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Intercultural Communication: Effective Communication with Japanese People

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Abstract

This study investigates what we need to know and understand in order to conduct effective intercultural communication with Japanese people. The study attempts to give insight into the most essential features necessary to pursue this. It covers the following three areas:

In the first area, both the traditional and contemporary Japanese culture and people are discussed. This section focuses on: the values and beliefs traditionally maintained as the cultural norm; the relationship between self and others; changes occurring in Japanese society. In the second area, the components of intercultural communication are examined in terms of features which are cross-culturally applicable. This section aims to find out the cultural differences in communication style by identifying how those features vary from culture to culture and how such variation influences communication style. In the third area, the major characteristics of Japanese communication style are discussed. It examines the bases on which communication style is determined, for example the concept of *uchi/soto* (inside/outside) which is differentiated on the basis of intimacy.

These three areas ultimately aim to assist people with knowledge such as what is important to know of the other culture and which features of communication process we should be paying attention to. Through this study, it is also intended to provide us with a chance to consider how our own communication style can be modified to the way in which a communication counterpart would benefit in terms of avoidance of misunderstanding caused by miscommunication. This will result in the collaborative fulfilment of communication.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In our present era many people experience international contact for either business, professional, or personal reasons. While there are times when they cross borders and interact with people in different countries, there are also times when they use computers and electronic communication without physically moving to a certain place. The advancement of technological development of communication systems has made information accessible to us nationally and internationally. Such systems enable us to conduct certain kinds of business such as banking, commerce, and even allow us to have a video conference. Such advanced technology has become part of our life today. However, this does not mean that these methods of communication or ways of business have overtaken the necessity of communication conducted in the presence of each party. In fact, our engagement in face-to-face communication is more frequent than through computers and electronic communication in the home, the workplace, and within the community and society in general, on a daily basis.

It is hardly possible for most of us to avoid communication with others regardless of gender, occupation, age, or the part of the society we live in. We live with family members and associate with people outside the home such as friends, acquaintances, and members of occupational or organizational groups to which many of us belong. We experience different types of relationships with these people and learn about what is and what is not socially acceptable in terms of behaviour, language use and social conducts in general. This is essentially socialization, which refers to the process of personal development which is facilitated through social contact. Socialization is reliant on communication. Communication is therefore

our most important medium for personal development and social contact.

Although there are individual differences in our views of social life, of course, we are likely to share the same principles of our own culture. Thus, what we internalize during the course of socialization is influenced by these culture specific principles of our own culture. Socialization helps us develop social skills which enable us to engage in many aspects of social life appropriately and smoothly. In my opinion, social skills thus play a vital role in human relationships and comprise of three dimensions: knowledge of the social system and how people conduct themselves socially within a society; wisdom to know when to apply this knowledge; and, skills of knowing how to apply the same knowledge to varying situations. The application of social skills to human relationships involves communication to a large extent. In this sense, I contend that social skills promote communication skills, communication skills generate good interpersonal relationships, and vice versa. The ability to establish and maintain good interpersonal relationships is carried through to international settings, the most inevitable being the intercultural communication situation. Thus, learning about other societies and cultures helps us to understand people in terms of behaviour in a general sense.

“Intercultural communication, effective communication with Japanese people” is the theme of my thesis. I view intercultural communication as the culturally derived form of interpersonal communication and define it as interactive face-to-face communication between people from different cultures, accompanied by verbal, nonverbal, and behavioural messages. It is appropriate to expect that the communication partner from a different culture is likely to have experienced a different way of socialization within the different principles specific to that culture. Different historical, cultural, social, and economical backgrounds create people with different languages, use of language, perception, ways of thinking and behaviour and, above all, systems of values.

I had two reasons for choosing this theme for my thesis. One reason is that I believe that communication is fundamental to our daily life, and that face-to-face communication is the essence of human relationships. When we meet someone for the first time, it is our interpersonal communication skills that make a difference in forming a new relationship. Interpersonal communication skills require understanding and tolerance toward each other, as communication is a collaborative effort. My second reason is that I believe an increasing

emphasis is emerging on learning how to communicate effectively interculturally. For example, from a global economical point of view, the globalization of markets in products and services is evident in many parts of the world.

In Japan also, people have witnessed the entry of multinational corporations of fastfood, soft drinks, clothing and so on, into the Japanese market for many decades. Many Japanese corporations including several within the electronic and automobile industries, for example, have changed their management systems and relocated to other countries to undergo local production. One of the reasons underlying three changes was trade friction. Local production was also encouraged by currency fluctuations and the political uncertainties of protectionism in some other countries. The shift to local production can be effective for corporations in the sense that they are able to learn directly what the local market needs and how they can perform cost-effective production.

Furthermore, localization links corporations to local community and its people through employment. These local people become a corporation's assets and are linked to the global economy through technological innovation, manufacturing skills or trading¹. Localization dismisses the buyer and seller relationship. It is, instead, two parties who interlink through operation and production. The two parties work together on the development and innovation of products. Today, Japanese people require skills not only to deal with localisation but to adaptively deal with a variety of other intercultural situations. Due to the prolonged recession in recent years, some companies have been compelled to accept a foreign manager as a result of restructuring. Recruiting an international workforce from overseas has been an ongoing practice. Furthermore, from a more global point of view, Japan has been pressured by other countries for more positive participation and contribution to world affairs and for a free or more equal trade system. Each of these situations require effective and adaptive intercultural communication skills. For these reasons, I intend for people to benefit from this thesis by learning what exactly intercultural communication involves and how effectively people can modify their own communication style by understanding the other interactant's viewpoint.

¹See *World Class: thriving locally in the global economy* by Kanter, Rosabeth Moss (1995); *Rosabeth Moss Kanter on the Frontiers of Management* by the same author. (1997)

The emphasis of this thesis is on the practical issues that define culture inclusively and define communication broadly. It focuses on the following two features. Firstly, the practical aspects of communication as a tool to facilitate effective intercultural communication with the Japanese. Secondly, the components of intercultural communication, specifically, the culture-specific features which distinguish communication style from culture to culture. This refers to components for the relationship between culture and communication as the primary components.

I will discuss the following issues to find out how culture influences the communication process: (1) How Japanese culture influences individuals: culture provides guidelines for how individuals should interact with others and how they should interpret others' behaviour. Culture incorporated into human interaction directly affects the process of communication. Thus, communication involves integration of culturally defined values, beliefs, and perceptions, (2) On the basis that each culture provides its own guidelines for human behaviour, what cultural differences are seen in communication processes, and (3) What the generic features of Japanese communication style are.

I would like to note that my intention of this study on Japanese communication style is not solely to help equip non-Japanese with a factual knowledge of Japanese culture, people and communication style, but, as has been mentioned earlier, I also wish to provide Japanese people with an opportunity to view their own way of communication from the perspective of intercultural interaction. That is, to develop an awareness of culture-specific features which underly their communication style and recognize how these culture-specific features may affect the communication partner and entire communication process.

For the theoretical investigation of these three main issues, I have read a substantial number of articles, books, journals from different disciplines, fields, and perspectives. I have then selected a variety of cultural and communication factors to discuss on the basis of their applicability to varying communication situations across cultures. These factors are set out under the heading "*Contents*" and will be divided into the following three chapters.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the first issue of Japanese culture focusing on (1) the Japanese cultural values and beliefs which are intrinsic to Japanese thought and behaviour,

(2) how these values and beliefs are manifested within the family and wider society, and (3) how these traditional values are perceived by the younger generations. This is to consider both the traditional and contemporary features of Japanese culture. The former refers to the fundamental aspects of Japanese culture which, I consider, the main pillars of Japanese culture. The latter, supported by many young people today, will be viewed in terms of their perception of the existing social system. In my view, to categorize roughly, there are two things which influence the way we think, behave, and perceive others. One is our own culture. We are born into a culture and are raised by people who are already shaped by the culture which has been handed down from generation to generation. (1) and (2) fall under this. The other is the current political and economical state which a country is in. These can directly or indirectly affect individuals' attitudes toward their own lives as well as society as a whole, and therefore, (3) is to be dealt from this perspective.

In Chapter Three, I will discuss the second issue of cultural differences in the communication process. I will examine various factors which contribute to cultural variations in the communication processes. Where we are and who we are communicating with - we normally take these things into account when determining how we should speak and behave. These determinants include (1) the relationship between self and group, (2) the extent to which verbal and nonverbal messages are disclosed, and (3) the way of constructing and delivering speech. These matters deal with socially and culturally acceptable ways of communication which differ from culture to culture. Although these issues will be seen from a cultural perspective, we must keep in mind that there will undoubtedly be individual differences as well. Since each individual has a different social experience, personality, personal view of other people, social values and so on. For example, person A and person B would form a different interpersonal relationship with person C. It is apparent then that the communication style of these people with person C would be different. In this chapter, I will also include the issue, "dealing with anxiety and uncertainty" which is one of the major concerns of intercultural communication.

In Chapter Four, I will discuss the third issue of patterns of Japanese communication covering both verbal and nonverbal communication. These are (1) indirect communication, (2) public communication and private communication, and (3) nonverbal behaviours including intuitive communication. In this chapter, I will incorporate some aspects of Japanese culture

discussed in Chapter One with the Japanese way of communication to see how culture influences the way Japanese people think, behave and interact with others. This is where we bring culture and communication into correlation. I will examine how Japanese cultural beliefs and values influence the communicator's attitude toward the communication partner and process.

Lastly, in Chapter Five, I will summarize the findings for the three issues and conclude this paper with the key points which will help development of a comprehensive understanding and practical knowledge of intercultural communication.

Chapter Two

Japanese Culture

In studying anthropology, it becomes evident that culture consists of ideals, values, and assumptions about life around us. These characteristics are common to people within a culture and lead to the development of culture-specific behaviours. This consequently means our thoughts, values, and behaviour in everyday life are inherently influenced by our own culture. We take our own culture for granted. We do not question or challenge our values, the basis on which we make judgements and evaluations, or how we form and maintain relationships with others. Most of us fail to recognize the extent to which our thoughts and behaviour are influenced by the culture we live in.

However, cultures are dynamic rather than static. They, in fact, change when we change our thoughts, perceptions and values, as living conditions change or we encounter different personal experiences. In recent years in Japan, significant changes are evident, particularly in the value systems of the younger generation. This shift in values may seem inevitable in acknowledging the impact of contributing factors. These include increased contact with foreign cultures, the current instability of the economy, rejection of the existing social system, globalisation, the consequent disintegration of rigid cultural boundaries and the move from a manufacturing-based industry to an information-based industry.

Times have changed in many ways: the education system, for example, has been deliberating over introducing greater creativity in education to meet individual needs instead of the

traditional focus on producing people to meet corporate expectations. The extent to which corporations are ready for this creativity, which challenges the tradition has yet to be determined. Companies are still uncertain of whether they are sufficiently prepared for accepting greater creativity and individuality into the organization. They may see these new types of recruits as threatening and are thus still unsure about the change. Hence, current Japanese culture is comprised of both traditional and transitional features, representing a conflict of modern versus traditional values as the younger generation migrates towards the more Western mode of individuality.

Culture and people's ideals, values, and assumptions mutually affect each other. It is not very difficult to identify the underlying sources of the changes within a culture as those exemplified above. But when we observe unfamiliar behaviour demonstrated by a person in an intercultural interaction, we are likely to fail to realize that these unfamiliar behaviours are actually generated by certain features of that person's culture. All cultures are subject to variation and each culture has its own culturally guided patterns of thought and behaviour. This realization is essential, enabling greater intercultural understanding through a more accurate analysis of the behaviour of other people based on cultural knowledge. This entails gaining knowledge of the cultural factors underlying other societies, which generate people's thoughts and behaviour. Some of the cultural factors presented here are those that enable us to gain insight into Japanese people's thoughts and behaviour from both a traditional and contemporary perspective.

1. Attitudes and values

Cultural values consistently influence peoples' thoughts and behaviour. An attitude, on the other hand, expresses values and disposes a person to act or react in a certain way towards something. Values therefore reflect general beliefs that define social rules such as right or wrong and specify the social norm. The cultural values that Japanese people hold have been heavily influenced by the importation of two religious philosophies, namely Buddhism and Confucianism. Zen Buddhism particularly influenced Japanese culture spiritually and intellectually with its emphasis on ego or self denial and reaching the spiritual freedom of selflessness. Confucianism, on the other hand, was developed as a practical ethical guideline for human behaviour in daily life by Kong Fu Ze who was later renamed Confucius around the time of 500 BC. (Hofstede and Bond, 1988, p. 7) Confucian thoughts are deeply rooted in the Japanese mind and demonstrated in their behaviour.

As discussed earlier, cultural influences are seen in various aspects of every day life including work. Some researchers (i.e., Hofstede and Bond, 1988, pp. 16-19) took a particular interest in the relationship between the economic growth of some Asian countries² and Confucianism, and carried out research on "employees' devotion to the work ethic and their respect for tradition". They discovered their extremely strong work ethic and their commitment to traditional Confucian values, and that Confucian thought was the major impetus behind the rapid economic development of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore from the 1960s onwards. This argument stresses the adaptiveness and flexibility of businessmen, their work ethic, respect for authority among workers, thrift, the emphasis on education, and the role of family in the formation and operation of business. (Chau, 1997, p.63) Some of these key principles of Confucian dynamism are discussed below. (Hofstede and Bond, 1988, p. 8; Hofstede, 1994, pp. 164-166)

²See *Economic Development in Twentieth Century East Asia, The International Context* by A. Ikeo (1997); *Lessons From East Asia* by D. Leipziger (1997); *Emerging Economic System in Asia: A political and economical survey* by K. Sheridan (1998).

1.1 Confucian dynamism³

1. *Unequal status relationships lead to a stable society*

This concept does not refer to lord-peasant or master-slave relations seen in the feudal time before Japan became a unified nation in the sixteenth century. Instead, it refers to constructive relationships such as, ruler-subject, father-son, older brother-younger brother, husband -wife, and senior friend-junior friend. These relationships are based on mutual, complementary obligations. For instance, the younger brother is expected to show respect for and obedience to his elder brother. The elder brother, in return, ensures the younger brother protection, guidance, and consideration.

2. *The family is typical of all social organization*

This concept refers to “self identity” as a member of a group in which the family is regarded as the first group and a fundamental social unit. One is expected to find identity as a member of the group and maintaining harmony among the members is considered very important. This is achieved by placing the interests of the family above personal self-interest. It is essentially self denial, where self-interest is suppressed for the common interest. It is also required to maintain one’s own “face” or dignity, and that of others’. For example, a member of the family should not cause trouble which would cast a shame on another member of the family. Individual members are expected to maintain their dignity and self-respect.

3. *Virtue in life*

Confucianism is an ethical system, concerned with human relations which emphasises loyalty, personal relationships and etiquette. Virtuous behaviour toward others consists of treating others as one would like to be treated oneself. Under this concept, gaining useful skills like business skills, an education, and an ability to endure hardship are all highly regarded virtues. It teaches that one can only expect to be successful by studying hard, working hard, and developing a reputation for perseverance. Further, when people become successful and financially established, they are expected to help other members of the family,

³This is one of the five dimensions of cultural variability used in Hofstede’s study of values of employees of multinational corporation. (1988, p. 9; 1991) Other dimensions are: Power distance; Individualism-Collectivism; Masculinity-Femininity; Uncertainty avoidance.

particularly senior people, whenever they are in need. These religious philosophies have become fundamental values of the Japanese value systems.

Hofstede and Bond (1988, p. 18) claim that the values of thrift and perseverance; belief in tradition and “face”, traditionally held by Chinese and Japanese people, are at least part of the cause, and economic growth, the effect. According to them, the values which are endorsed low on their “Confucian Dynamism” scale facilitate economic growth (p. 18). These are: personal steadiness and stability; protecting one’s face; respect for tradition; reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts. They also raise non-cultural conditions as a facilitator of economic growth. These are: the existence of a market and a political context that allows development.

I agree with these kinds of values listed through a values questionnaire composed by Chinese social scientists. But, I do not agree with that “protecting one’s face” is associated with the negative side of values of “Confucian dynamism”. Hofstede and Bond (p. 18) argue that if this value is widely shared as a concern, it detracts from getting on with business. I do not agree with this proposal of a causative relationship between “protecting one’s face” and “detracting from working hard”. I consider that maintaining human relationships would have been just as important in the past as in the present time, when people were devoting themselves to economic development in the postwar era. In fact, I believe that maintaining harmony with others has always been considered important in Japan whenever Japanese people are engaged in collective work. This is one value Japanese people maintained and still maintain. In order for them to maintain this value, they have to be sensitive to others concerning “face”. Reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts is also oriented towards maintaining harmony within human relationships.

I also would like to add to the above a number of other factors which contributed towards Japan’s postwar economic growth. I will put these factors into three categories. First, Japan’s socio-economic structure. Japan had advantages such as an abundance of labor, and a low level of defence expenditures due to being relieved from the maintenance of military forces, and was therefore able to divert funds to development of heavy and chemical industries, rebuilding the industrial arena.

Second, the management policies of corporations. This includes various policies provided to employees such as the lifetime employment system, the seniority system, the labour union, and participation in decision making to some degree. Various facilities including recreational, medical, and housing which were also beneficial to employees. Events and gatherings which also involved family members were organized by companies on a regular basis. Through these systems and policies, the benefits corporations gained from the commitment and devotion of human resources, were enormous and crucial for corporations to develop further and thrive. It is apparent that Japan's industrial history would have been different if those corporations did not have employees who knew how to cooperate with others, who conformed to company goals and remained loyal to the company, and who worked long hours for many years.

The industrial technology which was imported from Western countries was also a major contributing factor to economic growth. Further technological development and innovation have followed. Thus, I believe that Japan's postwar economic success emerged from the integration of effort at a governmental level, industrial level and individual level. It is my belief that the principles of Confucian thought⁴ were applied to all three categories discussed above and were evident in Japan's economic development. The major aspects of cultural values, upon which human relations in Japan are based, will be discussed in the following section.

1.2 Cultural Values

1.2.1 *Wa*- Harmony

Wa is a central and important value in Japanese culture. Dating back to the seventh century, it was initially raised in the first article of the constitution, written by Prince

⁴See "Confucius and Economic Growth: New Trends in Culture's Consequences". *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 16, no. 4 (1988) pp. 4-21, by G. Hofstede and M. Bond; Chinese Values and the Search for Culture-free Dimensions of Culture: The Chinese Culture Connection. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1987), pp. 143-164, by the same authors.

Shotoku to meet the spiritual needs of the society which was becoming increasingly sophisticated.

Japanese people are extremely sensitive to any possible conflict, hence avoidance of conflict can be observed in many aspects of Japanese culture. *Wa* is something that is expected to optimise human relations and create and maintain solidarity within a group, especially within companies. The *wa*, that Japanese people expect or desire to achieve is not simply a mechanical cooperation but a total harmony, which maintains the integrity of sameness of thoughts - unanimous agreement of the members of the group. The ideal of Japanese culture is to establish and maintain harmonious social relations. The emphasis on harmony applies to relations between individuals who may come into contact in a collective group. Clancy (1986, p. 215) describes the attitude individual members have toward verbal conflicts as follows, "Individuals may hold their own view, but, in the interests of group harmony, should not express it if it conflicts with the opinion of others."

