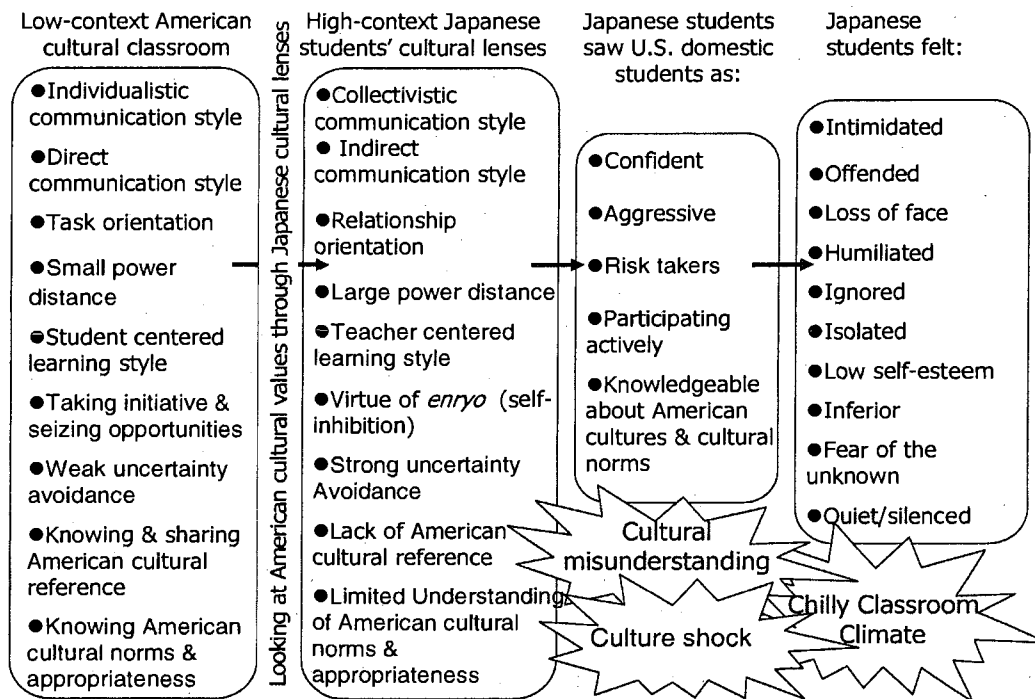Cultural misunderstanding — Culture shock — Chilly Classroom Climate

Figure 4. Process of intercultural misunderstanding of Japanese students in American classroom contexts.

When the Japanese students in my research began to study in American classroom contexts, they saw the world through their high-context cultural lenses and still did not recognize objectively the cultural value differences between Japan and the U.S. Some of them may have already known about the cultural differences, but they were not ready to accept them. The cultural differences include individualistic versus collectivistic, direct communication style versus indirect communication style, small power distance versus large power distance, task-orientation versus relationship-orientation, and weak uncertainty avoidance versus strong uncertainty avoidance. Pedagogical differences include student-centered learning style versus teacher-centered learning style and taking the initiative and seizing opportunities versus the virtue of enryo (self-inhibition). In addition to these cultural and pedagogical aspects, we must look at the role of American cultural references and norms in the classroom. Domestic students were obviously knowledgeable about American cultural references and norms while Japanese students struggled with them. However, the Japanese students interpreted the American students' actions through their own cultural frames of reference, creating the sense of a chilly classroom climate. The American students' communication styles and attitudes, their confidence, aggressiveness, risk taking, active participation, and familiarity with American cultures and cultural norms left the Japanese students feeling intimidated, offended, losing face, humiliated, ignored, isolated, and inferior, leaving them with low self-esteem, fear of the unknown, and silenced.

On the American students' and faculty members' side, the findings revealed that their cultural misunderstanding of Japanese students' attitudes and behaviors affected them as well, hindering their motivation to learn about the Japanese students (cognitive), accepting them (affective), or working together with them (behavioral). However, in this research, I did not interview them and did not listen to their subjective experiences of working with Japanese students; instead, I want to focus on the Japanese students to discuss intercultural misunderstanding from their perspective, to look at their experience studying abroad in the U.S.

Japanese students felt the chilly classroom climate most severely when they were in their intercultural transition period, when they had just started to study in their graduate program. Bennett (1998) explained that transition shock/culture shock may be viewed as a defense mechanism in reaction to a threat to one's worldview. Bennett (1998) suggested that:

> Our first reaction is to fight for the survival of our worldview and to rescue it by reaching for our defenses. But the only defenses we have are those from our own culture, defenses which are rarely helpful in the new culture. Our sense of alienation increases as our defense mechanisms drive us further from understanding the culture. The old frame of reference does not help in the least, but it's all we have, so we protect it furiously. Perhaps in doing so, we prolong culture shock and delay the acquisition of a new frame of reference. (p. 219)

There is a saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." However, in this way, the cultural transition could lead to more cultural misunderstanding between Japanese students and domestic faculty and students, which may create conflict rather than collaborative work or mutual understanding. Berlo (1960) asserted that when only one side is learning from the other culture, it is not good. Intercultural misunderstanding will be perpetual until both sides become aware of their cultural differences and accept them. It is crucial that both sides, Japanese and U.S., learn not only their counterpart's cultural core values but also more about their own for mutual understanding. This approach will benefit all students and faculty by expanding everyone's intercultural perspective.

Individualistic Communication Style Versus Collectivistic Communication Style

Relatively speaking, Americans are individualistic, independent and free from group obligations, while Japanese are collectivistic and considerably more group-oriented. In U.S. classrooms, American students speak their own opinions and sometime affirm verbally that they are right and good without hesitation. Yet American students' self-affirming and self-assured statements such as "I can speak Spanish" or "I am good at..." were perceived as overly confident and aggressive by Japanese students, who hesitate to express verbally their confidence as individuals. According to Liu (2001), Asian students are willing to speak up, but the excessive participation of American peers in their classes sometimes intimidates them. This happened to my research participants. As I discussed in the analysis of findings, it is taken as a virtue for Japanese students to suppress their individuality in Japanese culture, while it is a virtue

to be self-confident and assertive in the U.S. (Maynard, 1997). Also, Japanese students

are part of an interdependent group, so that standing out in the group is risky. As

Japanese proverb says, "the post that sticks up gets pounded down." These differences

may create a perception gap between Japanese and American students and result in the

chilly classroom climate for Japanese students. Americans can interpret Japanese to be

"submissive" at the same time Japanese students interpret Americans as "aggressive."