In Japan, the establishment of unanimity is seen as essential to maintaining harmony. Unanimity can be established when different viewpoints are integrated into a collective unit. Members of a group cannot behave in an egocentric, inhumane, or disrespectful way to others. The expression of ideas and desires from an individual perspective is discouraged. Instead, viewpoints are integrated to form a cohesive and collective representation of the group's point of view. This self-restraint is known as *enryo*, manifested as a reserved, hesitating, constrained manner which avoids conflict or an outspoken approach. *Enryo* is in some cases, activated by a sense of *omoiyari* (empathy). *Omoiyari* represents an awareness or focus on, the feelings of others and consideration for their wishes, while *enryo* is simply used to avoid any possible dissension or conflict with others.

An example of *enryo* is seen in decision-making in a group. When an organization needs to reach a decision on a certain issue, the chairperson presents the subject matter under consideration. The members typically, simply say "no objection". My observation is, that it is the absence of objection that counts, rather than the presence of agreement, for reaching a decision. In a case like this, the whole process can be manipulated by the chairperson, by taking the silence of members as an indication of agreement rather than of disagreement, and avoiding asking who agrees. Behind this method of decision-making lies an unofficial

practice for the preliminaries or groundwork called *nemawashi*. It is a method of decision-making peculiar to Japanese business management in which an issue is discussed, opinion provided and approval reached before official action is actually carried out. By doing this, when a proposal is taken to the official decision-making level it is accepted with unanimous consent. In this sense, it is a matter of formality to confirm with the other members regarding the decision that is supposed to be made. *Nemawashi* is conducted so that proposals may be accepted without any objections being raised at an official level. This method of decision-making negates direct debate, but assumes that one must have *omoiyari* to help others maintain honour.

The above observation indicates how *Wa* is typically viewed and idealized in Japanese culture. However, in my view, it is important to understand on what basis the concept of *wa* is promoted. Take avoidance of open conflict, for example. This may represent the hierarchical order among the people present. This means that one is aware of this importance because one is with some other people who are higher in social status which could mean more power. It is also possible to assume that one avoids objection because his/her idea is likely to be against the others. Or, if one did speak up he/she might offend the others. Such attitudes as “I won’t make waves because they have more power than I” or “I won’t show that I have different ideas because they won’t like that”, would be likely to appear outwardly as maintaining harmony.

I consider though, that people who think in such ways may be actually afraid of the consequence of objecting, rather than considering *wa* from other people’s perspectives. These people may, in fact, be trying to save themselves from conflict for their own sake. But whatever the reason why people behave in such ways, I must add that I have absolutely no intention of viewing these people negatively without examining their true motives. The important point of *wa* is, I believe, that everyone feels that it is good to have one’s own idea and to put it forward. *Wa* should therefore be promoted on the basis of understanding each other with much wider acceptance of differences in individuals. Thus it is necessary for us to eliminate our preoccupation of unanimous integrity as the goal of collectivity especially if it was the type of *wa* that was established to just follow the formality.

1.2.2 Reciprocity

The *on*, with moral implication, is a culture-oriented relational concept of reciprocity. Japanese culture honours ethical conduct and prescribes a strict code of ethics derived from Buddhism and Confucian principles. This is seen in the concept of reciprocity in which this important principle is drawn upon in pursuit of the aim of maintaining harmonious relations.

Reciprocity refers to the way Japanese people feel compelled to compensate for benefits received from someone else. It is important to understand reciprocity, since it is one of the references for understanding Japanese social phenomena. It manifests social relativism involving the two parties, one as an *on*-donor and the other as *on*-receiver. The following Chinese phrase expresses a principle of reciprocity, “yin shui si yuan.” This means, “while one is drinking water, one should thank the source.” It stresses the importance of never forgetting those to whom you owe your success and those who give a helping hand when you are in need. The concept of reciprocity in this phrase is based on “*on*; “thank the source”. When a favour is granted by A to B, B automatically owes a debt to A. B accepts A’s favour, namely, *on* with gratitude seeing it as evidence of A’s benevolence or generosity to B. In so doing, B feels he/sh is morally obliged to repay A’s *on* and that it is crucial to retaining a positive relationship with B. Japanese people generally consider that it is important to develop good human relationships that enable them to help each other and maintain a give and take relationship extending or receiving a helping hand in various forms.

In my view, however, the *on* does not always elicit such a positive response. An acceptance of such help could create a heavy burden for the receiver. Whether or not the favour offered is something which the receiver genuinely appreciates, once accepted, it is recognized by both parties that the donor has done a favour. This sense of obligation may be overwhelming if the resources needed to reciprocate are scarce or inadequate. This burdensome aspect of *on* is expressed as *giri*. As it relates to *on*, *giri* implies a sense of constraint under which the receiver feels bound in his attitude toward the donor in some cases, or may feel subtly manipulated by the donor who is in the state of creditor. Regardless of psychological pressure, the receiver will express gratitude and will eventually demonstrate “*on* repayment”, realizing that the avoidance of *giri* can cause damage to the relationship with the donor. This is the fundamental aspect of reciprocity. It is important to recognize however, that the

refusal of an offered favour can be made under the virtue of *enryo* which expresses reserve and modesty. It depends on the relationship of the two parties, the kind of favour offered, or the degree of burden that the donor experienced.

A study by Lebra (1986, p. 51) on reciprocity as a part of moral order illustrates the emphasis placed on reciprocity within Japanese society. Her sample of 201 male and female Japanese adults indicates that, while only 13.7% expressed that they expected a direct, reciprocal exchange of equivalent repayment for an act of kindness to others, 32.7% expected repayment in some form other than direct repayment of *on*.

In my opinion, there are two reasons for suppressing an explicit anticipation of direct repayment. Firstly, from the donor's point of view, it would be considered unethical or disgraceful to express expectation for repayment of equivalent value, and that the kind act would lose its value as a result of this expectation. Furthermore, if the donor demands repayment from the receiver, the latter would be likely to make adjustments to the future relationship with the former. Secondly, from the receiver's point of view, the donor expects the receiver to practise *giri* for what he/she did for the receiver. Thus, the donor's suppression of expectation for repayment does not mean the receiver is free of repayment. Reciprocal exchange is also seen in many other cultures but Japanese reciprocity is unique since it is considered as part of the moral code in expecting both donor and receiver to play a distinct and socially defined role. Japanese reciprocity is therefore unique because it is socially constraint-bound for the purpose of maintaining existing relationships.

In Japanese society, *on* is commonly recognized within a group when those of a higher rank do a paternal type of favour for their subordinates. In return, subordinates demonstrate their appreciation through loyalty toward the superior. This is one of the common cases of how social indebtedness, namely, *on*, occurs and is dealt with within an organization and it helps both the donor and receiver to be bound by a closer relationship. Japanese people usually offer a favour in the following two cases. Firstly, when they have genuine concern for others, and secondly, when they feel obliged to intervene in other people's affairs. In the former case, the giver demonstrates kindness expressing a willingness to do something for the other person. In either case, the giver tends to provide suggestions or instructions as to what the receiver should do, or to explain in what way the receiver can benefit from this

kindness, and so on. In other words, Japanese are inclined to get personally and directly involved with the personal affairs of other people. This involvement with someone else's personal affairs can generally be interpreted either as "showing concern for others" or "intrusion to others' privacy".

As far as the above analysis is concerned, acts of kindness are motivated by the giver's genuine concern for the receiver. It is considered to be a human act of benevolence which does not require reciprocity. In my view, however, although the survey reveals that many donors do not expect a reciprocal response from the receiver, it is important that the receiver maintains the relationship with the donor remembering the help or kindness he/she received from the donor and being prepared to help the donor when he/she is in need. It is the willingness of the receiver that is important in compensating for the kindness received. This is vital to the maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

2. Family System

Japan's defeat to the Allied powers in the Second World War brought about tremendous political and social change in Japan. The biggest change of all was the new Constitution which took effect in 1947. It provided for democracy and demilitarisation and declared popular sovereignty. By this time, the Emperor was no longer considered a living God but became a "symbol of the unity" of Japan. The Constitution guaranteed people wider freedom and fundamental human rights. Among these, the freedom of expression and religion, and worker's rights to organize labour unions. It also provided for the equality of the sexes, and women's right to vote. But most importantly, the renowned Article 9 of the Constitution renounced the sovereign right of the State to use war as a means of settling international disputes. (*Nippon - The land and its people*, 1982, p. 59)

It is apparent that the main factor which fostered the development of a unique Japanese social identity in terms of the family system, is loyalty towards a superior in a hierarchical social system which was formed under the influence of the teachings of Confucianism, *Tennoism*, and *bushido*. This hierarchical system had a major impact on the way family was defined as well as the way interpersonal relationships were formed. Further impact was added by militarism which was closely related to *Tennoism* - the source which formed the basis for the philosophy of "the whole nation as one great family descended from the Emperor".

2.1 Definition

A family is a group that one enters through birth. Through this biological linkage, a child learns about kindred which equates to learning about social relations. (Ishikawa, 1996, p. 24) This group takes the form of kinship lineages. As a child grows up, he/she gradually starts to develop an awareness of the outside world and learns to communicate with other members of society. He/she achieves this through means of socialization, converting himself/herself from a member of his/her family into a member of the society. His/her perceptions of the world are shaped by characteristics of society such as language, behaviour, rituals, social structure and constraints, and he/she learns how the society works. He/she also learns simultaneously about his/her family. For example, he/she will learn the basics of interpersonal interaction and relationships and how the family is organized and functions.

Based on Ishikawa's statement mentioned above, I argue that an understanding of kin relations is a particularly important part of understanding a society. That is because kin relations are often associated with other types of relations such as business activities or political relations. Thus, it helps us to understand peoples' behaviour and to make accurate assumptions of such relations when it is put into the context of the kinship system, namely, the family system. The family system is defined here as the way the household is organized involving each member's behaviour and attitude towards it. This definition intrinsically stresses the concept of the continuity of the family line which is the prime concern of most Japanese households. The English term "family" carries the connotation of a group of biologically related people which corresponds to the Japanese term *kazoku*. But these terms strongly deliver a connotative sense of the living group of household members and therefore seem to lack emphasis on the important facet of continuing the family line. Thus, I will use the indigenous term *ie*, because it emphasises the organizational and functional aspects of family. *Ie* organization is comprised of the relationship between two features, these are (1) the entire time and space of the house, which is continuous over time and (2) how the notion of the "family system" is derived in the world outside the family.

2.2 The organizational and functional aspects of Japanese family

In Japan, continuing the family line is an essential feature of *ie*. The family affairs are generally managed by the head of the family, usually the husband/father, or the eldest son. He is also legally and morally responsible for all family members, whether they are residents or not. The total membership includes, not only living members, but ancestors and descendants as well. Individual members of the family are also expected to share duties with the head.

Hunter (1989, p. 77) states that many Japanese families have continued to attach great importance to the family line. This is true as keeping the family name is extremely important, ideally through lineage. This is achieved in the following way: at some stage, the head leaves his position voluntarily and transfers it, usually to his son as permanent heir, although a first male or female child could be chosen, depending on the family circumstances. A spouse would be brought in through the son himself or by some sort of arrangement to share the role of continuing the family line. For example, if there were no sons in the family, *yoshi* could be arranged. That is, adopting a son from another family who marries the daughter of the family who retains the household name. If there were no children at all or if all the children were thought to be too incompetent, a child from a relative or a totally unrelated child could be adopted.

The permanent positions are that of the head and wife. These two are the very core of the main *ie* organization. The heir stays in the main household called *honke* and place other children out of the main household. Daughters marry out and obtain membership in other households. Non-inheriting sons establish their own families and start new *ies* (Hamabata, 1985, p. 197) which are the branches of the main household called *bunke*. *Honke* and *bunke* together as groups of related *ie* known as *doozoku* often cooperate in economic activities and sometimes in political relations. The following is a typical example of such economic activities which illustrate the system of *honke* and *bunke*.

A large corporation forms groups through diversifying, creating specialized subsidiaries called *kogaisha* (child companies). These groups of *kogaisha* along with the large corporation are called *doozoku gaisha* and these groups of subsidiaries are called *keiretsu* (Goldman, 1994, pp. 265-273) in which *kei* means “of the line of X company” or “descended from X

company” which emphasizes the relation to the parent company X and at the same time, *kogaisha* as a subsidiary of the parent company X. These groups specialize in particular fields of business such as production, marketing and finance groups under the parent company as with *Mitsubishi Groups*, *Mitsui Groups*, or *Sumitomo Groups*, in which all consciously create a group atmosphere and identity. The way in which large corporations are organized is an important social factor which has contributed significantly to Japan’s postwar economic development.

2.3 Changes in the *ie* system

The changes in economic conditions brought about changes in the *ie* system in the post-war era. I will discuss the economic changes and, at the same time, I will discuss how *ie* organization was affected due to these changes. The economy, of course, interrelates with industries.

Japan underwent a dramatic transitional period, changing from a farming society to an industrial society. Benefiting from the accelerated economic growth at that time, the position of agriculture dropped significantly in the national economy (*Nippon*, 1982, p. 99). This decline was due to urbanization; people leaving rural areas and migrating to the big metropolitan areas, taking advantage of secondary and tertiary industries which were prospering at that time. As a result of this, family ties have been weakened by old people living apart from their children (Hunter, 1989, p. 76). The three-generation family structure was interfered with and the number of nuclear families increased with a decreasing number of children.

I will be more precise in these changes. According to the data from The Bureau of Statistics provided in 1987 (Ishikawa, 1997, p. 62), the number of people engaged in primary industries such as farming, forestry, and fishery declined to 41% in 1955 compared to about 50% between 1920 and 1950, and those engaged in secondary and tertiary industries between 1950 and 1970 grew from 22% to 34%, and from 30% to 47%, respectively. This growth in

urbanization and the reluctance of women to continue the tradition of living with their in-laws, contributed to the establishment of nuclear families and to the demise of the *ie* system as it traditionally stood. This societal change is represented by the significant decrease in average family size, from 4.97 prior to 1955, to 2.99 in 1990, (Census taken by The Bureau of Statistics. Ishikawa, 1997, p. 59).

Now I will discuss the newest type of economy system - "knowledge economy", to find out how this system differs from other types of systems. I will also observe the changes that the emergence of the "knowledge economy" has brought to society.

In recent years, Japanese society has placed greater emphasis on knowledge-based industries as the world's economy system shifts from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. This does not mean that farming and industry-based societies do not exist any more; in fact, farming, industry, and information societies coexist (Takumi, 1997, p. 116). This is a change in the direction of the economy from farming to industry with an emphasis on manufacturing to a knowledge-based economy that stands on knowledge-based industries. A knowledge-based economy requires research and development through which ideas are developed into marketable products and services.⁵

Takumi (1997, pp. 120-121) argues that a knowledge-based economy, seen for the first time in Japanese history, provides society with equality between men and women, and self-establishment of individuals. I view Takumi's contention as follows: (1) Gender relations: if Japanese society intends to progress towards becoming a knowledge-based economy, it will require individuals with specific knowledge and skills which are gender-irrelevant. This implies that a knowledge-based society can offer greater equality of opportunity between men and women in the workplace at a professional level. When we reflect on industrial society, it is obvious that such equality was lacking. However, a knowledge-based economy system provides women with greater opportunities and enables them to participate in tasks at the front line. This leads to (2) A diversity of *ie* organization: the values previously attributed to a "large family" or "nuclear family" are now declining. These forms of family emerged to support Japan as a farming/industry-based society. This fact suggests that the family structure

⁵*NZ Herald*, C2, November 23, 1999

must constantly adapt to the changing structure of society.

As women become more and more independent emotionally and financially through greater professional opportunities, they will re-evaluate their expected role in household management. Thus, I expect significant changes to emerge in the roles women play in both the home and workplace. For example, within *ie* organization, women may become the family successor or principal bread earner, responsible for the continuity of the household. The number of women who do not marry, who do not have children, or who live on their own, may increase. There may also be an increase in the number of single member-households, married couples with an average of less than one child and couples with no children, who focus on living as independent individuals. All these people will form different types of nuclear families where husband and wife will be equal partners, instead of one being a wage earner and the other managing the household.

Similarly, within the corporate environment, there will be more women in positions of power at senior executive levels who are directly responsible for overall management of the firm. However, I also envisage the difficulties which women will face as their roles are reassigned within households and organizations. I suspect that men in general may not change at the same rate as women in accepting women's independence fully, as they have dominated industrial society since the war. This remains to be seen.

The following statement was made by Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter. She speaks of the importance of "human capital" as follows⁶:

"If the 20th century goes down in history as the machine age, as the age where we harness electric power to run machines in manufacturing, I think the 21st century may go down in history, provided we do the right things, as the age of the people...Brain power is to the global information age what oil was to the machine age."

She also explained that people were the most important ingredient for success. People provide brain power, technology, skill to work to a high standard, and the ability to form relationships.

⁶She spoke to an audience at the Apec Business Symposium in Auckland, New Zealand. *NZ Herald*, E3, June 26-27, 1999.

Despite the development of these structural and managerial changes in households and corporations, the importance of maintaining the name of both places will continue to be valued. For continuity means keeping lineage in the former and stability for the latter. The next section will clarify how Japanese people identify themselves and behave in relation to others.

3. Self and Others

How are the Japanese socially identified? In an attempt to understand the self in interpersonal interactions, I feel that it is important to examine (1) the experiential self, through some aspects of social relativism (Lebra, 1976, p. 22) that manifest the normative patterns of social interaction: that is, how individuals participate and experience the self in social interactions; how society interrelates to these interactions, and (2) the inner structure of the Japanese personality, that is the identification of psychological motives as the source of certain behavioural patterns. The following analysis focuses on the fundamental question of whether an individual should be identified as a single independent entity or as an entity determined by other individuals. I will attempt to answer this question by examining the following:

1. The distinction between individualism and collectivism
2. The younger generation
3. *Amae* - Dependency
4. *Tatema* and *honne*

3.1 The distinction between Individualism and Collectivism

I believe that one of the most important aspects of defining "self" in society is individualism and collectivism. I will discuss these two social principles in terms of how an individual is identified in society. We must, though, bear in mind that there will never be a society in which every individual is identified in the same way whether it is an individualist or a collectivist society, and that whatever the type the society is, it is dynamic rather than static. Hofstede (1994, p. 51) defines individualism and collectivism as follows:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

I will refer to the above definition by discussing the distinction between individuals within the two types of societies. The first distinction refers to priorities in people's goals (Brislin, 1994, p. 76). This refers to whether achievement is oriented towards attaining an individual goal or a group goal. Brislin (p. 76) discusses the fact that, in individualist societies, people aim to pursue their own personal goals working on their own plans and strategies towards their accomplishment. Essentially, he infers that individuals are motivated towards personal achievement at an individual level.

In my view, generally speaking, in an individualist society, the company or organization one works for is of much less concern than in a collectivist society. Instead, one's occupation is emphasized. One's performance of an "individual play" is evaluated and rewarded more directly and straightforwardly. In collective societies such as Japan on the other hand, people are expected to subjugate their priorities for the group goal of the organisation in which each individual collectively serves the group to assist it in achieving its goal. Thus, they are motivated towards, or at least, expected to be motivated towards the accomplishment of a group goal. People in collectivist society therefore share responsibilities and a sense of accomplishment through "team play" with other coworkers. This results in having strong ties between individuals.

Hofstede (1994, p. 50) states that, in collectivist societies the "we" group (or in-group) is the major source of one's identity: the "we" group, such as the *extended family* (often three generations living together) into which we are born, is distinct from other people in society who belongs to "they" groups. According to Hofstede (p. 50), in individualist societies on the other hand, children are born into the *nuclear family*, consisting of parents and possibly other children. These children learn to think of themselves as "I" which is distinct from other people's "I"s, and these others are not classified according to their group membership but to individual characteristics.

In my opinion, Hofstede (pp. 50-51) identifies individuals through the family structures only. I argue that the distinction between the group-based identity, "we" identity and individual-based identity, "I" identity must involve not only a physical connotation but a psychological one as well. This is because nuclear families such as those mentioned in the previous section can still carry out social activities with others for the common goal. The

other point to which Hofstede (p. 51) refers is that, children from such nuclear families are expected to leave the parental home as soon as the child has become able to stand on its own feet through education and not infrequently, children, after having left home, reduce relationships with their parents to a minimum or break them off altogether. Again, those nuclear families to which I referred are *unlikely* to do these things, but they would rather make an attempt to stay in touch with each other regularly. There are more than one type of nuclear family within and across cultures and they are organized and function differently. Establishing identity like Hofstede does will not be inaccurate for some cultures but can be inaccurate in others. I suggest that individuals are to be identified in terms of family ties as well as social ties such as the workplace.

In an individualistic society, personal identity is attained through professional success. People are focused on building professional expertise for their career rather than gaining organization-based identity. Thus, in an individualist society, people gain personal and professional identity based on their individual professional qualities. By contrast, in a collectivist society, people are identified as a member of the group. Traditionally, greater emphasis was placed upon the organization for which one works than upon what one actually did at work, subordinating personal identity to the social identity.

However, various changes occurred in Japanese society after the burst of the bubble economy, including the way people chose to establish themselves occupationally. The custom of valuing group collectivity over individuality is receiving less interest from the younger generation, resulting in a trend towards self-employment and part-time work. I view this tendency towards individualism as symbolic of rejection of the existing corporate and educational system which both fail to recognize a person as an independent individual. I consider that there are two main contributing factors towards this rejection.

The first is the fact that once one enters the corporate system, one is expected to give full commitment to the organization. This includes devotion to the work assigned and loyalty to the company. Traditionally the Japanese firm has adopted a seniority based wage and promotion system, and the employees are expected to conform to the immediate group they belong to and to the entire organization. This kind of system does not allow them to take the initiative or express unique ideas within a group. The second is the fact that the

educational values maintained within the current school system have focused on creating a degree of uniformity in young people, ultimately to serve industrial society. The educational focus is on producing human resources to meet corporate demands.

In Japanese industrial society, which is primarily supported by large-scale manufacturers, generally only young people who have been trained to suppress their own individuality are required. Individuality is considered to be unnecessary or even a challenge to their traditional focus and mode of operation in achieving mass-production of various consumer products. Both sectors have neglected the development of individual uniqueness. As a result of these two reasons, I view Japan's economical recession as having both positive and negative effects. It is obvious that the deterioration of economic power has serious financial effects at individual, national and global levels. However, as far as Japan is concerned, recession has provided the younger generation with an opportunity to re-assess occupational alternatives leading many to greater self reliance. This shift to individualism of the younger generation has consequently accompanied industry restructuring.

I fully welcome and commend these changes, particularly amongst young people, because they now realise that it is good to set their own individual goals for their career and their lives as a whole. This is a totally different concept from the traditional goal of "belonging" to a corporation. I believe that young people with creative and innovative thinking have enormous potential for the future, contributing to a wealth of technological skills, enabling development at the cutting edge of technology, computer software, for example. Their contribution of knowledge and skills of this kind will therefore become very important in enhancing Japan's economic and social development. I also believe that it is these people who will contribute to the increasingly emphasised knowledge-based economy, through their creativity and innovative thinking. At the same time, they will face a changing global economic system and structure. Therefore, the development of young people's talents and skills must be seen from a universal point of view, and they must be encouraged to contribute to benefits of the whole society and global economy rather than aiming solely to achieve the goals of the immediate group as has traditionally been expected by the Japanese collective system.

The question of how self-identity is created can be answered by looking at the social

structure and values that are reflected in the concept of individualism and collectivism. Although Japan has generally been categorized as a collective society, in my opinion, a closer inspection reveals that individualism is still observed to some extent in contemporary Japan. In other words, individualism does exist in Japanese society and is particularly evident within the younger generation as discussed above, but, the majority of people are presently involved with individual work which collectively assists an organization to function.

The dominance of one type of society over the other depends on economic and political conditions together with the prevailing value systems. As society changes from the machine age to the information age, the manufacturing-based economy is replaced by a knowledge-based economy. A knowledge-based economy does not directly involve mass-production but instead relies on brain power as the key resource, providing the creativity and innovation necessary for economic growth. In other words, ideas - intellectual and cognitive skills - are the key resource and are to be developed into marketable products and services in a knowledge economy.

I believe that in Japan too, people's creative and imaginative ideas can interact with information in abundance worldwide. Such unconventional thought could inspire people to transform individuals and organizations, as well as the economy. In order for Japan to cope effectively with and take advantage of this new economy system, I think it will be essential for organizations to modify their interpretations of collectivism and their attitudes towards it. This will require collectivism to be redefined as a way to form a group consisting of independent individuals who possess their own knowledge and skills. If this definition could be established and achieved, traditional superior boss and subordinate relationships based on a rigid hierarchical ranking within the group will be transformed. Greater autonomy will mean that individuals no longer rigidly adhere to tasks assigned by the superior but achieve these goals for the company while simultaneously enhancing their specialized knowledge and skills, furthering their own professional development or developing their own career independently. Therefore, they should be identified occupationally and independently rather than depending on which position they hold in the organization. If organizations initiate individual identification on this basis, society will also follow. Consequently, people will also begin to recognize the value of people who can work for themselves.

I do not suggest, however, that Japanese traditional cultural values should be abandoned or that society should change completely to individualism in deference to the knowledge economy. In fact, I consider that the concept of “*wa*” - harmony, for example, is important. “*Wa*” is important because it signifies acknowledgement of the individuality of each person, each with their own individual challenges. Collectivism offers an opportunity for unity and mutual cooperation. It also helps maintain law and order. Thus, I argue that Japanese society should maintain these values, yet also, begins to place more value on people’s individuality and diversity. In the next section, I would like to discuss the younger generation to see how they view the existing society.

3.2 The younger generation

It is my opinion that the concept of social belonging and conformity⁷ is losing acceptance amongst many of the younger generation today. They are vocal in their rejection of established values which emphasise working with others as members of a team, avoiding the traditional commitment and devotion which an organization assumes.

There are 44-million people born since 1970⁸, constituting one-third of Japan's population. These people grew up in a society of materialism promoted by the media which was heavily influenced by foreign cultures. In recent years, amongst the younger generation there is a noticeable change in social attitudes and values. They appear to reject traditional expectations, preferring to develop their own philosophy and values of individualism. These young people are critical of the existing social system including the current political system and the education system, which they perceive as failing to cater for their needs. They express a sense of disillusionment in the traditional education system which aims to cater for corporations instead of encouraging individual development. As a result of this disillusionment, they are opposed to existing social standards.

The behaviour of these young people is in contrast with that of earlier generations who worked hard when the Japanese economy was booming, and is consequently seen as lacking public awareness and responsibility by earlier generations. These young people show no interest in being members of the business organization and hold views which deny conformity. This has motivated the younger generation to move away from traditional career paths and take up temporary part-time jobs which provide them with gratification for their current leisure and lifestyle interests. This kind of attitude, which lacks commitment toward traditional career development has been further encouraged by the current economic state of Japan.

In my view, there seem to be two major factors underlying the behaviours of the younger generation. These are the state of the economy and the education system. When Japan was thriving economically, primarily through manufacturing products using high

⁷See "Belongingness" by T. Lebra (1974, pp. 23-37)

⁸*Time*, May 3-May 10, 1999

technology, almost everyone, including those who fell off the academic path could ultimately find employment and develop careers. But the bust of the economic bubble impacted on both earlier generations and the younger generation which came of age in the '90s, in terms of employment. Because employment means working for a corporation to many Japanese, no employment signifies nowhere to belong to and hence, nowhere to commit themselves to.

Such a sense of hopelessness for the future is one of the reasons why young people lack commitment toward career development. Japanese schools, particularly high schools, ultimately aim to send as many students as they can to prestigious universities. This is primarily to ensure that students attain occupational success at well-known companies. It is also vital, to attain a respectable position within the social hierarchy and to ensure the reputation of the school itself is maintained.

I believe that parents pressuring children into entering a certain university for the same purpose, and universities placing emphasis on catering for large corporations, are equally responsible for shaping young people's attitudes and behaviours, because both of them have emphasised corporative development rather than individual development. Many young people today want to shape their future as individuals, choosing their own mode of employment and pace of achievement. This appears to be a move toward individualism. However, true individualism can only be attained when these individuals become willingly and fully responsible for their social conduct, and attain professionalism in their career. Hence young people need to be encouraged to become truly independent individuals.

As a matter of fact, the Japanese Government has already realized the necessity of changing the Japanese society. According to an article in the *International Herald Tribune* (January 21, 2000, p. 4), the government-appointed panel has concluded that: the prevailing allegiance to rules and conformity in society has leached Japan's vitality. It is a society where group consensus is preferred over individual initiative. The report thus recommends "empowerment of the individual" and more support for risk takers. The Japanese should become more independent, more tolerant of people who veer from the norm and less preoccupied with rules, peer pressure and school tests. It also notes, there must be "a spirit of self-reliance and a spirit of tolerance" for Japan to succeed.

This change in governmental attitude leads me to anticipate a dramatic change in the employment and management systems and policies of Japanese companies. For example, employment will involve a stronger focus on individual skills and expertise rather than the traditional emphasis on academic background and level of conformity. There will be acknowledgement of the individuality and uniqueness of individual employees instead of seeing and treating employees solely as a collective group. If Japan is to develop as a knowledge-based economic society, it is paramount that individual skills and expertise together with independent and creative thinking become appreciated, and development of individual identities are encouraged.

3.3 *Amae* - Dependency

The concept of "*Amae*" was initially studied by Doi as a Japanese personality structure. (1974, P. 18) Doi translates the Japanese term "*amaeru*" as the tendency to presume upon another adult. (p. 18) This is a social behavioural pattern which is often manifested in interpersonal relationships. In my opinion, this word "*amae*" covers the psychological aspects of inter-relationships. It involves such mental attitudes as "One relies on someone", "One demands something", "One takes advantage of someone", "One takes kindness as a matter of course", or "One should be forgiven for this". "Someone" in these meanings refers to a person who cares for, protects, or bestows favours, seen in the collectivity of families, friends, or company groups.

To be specific, it is, in some cases, someone with a maternal or paternal role which is based on responsibility or even moral obligation for the overall well-being of someone. In other cases, it is a person who expresses *omoiyari* (thoughtfulness) which is based on kindness, benevolence, or generosity to deal with a specific matter; which someone is depending on. This is common in cases where one asks a favour of someone with whom a long-term interpersonal relationship exists, and takes advantage of this interdependency expecting that their needs to be satisfied.

Amae is cultivated in the early mother and child nurturing relationship in which parents firmly believe that unconditional, overall caring for the child is one of the most important roles of the parents. Child rearing is universal but differs in style and tradition from one culture to another. How the Japanese maternal relationship remains unique from its American counterpart is discussed by Caudil and Weinstein⁹. (1986, p. 201) They claim that the major characteristic of the Japanese maternal relationship is identified in the manner in which expressive dependency needs are fostered in the mother and child pattern. In the process of socialization the child is given total gratification and tolerance by the mother. This encourages the child to trigger dependency needs instead of becoming an autonomous being. The child comes to take advantage of this interdependency in the early stages of life.

Caudil and Weinstein seem to present a negative image of mothering of Japanese mothers. I presume this by interpreting their words "total gratification" as spoiling. The relationship between mother and child they infer is one in which the mother overindulges and undercontrols the child. I will define the common form of dependency observed in Japan as follows: It is the intention to or act of asking another person a favour which one hopes to be accomplished by the other person, taking advantage of the interpersonal relationship which has already been established.

In my opinion, the concept of *amae* mentioned above includes interdependent relationships between family members who are conscious of their intention to depend on the relationship between a mother and child from it. This is because, in this relationship a child is, naturally, instinctively reliant on a mother. What the child demands from the mother and how much he/she does, and how the mother responds to the child or how much she gratifies the child varies considerably. The way each mother deals with her child is unique. Instead, mother and infant relationship should be regarded as an infant's *amae* to mother who gives motherly care and attention to the child. Perhaps, Caudil and Weinstein interpret this motherly care and attention given by the Japanese mothers as excessive compared to American mothers. This may be, because Japanese people tend to think it is good to be lenient about children's behaviour while they are small but it is necessary to discipline them as they grow. I do not

⁹"Maternal Care and Infant Behavior in Japan and America." In this they selected as samples 40 Japanese and 30 American 3 to 4-month old infants and studied the interactions of those infants and their mothers.

think it is even appropriate to analyze whether this tendency is to be regarded as leniency or spoiling. This is a cultural difference which we should not perceive from our own cultural point of view and is something which cannot be generalized.

This emotional concept of *amae* is explicated by Wierzbicka (1992, p. 136) as follows, starting with the interpretation of a presupposition of conscious awareness that she cites from Doi.

X thinks something like this:

Y feels something good toward me

Y wants to do something good for me

When I am with Y nothing bad can happen to me

I don't have to do anything

I want to be with Y

According to Wierzbicka, this concept is based on the psychological prototype of *amae* that lies the relationship between infant and its mother. It clearly expresses infant's *amae* to mother. But, in my opinion, for adult - adult relationships it is necessary to apply a different but derived concept from this prototype. An infant's *amae* involves more or less unconditional love and care and it is, at least at this stage, not reciprocal. In contrast, adult relationships may not be unconditional and reciprocation may be an important aspect in maintaining the relationship. An adult recipient is hence unlikely to feel "I don't have to do anything", expecting total gratification, or take the relationship for granted.

I think that each adult relationship would vary. People in each relationship deal with a different type of *amae* with a different attitude, therefore, they must have different expectations and goals in each relationship. It is human nature to depend on someone when we are in trouble or difficulty requiring support or wanting to be cared for and we feel grateful when we receive assistance. There are cases in which people take advantage of someone's generosity or subtly induce someone to do something for them, compromising the relationship. However, I consider that dependency works to bind two people together and help to create a closer and longer-lasting interpersonal relationship. In the next section, I will discuss another aspect of "self and others" which deals with two dimensions of self.

3.4 *Tatemae* and *Honne*

A two dimensional sense of self¹⁰ called *tatemae* and *honne* refers to the two forms of communication in which what to say and how much, are manipulated by the speaker according to who the other person is and in what circumstances the two people are interacting. *Tatemae* is the outward presentation of the public self¹¹, whereas *honne* is one's real feelings or true intentions of the private self. Whether one should function as a public self or a private self depends on the type of context, namely, outer (*soto*-outside) or inner (*uchi*-inside) context. When contexts are structured with emphasis on formality and discipline in public situations, contexts are outer. In such contexts, one is expected to fulfil a formal role in terms of behaviour and language use. In other cases, one might behave formally simply because one has not yet formed a close and open relationship with the other. In either situation, one would consider the other person's reputation and exhibit cautious behaviour including what is said¹².

On the other hand, when contexts involve spontaneity and intimacy, people can be freely informal expressing their real feelings in the form of the inner group. Thus, the Japanese self shifts between *tatemae*, the formal dimension of the self and *honne*, a more spontaneous dimension. Such admission of self as *tatemae/honne* and *uchi/soto* can also be represented by the terms, *omote/ura* (front/rear). The notion of *tatemae* and *honne* is not only applied to communication in which either the social self or the private self is revealed, nor is this practice limited only to Japanese people: equal pay between male and female, the public promises of politicians during the time of election campaigns, and the age set for people being legally allowed to smoke or drink alcohol are all only *tatemae* in many other societies as well.

Joseph Tobin (1992, p. 23) discusses the way in which children learn to distinguish

¹⁰See Doi's "Some psychological themes in Japanese human relationships" in Condon and Saito (Eds.) *Intercultural encounters with Japan: Communication contact and conflict*. (1974)

¹¹See Ting-Toomey's "Intercultural Conflict Styles: A face Negotiation Theory" in Kim and Gudykunst (Eds.) *Theories in Intercultural Communication*. (1996)

¹²See Bachnik's "*Kejime*": defining a shifting self in multiple organizational modes" in Rosenberg (Ed.) *Japanese Sense of Self*. (1992, pp. 152-156; pp. 159-164)

omote and *ura* and move between the controlled behaviour of *omote* or *tatemaie* situations and the free behaviour of *ura* and *honne* in the Japanese preschool. According to Tobin, Japanese preschools play an important role as a place for children to cultivate a sense of self capable of integrating *omote* and *ura* (front and rear), *tatemaie* and *honne* (appearance and real feelings), *soto* and *uchi* (outside and home). He demonstrates that, as has been previously seen in dependency, Japanese children develop an interdependent dimension of self learned through interactions with their mother at home. They are already exposed to the situations where they can freely express the private, spontaneous side of the self. But, in order to learn *tatemaie* children need to experience more complex social situation beyond immediate family relations. In other words, they learn through socialization with other people such as peers, teachers, principals, or even complete strangers in a variety of situations such as school or social situations outside the home.

Socialization, in my view, is a process of learning the shared cultural and social rules of language use and behaviour in differing human interactions. People learn about culturally and socially acceptable ways of talking and behaviour by actually being exposed to a variety of situations including both the family and social settings. When children reach preschool age, preschools become an important place for them to learn about a real life. At this point, I wish to refer to Tobin's observation of the role of preschools in Japan. He claims that preschools provide children with a place to learn about the difference between *tatemaie* and *honne*, *omoto* and *ura*, and teaches them how to integrate them.

I view the role of preschools differently. I believe, the major role of preschools is to provide an environment in which children initially learn about group life within a semi-formal environment. Preschools teach children how to adapt themselves to a group situation in which they learn how to participate in various activities with consideration for other children. In other words, it is a matter of self-discipline for each child in order for them to get on well with others and carry out various group work and activities in harmony. Consequently, socialization takes place through interactive learning and playing with other members of the group, with each child seen in relation to the entire group. Tobin claims that learning of *tatemaie* and *honne* as the outward presentation of the social self is also learned by children through learning how to talk and behave in public. The *tatemaie* communication to which Tobin refers seems to be only concerned with an ability to talk and behave in a socially

appropriate manner. But, *tatemae* which is commonly understood by Japanese people is a thought such as “I will just say what the other person would like to hear.”, and this thought which underlies the concept of *tatemae* is not experienced by those children of this age.

However, children will learn at a later stage of socialization about the distinction between the formal and spontaneous dimensions of the self. I agree with Tobin’s assertion that “the primary function of the Japanese preschool is to help children add to the dyadic, interdependent sense of self learned at home in the first three years of life, a more group-oriented, outward-facing sense of self”. (p. 38) But, “a more group-oriented, outward-facing sense of self” means to me an overall development of social skills necessary to interact with others appropriately and effectively. The *tatemae* and *honne* communication forms I defined earlier are consciously chosen by the Japanese, depending on whether it is a situation in which the speaker can say exactly what he/she really thinks or whether it is a situation in which the other person’s feeling may be hurt or his/her honor may be impaired by what the speaker says.

The *Tatemae* communication form is basically applied to maintain existing relationships, without risking damage by certain words or actions, or to establish new relationships with another person. This fundamental concept of *tatemae* is observed in many social aspects such as business negotiation and social conventions such as gift-giving, for example, and is a completely different concept from self-development through gaining social skills.