Direct Communication Style Versus Indirect Communication Style

Another example of intercultural misunderstanding between Japanese and

American speakers is related to communication style differences. As Nemetz Robinson

(1988) articulated, "[m]isunderstandings between Japanese and American speakers are

also influenced by different ways of structuring information. The American value of

directness is contrasted with the Japanese value of maintaining harmony. Japanese use a

variety of conventions to avoid direct disagreement" (p. 57). My research participants,

especially Asami and Mari, reported that they felt that they were attacked verbally by

their peers in small-group discussion or in class discussion. For students from a

collectivistic culture, such experiences were shocking and they felt a loss of face or were

humiliated and even offended. Hyde (1993) said that when she observed different

modes of classroom interaction in an ESL program, those who complained most about

domineering partners were Japanese students. Hyde analyzed that Japanese students

may take assertiveness as domineering or rude, for example, disagreeing to another's

face or interrupting someone when they are working with a partner, while such

communication tends to be taken as a positive thing in U.S. culture. For my research participants, it was hard to know the degree of their American peers' directness when they felt that they were being verbally attacked. Japanese students from relationship-oriented culture may take the direct disagreement as a personal attack or as being unwelcoming, which can cause a chilly classroom climate. Asami commented, "We always have arguments in class discussions. It is amazing, but after [the American students] stepped out from the classroom, they forget about that." It was surprising for Japanese students that American students still talked to each other after a heated argument.

Task-Orientation Versus Relationship-Orientation

One of the reasons that American students can separate their arguments in class and friendships outside of class may relate to America's task-oriented culture. Where Japanese students tend to take a relationship-oriented approach to group activities, Americans emphasize task-oriented thinking that de-emphasizes feelings. That is not to say Americans are detached from emotion, or that Japanese are overly attached, but when it comes to group activities, Japanese students are very sensitive to interpersonal harmony. The Japanese concept of face-saving, demonstrated by avoiding confrontation with peers and the sense of guilt in expressing disagreement with faculty of authority, figures strongly in these research findings. Marko or Jiro felt unwelcomed as in-group members when American students huddled together and focused on getting things done in small-group activities or even in casual conversation in class, rather than getting to

know each member and showing respect. Marko felt intimidated and isolated in task-oriented activities without the opportunity to establish good relationships in the group first. Before entering his graduate program, Jiro expected to make good friends in class, but he was somewhat disappointed with the superficial nature of his relationships with his peers that left him feeling isolated.

Small Power Distance Versus Large Power Distance

In addition to the task-oriented American classroom context, graduate-level classrooms can be very competitive, especially when students also have professional careers. My research participants, who were from a large power distance culture, sometimes felt intimidated when they saw domestic students from a small power distance culture challenging their instructors in class. In a small power distance culture, faculty members encourage students to be assertive and share their thoughts and opinions in class. American students' direct ways of interacting with their professors, however, tend to be taken as aggressive by Japanese students. Asami commented that students seem to have more power than their faculty members in the U.S., and she even asserted that professors were not doing their jobs. Conversations were dominated by a certain group of students and they would get upset if the professor tried to make a rule to distribute the time equally to other students in class discussions. Japanese students are used to a learning environment where "blind obedience to the teacher [is] expressed by listening attentively and concealing and tolerating disagreement" (Liu, 2001, p. 176). My research participants reported that they even hesitated to call professors by their first

names. Traditional Asian culture emphasizes obedience, proper conduct, moral training, and the fulfillment of social obligations (Bond, 1986). Jiro observed that his American peers were talking to their professors like they were friends, but he thought he could not act like that. This cross-cultural gap of power distance between Japanese and U.S. values resulted in one of the most challenging issues for the Japanese students.

Student-Centered Learning Style Versus Teacher-Centered Learning Style

Japanese students who are used to traditional teacher-centered classroom environments, such as lecture or activities facilitated closely by faculty, tend to be self-conscious and quiet in the classroom. Thus, all of my research participants had a hard time participating in brainstorming activities in their American classes. Taro and Jiro kept quiet because they did not want to stand out by saying something inappropriate or out of context. Japanese students from a collectivistic culture tend to focus on context when considering how to participate properly. This behavior may be taken as less creative or less innovative by others. By contrast, American students from an individualistic culture tend to consider how to present their unique perspectives or examples in class discussions. My research participants took this as inappropriate behavior or self-centered. As Gannon (1994) pointed out, group work by Japanese people is "just like the water droplet, the individual is significant only in so far as he or she represents the group" (p. 264). Everybody is in the same pool of water, so each individual's responsibilities are "[c]ooperativeness, reasonableness, and understanding of others" (p. 264). Japanese students from a high-context, collectivistic, and

relationship-oriented culture tend to take more time to get to know others and decide who should take the initiative and who should assume other roles before they get to work as a group. They have to build relationships with each group member first to know their personal boundaries, personality, age, and other important elements. Additionally, it is challenging for Japanese students to keep up with American students' fast-paced conversation due to their generally low communication competencies in English. This pedagogical difference requires Japanese students to learn cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally in an unfamiliar student-centered learning environment.

Taking the Initiative and Seizing Opportunities Versus the Virtue of Enryo

In a student-centered learning environment, it is required that each individual be responsible and take the initiative to offer ideas and opinions in order to create a temporal group quickly to get things done. As opposed to American students' positive attitudes toward taking the initiative, Japanese students tend toward *enryo* (self-inhibition) and see Americans' behavior as aggressive. My research participant Jiro hesitated to speak up in class because he could not elaborate on his opinions. He was always using *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to figure out when and what was appropriate to speak up in class. Yuji also hesitated to interrupt his peers in small-group discussion. Yuji pointed out that acquiring the skill to interrupt group conversation was crucial to participating in the discussion because there is no structured turn-taking from his perspective. In American classrooms, an instructor sometimes proposes that students set ground-rules to create a fair learning environment. The general rules that I

have always heard are "give everybody time to talk," "respect others' opinions," and

"listen to others attentively." In a teacher-centered Japanese classroom, students listen

to an instructor and they do not talk much, so that ground rules to regulate students' oral

participation aren't required. This cultural difference became an additional challenge for

the Japanese students in my research.