Tobin (1992, p. 31) further points out certain features which contribute towards the establishment of an identity as a group-member and the two dimensional sense of self. One of these features is student-teacher ratios in relation to the identity as a member of a group. According to Tobin, this ratio is kept high and this is intended to provide students with a chance to mix with many different types of students in a large group and learn how to interact with them in differing situations. It is believed that it is important to make a clear distinction psychologically and physically between school and home, teacher and mother to foster the group ethos. Low student-teacher ratios are not preferred because it would create close interpersonal relationships between students and teachers which would result in students forming dependence. More importantly, students can learn to build up group-living skills by mixing with peers in the group, and learning how to get on with other group members,

allowing children to establish a group dimension of selfhood.

In my view, however, low student-teacher ratios, which allow both parties to be accessible or to have close contact with each other, may be preferable and not necessarily lead to children developing dependence on the teacher. The reason why there were so many students in one class in Japan was simply because, unlike today, large numbers of children were born in the past, and this philosophy provided a convenient way to deal with the large numbers. The consciousness of being a member of a group is therefore promoted through participation in various group work and, as Tobin claims, group-living skills are built by mixing with peers in the group. Thus, regardless of the number of children per teacher, they eventually become accustomed to an environment which facilitates and endorses the necessity of the development of a social self, and establishes their identity within the group. Such a group-oriented identity established at this time of socialization helps children prepare for further participation in larger and more complex group situations.

In every culture, various rules and rituals in part belong to the use of space. Space is transformed by buildings both inside and outside. According to Tobin, the concept of *omote* (front)/*soto* (outside) as opposed to *ura* (rear)/*uchi* (inside) occurs in spaces that express the distinction between them. In ordinary domestic space in Japanese homes, the rooms for *omote/soto* and those for *ura/uchi* are characterized by communication modes as well as relationships among participants which are based on the social distance in their relationships. This means that the distinction between *omote/ura* or *soto/uchi* has not only physical orientations in space but social and psychological orientations as well. (Bachnik, 1994, pp. 153-155)

Bachnik further extends these terms beyond the directional coordinate of “inside” and “outside” and links them with self, society, and language. She suggests that in traditional Japanese society, the *universally defined* orientations for inside/outside are linked with *culturally defined* perspectives for self, society, and language. (Bachnik, 1994, p. 7) This is evident by the inclination of Japanese people towards caution in social relationships between the speaker and listener, contexts which may partly be constituted by such relationships, and also, by the use of appropriate levels of language such as honorific and humble expressions. All these elements reflect the two communication forms *tatemae* and *honne*. The former,

informality in which various social rules are over-ridden by intimacy, and the latter, formality in which these rules are implemented, respectively. As illustrated above, Japanese society is built on social relativism which emphasizes interpersonal relationships and social context. The emphasis on these elements is based on a distinction between *uchi* and *soto*, that governs not only social behaviour but also language and shapes the nature of human relations.

4. Summary

An individual's attitudes and behaviour may change over time. The society people live in also continually changes and evolves. The way of life is affected by social changes and people make an adaptive attempt to think and behave accordingly. Japan's economic instability is the chief factor in driving current social change, forcing many industrial organizations to make significant changes in structure and the management system, for example. From a global perspective, an individual's way of life is affected greatly depending on how successfully industries deal with changing world economic trends and their trading counterparts. Accompanying such social changes, are inevitable changes in people's way of thinking, their attitudes and their value systems. These changes affect the concepts of household, family structure, occupational career, social identification and self identification and so on. With increased opportunities for professional growth for women within the emerging knowledge-based economy system, women are becoming more independent and self-sufficient. There are more men and women who are self-reliant and living independently away from home and the traditional family unit.

Many young people today also view their lives differently from older generations, in relation to the social environment they live in. These people, including those who are dissatisfied with social systems such as the educational system and those who choose not to commit themselves to a company, are moving away from traditional systems and values to pursue their own career and fulfil their own personal interests. These structural and managerial changes in household and corporation together with a shift by many young people towards individual-oriented type of work rather than a group emphasis, create a new value system.

Observing these changes in people's attitudes and behaviour toward those social changes help us to reassess Japanese people's attitudes and values towards their social structure and systems. One of the ways to do this is to refer to an individual's identity, social identity or self identity, and their attitude and behaviour toward society, individualist or collectivist. Despite the growing trend towards individualism and a rejection of the traditional social and employment system.

Despite the complexity of Japanese society, I believe that people's fundamental attitudes

toward human relationship remain unchanged. Social practices such as interdependency, the communication forms, *tatemae* and *honne* communications are fundamentally concerned with other's expectations and feelings. The Japanese ideals such as *wa* (harmony), *enryo* (self-restraint), or reciprocity are therefore still important aspects of human relations in Japan.

Chapter Three

Intercultural Communication: Cultural Differences in the Communication Processes

Culture is created by people collectively. People in each culture form a complete system of beliefs, values, and ideals through socialization together with their own individual and personal experiences. Socialization takes place through interacting with various types of people. People experience social affairs and events with others, drawing on shared cultural factors such as language, social attitudes, basic concepts of self, and history. In this process of socialization, people also learn how those social affairs and events are organized and conducted by either observing or actually being involved. Socialization also influences people's perceptions. Under the influence of socialization, people within a culture learn to perceive and respond to situations in a similar way. This shared similarity in perception and behaviour is based on socially facilitated moral constraints represented in the value system. This value system is reflected in society through the communication and behaviour of individuals.

The process of socialization takes place not only within one's familiar culture but also through intercultural interaction. Intercultural interaction often leads to a sense of discovery, as differences and similarities in communication become apparent. When two individuals from different cultures communicate, both tend to behave as they do in their own cultures often with no comprehension of how the other person from a different culture thinks, perceives,

or communicates with others. Additionally, they are prone to view and assess the behaviours and attitudes of the other person critically on the basis of their own cultural values and norms. It is unlikely that either of them would be consciously aware that the other person has encountered significantly different cultural and personal experiences, and hence is likely to think differently, pay attention to different things, and communicate differently.

It is essential to recognize that the unfamiliar behaviours and attitudes expressed by the other person are directly related to their different cultural and individual backgrounds. The meaning of social events held by different cultures, the way they are valued, organized, or carried out are all unique to each culture. People need to recognize that the way members of each culture perceive their social environment, react and attaches value to it, all varies with their value system, and that it is this uniqueness that differentiates one culture from another.

I consequently believe that it is important to gain factual knowledge about communication and to acknowledge that it is, to a large extent, governed by culture. This involves developing an understanding of the various features that create a certain communicative style and the characteristics of the people who apply it in their communication. I will therefore focus on the features which are universally recognized and which constitute components of intercultural communication.

5. Self - in-group relationships

The communication process is an aspect of cultural difference that is determined by each society. Societies are often identified and classified as either individualism or collectivism. We can assume then that, whether the society is individualistic or collectivistic¹³, social values maintained within the society influences communication process. For this reason I will discuss two analyses made by Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988, pp. 323-336) The first analysis deals with identification of the individual-differences variable, idiocentrism versus allocentrism within culture, on the basis of the theory that these variables correspond to the constructs of individualism and collectivism. The second analysis is the study of "self-in-group relationships" seen from a cross-cultural perspective. This analysis intends to identify answers to the following: how individuals in these two types of societies relate to their in-groups; how individuals in collectivist societies are different from those in individualist societies; do people in collectivist societies have the same attitudes toward their in-groups? The former analysis will be discussed in 5.1 and the latter, in 5.2.

5.1 Allocentrism-idiocentrism

Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca assess the extent of individualism and collectivism at the cultural level by examining a personality dimension labelled *allocentrism* versus *idiocentrism* at the psychological level. This personality dimension of *allocentrism* versus *idiocentrism* is applied to identify individual differences in terms of how individuals see themselves in relation to their in-groups and its members.

Triandis et al. (p. 323) hypothesized that allocentric or idiocentric attitudes reflect the constructs of individualism or collectivism. Whether the individual's attitudes toward their

¹³See Hofstede's *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. (1980; 1984), and *Cultures and Organization: Software of the Mind, Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*. (1994)

in-groups and its members is allocentric or idiocentric is measured by determining which attitudes toward them the individual has; cooperative, competitive, or individualistic¹⁴. This means that the individual differences dimension, *allocentrism versus idiocentrism* can be measured on the basis of individual attitudes toward cooperation, competition, or individualism. These attitudes were reflected in the relationship of individuals and groups in such ways as when individual goals are positively correlated with group goals, co-operation takes place.

By contrast, when they are negatively correlated, competition emerges. When individual goals cannot be correlated, it means the attitude of the individual toward groups is individualistic. Observing their analysis, I found some things unclear. For example, what exactly does "individual goal" refer to? What is the meaning of a correlation between "individual goal" and "group goal"? What do "positively" and "negatively" correlated mean?

On reflection, I have come to interpret the above term "individual goal" as how acceptable or desirable the group goal appears to be to a person. The degree of an individual's acceptance of the group goal determines an individual's attitudes towards the group resulting in being co-operative, competitive, or individualistic. A positive correlation would hence mean strong approval of the group goal, and a subsequent attitude of cooperation; negative correlations means disapproval of the group goal and hence a competitive approach; no correlation represents a refusal to commit to the group goal, preferring to work individually instead of working collectively. These three types of attitudes towards the group are the determinants of this individual difference dimension of allocentrism versus idocentrism. This equates with the extent to which a member is psychologically prepared to share work towards achievement of the group goal. Based on this interpretation, it seems more appropriate to apply "degree of willingness" to cooperate in achieving the group goal rather than the "individual goal". Willingness means, in this case, how much an individual is willing to devote himself or herself to fulfilling group needs in a cooperative manner.

¹⁴According to Triandis et al. (1988), the terms, cooperation, competition, and individualism were taken from the work Mead conducted in 1967. In 1961 Mead et al. undertook the task of determining the boundaries of scientific knowledge concerning cooperation and competition as a special phase of the larger field of personality and culture. (1961, p. 3) Competition and cooperation are defined as: the act of seeking or endeavoring to gain what another is endeavoring to gain, at the same time, the act of working together to one end, respectively.

I observe an important point brought to our attention by this analysis: it provides insight into an individual's inner thoughts about other members and their in-groups as a whole. The attitudes of people revealed in the analysis will be more accurate determinants of how individuals actually view their in-groups and other members of the group than the outer behaviours manifested by the individuals. This is due to a tendency in Japanese culture for members of the group to participate in cooperative group work despite viewing the group goal negatively. They may do so if they feel that it is important to remain a member of the group, or if they feel that it is necessary to adjust themselves to the needs of the group. They may exercise *tatemaie*. In such cases their behaviours will be seen as allocentric, conforming to the group. I will examine further in the next section how people view other members of their in-groups and explore their attitudes toward them.

5.2 People's attitudes towards their in-group

I have previously discussed "self - in-group" relationships in relation to individualism and collectivism from different perspectives in section 3.1 and the former section, 5.1. This analysis, once again, examines the two types of cultures but from a different perspective. It attempts to see if people in collectivist cultures relate to in-groups differently from those in individualist cultures. That is, compared with people in individualist cultures, do people in collectivist cultures consider themselves as being more similar to their in-groups; as paying more attention to the views of their in-groups; as being more concerned with the needs of their in-groups? (Triandis et al., 1988, p. 331) The following three cultures were examined:

Japan - The sample includes 150 students and 106 adults.

Puerto Rico - 97 students

Illinois - 91 people

The item, "Conforming to the in-group's wishes or evading a confrontation in response to conflict resolution problems" was given to examine "extension of self to in-group" versus "self as distinct entity from in-group" which also included themes of interdependence versus self-sufficiency.

According to these researchers, the overall results show that out of a sample of 138 Japanese and Illinois students, 19 showed the Japanese to be more collectivist; 105 revealed no difference; 14 showed the Illinois groups to be more collectivistic. The pattern of results showed no differences between the Japanese and Illinois samples in reaction to parents. But most of the cultural differences occurred in the ways those people react to acquaintances, coworkers, and friends. The Japanese indicated that they pay more attention to the views of their co-workers than did Illinois sample. The Japanese consider the workgroup important. But the hypothesis that collectivists will consistently see themselves as more under the influence of in-groups was rejected. Similarly, the hypothesis that in collectivist cultures, people will show more concern for their in-group members was supported in only 2 out of 11 samples for the Japanese, and both the Illinois and Puerto Rico samples showed more concern for their in-group than Japan showed. The hypothesis that people in collectivist cultures will subordinate their needs to the needs of their in-groups more than those in individualist cultures received mixed support.

This hypothesis was supported in 7 out of 18 tests in the Japanese samples, but the Puerto Ricans did not exhibit the same pattern. This suggests that subordination to the needs of their in-groups is unlikely to be a general pattern within collectivist cultures. Furthermore, the hypothesis that people in collectivist cultures will show less distance from their in-groups was supported in 6 out of 13 items for the Japanese, but the results for Puerto Ricans were similar to the Illinois individualist samples.

According to Triandis et al. (1988, p. 333), the global characterization of collectivism is inaccurate, at least when college students are studied. They conclude the study as revealing that, even though both Japan and Puerto Rico have been considered as collectivist. cultures, the study showed certain differences in the attitudes towards their in-groups seen from the perspectives of; the influence of in-groups; concern for other group members; subordination to the needs of in-groups; psychological closeness to in-groups. The results also show that individuals in both individualist and collectivist cultures can shift between allocentrism and idiocentrism.

I interpret the results within consideration of the following three points, taking several possibilities into account. First, I fully agree with the danger of assuming that people in all

collectivist cultures view their in-groups and other members in the same way. It is unclear whether the 150 Japanese students studied have experienced situations where they have been obliged to conform to their in-groups such as in the workplace. We can, on the other hand, presume that they have experienced associating within informal groups of family or friends, where individual thought and autonomy of behaviour is accepted and permissible. Conformity expected in the former groups and that in the latter groups would be completely different in terms of what and who to conform to, and the degree to which one must conform. In my opinion, generally speaking, people's attitudes towards their in-groups and others must be measured within a complex social context where people with varied social positions and status interact with each other such as the workplace.

Second, when we consider the fact that Puerto Rican and Japanese people do not share a common cultural heritage, it seems only natural that there would be differences in the patterns of collectivism expressed in family, friends, workplace etc. This is because each society has its own distinct social values. These individuals adopt and incorporate the inherited cultural values and existing social values in their own value system.

These differences also include the dimensions of idiocentrism and allocentrism. Triandis et al. considered idiocentrism and allocentrism as the individual difference variable and hypothesized that idiocentrism and allocentrism correspond to the individualism and collectivism constructs. (P. 323) In my view, the terms idiocentrism and allocentrism are used when considering how one views or behaves in relation to others. This means whether or not one is independent of the opinions of others. Most of individuals described maintain both dimensions of idiocentrism and allocentrism. They determine which one to activate based on each specific situation, drawing on knowledge of what is socially acceptable and what is not.

Third, the subordination expected in collectivist cultures varied between the Japanese and Puerto Rican subjects. I interpret the findings that the Japanese students express little concern for in-group members and in-groups as demonstrating students conscious choice to be independent of what acquaintances, co-workers, and friends think and express. The older generation would, I believe, be likely to adjust themselves to the in-group goals or to avoid open confrontation, in the name of harmony or *tatemae*.

6. High-Context and Low-Context Communication

6.1 The information processing system

Human communication can be defined from various perspectives. Cushman and Kinkaid (1987, p. 2), for example, claim that communication in its most general sense refers to a process in which information is shared by two or more persons and which has *consequences* for one or more of the persons involved.

I believe that communication is comprised of: (1) sending verbal and nonverbal messages, (2) perceiving and interpreting the messages, and (3) the physical setting, representing the process through which messages are exchanged. I will incorporate (1), (2) and (3) into the above theory combining the linguistic, psychological, and physical aspects of communication and define the whole process of the communication as follows:

Communication is a process in which a message is transferred by X and received by Y. Upon completion of the transmission of the message, both share the same information. Y processes the information received applying, to borrow Cushman and Kinkaid's (1987, p. 2) words, "the internal information processing capability" which allows Y to interpret the information in a way that Y can subjectively make sense out of his perceptions of experiences and incoming messages. (p. 2) Y then attaches meaning to it and responds or react to it accordingly. X and Y eventually reach communication objective or outcome.

The key issue of the communication process is how one processes an incoming message. I will now examine Hall's "Information processing system" from the perspective of the process of communication discussed above.

A study of high- and low-context communication conducted by Edward Hall (1985, p. 40) deals with the cultural differences seen in the way we process incoming information as a communication strategy. The information processing system focuses on situations in which the individual is faced with volumes of information that are too large to process efficiently, termed "information overload" by Hall. This is based on his theory that, when the amount of incoming information exceeds one's capability of processing, one must select which information to take in and screen out. This involves a psychological aspect of processing that enables us to select which information to take in and to ignore, paying attention to the right things

which affects the consequences of communication. Hall claims that selection of certain information from overloaded information takes place through screening. Screening is done through recalling the knowledge that one already has or the subject in discussion that has already been programmed in one's mind in the past, called "preprogramming". Thus, "preprogramming" means that if we have already inputted certain information into the machine in our brain, when we are exposed to the same information this machine automatically activates and sends message not to pay attention to this information. The brain hence selectively decides what to take in and what to ignore on the basis of previously internalized information.

Regarding context, Hall claims that "it involves (1) programmed and internalized contexting; (2) situational and/or environmental contexting. (pp. 44-45) Following Hall's conception of contexting, I regard the context - meaning relationship as follows:

We encounter continually new experiences, meet someone for the first time, read an article and find new words or expressions and so on, in our daily life. On these occasions one consciously or subconsciously selects information which one feels is relevant or meaningful to personal life experiences, and stores it after attaching the meaning to it through interpreting it. The selection of information and the meaning attached to it would be unique to each person. There are two reasons for this: (1) Each individual perceives objects and values them differently. They may even interpret the meaning differently. Furthermore, each involves his/her subjective views when attaching meaning, and this subjective view is based on previous experiences from specific situations. (2) Situational factors such as the setting, who is present, and what situational cues each individual pays attention to would be different.

The above indicates that paying attention to the right parts of verbal messages and the correct reading of situational factors, including nonverbal communication would be very important for effective communication. Lastly, I wish to emphasize the importance of gaining knowledge of the communication partner and the subject of discussion.

6.2 Cultural differences in high- and low-context communication

Hall's conceptualization of high- and low-context communication or messages focuses on the degree to which information is either embedded in physical context or internalized in the person communicating. Hall (1985, p. 42) defines high- and low-context communication or messages as:

high context communication or messages is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted of the message. A low-context communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.

In my opinion, although Japan tends toward the high-context end of the continuum, it would be more accurate to say that high-context communication often occurs in situations in which intimacy is shared such as in the home or where the speaker consciously chooses to be indirect or intuitive in his/her communication style. In such cases, often, only minimal information is explicit in the transmitted messages. High-context communication often involves simplified phrases in which the use of implicit and even ambiguous words is common. Yet, the meaning is fully understood, because the communicators have internalized so much knowledge about each other, accumulated over the many years of shared family life or social experiences.

In contrast, one would be expected to have particular skills to convey information by relying on the nonverbal and circumstantial cues in such situations as: (1) One has not preprogrammed the memory of the speaker, (2) Only a small portion of verbal messages are conveyed, and what is more, (3) These verbal messages are ambiguous, due to the avoidance of verbal articulation. In these cases, a person from a non-high-context culture may find communication with someone from a high-context culture difficult and demanding until he/she has got to know the person and programmed or internalized a certain amount of information about that person.

I believe that in general, people from low-context cultures tend to place high value on a detailed, direct, explicit, and high volume of verbal speech, expressing logical and analytical thinking, reasoning, and articulation, in symmetrical interpersonal relations. On the other hand, when people in high-context cultures such as Japan communicate with one another in

situations where intimacy is not yet established, they normally avoid directness in expressing such things as their thoughts, evaluation of other's opinion, denials or requests and so forth. The degree of self-disclosure would also be very limited until they start to feel comfortable and establish trust with each other. Thus, people in high-context cultures value and ultimately aim to develop and maintain long-term relationship. This is a central role in their interpersonal relationships, provided that skills to grasp and understand the intentions or meanings intuitively are mutually developed. Hence, their style of communication is oriented toward this purpose.

7. Thought Patterns and Discourse Patterns

7.1 Thought Patterns

As each culture influences its own communicative style, it also influences thought patterns and discourse patterns. The interrelationship between culture and thought patterns or discourse patterns has been studied by researchers as one of the major components in intercultural communication.

Kaplan (1970), for example, analyzed paragraphs written by American students and foreign students in his study of "Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education". He concludes significantly that: "each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself, and that part of the learning of a particular language is the mastering of its logical system." I interpret the "logical system" in this context as; the way people perceive an object or an issue and the way they internally process it in the way they think it makes sense through interpreting and attributing meaning to it.

Kaplan's analysis of paragraph structure concluded that the English speaker's thought pattern is linear, while the oriental pattern of thought is like a gyre. The English "linear" pattern is seen in the prototypic English paragraph consisting of (1) a topic statement, (2) a series of subdivisions of the topic statement, each supported by example and illustrations. (1970, p. 4) This pattern is also described as "to think in line" by Toyama (1973, pp. 12-19) in which the speaker or writer presents a subject to talk about first, then moves forward from section to section, each time giving more information or explanation of the subject, developing logically and constructively.

In the "Gyre Pattern", as opposed to the linear pattern, the development of paragraph may be called an "approach by indirection" and the development of paragraph may be said to be turning and turning in a widening gyre. (Kaplan, 1970, p. 10) In this pattern, each set of ideas may appear disconnected or irrelevant to the subject, or not supporting one's main ideas. Toyama (1973, p. 15) argues on this point that the reason why Japanese language may be thought to be illogical is because Japanese is viewed from the perspective of the logical linear approach which is valued in European languages. He (1973, p. 13) further argues that:

The logic contained in language is illustrated with something like a “line” and the shape of the “line” changes according to the familiarity between the speaker and listener. If they are unfamiliar with each other, for example, they will think in “line” and deliver in the order of the “line” to make sure that the other person understands what is being said without falling off the “line”.

In contrast, Toyama (p. 14) asserts that, if it is a situation where both parties are familiar with and understand each other, a different kind of logic applies, without being illogical. In such a case, the interactants can comfortably communicate by saying the key points only without following the “line”. The main points are delivered but the less important things or things mutually shared are neglected. He (p. 19) goes on to say that these neglected parts disappear from the surface of the “line” but are *embedded* underneath the “line”. This is how the “line” becomes a line of dots. This theory, which he calls “to think in dots” is illustrated as: A - B (A1) - C (B1) - D - (C1), instead of being A - A1 - A2 - A3 as in the pattern of “line”.

I observe that these embedded parts are the cause of “ambiguity” or so called “illogicality”, resulting in an implicit and indirect way of presentation. Although this is often interpreted negatively, to Japanese people, it is perfectly logical, as they are capable of connecting the dots and inferring the meaning of the underlying, neglected parts. The difference in the two thought patterns is therefore due to different principles of presentation involving, the use of simplified and abbreviated sentences and an explicit, coherent development. This form of ellipsis or collapsing of expressions or sentences, may be more easily understood if one understands the nature of the Japanese language and people. I will illustrate some contributing factors below:

(1) Deletion of subjects, objects, and other elements of sentences occurs more frequently in Japanese than in English, where it is severely restricted to a small set of forms - auxiliary verbs, subjects, articles, and so on - occurring in the initial position of the sentence in informal discourse. In Japanese, however, these and many other elements of a sentence are frequently missing; specifically, noun phrases such as subjects of finite verbs and objects of transitive verbs, structurally required in English, are regularly deleted in Japanese. (Shibamoto, 1984, p. 233) (2) Japanese language tends to be strongly situation-oriented, and hence

heavily influenced by situational factors. This means how one speaks, how much one speaks, and what one says and so on are determined and constrained by the situation one is in, including the degree of familiarity, formality, and certainty.

(3) Factors such as Japanese homogeneity of race, language habit and regulation, and geographic isolation have shaped Japanese language and its use today. Forgas (1985, p. 1) argues in his study of "*Language and Social Situations*" that:

".....every utterance we produce, and every utterance produced by others that we understand, is similarly dependent on people's shared knowledge of the surrounding social situation. ...both the meanings of utterances, and shared definitions of social situations, are the result of collective, and not individual, cognitive activity.

All cultures would have different ways of regulating thought patterns and language use. I will include discourse patterns¹⁵ within this assumption and attempt to examine the differences in patterns between cultures next.

7.2 Discourse patterns

I will discuss a study conducted by Watanabe (1993, pp. 182-203) which examines discourse patterns within cultures. This analysis will explore the characteristic discourse patterns of American and Japanese university students framing a speech event in group discussion. It focuses on (1) beginning and ending, (2) reasoning, and (3) arguing.

(1) Beginning and ending

The Japanese groups took time to frame the beginning by negotiating the procedure and the order of turn-taking while the American groups began discussions immediately. When framing the ending, the Japanese participants appointed a leader who led the ending by asking the members about their intention to end or officially announcing the end. In contrast,

¹⁵See "Rules of Discourse" in *Sociolinguistics: Goals, Approaches and Problems* by Bell (1976, pp. 99-101)

the American participants did not frame the ending this way but simply finished because they were through with the last topic.

I think that generally, when a Japanese person interacts with other participants, he/she tends to behave cautiously, taking into account the age, gender and social position of others present. Based on these relational features, the person will decide when, how much, how often he/she should be speaking, as well as the appropriate level of speech, i.e., formal or informal. The age, gender and social position of other participants determine whether the person is placed on a platform of equality with others in terms of speech behaviour. Watanabe (1993, p. 185) refers to this as the hierarchical order, which she regards as an essential part of Japanese communication.

I do not feel comfortable with the use of the word, hierarchical order based on who the others are, as it assigns levels of superiority and inferiority which respectively determine and restrict communication behaviours. I do not consider a person as inferior when compared to someone with a high social profile. What I mean in reference to consideration of age, gender, or the social position of others, is the overall recognition and respect for them. This leads to an adjusted degree of self-disclosure which is expected as part of the social order reflected in Japanese communication situations. I believe that consideration of the other participant's personal traits is motivated by formality and a lack of familiarity within initial interactions rather than the recognition of hierarchical order, as Watanabe claims.

(2) Reasoning

The participants were asked to give reasons for one of the following questions.

Q1: *Why did you decide to learn Japanese?*

Q2: *Why did you decide to study abroad?*

In (2), each group applied the same pattern in which each member took a turn. However, the differences between the American and the Japanese groups were seen in two areas. These were:

- i. The time spent in presentation.
- ii. The way the reasons were framed.

The average time the Japanese participants spent in presentation was 71.5 seconds while that of the American participants was 23.1 seconds. This outcome seems to be a result of the

way the reasons were framed, as in (ii). The way the Americans framed reasons involved reporting containing only the key points. Whereas the Japanese participants framed their reasons as “storytelling” in which a time was given at the beginning and then circumstances in relation to the decision were described in detail.

The following examples illustrate the differences in framing, structured by first, an Asian speaker and secondly, a Western speaker of English. (Scollon and Scollon', 1995, pp. 1-2)

The Asian speaker's structure is:

because of

Y (topic, background, or reasons)

X (comment, main point, or action suggested),

The Western speaker's is:

X (comment, main point, or action suggested)

because of

Y (topic, background, or reasons)

The difference in framing discourse as outlined above reflects a difference in expectations about the presentation of main points in interdiscourse communication. Different expectations is one of the main factors contributing to confusion or misunderstanding of the main point. I will now return to the group discussion.

(3) Arguing

The participants were asked to argue the following topic.

Topic: *Many people think that, for Americans, Japanese is harder to learn than European languages. Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

The main difference evident was that the American participants presented one argument at each turn which enabled every participant to take many turns, while the Japanese participants gave a few arguments covering the opinions both for and against the issue in one turn. Each, therefore, took much longer as contrasted with the American participants, whose arguments were short.

As far as this analysis is concerned, I interpret the following two features (1) the way the discussion was organized - beginning and ending and (2) the way the speech was structured, as follows:

(1) refers to a group-oriented, formal discussion. The reason for this is, because the discussion was required for Watanabe's study. Students hence thought they had to conduct the discussion properly for that purpose. If these students were in a different speech event, for example, they know each other and are talking to each other casually without being taped, they would have carried out the discussion in a more relaxed manner without setting out a rule-like format. I consider the discussion as being relatively formal on the basis that: In Japan whenever a group activity or group event is organized, such as a school entrance ceremony, a wedding reception, a company's end of the year party and so on, an official announcement of opening and closing is given by incorporating it in a speech, although the degree of formality would vary depending on the situation. This is rather ritualistic and is something characteristic of Japanese culture.

(2) refers to the lengthy circumstantial explanation given before the main point in Japanese speech. This illustrates the Japanese people's thought pattern presented by Toyama (1973, pp. 12-19) and the framing structure by Scollon and Scollon (1995, pp. 1-2) mentioned earlier. Delaying the main point or slow warming up to the key point, works for Japanese people in terms of determining whether the other person is sufficiently ready to hear the key point and the timing of disclosure. The time spent warming up provides cues for the speaker to determine whether he/she should ever bring up the subject; if so, then when and in what sort of manner he/she should do so. Also, most definitely, the other person is engaged in a similar task. For example, while two parties are engaged in a casual talk, if a speaker somehow feels a negative attitude from his/her partner towards maintaining the ongoing conversation, the topic or main point may not be brought up. It might be the case that he/she decides not to, or delays disclosure until the next meeting.

Lastly, the differences manifested between the Japanese and the American students imply that people have their own expectations about framing beginning and ending, reasoning and arguing. If the discussion was held in a mixed members group of the Americans and Japanese in this study, the American might characteristically think in relation to the Japanese way of presentation, "Why don't we just get started?", "Why don't you get to the point?", or

“Just tell us whether you agree or not”. These thoughts would arise from assumptions that one’s own way of organizing speech or discourse is absolute and hence the only way. These assumptions are a common cause of miscommunication.

As Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 1) observe, people in each culture practise their own principles of discourse to organize its presentation, thus it is important for us to be aware of the existence of variation and try to understand the way a person puts together and delivers his/her thoughts. Eventually, we will be able to anticipate where and when to pay more attention in his/her utterances. This will help not only to reduce miscommunication but is essential for effective communication.

8. Intercultural perception

Why do we perceive other people's behaviour, social objects or systems in the way we do? Do we perceive in the same way as people from a different culture? Is our perception always accurate? I wish to discuss these issues in this section and make an attempt to see how perception influences intercultural communication. First, I will refer to Singer's (1985, p. 63) cultural model which he terms "A Perceptual Approach". A key premise from his model follows:

"The greater the biological and experiential differences between individuals, the greater is the disparity in perceptions there is likely to be. Conversely, the more similar the biological and experiential background, the more similarly are individuals likely to perceive."

This means that, because people within a culture are likely to share a similar biological and personal experiential background, it is assumed that they share similar perceptual patterns. However, when these people are compared with others from a different culture, they are likely to share less similarity in biological and experiential backgrounds, resulting in two different perceptual patterns.

I support this view of perception on the basis that we acquire our perceptual processes as part of cultural experience and we unconsciously develop perceptual patterns through social experiences with other people. It is our own belief, value and social attitude systems that shape our perceptual patterns. We, therefore, develop cultural norms of perception collectively and evaluate and judge things in a similar way. These culturally determined perceptual patterns become the basis of the way we selectively see people and things from our social environment, and significantly influences the judgemental aspect of perception. This means that our perceptual patterns are largely conditioned and structured by our own culture. When different perceptual patterns are brought into intercultural communication, the way each party interprets, evaluates, or judges other people's behaviours or verbal and nonverbal messages can be distinctively different from each other. This means, when cultures vary, peoples' perceptions also vary.

Suppose that two individuals from different cultures meet for a business negotiation. Person A wishes to take some time to get to know Person B before starting the main

discussion. Person B, on the other hand, intends to initiate a business talk almost immediately after meeting. How do they perceive each other? Would A perceive B's action and interpret it as premature, inappropriate and rushed, while B thinks it is time-saving and an efficient approach? Which of these are correct interpretations? It is actually not a matter of correct or incorrect interpretations. The fact is that such perception are based on one's own cultural value or beliefs and are not evident to the other person.

Singer (1985, p. 62) defines perception as *the process by which an individual selects, evaluates, and organizes stimuli from the external environment*. Perception is selective, learned, and culturally and individually determined. What I mean by "individually" is that even within a culture, each individual may perceive differently. This may be due to the way each individual has been raised and socialized, and the degree to which one's internalized social value systems contrasts with others.

Consider the Japanese school system, for example. This is a case in which educational value is culturally determined but the way individuals perceive and evaluate the system may differ depending on the degree of internalization of educational value gained through the experience of the individual. Most Japanese people believe in taking up high levels of education, but how individuals view the existing school system varies. How does each individual view the fact that the system drives many children to "cram" schools (called *juku*), in addition to regular school, even during school holidays? (Honna, 1997, p. 36)

Some may perceive it as an action which supports the fact that the prestige of the university a person attends often determines the status one will ultimately achieve in life, and those who graduate from the prestigious universities are rewarded in both their careers and in their social lives through the good reputation and the strong connections of their universities. But others, including many young people today, would view the system as one which only provides students with studies to prepare for entrance examinations with too much rote memory work, too little creative or individualistic thinking, and with no encouragement of personal development. (Honna, 1997, p. 86) Most Japanese parents do try to provide their children with every chance for the best possible education, but how they deal with the needs of the society differs. Therefore the value placed on education, as a whole, by the Japanese is learned through socialization and is culturally determined. But each individual would

perceive the school system differently, and hence would hold a different attitude toward it. Thus, the way each individual judges the school system would also vary.

Individual difference in perception is also observed in what one chooses to see and hear. When we hear a certain amount of information, it is unlikely that we remember every single detail we have heard. This is because we unconsciously screen out some of what we hear or see in the perceptual process. For example, when someone tells a story about a trip taken, talking about the places, people, or episodes experienced, the listener screens out some of the stories, selecting only the information that the listener chooses to hear. Similarly, in the case where a non-Japanese businessman visits a company in Japan and enters a large office, he may see only that the department chief sits far back in the office, which is shared with his subordinates. He may wonder why the chief is not occupying his own office somewhere close to his superior, or he may immediately think that no privacy is maintained in such an office arrangement. Someone else might assume that the boss and staff share the room because work is to be accomplished collectively in Japan, or because the Japanese employees are under constant supervision by their boss.

We perceive only certain information, either visually or aurally. The important point is that perception and Hall's contexting closely interrelate. That is, contexting involving both the programmed, internalized contexting, in which past experience is activated by the brain, and the situational and/or environmental contexting, which is outside of the function of the brain, (Hall, 1985, pp. 44-45) conditions the way perception takes place. Hall emphasizes that what we perceive is influenced by, at least, these five factors: the subject or activity, the situation, one's status in a social system, past experience, and culture. It, therefore, would be inevitable that these factors have a direct influence on the meanings we attach to our perceptions.

In my view, perception is something we all do, when we look at something new, we meet someone for the first time, we experience a place where we have never been before, our mind automatically starts to work, deciding whether the object is interesting or peculiar, the behaviour manifested by a person is good, bad, or inappropriate to the situation, the mentality of the person is childish, low and so on. These evaluations and judgements are the result of the internal process through which we rate what we perceive according to past experience, influence from the media or others, and knowledge and understanding of our own culture.

We further add our subjective views to these factors and formulate our own perceptual patterns .

It is obvious that knowledge and understandings of our own culture is, to a large extent, shared among people. This means that our perceptual process is culturally shaped to some extent and we share cultural knowledge with others. As Bonvillain (1993, p. 70) states, “all human experiences are cultural, a tremendous amount of accumulated but unstated knowledge is carried with us continuously.”

I would stress that perception is therefore based on cultural and individual differences and, in my view, the cultural and individual differences stated above override Hall’s (p.41) factors which are “the subject or activity”, the situation”, and “one’s social status”. This implies that the meaning attached to what has been perceived in objects, events, or messages can be different across cultures as well as between individuals within any culture. Thus, overcoming the cultural and individual differences in perception in intercultural communication will depend on the extent of similarity or dissimilarity in individual’s different personal and cultural backgrounds. Finally, as a warning to us all, I will put forward Adler’s (1997, p. 72) view of perception:

“Perception is *inaccurate*. We see things that do not exist and do not see things that do exist. Our background, values, interests, and culture act as filters and lead us to distort, block, and even create what we choose to see and to hear. We perceive what we expect to perceive. We perceive things according to what we have been trained to see, according to our cultural map.”

9. Intercultural Communication

9.1 Uncertainty reduction

Uncertainty reduction theory¹⁶ is a theory (Berger, 1979, p. 124) which assumes the possibility that uncertainty may occur when two persons meet for the first time. Assuming that each person does not have information about their interaction partner, they are faced with the problem of predicting how their partner is likely to behave and what their partner is likely to believe. Moreover, according to Berger (1986, p. 52), this prediction problem must be dealt with in reference to their own behaviour and beliefs; that is, people are capable of both behaving and believing in a number of alternative ways depending upon what their partner believes and does during the interaction. Thus, each interactant must make predictions about their partner and about themselves. (Berger, 1986, p. 52) Thus, it is assumed that relationships develop and escalate when relational partners are able to reduce uncertainty about each other, and that relationship de-escalates when relational interactants are unable to do so. (Ting-Toomey, 1986, p. 118)

When a person is to interact with someone from another culture for the first time, how would he/she be feeling about the entire communication¹⁷? We can imagine that the person would be likely to have some degree of uncertainty and anxiety as to whether he/she is able to manage an unfamiliar situation and conduct communication effectively. Berger (1986, pp. 52-53) argues that uncertainty is associated with: (1) the linguistic differences, (2) the social appropriateness of actions - whether the behaviour is socially appropriate, and (3) evaluating dissimilarities manifested by the other person.

Anxiety, on the other hand, refers to the feeling of being worried, nervous, or apprehensive about what might happen. This results from anticipation of the negative consequences of

¹⁶Uncertain reduction theory (Berger, 1979, pp. 122-144) is applied to explain cross-cultural variations in communication, as well as intercultural communication. This theory differs from "Uncertainty Avoidance" which is Hofstede's (1994) one of the four dimensions of cultural variability.

¹⁷In Ball-Rokeach's (1973) analysis of pervasive ambiguity, she hypothesizes that adaptation to a new social situation involves both information seeking to resolve the cognitive problem of defining the situation and tension reduction behaviour to cope with emotional stress.

the interaction. (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994, p. 6) Thus uncertainty and anxiety can emerge together. The ability to reduce uncertainty and anxiety about the other person¹⁸ is important for the development of an interpersonal relationship. A mutual understanding developed through interpersonal relationship leads to effective communication.

I analyze Berger's (1986, pp. 52-53) three factors associated with uncertainty, as follows: First, using a second language in communication is psychologically and practically disadvantageous to someone if he/she is not fully competent in the use of the language. This causes anxiety for the person. This anxiety is accelerated by the uncertainty of the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the other person. As a result of this, the person may appear to be less confident in communicating. But it will not be wrong to assume that this same person may communicate differently in his own language.