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance Culture Versus Strong Uncertainty Avoidance

Culture

In the classroom context, generally speaking, those who take the initiative to

participate tend to exhibit weak uncertainty avoidance, while those who tend toward

enryo (self-inhibition) tend to exhibit strong uncertainty avoidance. My research

participants used their *sasshi* (sensitive guessing ability) to learn when to speak up, what

to say, and even what tone of voice to use in order to figure out appropriate ways to

participate in the class activities. They needed more time to go through their

communication process before speaking. People from strong uncertainty avoidance

cultures are intolerance of deviant individuals and ideas (Hofstede, 1992), while people

from weak uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to be tolerant of deviant individuals and

ideas so that each individual tends to feel at ease sharing their unique points of view

(Hofstede, 1997). In this way, Japanese students tend to wait until they find the right

time to say what they are thinking, which results in missed opportunities for

participating. They also stay silent in class because of concerns about making mistakes

and saving face through risk avoidance. Uncertain situations made my research

participants observe discussions rather than actively participate in them, and they felt

silenced in small-group activities because of cultural differences. This contributed to a

chilly classroom climate for them due their not being acknowledged. Taro and Yuji said

that they did not like small-group discussion, because they stood out for not being able

to keep up with the fast pace of conversation in the group. Yuji said that being quiet

made him stand out because everyone else was discussing actively. This is an interesting

observation, but in Japanese classrooms, they stand out by being talkative. By contrast,

in American classrooms, they stand out by being quiet. In both contexts, Japanese

classrooms and American classrooms, Japanese students felt uncomfortable standing

out in the group, which may come from their uncertainty avoidance and collectivists'

cultural values.

Lack of Knowledge About American Cultural References and Limited

Understanding of American Cultural Norms and Appropriateness

Lack of knowledge about American cultural references and limited understanding

of American cultural norms and appropriateness also contribute to Japanese students'

level of uncertainly. These factors increased my research participants' fear of the

unknown and increased their anxiety. Japanese students tend to hesitate to ask questions

or speak up in class because they tend to be afraid of making mistakes in speaking in

English and stopping the flow of conversation, which ends up in their losing face. Taro

said, "I think unconsciously that I don't want to lose face by asking or saying anything

stupid." In diverse American classrooms, students from diverse backgrounds have

lower predictability of interaction and emotional exchange, which made my research

participants be even more observers than active participants in class. In student-centered

classrooms, interaction among students or between professors and students is also

usually counted as a part of grading. Students sometimes evaluate other students in

small-group activities. My research participants, who were used to lecture-only classes,

were sometimes overwhelmed by their urgent need to learn American cultural norms as

well as American cultural references. Mari and Asami strongly felt that they were

becoming a burden for faculty and peers in their classes because they were culturally

different and ignorant of local norms. This feeling negatively affected their self-esteem

and caused them feelings of being excluded. Taro also repeated that, because of his lack

of American cultural references, he could not speak up in class much, and that every

time he missed the opportunity to speak up, he felt like he was being punched in his

stomach. This cultural anxiety eventually accumulated until he went to see his counselor

to ask for help to overcome his transition stress.

Support That Japanese Students Really Wanted

Japanese students appreciate a sense of inclusion and the feeling of belonging to a

group, and this kind of support is essential for their success in American classrooms.

Yuji and Taro felt that there was an inclusive atmosphere in their classes, which they

appreciated. Taro liked to be greeted in Japanese. He also appreciated his peers listening

attentively to him during his presentations. In contrast, Mari did not feel an inclusive

atmosphere in her classes. She felt that she was unwelcomed, ignored by her peers, and

uncared for by her instructors. This resulted in her feelings of isolation and low self-esteem. One of the stress factors of international students is their being treated as invisible and being ignored in group settings (Paige, 1993). Jiro did not have sense of belonging to his peer group because of superficial interaction with domestic students. As Christine Cress (1999) asserted, in the collegiate environment, it is crucial for each student to feel important and cared for by others (peers, faculty, and staff), and students must have a sense of belonging in order to grow, develop, and succeed. The sense of belonging and respect for their cultural identity can give Japanese students feelings of security in their identity. Barna (as cited in Bennett) suggested that, "[if you] become secure in your own identity…there is little chance for serious loss of self-esteem and more freedom for open investigation" (1998, p. 220).

In addition to the sense of inclusion, feeling respected and acknowledged are important factors for supporting Japanese students. As Asami and Yuji pointed out, they did not appreciate support that came with the attitude that they were children to be taken care of. It was hard to know if these Japanese students were misinterpreting their peers' nonverbal communication, but Asami felt of a loss of face when her peers would say to her, "Poor you! Let me know anything I can help you with!" as if she were a child. She did not receive actual help from them, but instead learned that she could not count on them to follow through with their offers to help her. Yuji, who appreciated a lot of support from his peers, also he told me that he did not want to receive special attention in class. He wanted to be treated as other domestic students by faculty. This kind of

attention made both Yuji and Asami miserable and negatively affected their self-esteem.

They wanted to be respected and did not appreciate being seen as inferior just because

they were international students. In regard to acknowledgment, Mari wanted to be

acknowledged by her peers for her ability to speak Spanish. But, she felt stereotyped by

her peers, as if no Japanese student could speak Spanish. Jiro felt that his peers did not

acknowledge his Japanese ethnic identity at all. He was not comfortable that they

treated him as if he were an American.

Ting-Toomey (1999) argued that culture-sensitive knowledge is "the process of

in-depth understanding of important intercultural communication concepts that 'really

make a difference'" (p. 266). By learning Japanese and U.S. intercultural core values,

Japanese students and domestic faculty and students can enhance mutual understanding.

Berlo (1960) argued that it is crucial to have mutual acknowledgement of each other's

culture and a willingness to accept different cultures in order to reach the highest level

of intercultural communication. Doing this will enhance intercultural competencies and

create a warm classroom climate that benefits all students in the classroom.