Second, socially expected behaviour in a different culture can be learned. This is done by gaining knowledge of people and society. Inappropriate behaviour often results from being ignorant of the fact that each culture has its own "dos and don'ts" and hence may be completely unintentional. Whatever the cause, an action can mean a lot more than words and this could result in an unfavourable outcome of communication for both parties. Thus it is important to reduce uncertainty of human behaviour, especially by becoming acquainted with the manners and protocol of a culture.

Third, it is human nature that we feel comfortable and find it easy to initiate an interaction with people who have similar values, beliefs, thought patterns and perceptual patterns to ours. How do we then see dissimilarities and evaluate them? This reminds us of perception discussed in section (8) of this chapter. Our perception may be inaccurate yet it can persist in our mind. We often do not bother to check whether the way we perceived something is accurate or inaccurate. When we encounter something unfamiliar, we might perceive it inaccurately and consequently evaluate it on the basis of this perception. This means we could misattribute the difference or dissimilarity. Misperception, misattribution, misinterpretation, and misevaluation all interrelate. Errors of this kind may be due simply

¹⁸Berger argues that the uncertainty reduction process may involve three classes of information acquisition strategies: interrogation, self-disclosure, and deception detection. (1979, pp. 139-143)

to a lack of experience or knowledge, but it may also be generated by people who are predisposed to - "prejudice", "ethnocentrism", and "stereotyping". Brislin (1986, pp. 75-79) describes these terms: Prejudice refers to emotional and evaluative prejudgements of others based on labels which are used to refer to social categories (p.75); ethnocentrism involves imposing standards from one's culture without understanding other viewpoints. (p. 76) People cannot see beyond themselves with respect to what is right and wrong, proper and improper, or good and bad; Stereotypes are an example of the formation of categories: people gather individual pieces of information into categories and then respond to the categories. (pp. 78-79)

It is obvious that evaluation of dissimilarities cannot be done fairly and correctly if one is preoccupied with certain ideas before he/she actually sees the difference. Perceiving others from the perspective of "Our way of doing things is the best and the only way", for example, blind people to other possibilities. Categorization of people and generalization of characteristics, on the other hand, may work at the group level if one has a substantial amount of experience in interaction. But people change and so do their characteristics. People's evaluative judgements about the behaviour of others is not only concerned with uncertainty reduction of *others* but the way they evaluate dissimilarities in behaviour reflects upon what they say and how they behave. Their behaviour is, of course, responded to by the other person accordingly.

One way to deal with uncertainty is by obtaining information. Gudykunst and Nishida (1994, pp. 8-11; pp. 62-65) argue that there are two types of information; individual-specific information and social information. Individual-specific information refers to person-based information including attitudes, values, emotions, and past behaviour. Social information refers to group-based information. The former type of information is, according to Gudykunst and Nishida, used in low-context cultures and the latter type, in high-context cultures. Generally speaking, Japanese people primarily seek group-based information. In my opinion, this is because Japanese people identify themselves in relation to the organization or group they belong to, and so it seems natural for them to seek information from this perspective. They will therefore obtain information of the other person in terms of the name of the organization, division, rank, age and so on, as opposed to information about personal attributes.

As far as Japanese people are concerned, it is essential to obtain group-based information whether it is in regards to a private meeting or business meeting, in order to reduce the uncertainty of the communicative behaviour of the other person. Reducing uncertainty means, in this case, determining one's appropriate politeness level in language use and behaviour. It is important however to note that the type of information people seek to reduce uncertainty and to predict how the other person would behave in a communication situation and hence prepare for it, can vary depending on the situation.

Similarly, Miller and Steinberg (1975, pp. 12-22) present three levels of analysis for making predictions aiming to deal with uncertainty: cultural, sociological and psychological. I will now discuss these three types of factors involved in making predictions of others' behaviour. First, the cultural level of analysis refers to cultural information which is based on anthropological and sociological views of culture "People in a culture are united through their norms and values." (p. 12). This level of analysis focuses on knowledge of the other person's culture, including the language, norms, habits, and values. It is used to predict the other person's likely response to certain messages, taking these cultural factors into account.

Second, the sociological level of analysis refers to social information which is based on the message-receiver's membership of certain social groups or social roles. A social group is a class of people who share certain common characteristics. (p. 17) Group memberships based on ethnicity, company, gender, university, religion, for example, are used as ways to predict or explain the other's behaviour. Information about social roles as a professor, physician, or policeman, for example, also make prediction possible. Social information therefore means information about social identity which is used to predict the other person's behaviour despite cultural differences.

Third, the psychological level of analysis refers to the personal information related to an individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. In my view, what we feel we need to know is something we consider important and something our culture places high value on. I will illustrate an example. In Japan, when Company A is organizing a meeting with Company B, Company A will choose someone who is suitable for the meeting. A person will be carefully chosen on the bases of the nature of the business and rank which often indicates the degree of importance of the issue. This implies that if Company B did not choose someone from

Company A's perspective and chose someone young and talented but not in a high rank position, Company A may think the issue has been underestimated by Company B.

In the above case, the difference between the two companies is that, while Company A considers social information (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994 pp. 8-11; Miller and Steinberg, 1975, pp. 17-19) more important than individual specific information (Gudykunst and Nishida, pp. 8-11) or personal information (Miller and Steinberg, 1975, pp. 19-22), Company B considers it the other way around. This implies that people seek social information because social rank is regarded as important in their culture. On the other hand, people who obtain personal information value individual's in their culture. How can people know what kind of information the other party wishes to obtain? This is difficult and problematic. It is therefore important to seek cultural information first, focusing on the cultural norms, habits, and values. (Miller and Steinberg, 1975, pp. 12-17) of the other culture to find out what the other culture values in terms of human interaction.

I think that we commonly attempt to obtain information about the other person such as their role within the group, age, nationality, or the language spoken, as well as other types of information such as national characteristics or their company background including management system, technological achievements, work ethic, quality of products and so on in the case of a business meeting. It is simply that one type of information seeking tends to be more dominant than the other. But this is not absolute because there may be cultures which consider something else other than those stated above to be important. Thus, as a whole, it seems important to be open-minded about any variations in the approaches. This means that, in order for us to perceive accurately and make accurate predictions it is important not to become overly dependent on information-based predictions or consider it as the absolute or only tool in uncertainty reduction.

9.2 Cultural differences in communicative behaviour

I will discuss this issue in terms of information seeking: Cultural difference in information-seeking leads to differences in communicative behaviour. I propose that specific types of information-seeking lead to specific behaviours. This is evident when we consider the tendency of Japanese people to place a heavy emphasis on social information. In my opinion, the reason why they seek this type of information is that they value social identity - how one is socially identified. It means that one is fully responsible for one's actions for the sake of the group one belongs to. This is one of the reasons why Japanese people have a strong tendency to behave formally and employ formality. People of other cultures, on the other hand, may seek personal information. These people will be focusing on an individual's personal identity instead of their group-based identity. I will exemplify these two approaches below.

The difference in communicative behaviour between the two approaches above is based on the distinction between a group-based social identity and a personal-based individual identity. A Japanese businessperson from Company A illustrated in the previous section interacts with someone from Company B who is from a different culture. The former emphasizes social information, and behaves as expected in his culture, fully conscious that one is representing his organization. The communicative behaviour is therefore likely to be formal due to the influence of his social identity.

This implies that the former is likely to expect the latter to have the same emphasis on the same information, participating in the communication with the same attitudes. But, differences arise if the latter happens to be a person who seeks personal information, with the communicative behaviour being based on personal identities. The communicative behaviour of the latter may become more egalitarian emphasizing interpersonal communication, as opposed to the former being authoritarian, and emphasizing intergroup or intercultural communication.

Miller and Steinberg (1975, p. 12), established three levels of analysis for making predictions, cultural, sociological, and psychological, as discussed in the previous section. The distinguish between non-interpersonal and interpersonal communication on the basis of

the following analysis:

When predictions about communication outcomes are based primarily on a cultural or sociological level of analysis, the communicators are engaged in noninterpersonal communication, when predictions are based primarily on psychological level of analysis, the communicators are engaged in interpersonal communication.

When we think of the possible emergence of these two types of communication, it seems important for both parties to take into account whether the other person requires psychological (person-based) or sociological (group-based) information, (Gudykunst and Nishida, 1994, pp. 62-64). This is important not only to reduce the uncertainty of the other person, but also to minimize the differences in communicative behaviour.

Both interpersonal and intercultural communication require skill in handling anxiety about unfamiliar interactions and strategies to deal with the uncertainty or ambiguity of the other person or situation. However, it is likely to trigger greater uncertainty and anxiety in intercultural communication, since it can be very difficult to predict a situation involving someone from a different culture, due to unfamiliarity. Brislin (1993, p. 217) discusses the importance of distinguishing the two factors of communicative behaviour. According to Brislin (1993, p. 217), the degree of expressiveness, the amount of talk, clarity, the use of silence and so on, manifested by the other person, can be categorized under either *personality factors* or *stylistic factors*. This is to determine whether the behaviour manifested by the other person is something culturally specific to the people of his/her culture, or is simply a personal characteristic.

Whether one is capable of distinguishing between the two different types of attribution factors is important in terms of interpreting the behaviour of the communication partner accurately. According to Brislin, (1993, p. 219) silence, for example, is used as a response to ambiguity in some cultures, while ambiguity is dealt with by engaging in small talk in some cultures. An ability to distinguish between the two factors therefore assists in avoiding misunderstanding of each other. Learning about the stylistic factors of communication of the other person is the key to an ability to analyze and understand the communicative behaviour and communication style of the other person. It seems then, important to acquire cultural information such as cultural norms, habits, and values considered important in human

relationships as discussed by Miller and Steinberg. (1975, p. 12) It is also important for us to keep in mind that there may be cases where some stylistic factors are totally acceptable or expected in some cultures but are considered rather peculiar or awkward in others, such as silence.

10. Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed cultural differences which occur in; (1) self - in-group relationships, (2) high-context and low-context communication, (3) thought patterns and discourse patterns, (4) intercultural perception, and (5) intercultural communication. I will summarize the key issues of the cultural differences discussed in relation to communication processes. First, the research I have examined reveals that a culture regarded as collectivist or individualist does not always reflect people's real attitudes toward the in-group. A society known as individualist may be more collectivistic in its approach to concern for the in-group and a society seen as collectivist may be less concerned for its in-group members than a society regarded as individualist. There is also a difference in the degree of subordination to the needs of the in-group and the concern for in-group members between collectivist societies. This warns us that when we identify a society as individualist or collectivist, it is also important to observe individual's attitudes towards each differing aspect of a group such as subordination and emotional closeness to in-groups or concern for its members. This means that each society produces a different form of society whether it is collectivist or individualist. It is also realistic to expect that there will be individuals who are allocentric in individualist cultures as well as those who are idiocentric in collectivist cultures. Thus, we must refrain from overgeneralizing the two types of societies and must acknowledge the reality that each society contains both individualistic and collectivistic aspects. Further, personality dimensions of idiocentrism and allocentrism cannot be determined by the society people live in. Idiocentric and allocentric people are evident in existence in both societies.

Second, high-context and low-context communication in terms of information processing involves two features: one is the amount of information to send or receive, and the other is what information to send or receive. Each individual treats these features differently because: (1) which piece of information each individual sees as relevant and how much they know about the matter is different and (2) each individual perceives information and situations subjectively. The point is, that such differences between individuals affect the overall communication style, particularly in terms of expressiveness and explicitness. In these respects, high- and low-context communication is concerned with the degree of verbal and nonverbal messages involved in communication.

Third, thought patterns and discourse patterns were observed to see how people structure what to say and how this affects the presentation of speech and discourse. In thought patterns, the pattern called the “bridge pattern” is the pattern in which a topic is presented at the beginning and moves logically and constructively to cover relevant issues or opinions about the topic. The other pattern called the “gyre pattern”, on the other hand, appears to be more indirect, and delivers information less-systematically, therefore, it requires the listener to be able to identify the key points through enthusiastic and active listening. As for the discourse pattern, the significance of the group discussion was that (1) thought patterns stated above were applied in each turn. This refers to either getting to the point directly or “beating around the bush” and (2), that the group discussion was individual-oriented in one group and group-oriented in the other. Differences in timing and the style of stating the key points as well as the degree of clarity of the points made, are the major factors differentiating thought patterns and discourse patterns.

Fourth, perception varies from culture to culture as well as from individual to individual. Perception is, to a large extent, based on the beliefs and values of a culture. We develop perceptual patterns which are based on our own beliefs and values. In this sense, perception is culturally determined and collectively realized. By sharing similarities in perceptions with others, most of us become able to judge and evaluate people’s behaviours and social objects in a similar way. In intercultural interactions, we can predict that each participant employs their own culturally independent beliefs in evaluating the interaction. We must realize that certain ways of perception which are characteristic of a culture are likely to be different in other cultures. Thus, the key to reaching consensus in perception between participants is to learn about the other participants’ belief and social value systems, identifying similarities and differences between them.

Fifth, when intercultural communication is compared with interpersonal communication, there are some features which are specific to intercultural communication. These are: (1) the high probability of the use of a foreign language by at least one party, (2) uncertainty of the communicative style of the other party, (3) a difficulty in distinguishing between personality factors and stylistic factors manifested by the other party, and (4) a lack of knowledge of the cultural background including the cultural norms of the other party. (5) the uncertainty and anxiety involved in intercultural communication is much greater.

Mistakes often result from a lack of knowledge, from our own ignorance, and/or a lack of effort to learn about other people and cultures. Knowledge can be obtained. To reduce uncertainty and anxiety about others, we must disclose our intention and provide information about ourselves. We need to spend some time and effort to get to know each other and find out what is regarded as most important in human relationships. We should not impose what we do and how we do things on people from different cultures, ignorantly assuming that our way is the best way. Cultural differences are not dangerous nor wrong, they are interesting and often fascinating

Lastly, I would like to stress that communication is generated by both parties. Both parties are equally responsible for a conversation to flow smoothly and must assist the other party in overcoming differences in communicative style. At the same time, a concerted effort to develop good interpersonal relationships is essential. This goes back to the fundamental issues of positive human relationships, in which we need to obtain social skills and to be honest, understanding, tolerant, open and flexible in new situations regardless of the personal backgrounds of others. Intercultural communication is grounded not only on cultural issues but recognises that basic interpersonal skills are just as important in ensuring effective and fulfilling communication experiences.

Chapter Four

Japanese Communication Style

Communication styles reflect human relationships within a culture. As discussed in Chapter One, Japanese culture has been influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. These religious philosophies also had great impact upon the social and interpersonal aspects of language use and behaviour in communication. For example, the use of respectful and humble languages known as *keigo* demonstrates respect for another person senior to or higher in social status than the speaker, in this way, recognising the hierarchical system through language. Similarly, the different use of words and expressions by male and female, or the use of terms of address, including names, personal pronouns, titles, and kinship terms all reflect the relative relationships between individuals in Japanese society. In this chapter, I will discuss the major characteristics of Japanese verbal and nonverbal communication styles to assist identification of features specific to Japanese communication style.

11. Japanese Verbal Communication

11.1 Indirect communication

Here, indirect communication refers to two aspects of communication: (1) the perceived vague and ambiguous nature of Japanese verbal expression and (2) the use of indirect speech acts¹⁹. I will discuss (1) first. It is often observed in the articles on Japanese communication that Japanese people often use vague and ambiguous verbal expressions. It certainly is one of the characteristics of Japanese communication. It is important to have a knowledge of communication style of other cultures but it is just as important to find out features which promote characteristics and understand them.

First of all, I would like to address my view of the difference in the uses of words, vague, ambiguous, and indirect expression. In my view, the words, vague and ambiguous used for a certain expression are reflecting the way the listener perceived and felt on the basis that the expression is not direct nor explicit enough to understand. Thus, it is *likely* that the meaning of the expression remains understood. Whereas the word, indirect seems to be the word which is viewed more objectively. This means that the listener realizes that the meaning of the expression must be determined taking context in which uttering took place into account. If that is the case, it requires the listener to be attentive to what has been said and the gap between the words. It may also include nonverbal cues such as facial expression, gestures, body languages, tone of voice and so on manifested during the course of conversation. The indirect expression does not always lead to a difficulty to decode the meaning. But it requires to know how. Japanese indirectness in verbal communication serves for a purposeful communicative strategy for Japanese people. Thus, while there are cultures which value clarity-focused language use, there are also cultures which incline to rely on connotative meanings in their speech.

The communicative strategy mentioned above primarily concerns for human relationships. It safeguards against the negative consequences including damage to the existing relationships

¹⁹See "Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts" (pp. 25-65); "'indirectness' in Japanese" (pp. 93-95) in *Cross Cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction* by Wierzbicka. (1991)

between the two parties. Any type of communication is contextual. In order to understand the meaning of message it is very important to pay attention to context. According to Porter and Samovar (1985, p. 18-19), communication takes place in both a *physical* and a *social* context. The former refers to physical surroundings and the latter refers to the social relationships between the parties.

In my view, there are two types of context and they are found in all communication: one is the physical setting (environment) and the other, the linguistic context in which verbal is produced and transmitted. I refer physical setting to (1) place - where communication is taking place and (2) event - the purpose of interaction. In terms of context which guide Japanese people for indirect use of language can be therefore focused on the event in which two parties are communicating about something.

The context in which Japanese people choose to avoid being direct or explicit is, for example, when disagreeing with someone or declining something, having a concern for loss of face, causing conflict, or avoiding a clear-cut use of "yes" and "no". Even though indirect communication is commonly employed by the Japanese people, there would be problematic to others who apply a firm articulation of their thoughts, circumstances, or intentions. It may cause frustration, misunderstanding to them.

Although we can never generalize all the communication situations, generally speaking, being straightforward is regarded as impolite, particularly in a case in which the speaker has not yet established interpersonal relationship with the other person or when he/she is expressing a request, an assertion, judgement, denial, disagreement, or criticism. They instead prefer an approach which circles around the main point instead. Indirect speech is also favoured as the speaker assumes other people will understand meaning from the context of the situation without expressing anything precisely. In this respect, the usage of the language is limited in terms of transmission of messages due to dependence on contextual interpretation.

Japanese people, like any other people in other cultures, follow their own logic of communication. They would rather not confront others, make quick "right-wrong" judgements, or give immediate "yes-no" answers. Instead, they prefer to take time for relationships to

develop and they like to get to know each other first before making any decisions²⁰. For these reasons, the process of communication may take long and even to get to the core of discussion it may seem long.

I will now discuss (2). An indirect speech act concerns with a particular social and cultural context. For example, statements such as: “that is a little difficult” and “this probably calls for further questioning and consideration” (Goldman, 1994, p. 169) uttered in business negotiation setting are an indirect speech act. In that, what the speaker intends which is to deny something is not what the sentence literally means. The underlying intention of preservation of face is indicative of Japanese ethical communication rule. According to Okabe (1987, p. 134), the statement “Let me consider it for a while,” is similar signifying an unfavourable answer. These speech acts are conventionalized form of expression and are idiosyncratic to the situation. (Okabe, 1987, p. 135) This means that these expressions have been established by accepted usage based on the perception of what is thought to be appropriate in a given situation. In other words, the language is used within a particular social and cultural context.