Enhancing Mutual Understanding and Cultural Competencies

Intercultural competencies are a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills

(Bennett, 2008). Bennett listed elements of each skill set: cognitive (knowledge of

cultural general and cultural specific, etc.); behavioral (empathy and listening skills,

etc.); and affective (curiosity and tolerance of ambiguity, etc.). All are indispensable to

attain for intercultural understanding. In addition to the cultural differences between

Japan and the U.S. discussed previously, I would like to address empathy as one of the most important behavioral skills. Bennett (1998) argued for the importance of empathy for mutual understanding. He asserted that sympathy is inadequate in intercultural communication, but not empathy. Wispé (1968) made a precise contrast of the meanings of sympathy and empathy: "[i]n empathy, one attends to the feelings of another; in sympathy, one attends the suffering of another, but the feelings are one's own" (p. 441). Bennett (1972) also articulated the difference between *sympathy* and *empathy*. *Sympathy* is "the imaginative placing of ourselves in another person's position" (p. 66). That is, "we are not taking the role of another person or imaging how the other person thinks and feels, but rather we are referencing how ourselves might think or feel in similar circumstances" (Bennett, 1998, p. 197). *Empathy* is, on the other hand, "how we might imagine the thoughts and feelings of other people from their own perspectives" (Bennett, 1998, p. 197).

The idea of empathy is similar to the *Platinum Rule*: "Do unto others as they would do unto themselves"; and the idea of sympathy is related to the *Golden Rule* "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" as Bennett (1998) suggested. This is an interesting observation, but I realized that both *Platinum Rule* and *Golden Rule* emphasize the "Do" part, which represents a Western cultural value of active-orientation. By contrast, in Eastern cultures, there is a saying, "Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself," from Confucius in Analects. It emphasizes "Do not" (or "Do not impose"), which represents the Eastern cultural value

of enryo (self-inhibition), which my parents taught me when I was a child. This cultural

difference is significant for understanding the different approaches to saying essentially

the same thing; and understanding this perspective increases one's curiosity of learning

from another culture. Janet Bennett (1998) asserted that curiosity is one of the most

important elements of developing affective skills of intercultural competency. We

become enriched as we engage our curiosity and learn about the ways and customs of

others from different cultures. Bennett also emphasized being curious while respecting

others in a culturally appropriate manner. In order to acquire culturally appropriate ways

of communicating with people from different cultures, again, there are three skill sets --

cognitive skills, behavioral skills, and affective skills -- which are interconnected and

also indispensable.

Summary

The chilly climate was magnified by culture shock that these Japanese students

encountered in their cultural transition. When they encountered different cultural values

in American classrooms, their Japanese frame of reference or worldview was threatened,

which caused culture shock. Then, intercultural misunderstanding only added to the

chilly classroom climate. The Japanese students always appreciated warm support from

faculty and domestic students because it helped mitigate their challenges in the

classroom. But intercultural misunderstanding tends to come from lack of knowledge

and ignorance about different cultures or ethnocentric views and being defensive toward

different frames of reference. At the end of their program, the Japanese students found it

more stimulating to exchange ideas with those from different cultural backgrounds, even it was very challenging for them. The diverse nature of American classrooms gave them opportunities for exploring and understanding cultural differences and complexities; and this made them grow. To help enrich this process, I hope everybody on campus, including faculty, domestic students, international students, and staff members, will enhance their intercultural competency and create inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Suggestions for Faculty Members

In order to help Japanese students, creating a warm and welcoming classroom climate is the first and foremost task for faculty members. Simply greeting the international students with nonverbal gestures or checking how they are doing before or after class is very important for providing a sense of inclusion, not to mention making eye contact with them during lectures and nodding and smiling to express care for them, or giving them time when they are speaking in class. Japanese students from a collectivistic culture appreciate those small gestures, which give them a sense of belonging to the group. As I explained before, there is a higher threshold between in-group and out-group membership in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Along these lines, invitations such as welcoming, greeting, and asking those Japanese students questions would give them a sense of belonging to the in-group and help them to feel secure. This would also help the students feel comfortable approaching their professors as authority figures.

In the classroom, faculty can support Japanese students by affirming their effort whenever they speak up and encouraging them to share cultural knowledge when the timing is right for them and for the class without pushing them. Japanese students appreciate when a professor discusses international and intercultural issues in class, not just domestic issues, and doing so may broaden domestic students' knowledge about interests outside of the U.S. Faculty can also create a study partner system in class by giving domestic students extra credit for working with international students. In this way, Japanese students and domestic students can build friendships with each other. Japanese students, typically reflective observers in their learning styles, also appreciate receiving a clear syllabus, and if there are extra assignments, they appreciate when professors give a reminder about them. They also appreciate when faculty define jargon or slang, which is culturally related, as much as they can. Reflection papers are also helpful for both Japanese students and professors. Japanese students can share their feelings and thoughts in a constructive way with their professors, and their professors can learn about what their international students are going through.

Another thing that faculty can do for international students in general is to provide information for them about resources such as writing centers, campus recreation centers, or study groups for international students. For Japanese graduate students, they appreciate when professors encourage them to visit during office hours. Doing so makes for a welcoming environment that helps bridge the power distance culture gap. International students under stress appreciate meaningful relationships with faculty,

such as when faculty mentor students for their professional development (Leong & Sedlacek, 1986). If faculty can enhance their intercultural competencies and deepen their cognitive, affective, and behavioral understanding toward the multicultural classroom, they can provide a quality learning environment that minimizes intercultural misunderstanding for Japanese students and domestic students alike.

Suggestions for Domestic Students

Japanese students from a collectivistic and relational culture expect a welcoming and supportive environment. Because of language barriers and culture shock, Japanese students may have difficulty expressing themselves in the classroom, and it may be hard for domestic students to be patient and listen to them attentively. However, listening to Japanese students mindfully and asking questions about them and their Japanese culture can definitely help the Japanese students begin to interact with domestic students. Sometimes, Japanese students need more time to express their thoughts and process the information and questions that they receive, so domestic students need to be patient. Liu (2001) stated that, "Asian students were more likely to participate in class discussions when they had social support from their teachers or peers" (p. 197). Domestic students may struggle with how to interact with Japanese and other international students. Those who have limited international experience can learn about the challenges of studying abroad through working with international students.

Domestic students' impatience to differences toward Japanese students may enhance the chilly classroom climate, so that Japanese students feel a loss of face,

exclusion, stereotyping, and discrimination. This happens when Japanese students have little sense of predictability about how interactions with domestic students will go. The result is less emotional security and negative feelings toward the counterpart. If we do not appreciate cultural differences but instead ignore them, we lose the opportunity to learn from our differences. But the burden in this case is on the domestic students to initiate and be receptive to intercultural communication. As Miller (1992) contended, "[a] dominant group, inevitably, has the greatest influence in determining a culture's overall outlook -- its philosophy, morality, social theory, and even its science. The dominant group, thus, legitimizes the unequal relationship and incorporates it into society's guiding concepts" (p. 23). Miller also argued that dominant groups usually impede the development of subordinates and block their freedom of expression and action. This statement may sound harsh toward people of the dominant group, but it refers to unconscious acts and describes them as normal phenomena, without judgment. It is important for us to understand this situation and enhance our empathetic approach to people of the non-dominant group, in this case international students including those from Japan.

Suggestions for Institutions

This research indicated that some faculty members' and domestic students' cultural awareness was not as high as my research informants expected. Institutions should provide intercultural communication training for faculty and staff members who provide service to international students, such as the health center, writing center,

cashier's office, library, student recreation service, student housing, gymnasium, and cafeteria. Institutions should also require all domestic and international students to take at least one intercultural communication course. I would also emphasize that instructors should be adequately trained and they should be able to use their intercultural experience and intercultural communication concepts in their intercultural training. It is also important to provide all students the opportunity to increase their intercultural competency to enhance mutual respect across different ethnicities on campus.

According to Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992), in order to provide strong social support for international students, programs should promote faculty mentoring, have more adequately trained academic advisers, and enhance support among program peers. There are some faculty who provide mentoring for international students. Institutions should acknowledge the importance of that work and provide incentives to encourage more faculty to work with international students.

At UC, the Office of International Services provides the International Mentor Program for international students. My colleague and I co-facilitated intercultural leadership workshops for the international mentors in 2007. They have provided great support for international students. Many mentors are international students, but the institution should encourage more domestic students to serve as mentors. Individual departments also should implement a mentor system to provide support for international students' academic work, and give incentives for those mentors. I created a study partner system when I was working as a graduate teaching assistant in the International

Studies department, and it went very well. In addition, having a more diverse population among faculty members in each department on campus would be great for sharing different cultural perspectives with all students. As Jiro suggested, recruiting students from the Peace Corps or students who have studied abroad would also provide different cultural perspectives on campus.

As another idea, English for second language (ESL) program should provide a course specifically for class participant skills and strategies in American classroom context in order to aid international students' transition to their regular classes and study with domestic students.

Of course, these efforts would require money. External funding can play an important role in compensating for scarce institutional funds. The following professional associations contribute to international education through scholarships, academic conferences, and other activities in the U.S.: International Institution of Education (IIE); National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA); Council on International Education Exchange Programs (CIEE); Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA); Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE); and International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP), among others. By creating partnerships with external professional organizations and businesses, institutions may also be able to receive funding or grant money for their internationalization development on campus.

Finally, as Harari and Reiff (1993) recommend, internationalization should be an

integral facet of the mission statement of institutions. The mission statement as a part of an institution's culture can become a great force for providing a supportive environment for international students. A mission statement and visual images that articulate the collaborative and inclusive learning environment, such as art, photos, and messages about the importance of learning from different cultures, may also be powerful forces for internationalization on campus.

Suggestions for Japanese Students

When Japanese students begin to study in the U.S., they should first know about transition shock and culture shock and remain aware of their reactions to living and studying abroad. Also, they should talk to international student advisors or even to friends from Japan, and ask for help from professional counselors on campus. It is quite normal to have culture shock; it is a sign of transformative experience and an opportunity to develop cultural transformation competence. In the classroom context, Japanese students have to acquire communication competencies in order to participate in discussions and activities with domestic students. Merely having high language skill is not sufficient for Japanese students to be able to perform culturally appropriately in American classrooms. Acquiring such competencies does not happen in a month, and perhaps not even in a year. It can require a long period of time to be unconsciously competent in a different culture. International students must engage in this valuable process of self discovery.

Ting-Toomey (1999) posited, "[i]t is through the mirror of others that we learn to know ourselves, and it is through facing our own discomfort and anxiety that we learn to stretch and grow" (p. 8). It is also crucial to learn about cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan. It is said that when we are out of our home culture, we are like "a fish out of water." We do not think about the cultural waters that we are raised in. It can be shocking to immerse ourselves into a different culture, much like jumping into different water. However, by learning different ways of communicating with people in the host culture, we can gradually start to communicate more smoothly, like fish gradually start to swim comfortably in new water. There is much tacit knowledge that we cannot adapt to immediately, such as nonverbal communication (body language, facial expressions, eye-contacts, tone of voice, touching, and space between people) and idiomatic expressions and slang. Japanese students, therefore, should be open-minded and curious about American culture and be motivated to seek out individuals who can serve as role models in the host culture.

Japanese students should try to interact with people inside and outside of the classroom. All of my research participants understood the importance of creating social support and networks with both Japanese students and domestic students. Networking with peers, faculty, friends, and the Japanese community helped feed them knowledge of American cultural references and other important elements for succeeding in their social and academic life. Japanese students who had the most smooth cultural transitions had strong social support networks among host nationals, teachers, fellow

students, their Japanese cultural groups, and other people in the community. Those who did not build a strong social support network suggested in their interviews that newcomers make sure to not make that mistake. Support from friends, not only Japanese but also Americans and those from other ethnic groups, also helps newcomers ease into the new environment and promote their cultural transformation and academic success. Finding mentors from both Japanese and U.S. cultures also helps to gain understanding of tacit American cultural knowledge. Liu (2001) reported that, "academic adjustment for international graduate students is closely related to their perceived language skills, especially in terms of note-taking, conversing with faculty, and participating in class discussions" (p. 5). Japanese students can learn those skills and techniques from their mentors and more senior students.