The use of these conventionalized forms of expression is particularly unique to the indirect speech acts of the Japanese. The statement “Have you got a telephone?” appears to be a question asking whether or not the hearer has got a telephone which is the literal meaning of the statement. Yet, an act of request for the speaker to use the telephone is also expressed indirectly, which is the indirect speech act of request. The communication in indirect speech acts requires, not only knowledge of the conventional or idiomatic usages of the language, but also an ability to be able to infer the speaker’s intended meaning, particularly when such cognitive acts like requests, assertions, judgements, denials, disagreements, or criticism are involved. The ability to make inferences can only be developed through practice of contextual interpretation.

The Japanese preference for indirectness in spoken language over clarity represents their attitude toward verbal conflict. They prefer to preserve the feelings and relationships

²⁰See: Negotiation Styles from a Cross-Cultural Perspectives” in *Organizational Behavior* by Adler (1997, p. 192)

of the participants. Moreover, indirectness in verbal communication allows them to be flexible in responding to certain questions or proposals lacking specificity and precision. It works as a deliberate verbal strategy which attempts to prevent any complications, disputes, or loss of face that may later occur. Such indirectness should be considered not as an individual's personal attribution, but rather as a culture-based communicative tactic that permeates Japanese society or in other words, it is "stylistic factor" as opposed to "personality factor"²¹.

11.2 Public communication and private communication

Many Japanese people establish friendships and maintain lifelong relationships. They also tend to look at business relationships in a similar way. It is often the case that they view business associations with their counterparts on a long term basis. The Japanese people place importance on trust both in social and business interaction. "Trust" is based on "human sincerity" which is valued in and intrinsic to developing good interpersonal relationships. In the business arena particularly, Japanese businesspeople make an effort to get to know their business counterpart to determine whether he/she is trustworthy, before they get engaged in any business dealings. "Trust" is considered the fundamental basis for human relationships, encouraging mutual cooperation and helping to solve problems that may occur later. What they often do when meeting counterparts is to engage in "small talk" about literally anything. They often spend significant amounts of time getting to know the person before getting down to business. While participating in a number of casual, social engagements, they try to assess the attitudes, personality, communication style, motivation and so on, of the counterparts. This time is for gaining a sense of each other.

In general, Japanese people are always aware of the necessity of distinguishing public communication and private communication styles (Goldman, 1994, p. 240) and they know

²¹Refer to 9.2 in Chapter Three on page 71 for "stylistic factors" and "personality factors".

when to employ each communication style according to the situation. Public communication is surface, *tatemae* communication which is employed when dealing with someone not yet known well, and therefore, the inner self, feelings or true intentions are not disclosed openly. For example, Japanese businesspeople would never rush into business negotiations without knowing the counterparts and their background well. Public communication is often used for such situations as “warming up” or “breaking the ice”, while at the same time studying the other party before the oncoming, important negotiations begin, or sometimes for a casual interaction with no specific purpose. In the former situation, due to a long “warming up” or “thorough studying of the other party”, it may take a long time for them to disclose themselves and show more of their inner feelings or intentions as *honne*.

This shift from *tatemae* to *honne* is essentially a shift from the public self with public communication to the private self²² with private communication. Private communication is typically used when businesspeople socialize with their coworkers after work. The amount of time spent getting to know one’s business partners prior to business negotiations, as well as the amount of time spent with colleagues after hours are both done for specific reasons, to build a personal relationship which includes revealing the private side of oneself.

As stated in the section about “Intercultural perception”, people perceive what is relevant to themselves. Thus the way individuals perceive the external world or existing reality, varies. Diaz-Guerrero (1975, p. 18), draws out two kinds of reality from the viewpoint of psychology - the *external* physical reality and the *interpersonal* reality. He describes the former as the reality of nature; and the latter, as the reality of a state of affairs between two or more persons. Diaz-Guerrero (1975, p. 17) means by the latter, the reality created by the interactions between two or more people in a social or communicative relationship. This incorporates people’s attitudes toward each other, their expectations of each other, the many intangibles, conscious and unconscious, of their mutual feelings. He (p. 18) assumes that interpersonal reality is not just a given state of affairs but can be acted upon or modified at the will of the interactants. The most important implication of this assumption is that people actually *create* salient qualities of this interpersonal quality, according to Diaz-Guerrero.

²²See *Public and Private Self in Japan and the United States* by Barnlund (1975)

In my view, this assumption of "interpersonal reality" is the fundamental concept that the Japanese people employ for developing sincere and trusting interpersonal relationships. This interpersonal reality is the emotional content of the interpersonal relationships which Japanese people attempt to build mutually over a certain period of time. Frequently meeting with the other party, the medium of small talk, and socializing after work are all cultivating grounds for personal relationships, which involve a gradual unfolding of the private selves through private communication. It is their belief, and the rationale for the behaviours described above, that this interpersonal reality helps foster good human relationships, if people are conscious of maintaining the right attitudes toward each other i.e., being open-minded, understanding and being sensitive to other's feelings.

I observe that Japanese people distinguish between public communication and private communication whenever they interact with others. Their communication style is determined by certain factors. This means that they clearly draw a line between the times when they can reveal their private selves and public selves on the basis of whether they are in the public arena or private and who they are interacting with; in-group people or non-in-group people. Also taken into consideration is whether it is a formal meeting or private, that is, whether one is representing one's organization for a business reason or interacting solely for a private reason.

Japanese people initially engage only in surface, *tatemae* communication in both private or public communication modes. This surface, *tatemae* communication enables them to take time before they get down to the core of the matter under discussion, holding back from disclosure of information about themselves. This is a rather ritualized form of communication as preparatory steps to grasp "interpersonal reality" (Diaz-Guerrero, 1975, p. 18) comprised of the feelings and impressions of the other person, which are necessary to move from the public to the private realm. This is a normative process of developing a human relationship with a high degree of respect toward one another, acting out each scene in accordance with the "cultural norms" which ritualistically accompany cultural scripts.

11.3 Face

The Japanese people are extremely sensitive about “self-image”. They make an effort to keep face and also not to ruin others’ face. To lose face is to lose honour, pride, dignity, or self-respect. It is also to lose credibility and reputation. A loss of face occurs in a relational situation. A public announcement of bankruptcy of a company by its president, for example, is an entire loss of face in front of his employees as well as the whole society. In this situation, the president’s self-image viewed by his employees and people in general would be completely ruined. He would lose credibility as a businessperson who is ultimately responsible for a whole business. Such public-exposure of loss of face is most damaging to the image of the given person personally and publicly in terms of future relationships with others and business prospects.

Brislin (1993, pp. 226-234) presents the following case, suggesting attention be paid to other people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviour for more effective intercultural communication. This case describes how a Japanese student, Yoshiko, who is studying in the States, felt about the behaviour of her close friend, Barbara. Yoshiko gave a presentation on a topic in one of her classes. After her presentation, Barbara provided feedback in the form of critical suggestions about it. Barbara thought the session went very well, but Yoshiko became upset because she did not expect friends to make critical remarks in *public*. Although the focus of this example is “cultural differences in expectations” and the definition of a friend, which is really a discussion of emics, one suspects that what made Yoshiko upset was a threat to her face directed by her friend in a public situation. Even though they were helpful suggestions, Yoshiko took it as public humiliation or criticism that resulted in loss of face therefore she inevitably felt betrayed. However, it is assumed if those suggestions were given to Yoshiko in a more private and informal setting, she would have taken Barbara’s criticism as helpful suggestions and would not have felt a loss of face because there was nobody except her close friend, Barbara present.

I observe the above case as follows: The notion of “face” in this particular case is marked by two different practices of discussion in *public*. This refers to the cultural difference in expectation of an individual’s behaviour, specifically in the way one present a personal view of other’s work in a public setting. The cultural difference occurring in this case where:

From Yoshiko's point of view, (1) suggestions unless they are positive ones are criticism. (2) A friend would never criticize his/her friend in front of other people. As a result of this Yoshiko thinks: "I lost face because (1) and (2) happened. Why did Barbara do this to me? I thought she was my friend." In contrast, Barbara would have thought: "In our culture we were always encouraged to say what we think about an issue and respect others' views as well, regardless of others being present or not. Comments are, even if negative, made on the issue not on the person. What do you mean by losing face?"

The study of "face" and "facework" has been conducted by many researchers²³. Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 35) define face as: "the negotiated public image, mutually granted to each other by participants in a communicative event." While according to Ting-Toomey, (1988, p. 215): "Face, in essence, is a projected image of one's self in a relational situation. It is an identity that is conjointly defined by the participants in a setting". Facework, on the other hand, is defined as: "the communicative strategies that are used to enact self-face and to uphold, support, or challenge the other person's face". (Ting-Toomey and Chung 1996, pp. 247-248) Face and facework are hence basically about projected self-respect issues and other-consideration issues. (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 1996, p. 249)

I hold a similar view as Ting-Toomey's considering "face" as the self image or self-identity associated with (1) the mutually established relative status of participants in interpersonal communication and (2) face-saving based on the relationship of the two parties, and the issue discussed, whether the communication is taking place in a private setting or a public setting. In Japan, preservation of face is mutually viewed as consideration for others, a part of politeness. Therefore, Japanese people make an attempt to avoid direct request, criticism, disagreement, or expression of dislikes to other people, resulting in an indirect way of expressing something or communicating. Such a concept of face generated by politeness is based on the relational position with others in a group or society.

Also, in my opinion, "face" is similar to shame, in the sense that shame is social in nature (Hofstede, 1994, p. 60) and so is face. "Losing face" occurs when one's action or

²³Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 61-67); Ting-Toomey (1988, pp. 213-232); Hofstede (1994, p. 61; p. 165; Scollon and Scollon (1995, pp. 34-36); Ting-Toomey and Chung (1996, pp. 248-251)

utterance has failed to meet one's own or others' social expectations including breaking social rules, and has become known to other people. Such negative consequence can put not only the person oneself into a state of "loss of face" or "feeling ashamed" but also forces other people such as his/her family, organizational group, or other in-groups into a similar state of dishonour. In collectivist society, particularly, these effects on others are inescapable. To the Japanese people "losing face" is therefore something which must be prevented for the sake of maintaining one's self image as well as avoiding "loss of face" of others with whom one is associated. To lose face is to lose honor, pride, dignity, or self-respect, and crucially, may result in loss of credibility and reputation. A loss of face occurs in relational situations. The public announcement of bankruptcy of a company by its president, for example, brings him loss of face in front of his employees as well as the whole society. In this situation, the president's image viewed by his employees and people in general would be completely ruined. He would lose credibility as a businessperson who is ultimately responsible for entire business. Such public-exposure of loss of face is very damaging to the image of the given person personally and publicly in terms of future relationships with others and business prospects.

With regard to the difficulties in understanding the concept of face, Ting-Toomey (1985, p. 82) summarizes these factors, from the perspectives of high- and low context cultures, in the table below. "A Summary of Basic Characteristics of Low-context cultures Conflict and high-context cultures Conflict".

In it she points out that individualists tend to use more self-oriented face-saving strategies, while collectivists tend to use more other-oriented face-saving strategies; individualists tend to use more direct, face-threatening conflict styles, and collectivists tend to use more indirect, mutual face-saving conflict styles. Note that "Instrumental conflict is marked by "opposing practices or goals," and expressive conflict stems mainly from "desires for tension release, from hostile feelings." (p. 77)

A Summary of Basic Characteristics of LLC Conflict and HCC Conflict

<i>Key Questions</i>	<i>Low-Context Conflict</i>	<i>Hhigh-Context Conflict</i>
Why	analytic, linear logic instrumental-oriented dichotomy between conflict and conflict parties	synthetic, spiral logic expressive-oriented integration of conflict and conflict parties
When	individualist ic-oriented low collective normative expectations violations of individual expectations create conflict potentials	group-oriented high collective normative expectations violation of collective expectations create conflict potentials
What	revelment direct, confrontational attitude action and solution- oriented	concealment indirect, nonconfrontational attitude "face" and relationship- oriented
How	explicit communication codes line-logic style: rational factual rhetoric open, direct strategies	implicit communication codes point-logic style: intuitive- affective rhetoric ambiguous, indirect strategies

Source: Ting-Toomey (1985, p. 82)

I will add further to an understanding of "face", from a Japanese perspective: When interacting with Japanese people, it is wise to avoid bringing up certain issues that challenge face or provoke public confrontations which may result in loss of face. Incurring loss of face is an extreme insult and vice versa. Generally speaking, Japanese people choose not to be direct especially when, criticising and declining a request or proposal from others in a public setting. I believe that the underlying element of politeness which aims to avoid any possible conflicts is sensitivity. To pay attention to others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour may be the key to be able to deal with rules of "face" to which Japanese people consent in their society.

11.4 Self Assertion

Assertion means to state your opinion, agree or disagree assert preferences, criticism, etc, clearly and constructively. Japanese people are very cautious about how they should behave or how much they can put themselves forward when interacting with others. Self-assertion is concerned with how clearly and directly one delivers verbal messages as well as the number of verbal messages one delivers and the wording and manner of those messages. Individuals' self assertion differs greatly in each interaction involving different discourse scenarios. According to Palmer and palmer (1996, p. 176), discourse scenarios include participants' intentions, actions, roles, and thoughts expressed through speech acts which are the pragmatic aspect of language containing the intentions, motives, and goals of the speaker.

Observe the following case in which the ideal of *enryo* (self-restraint, holding back) determines the degree of expressiveness and assertion. A young Japanese person visiting someone in the States for the first time was asked if he wanted to have a drink. To be polite in the Japanese way, he said "No, thank you", expecting that he would be asked again. But much to his regret, he did not get asked again. He avoided saying "Yes, I would like one". He learned that "no" means "no" in the States. I attribute the this miscommunication to two main reasons:

Firstly, he thought he should behave politely, that is, hold back from saying "Yes, please" since he was meeting the host for the first time. The other is, he thought that the host would interpret "No, thank you" in context considering the fact that he had walked some distance to the host's home on a hot summer day. These reasons may sound illogical to a non-Japanese. They are, in fact, considered appropriate by Japanese people, because he put the principle of *enryo* into practice in his interaction with someone unfamiliar. However, as far as the motive of avoidance of assertion is concerned, it is not always generated by *enryo* based on *omoiyari* (empathy), although it seems so in outward appearance. Sources of avoidance of assertion can be the practice of public communication with little or no explicitness, the intention to play it safe, not to invite hostility or to give a bad impression, or *omoiyari* (empathy) to keep face of the other person, depending on the intentions, motives, and goals of the speaker.

Palmer and Palmer (1996, p. 187) discuss Anna Wierzbicka's approach that links cultural differences in ways of communicating to underlying differences in ways of thinking. According to them, she claims that peoples' ways of speaking are governed by cultural scripts, which she defines as tacit systems of cultural rules. She describes cultural scripts using a universal "natural semantic metalanguage" that enables us "to portray and compare culture-specific attitudes, assumptions, and norms from a neutral, culture-independent point of view ...". She discerned the following scripts for Japanese that represent the tendency to avoid speech in favour of mutual *omoiyari*:

1. it is good not to say to other people all that I think
2. often it is good not to say anything to other people
3. when I want to say something to someone, it is good to think something like this before I say it:
it is good not to say to other people all that I think
something bad could happen because of this
4. if I say many things to people
people may think something bad about me
I may feel something bad because of this
5. when I want someone to know what I think
I don't have to say it to this person
I can do something else
6. when I want someone to know what I feel
I don't have to say it to this person
I can do something else
7. it is good if I can know what another person feels/thinks/wants
this person doesn't have to say anything to me

Concerning these scripts, Palmer and Palmer (1996, P. 188) argue that, even though they represent a general characterization of prototypical cultural patterns of discourse, and may be useful for cross-cultural comparison, they are metalinguistic representations of ways of speaking, and are not cultural models themselves. According to Palmer and Palmer, (1996, p. 176) discourse scenarios integrate linguistic and non-linguistic domains, including participants' intentions, actions, roles, and thoughts. These cognitive features are expressed by speech acts that directly relate to the pragmatic aspects of language, the intentions,

motives, and goals that are inherent in all human discourse. Palmer and Palmer's criticism of Wierzbicka's cultural scripts is that they are extremely abstract and general, simply showing the ways of thinking and the ways of speaking and require the intentions, motives, and goals being expressed in some kinds of expressions in a dialogue with sequencing schemas.

I basically agree with Palmer. These scripts are insufficient to determine whether they represent underlying thoughts that trigger the avoidance of speech of Japanese people. Wierzbicka fails to represent the important features including: what is it about that "I" in the script thinks it is good not to say something and why? ; who is "other people"? ; what sort of situation does "often" refer to? ; who is "this person" who can read I's mind? Without these information it is impossible to detect what "I" consciously feels about something, which leads to a certain way of speaking of "I" - avoidance of speech, for. These scripts are also insufficient as they lack representation of a variety of scenarios to which each script can be applied. I do not think that, in any culture, the relationship between ways of speaking and the cultural rules can be explained by a series of single scripts. Each script needs to be put into a context covering those missing elements to enable us to see the circumstances in which the tendency to avoid speech promoted by the Japanese ideal of *omoiyari* emerges: within which situations are Japanese people likely to demonstrate speech avoidance. Thus, I would like Wierzbicka's cultural scripts to be put in a differing discourse scenario showing varying, specific situations in a way that those scripts are made sense of. At the same time I would like to point out that culturally appropriate ways of communicating must be linguistic and behavioural representations of cultural and social standards, and our linguistic and behavioural representations do change depending on the situation and yet these varying representations can still meet our own cultural and social standards. I therefore consider that, in order to determine culturally appropriate ways of communicating, it is important to examine the fully developed context which allows us to infer cultural values demonstrated through linguistic and behavioural representations of schemas exchanged by the two parties sequentially.

Ways of thinking influence ways of speaking across cultures. Ways of speaking are dependant on people's shared knowledge of the social and linguistic rules. The thought, "It is good to say no when I am asked if I want something, even if I want one." as in the above

case in contrast to, “It is good to say yes when I am asked if I want something and if I want something and if I want one.” clearly show the underlying cultural differences in ways of thinking that govern communication. This indicates that people with differing intentions, motives, and goals interact and produce various cognitive and behavioural outcomes.

11.5 Function of Language

The term “primary socialization” is used by social psychologists to explain “cultural learning”. It consists of the processes which a child goes through in the early stages of “enculturation” or becoming a member of his or her culture or society (Scollon and Scollon, 1995, p. 150). According to social psychologists, generally speaking, the child’s learning takes place initially within the family and close intimate relationships. This is “primary socialization”. Then it is followed by “secondary socialization” which takes place when the child starts to interact with the outside world such as at school. This theory proposes that the great majority of the basic syntactic and phonological structures of one’s language are learned (or acquired) as part of one’s primary socialization. To be more precise, the child learns and develops patterns for relating to those of hierarchical status, difference in age and sex, in-group and non-in-group communication, and discourse. Furthermore, the child learns through his/her primary socialization, how the language is to be used and how it functions.

There are many functions of language, including two main functions; the information function and the relationship function (Scollon and Scollon, 1995, p. 138). There is often a cultural difference in beliefs regarding whether language is primarily used for the purpose of conveying information or expressing relationships. Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 138) state that the use of language always accomplishes both functions to some extent. They propose that in relation to Japanese communication, “Japanese culture places a very high value on the communication of subtle aspects of feelings and relationship and a much lower value on communication of information.”

I do not agree fully with Scollon and Scollon's comments on Japanese communication of information. It is true that Japanese communication places an importance on the participants' feelings, face and so on to maintain existing relationships, therefore, it can be said that the socially oriented relationship function of the language use is considered important in Japanese culture. However, I argue that what Scollon and Scollon mean by "a much lower value placed on communication of information" is ambiguous. Does this mean that Japanese people lack exchange of information voluntarily in their communication? What sort of communication do they mean? How is "information" defined here?