Liu (2001) suggested that, "[t]o maintain group membership, Asian students need to venture out of their own communities and immerse themselves with people in the target culture through various activities to acquire the commutative competence that is necessary to function as an in-group member of the target culture" (p. 226-227). Transition comes with the pain and sorrow of losing cultural tendencies that we cherish or rely on; but by embracing new ways of watching, thinking, feeling, and doing, we can enhance our empathy skills, namely intercultural competency. Doing this will allow us to accept and respect people from different cultures and adapt ourselves to those differences, which eventually elevate us to unconscious competency level. Once we

attain the level of intercultural competency, it becomes much easier to live in the different culture.

Pre-departure training is also really important for all international students to get information not only about intercultural transition, but also other tips for their academic success. Before departure, students can use the internet to research student life in the U.S. to learn in advance what they should know as Taro did. The International Student Office may also provide orientation programs designed for international students. As Mari strongly suggested, international students should attend these orientation sessions to make sure they receive correct information about immigration status and other important details of living abroad. By attending those sessions, they can start creating networks with the other participants. The Japanese students in my research experienced many challenges, but they all reflected on their hard experiences and appreciated them because they made them grow personally so much. They were much more confident about participating in discussions with native English speakers than they were previously.

Contributions

I hope that this study will contribute to the body of knowledge in education, and increase faculty members' understanding as well as domestic students' curiosity, awareness, understanding, and interest toward Japanese and all international students. It is very important to do this in order to create an environment of mutual understanding among teachers, domestic students, and international students. I also hope this study

helps Japanese students specifically to learn about their own cultural perspectives and motivate them to acquire language and other communicative competencies for their academic success in the U.S. Consequently, I hope this study enhances intercultural competency not only for faculty and students, but also staff members who work with international students, to promote international and intercultural learning environments.

Implications for Future Research

A few directions for future research have been identified throughout the course of this study. My research participants were from five different departments in social science, humanity, or education. Interviewing Japanese students from other majors such as sciences or business needs to be conducted to learn about their experiences as well. Regarding the results of Kolb's learning style inventory, all of my research participants were Reflective Observers, except Jiro, who was an Abstract Thinker, yet very close to being a Reflective Observer. Japanese students in business or science may show different results and different experiences in their American classroom experiences.

Another narrative study with domestic students and faculty in the same context would be informative to learn their perspectives about working with Japanese students, viewing things from the host culture's perspective. By understanding perceptions and assumptions on both sides, we might have the best opportunity for understanding the classroom dynamics and ideas for how faculty, domestic students, and international students should position themselves to create a truly inclusive atmosphere in the classroom.

Finally, in this study, I focused on challenges that Japanese graduate-level students encountered and the support that they needed or appreciated in the American classroom context. It would be interesting to investigate stories about U.S. students' study-abroad experience in graduate-level classrooms in Japan to compare the findings to the research findings of this study.

Conclusion

This qualitative narrative study was conduced to investigate what kinds of challenges Japanese graduate-level students experienced and what kinds of support they needed or appreciated in the American classroom context. Findings revealed that research participants experienced challenges due to cultural differences, learning style differences, and lack of language skills. Three participants, Mari, Asami, and Jiro, reported that they felt a chilly climate in the classroom and that they did not receive support that they needed. Analysis of the data revealed that their sense of the chilly climate was magnified by their culture shock. Warm support from faculty and domestic students was always appreciated by these Japanese students. The support that they really wanted was inclusion, respect, and acknowledgement from their faculty and domestic peers in the classroom. During the period of culture shock, Japanese students tend to be the most vulnerable, but a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom encourages them to adapt to new learning styles that help them succeed in a different culture. The diverse nature of American classrooms offers both domestic and international students many opportunities for exploring and understanding cultural differences and complexities. It

can be concluded that for promoting inclusive and collaborative learning environments,

everyone in the classroom must be open-minded to different cultures and become

respectful to one another. This will enhance the intercultural competence of everybody

on campus and promote cultural sensitivity, internationalization on campus and

potentially around the world.

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APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT (sent by e-mail)

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral student from the Graduate School of Education of Portland State University. I am contacting you to request your participation in my dissertation research study, which is a study of Japanese international students' experience in U.S. Graduate-Level Classrooms. This project has the potential to make a significant contribution to help Japanese students have successful study abroad experiences. The ultimate goal of this study is to help faculty as well as domestic students learn international perspectives, and contribute to their internationalization and enhance their cultural sensitivity on campus. Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this research project, your confidentiality will be protected and your name and school will not be identified. Your participation in the research process would involve three audiotaped interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each. Before the first interview, you will take Kolb's Learning Style Inventory, which shows your preferred learning styles. If you agree to participate, you will be presented with and asked to sign an Informed Consent Letter which explains the specifics of your involvement in more detail. Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this project. For more information, you can contact me by phone at 503-635-4652 or by e-mail at mikiy@pdx.edu.
Thank you for your consideration.

Miki Yamashita
Doctoral Student
Postsecondary, Adult & Continuing Education
The Graduate School of Education
Portland State University

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
Graduate School of Education
Department of Postsecondary, Adult & Continuing Education (PACE)
Portland State University

Japanese International Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education Classrooms: An
Investigation of Their Pedagogical and Epistemological Challenges and Supports

Dear Prospective Subject,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Miki Yamashita, a
doctoral student in the Postsecondary, Adult and Continuing Education (PACE)
program, the Graduate School of Education of Portland State University. The researcher
is conducting this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree
in Educational Leadership. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr.
Christine Cress, Associate Professor of Education. You were selected because you are
an international student from Japan in a graduate level program.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be interviewed three times. Before the
first interview, you will be asked to take Kolb's Learning Style Inventory. In the
interviews, you will be verbally responding to questions that I ask.

The total number of interviews will be three, and each interview will take approximately
60 to 90 minutes. The total time required for the interview is 180-270 minutes. You may
feel uncomfortable with some of the questions, but you are free to skip any questions or
withdraw at any time. Kolb's Learning Style Inventory will take about 10 minutes and at
the conclusion you will know more about your learning style. I would like you to take
this inventory only one time before the first interview. If you feel uncomfortable taking
the inventory, you can stop taking it at anytime.

The interviews and the Kolb's Learning Style Inventories will be held on UC campus. The interviews will be audiotaped, but the audiotapes used to record the interviews will be kept in a locked safe place where they are only accessible to the researcher. These audiotapes will be destroyed after the study is completed. The result of the inventory will also be kept in a safe place, and will be destroyed after this study is completed.

Audiotapes of interviews will be fully transcribed by the researcher. You will have an opportunity to review the transcript and suggest any necessary revisions, changes, additions, or clarifications to the transcript in order to insure that the transcript accurately reflects your responses. All data and records will be kept on file for three years following completion of the research, as required by federal regulations, and then will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study will inconvenience you by taking up a small amount of your time, but it does not involve any other potential risks or discomforts. You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, but the study may help to increase knowledge which could benefit others in the future. I am available to answer any questions you may have about the study and what you would be expected to do.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that could be linked to you or your identify will be kept confidential. Your name and identity will be kept completely confidential. You will be identified in the dissertation report by a pseudonym only. The audiotaped recording of your voice will be erased following completion of the study. Information collected from you in audiotaped form will not be reported to your supervisor or evaluator in any way. The list of names and contact information which includes your name will be kept in a file in a locked file cabinet at the home of the researcher.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, and it will not affect your course grade or relationship with your instructors at your college or anyone else. You may also withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your course grade or relationship with your instructors at your college.

If you have concerns or questions about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207, 503-725-4288 or 1-877-480-4400). If you have any questions about the study itself, contact Miki Yamashita at (503) 635-4652 or mikiy@pdx.edu

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims or rights. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

First interview protocol

The presenting statement to begin the fist interview is:

> Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your name will not be used in the study and your confidentiality will be maintained throughout and following the study.
>
> In this interview, I would like to hear the story of your experience in graduate-level U.S. classrooms.

First of all, I would like to ask you some introduction questions.

Introduction questions:

1. Will you tell me your educational background?
   a. What is the last degree you earned in your home country and when was it?
   b. How many years have you been studying in your program?
   c. What is your major now?
2. Please tell me what you were doing in Japan before you came to the U.S.
3. Did you have any anxiety before coming to the U.S.?
4. Besides studying in your graduate program, are you working as a professional (e.g. graduate assistant or graduate teaching assistant) on campus?

Interview:

Next, I would like to hear the story of your experience in graduate-level U.S. classrooms in order to learn what challenges you have experienced related to your intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms; and what kinds of support you have needed or appreciated in learning and socializing with your faculty and peers in your graduate-level classrooms?

Please take a moment and reflect on your experience in graduate-level classrooms. You can start wherever you would like. I will take some notes while I am listening to you.

If it is necessary, prompts and questions will be asked to elicit more information about the topic or events based on research questions: (a) What are the challenges that Japanese graduate students experience related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms; (b) What kinds of support have Japanese graduate students needed or appreciated in learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in their graduate-level classrooms? Prompts and questions related to research question (a) are:

1. Have you had any challenge related to language problems including writing academic papers? If so, can you tell me about it? (language)

2. Have you had any challenge related to class activities such as class discussion, group presentations, research, critical thinking? If so, can you tell me about it? (learning styles)

3. Have your preferred learning activities changed over time? If so, can you tell me more about it? (learning styles)

4. Have you had any emotional experience in class, can you tell me about it? Does the emotional experience come from the cultural differences? (culture shock, intercultural experience, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, loosing face, in-group vs. out-group)

5. Have you felt that you were treated in unpleasant ways by faculty or peers in class? If so, can you tell me about it? (socialization as professional)

6. What do you think are the differences between American and Japanese classrooms? (pedagogy, Confucianism)

Prompts and questions related to research question (b) are:

7. When you had any challenge related to language problems (e.g. writing academic paper or writing styles), what kinds of support were helpful? (language)

8. When you were not participating actively in the activities, what kinds of support from teachers or peers might have helped to increase your level of participation? (learning styles)

9. When you had any emotional experience, what kinds of support did you need to ease yourself? (culture shock, intercultural experience, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, loosing face, in-group vs. out-group)

10. As a graduate student, how do you expect faculty members and peers to treat you or support you? (socialization as professional.)

11. Have you made a good relationship with your instructors or any American students on campus? If so, what kinds of support have you received from them? (socialization as professional.)

12. What kinds of support do you think helped your transition into American graduate-level classrooms? (pedagogy, cultural differences)

Second interview protocol

The first interview will be transcribed. The second interview is an attempt to clarify issues raised in the first interview and to ask for more examples and descriptions. I will develop questions and prompts for the second interview on topics and events described by the participants in the first interview. The presenting statement to begin the second interview is (This part of interview protocol was adapted from Wilson, 2007, p. 38):

Today, I would like to reconstruct details of your experience with you—stories about your experience on the particular happenings, incidents, or events in your U.S. graduate-level classrooms. I do have some prompts for you based upon the transcript of our first interview together. Please tell me when you are ready to begin.

Prompts and questions will be designed to elicit more information about the topic or event, such as,

"Can you tell me more about...?"

"What was it like when...?"

"Can you remember any examples of ...?"

"What was it like?"

"Can you remember any events involving...?"

"Was there some particular crucial time or situation you recall?"

"Is there anything else you would like to add?"

Third interview protocol

The second interview will be transcribed. I will create an edited, combined transcript of both interviews. In the third interview, I will first present it to my interviewee and I will encourage the participant to add or delete information from the document in presentation for the third interview. The presenting statement to begin the third interview is:

> Thank you for participating with the third interview to fully develop your input to the story of Japanese students experience in U.S. graduate-level classrooms. I transcribed the second interview and edited, combined the transcript of both first and second interviews. In this interview, I will present and explain what I transcribed and edited to you, and next I will ask you some questions to explore your interpretation and explanation of important moments or events in your U.S. graduate program. This will help me to check and edit the transcript with you. If I miss something significant, please be sure to include it during the interview.

Next, I will ask them closing questions.

Closing questions:

1. How have your expectations about studying in the U.S. changed after you finished your first (or second) year in your program?

2. Give five pieces of advice to a faculty member teaching someone like you.

3. Do you have any advice for new international students from your country (or culture) to help them succeed in American classrooms?