In my view, Japanese culture downplays the communication of ideas or opinions rather than communication of information. As mentioned earlier, Japanese people often do not present their ideas or opinions clearly and logically because they prefer communication of ideas or opinions to be made in an indirect and imprecise manner. This is not only to preserve peace but because it is generally possible for Japanese people to determine the reaction of the other person to a particular issue or situation simply by observing his/her facial expressions or body language, that is, by intuitively feeling out the other person's attitudes and beliefs.

Unlike communication of ideas or opinions, if information is defined as factual knowledge or physical data, the idea that communication of information is of low value, does not seem to be based on any social values or social factors. The language used for communication of ideas or opinions holds both the relationship function and the information function and it conveys information. Japanese people do so in their own particular style which is distinct from the direct and explicit verbal communication that is so valued in many other cultures. The way information is expressed and transmitted often differs from "straight to the point" and "conveying expressively" methods. The Japanese way of using language, like any other language, reflects some aspects of culture such as indirectness. It is significant to realise that indirectness does not indicate that the exchange of information has little value, but rather that it is underplayed.

I stress that all communication carries some sort of information and all are socially oriented in one way or another. For example, the expression "O-genki desu ka." (How are you?/Are you well?) can have either an information function or a relationship function. The

information function is evident in situations such as when the speaker knows that the listener has been unwell and is expressing concern for the health of the hearer. In such a case as this, the listener would be likely to respond by providing information such as "Yes, I'm getting better now." or "I'm having another test next week." etcetera. It can also be taken as an expression which is, as Scollon and Scollon (1995, p. 138) explain, used to acknowledge recognition and to affirm that the relationship you have established remains in effect. If that is the case, the listener would normally respond by saying "Hai. Okagesama de." (Yes, I'm fine. Thank you for asking.) On the other hand, the expression "O-dekake desu ka." (Are you going out?), which is commonly used in everyday conversation to a person who is just about to go out, is a socially oriented expression from which the speaker does not really expect the hearer to be informative even if the hearer responds by saying something like "Yes. I'm going to the bank".

It seems important to recognize that each culture places values on different aspects of communication. Paying attention to people's feelings avoiding damage to one's "face", for example, is considered highly important in order to maintain relationships in Japan. This sensitivity is a prerequisite in all human relationships in Japan. This is one of the factors which contributes toward a communication style involving a certain pattern of thought, the way a message is constructed and presented. Thus the way the language is used by Japanese people to give and receive information or to maintain existing relationships would be specific to Japanese culture. It is this sensitivity which underlies the language use and promote indirectness. It is perhaps more important to understand how language is used, than for what the language is used.

12. Japanese Nonverbal Communication

12.1 Underlying Factors of Japanese Nonverbal Communication

The reliance of Japanese people on nonverbal communication primarily concerns human relations. There are two main factors that underlie the development of intuitive, nonverbal communication in Japan. One is the avoidance of direct expression of feelings and opinions to maintain harmony in human relationships. This is due to the Japanese cultural emphasis on avoidance of confrontation and conflict which may emerge through direct, verbal communication. The other factor is the ability to communicate with minimal use of verbal messages. This has been possible due to the high level of shared social experiences and knowledge based on many aspects of historical and social background common within Japanese society. This means that, as stated in “High- and low-context communication”, people often can, to a large extent, rely on their physical surroundings (context) and nonverbal behaviour to understand the speaker’s intended meaning. These are some of the factors behind the development of a silent language of ambiguities, silences, and subtleties and the ability to communicate intuitively. Japanese people have many features in common such as heritage, philosophical and religious systems, language, and cultural values. In addition, sharing their workplace with others and their homes with other members of the family in everyday life helps them learn to perceive and carry out social conducts in a similar way. This also helps them to internalize their physical surroundings, rules for interpersonal relationships, rituals, manners, and so on.

12.2 The Characteristics of Japanese Nonverbal Communication

I consider the following two features to be major characteristics of Japanese nonverbal communication. Firstly, the listener is required to fully involve themselves in listening, relying on their ability to infer what the speaker is trying to convey. Secondly, minimal physical and emotional expressions are displayed.

Ramsey (1985, p. 312) refers Japanese nonverbal behaviour to *Enryo-Sasshi* Communication Model proposed by Ishii. In this mode, according to Ramsey, he views the behaviours from the viewpoint of the relationship between *enryo*, which means reserve or restraint, and *sasshi*, which means to surmise or guess. The model shows that a sender filters his/her own behaviour and a receiver pays great attention to what is *not* said, in order to expand the message by filling in. This means that the listener needs to have the ability to capture the subtlety behind both the verbal messages and the nonverbal messages.

This theory overlaps with the ability Ramsey (1985, p. 312) describes to “hear one and understand ten”. Active participation is also required in an extreme case of a particular communication style which involves taciturnity. Restraint and its extreme, suppression of verbal communication, or minimizing behavioural expressiveness has been a highly valued form of expression in Japan as seen in *haiku* (the seventeen syllable poetic form), *sumie* (brush painting), or *noh* (a form of masked theatre). (Ramsey, 1985, pp. 311-2) In *haiku*, the reader is expected to know the season by a certain word and a viewer of *sumie* is expected to read the meaning of “empty” space in relation to line. *Noh* seeks to communicate by silence and suggestion. In *noh*, by moving a foot or shifting tilt, a mask revealing no overt emotion can actually display emotions ranging from grief to happiness. *Haiku*, *sumie*, and *noh* all command active participation and require an ability to read meaning based upon nonverbal components.

Preference for nonverbal communication over verbal communication triggers a reliance on nonverbal communication which neglects articulation in speech and encourages silence between the verbal messages. This results in discouraging people from being eloquent speakers. Japanese face-to-face nonverbal communication primarily employs the subtle and indirect messages of facial expressions, tone of voice, and silence that rely upon a tacit agreement of intuitiveness between a sender and receiver. The silence called *ma* applied in speech is actually a pause. One of the major difficulties which non-Japanese people face when interacting with Japanese people is interpreting this *ma* of Japanese people. Japanese nonverbal communication with these characteristics is greatly disadvantaged in such forums as international conferences where silence is viewed as indicating a lack of enthusiasm for participation or an ability to hold an informed and rigorous debate or discussion.

The table below further illustrates Japanese people's predominant use of silence in contrast with two other nations. It also reflects the fact that they are not inclined to obvious gesture or physical communication. Appropriate eye contact and keeping some distance from the other person are also important nonverbal features to show respect and acknowledgement for the other person.

Behaviour (Tactic)	Japanese	Americans	Brazilians
Silent Periods (Number of silent periods greater than 10 seconds, per 10 minutes)	5.5	3.5	0
Facial Gazing (Minutes of gazing per 10 minutes)	1.3	3.3	5.2
Touching (Not including handshaking, per 30 minutes)	0	0	4.7

Source: John Graham (1985), "The Influence of Culture on Business Negotiations," *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 16 no. 1, p. 84

In Japan when talking or listening to someone, particularly to one's seniors, many people avoid eye contact with the other person. This is because this behaviour can be interpreted as defiance against the speaker or what is being said, therefore, they tend to look downward to show their humbleness. Expressing emotions such as anger, joy, disgust or sadness through certain gestures or physical movements are not inherent characteristics of the Japanese people. When they are having a discussion, negotiation, or even when trying to convince others, they rarely display physical movements except perhaps bowing to show apology, show gratitude, or ask a favour.

Their main concern in social interaction is to behave in a socially appropriate manner, especially with people from outside their in-group or with someone senior to the person. This is considered to be the essence of politeness. Being well-mannered in social interaction requires appropriate language use and nonverbal behaviours which lay restraint on strong expression of emotions such as anger, disgust, or contempt accompanied by certain tones of voice, body movements, or body contact. Japanese people recognize that direct expression of emotions will lead to negative impressions of themselves as adults who fail to control their emotions in social encounters, and hence are childish and immature.

Similarly, when interacting with someone, putting their hands in their pockets or crossing arms would be viewed as casual body movements. Physical contact such as touching does not normally occur except hand shakes, perhaps, when greeting someone from a different culture. However, it must be noted that the Japanese use of language and general behaviours varies to some extent depending on the situation they are in, i.e., whether they are in a formal arrangement such as a business discussion or an informal environment such as after-five activity such as socializing while eating and drinking.

13. Summary

Japanese communication is fundamentally concerned with developing and maintaining human relationships. The Japanese communication style varies, and is determined by the situation. I contend that a situation comprises of (1) who the interactants are and the relationship between the two parties, (2) the physical setting, and (3) the purpose of meeting. Among these three determinants, the relationship between people would be the most influential dimension. I refer to such relationships as those between members of in-group and non-ingroup people.

The communication style used within in-groups would not be only one kind but once again varies depending on the degree of intimacy between people. It is however, generally characterized by such features as: a typically informal level of speech accompanied by simplified expressions of language use and casual behaviour. A greater level of self disclosure is usual, with the real self or *honne* revealed. Comprehensive information of each other and the shared social environment is mutually shared and internalized. This leads to high-context communication where a great deal is often left unsaid, involving reliance on extensive mutual knowledge or intuition by the other person. The family group which is the innermost group would be a good example of this kind of human relationship.

In contrast, the communication style used with non-in-group members differs significantly from the communication style expressed amongst in-group members. The greatest difference is "formality". Formality governs language use including the speech level, amount of verbal and nonverbal messages, indirect expressions and so on. It, in fact, dictates the entire communication process and the style of communication appropriate to each communication situation. Each communication counterpart is subtly and carefully studied; "face" is paid attention to, and harmony is maintained by implementing *tatemaie*.

Despite these distinctions, other features are common to both types of communication style. For example, as opposed to cultures that enjoy arguments and encourage people to freely exchange different ideas and debate, Japanese people generally avoid confrontation or argumentativeness in face-to-face communication. The characteristics of each communication style should not be viewed in isolation but within the context of cultural values. Within

Japanese society, cultural values such as harmony (*wa*), empathy (*omoiyari*), or self-restraint (*enryo*) shape the development of social rules that influence Japanese thought and behaviour.

The logic of the characteristic of Japanese communication style becomes obvious when we realise that it is based on their social value “to maintain human relationships”. Reluctance in being explicit or assertive, and the reliance on intuitive interpretation, as well as the restraint of emotions may be the necessary ingredients for establishment of long-term relationships. Thus, in order to sustain this fundamental, social value of maintaining human relationships, Japanese people determine their verbal, nonverbal, and behavioural aspects of communication according to each situation, carefully paying attention to the three factors mentioned earlier.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

When we look around us, we become aware of people who are highly skilled at communicating effectively. We can hence identify the specific factors which make those people a better communicator than others. I refer to a good communicator as someone who has the right attitudes toward the other communication partner. I believe that a good communicator is defined as someone who has the ability to be able to establish interpersonal relationships and who has good communication skills.

Constructive interpersonal relationships are developed by a person who has respect for the other person, enables a relativistic view of the other person, demonstrates sensitivity to the other person, avoids judgement of the other person, and establishes rapport with people. I believe that these attitudes are the constructs of interpersonal skills which lead to establishment of effective interpersonal relationships. Thus development of interpersonal skills is primarily concerned with people's attitudes toward the other person and the communication situation.

A communication skill, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with the verbal and nonverbal side of interaction. A communication skill is developed through developing various abilities concerned with speaking and listening as well as adaptability and flexibility to varying communication styles and situations. The abilities contributing to developing communication skills are these: clear and articulate expression, listening carefully to the other person, tolerance for the other person, in conversation. Furthermore, communication

skills must include such abilities as: being able to quickly grasp the communication style and adjust to an appropriate communication style in response. The ability to establish good interpersonal relationships and well-developed communication skills lead to communicative competence. This is essential to all human communication.

This study of communicating with Japanese people has looked beyond the importance of attitudes and communication skills. The communication between different cultures requires more than appropriate attitudes and communication skills. Effective intercultural communication must consider: (1) underlying cultural factors such as beliefs and value systems, (2) culture-specific features which make cultural differences in communication process (3) where in communication process the cultural differences emerge, and (4) how cultural differences in communication process influence the communication style.

Japanese culture

Individuals in Japanese society have been regarded as group-oriented and thus collectivist. This may appear to promote a lack of individualism in some people's view. But both collectivism and individualism have pros and cons. Japan's history suggests that collectivism has worked in Japan in terms of economic development, together with a strong group orientation which goes back to the time when Japan was primarily an agriculturally-based society. This emphasis on group and a sense of belonging to a group has produced strong individual-group ties for which individuals were rewarded for their devotion to the organization. An individual's identity, thus, has been determined through the group to which one belongs.

The individual-group tie accordingly became seen as a virtue in Japan. Because of this, individuals have come to be shaped according to this norm of individual identification and belongingness through socialization and group affiliation. The systems of values of Japanese people and society have developed under the influence of the religious philosophies, Buddhism and Confucianism as well as the way society operates. Specifically, Japanese society maintains such features: the social structure which stipulates the identity of individuals, relationships between individuals as well as the vertical relationships within a group, the occupational and psychological ties between in-group members who share their social roles, and the distinction between in-group and non-in-group members. These features have contributed to the Japanese ideals of harmony and social uniformity.

The *ie*, the household system has placed the emphasis on the continuity of the family line, placing the head of the household as heir to the family name. Traditionally, within families men and women had distinct roles in which the husband was the breadwinner and the female managed the household and cared for the children. The family unit was fundamental to the in-group and non-in-group system.

Significant changes have been seen in people's social attitudes, beliefs, and value systems in recent years. Family ties have weakened as a result of an increase of the nuclear families living in urban areas. The younger generation has been seen as shifting toward an individual-oriented value system which places very little value on traditional social systems but more on individuality-focused career development with self-interests. Changes in management systems means changes in both the structure and focus of corporate systems. This management system, which governs the employment system, has accelerated changes in individuals' attitudes toward employment and has encouraged to place an emphasis on "being an individual" amongst the younger generation.

Japanese society is indeed a complex society due to these social, economic, and attitudes changes. Japan's responsibility for re-gaining economic stability may necessarily be its immediate goal before accepting a gradually but steadily growing diversity in attitudes to collectivity, conformity, and uniformity in contrast with traditional social values and behavioural norms.

Intercultural communication

Each communication style reflects the prevailing cultural and social values which are important within a culture. It is my conclusion that understanding features such as the cultural values underlying a communication process, is the key to understanding why a certain communication style exists in the way it does. Furthermore, such cultural and social values not only determine the communication style but also regulate the language use and behaviour in communication.

To understand intercultural communication, it is important to acknowledge that people across cultures maintain their own distinctive patterns of communication style. There are many factors for this, including; the differences inherent to each social system; the way one

relates to others and the way one's self is identified; the way people perceive, interpret, assign meaning to, and evaluate objects. Cultural differences in any of these factors may lead to negative consequences of communication, including miscommunication, misinterpretation, or even conflicts. This is why it is essential for us to develop our knowledge of other cultures and understand the relationship between culture and communication style.

Japanese racial homogeneity and collectivism have enabled Japanese people to communicate in a high-context communication style. High-context communication, is based on shared mutual knowledge, and assumes that the listener will infer what the speaker is conveying through context, rather than a reliance on an explicit verbal message. Hence, verbal dialogue takes less precedence and situational factors receive more emphasis. This illustrates a clear difference in value systems between the two communication styles; "Don't say too much or too overtly. The other person will know what you mean." versus "Speak up and be explicit and direct so that the other person will fully understand you." These overt differences in communication style may be explained by an understanding of cultural values. The indirect and high-context style of communication favoured by the Japanese people relates directly to the emphasis placed on developing and maintaining human relationships with sensitivity, to avoid "loss of face" or conflict.

The communication differences between high- and low-context cultures are also apparent in nonverbal behaviour. People in high-context cultures may be more familiar with applying and interpreting nonverbal behaviour than people in low-context cultures. The way that people in each type of culture deal with conflict also differs. For example, people in high-context cultures tend to use more indirect, mutual face-saving conflict styles, whereas people in low-context cultures apply more direct and confrontational face-conflict styles.

The important point here is how each style is perceived by the other person. Perceptual process is the mechanism through which we describe, interpret, and evaluate people, experiences and events. For example, an excessively talkative person is not regarded as credible in Japan, while other cultures may value the ability to be outspoken and explicit. Nobody can see and tell what is perceived and how it is processed through the mechanism. Thus, how one interprets and evaluates the object is purely subjective and this subjective view is largely influenced by our own cultural belief and values. Our beliefs are learned and

hence the interpretation of beliefs is culturally determined. For example, Japanese culture is relatively tolerant of *amae*-dependency, as seen in the parent-child relationship reflected in Japanese society in many adult relationships. Cultural beliefs and values significantly influence perception and communication.

Japanese communication style

I consider the following to be the major characteristics of Japanese communication style: (1) communication situation can be roughly classified as formal and informal based on the degree of formality, (2) communication is “being”-oriented.

Formality is based on the concept of *uchi /soto* (inside/outside). The communication styles greatly differ between *uchi* communication which refers to *honne* communication and *soto* communication, as *tatema*e communication, both depending on the degree of formality. The selection of speech style and communicative behaviour is governed by situational factors. The degree of assertiveness in speech, or the use of indirect ways of expressing oneself become important as the degree of formality increases.

It is important to learn about sociocultural features within the communication environment and to be able to interpret the meaning of those features accurately. For example, why business cards are exchanged and how this interaction should be approached. When and how gift-giving takes place, between who and when multiple members are present. These ritualistic activities should be regarded as part of communication which are just as important as language use. In this area of communication, nonverbal behaviour or cues are manifested. The ability to interpret nonverbal behaviour from the context is hence important part of understanding sociocultural features.

My comment that Japanese communication is “being”-oriented refers to the emphasis placed on maintaining sensitivity, harmony and empathy between the communication parties. This implies the development of interpersonal relationship is the antecedent to communication to function effectively. It also implies that without having an willingness to conduct communication in a harmonious and empathic manner, the communication may not proceed further to the core of the conversation. This means that, tolerance toward the other person, open-mindedness, flexibility, and respect for the other person as an individual, is essential to

adapt effectively and appropriately to the communication style of others.

Suggestions

Communication is a collaborative effort. Communication involves fundamental human relationships rather than merely an exchange of messages. In order to conduct communication with Japanese people, it must be understood that interpersonal reality is considered paramount. In order for an interpersonal relationship to be developed, it is important to understand how human relationships are initiated and maintained in Japan. "Face", for example, is a culture-general feature but in what situation the rule of "maintaining one's face" is applied is culture-specific. Something many cultures experience is not necessarily conducted and perceived in the same way. What to pay attention to most, is culture-specific. "Face", for example, should not be looked as one communication rule but as the associated issues which go beyond the surface rules of communication: why it could provoke one's face, who else can be affected by this and the degree of damage given, or how the relationship may be affected. These main issue-associated concerns may be called sub-rules of communication. It is hence necessary to learn the rules and sub-rules of communication. We must also be aware that these rule books must be re-written as social changes emerge.

I believe that it is important for people to be exposed to an understanding of intercultural or cross-cultural encounters much more than is available at present time in New Zealand. Students of Japanese are shown high culture side of culture such as "flower arrangement" and "tea ceremony" in their study of Japanese at schools but the anthropological side of culture is neglected. It is also unfortunate that this kind of study is not delivered within a context in which many international students are actually present. Schools should take advantage of their often rich cultural diversity to create learning opportunities where students are able to apply intercultural communication theories into practice within a casual atmosphere. Experiencing the intercultural interaction and discussing and analyzing interaction experience would be not only the best method of learning of the culture but also the best way to understand the people one is interacting with.

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