4. Finally, do you have anything else to add? If not, thank you so much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

(Japanese Translations):

First interview protocol

The presenting statement to begin the fist interview is:

このインタビューはボランティア参加ですので、いつでも参加を取り消すことができます。この研究において、あなたのお名前は使われませんし、内密に取り扱います。このインタビューの中で、あなたの大学院レベルのクラスの中での体験談をお聴きしたいと思いますので、どうぞよろしくお願いします。

まず初めに、いくつか質問をさせてください。
1. あなたの学歴についてですが、
   a. 日本で取得した最終学歴は何ですか。いつ取得されましたか。
   b. 現在の大学院プログラムにおいて、今何年目ですか。
   c. 現在、何を専攻されていますか。
2. アメリカに来る前は日本で、何をされていましたか。
3. アメリカに来る前に気がかりになること、不安に思うことなどありましたか。
4. 勉強以外に何かの専門的なポジションで、例えば、グラデュエイトアシスタントや、ティーチングアシスタントで、キャンパス内で働いていますか。

Interview:
次に、アメリカの大学院の中での、あなたの体験談についてお聴きしたいと思います。クラスの中で、その異文化に入っていく上で、どんなチャレンジがあったのか、また、あなたのプログラムの中で教授やクラスの仲間と学び、ソーシャライズしていく中でどのようなサポートを、彼らからいただけたらよかったと思いますか。時間をかけて、思い出してみてください。いつスタートしても結構です。お話をお伺いしている間にメモを取らせていただきます。

If it is necessary, prompts and questions will be asked to elicit more information about the topic or events based on research questions: (a) What are the challenges that Japanese graduate students experience related to their intercultural transition into U.S. graduate-level classrooms; (b) What kinds of support have Japanese graduate students needed or appreciated in learning and socializing with their faculty and peers in their graduate-level classrooms? Prompts and questions related to research question (a) are:

1. 言葉に関する問題、例えば、アカデミックペーパーを書くなども入れて、何か大変だと思うことがありましたか。もしありましたらお聞かせください。

2. クラスアクティビティーの中で、たとえば、クラスディスカッション、グループプレゼンテーション、リサーチ、クリティカルシンキングなどで、大変だと思った経験はありますか。もし、ありましたら、お聞かせください。

3. 自分の好きなラーニングアクティビティーは、以前と比べて変わりましたか。もしそうだとしたら、そのことについて話していただけますか。

4. クラスの中で感情的になったことがありますか。もし、ありましたら、そのことについて話していただけますか。その感情的になった経験は文化の違いから起きたことですか。

5. クラスの中で、教授や、クラスの仲間から、不快になるような扱いをされたことがありますか。もし、ありましたら、話していただけますか。

6. アメリカのクラスと日本のクラスの違いは何だと思いますか。

Prompts and questions related to research question (b) are:

7. 言葉に関することで大変なことがあったときに、たとえばアカデミックペーパを書く、なども含めて、どんなサポートが役に立ちましたか。

8. 自分がアクティビティーに参加していないときに、先生やクラスの仲間からのどのような助けが、クラスアクティビティーに参加しようと思わせましたか。

9. クラスの中で感情的になったときに、どのようなサポートによってなだめられましたか。

10. 大学院生として、どのように、教授やクラスの仲間に自分自身を扱ってもらいたいですか。そしてサポートしてもらいたいですか。

11. 大学内で教授たちやアメリカ人の学生たちと、よい関係を築くことができましたか。もし、そうだとしたら、どんなサポートを彼らから受けましたか。

12. アメリカの大学院レベルのクラスに自分自身が入り、その中で自分の価値観や、振る舞いが変化していく中で、どのようなサポートが手助けになると思いますか。

Second interview protocol

The first interview will be transcribed. The second interview is an attempt to clarify issues raised in the first interview and to ask for more examples and descriptions. I will develop questions and prompts for the second interview on topics and events described by the participants in the first interview. The presenting statement to begin the second interview is (This part of interview protocol was adapted from Wilson, 2007, p. 38):

今日は、お話していただいた詳しい経験談の内容を、特にアメリカの大学院レベルのクラスの中で起きたことを、もう一度一緒に組み立てていきたいと思います。一回目のインタビューのトランスクリプトに基づいて用意した質問をいくつかお聴きしたいと思います。インタビューを始めてもよろしかったら、おっしゃってください。

Prompts and questions will be designed to elicit more information about the topic or event, such as,

"Can you tell me more about...?"

"What was it like when...?"

"Can you remember any examples of ...?"

"What was it like?"

"Can you remember any events involving...?"

"Was there some particular crucial time or situation you recall?"

"Is there anything else you would like to add?"

Third interview protocol

The second interview will be transcribed. I will create an edited, combined transcript of both interviews. In the third interview, I will first present it to my interviewee and I will encourage the participant to add or delete information from the document in presentation for the third interview. The presenting statement to begin the third interview is:

> 三回目のインタビューに参加していただいてありがとうございます。インタビューの中で、あなたの日本人学生の大学院レベルのクラスルームの中での経験についてお話していただいたことを最大限に発展させていきたいと思います。二回目のインタビューをトランスクライブ・編集し、一回目のインタビューと一緒に、まとめました。今回のインタビューでは、その編集した内容をお見せし、説明いたします。そして次に、あなたのアメリカの大学院プログラムの中で起きた大切な出来事についての解釈と説明をお聴きしたいので、いくつか質問をいたします。このトランスクリプトをあなたと一緒に構成していく上で、とても助けになりますので、どうぞよろしくお願いします。もし、私の方で重要箇所をはずしていた場合は、インタビューの中でおっしゃってください。

Next, I will ask them closing questions.

Closing questions:

1. プログラムの初めの一年、または二年目を終えた後、アメリカで勉強していくことにおいて、自分自身への期待はどのように変わっていきましたか。

2. あなたと似た立場の人を教える教授に対してのアドバイスを五つくらい挙げてください。

3. あなたの国（または、文化）からやって来る新しい外国人留学生に対して、アメリカのクラスの中で成功していくための、アドバイスがありますか。

4. 最後に何か付け加えることがありますか。もしないようでしたら、ご協力ありがとうございました。