Intercultural Conflicts Between

New Zealanders and Japanese

under Business Conditions

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity includes many different values and behaviours. This frequently causes intercultural conflicts and communication break-downs. If people do not know these differences, they cannot know the reasons for these communication failures. People who communicate with others from different cultural groups, therefore, have to be aware of the different cultural values and communication rules these target cultural groups have.

When New Zealanders work with the Japanese people, what are the factors to prevent communication? This dissertation aims to answer this question. An interview survey was held in order to analyse successful cases and unsuccessful cases of intercultural communication between New Zealanders and Japanese under work conditions. The Japanese managers and employees were interviewed to investigate what intercultural aspects these New Zealanders have to be aware of. The research results show that ; (1) different styles of work, (2) senses of responsibility - individual responsibility / group responsibility -, and (3) different ways of apologising frequently cause problems. All of these three aspects are related to the individualism-collectivism dimension of culture. These results indicate that this conceptual difference, individualism-collectivism, is the biggest cultural dimension which causes intercultural conflicts as a number of researchers argue. This aspect, therefore, has to be taught in Japanese language courses or job training courses to avoid these frequent conflicts and failures of intercultural communication between New Zealanders and Japanese.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate: (1) whether New Zealanders who work with the Japanese are communicating with them successfully; (2) if they succeed in the communication, what the degree of the success is, and if they fail, what the degree of the failure is; (3) what they have to know to succeed in communicating with the Japanese.

Cultural differences between New Zealand and Japan are big obstacles for New Zealanders who would like to work with the Japanese. This is because different cultures determine different values, behaviours and communication patterns of people in the cultural groups at the unconscious level of their mind.

Most of these New Zealanders have learned Japanese language before. In New Zealand, Japanese language education is quite common in secondary and tertiary institutions today. However, its culture is hardly taught in these courses. Learners of this language know only some cultural events or the geography of Japan. They barely learn when and to whom they have to be polite or how to ask help from others, or what they should not say in an argument and so on, though these factors are extremely important when working with Japanese. Therefore, whether they can adjust themselves to this different culture is reliant on their individual personalities. Only when they are lucky to have personalities which fit the Japanese culture they succeed. All other people can be seen as cases of cultural maladjustment to the Japanese environment.

Today many specialists of language teaching advocate that teaching only the language is not enough for communication with the native speakers of the target language (Kurachi, 1990; Neustupny, 1987). They argue that real communication is not only a process of using of the languages, but also a process of an interaction to achieve social, economical or interpersonal goals. In order to achieve these goals, learners must have knowledge of the culture in which the target language is embedded.

This researcher also strongly argues that there is a need to teach culture in Japanese courses. Through her experience in teaching Japanese in New Zealand, she has found that more Japanese learners give up further improvement of their Japanese skills because

of difficulties of interaction with the native speakers rather than difficulties with the language itself. Numbers of Japanese learners who have completed the Japanese course and left the classroom to venture into the real world, come back to tell teachers that they cannot communicate with the Japanese well at work and they are not really comfortable there. They do not know why, but they feel that something has gone wrong. They cannot solve problems because they do not have the knowledge. In fact many of them go feeling their way in the dark. As a result of lack of cultural knowledge, they start having a negative feeling towards the Japanese because of their failure to communicate with them. Most New Zealanders working with the Japanese have similar feelings. Some of them, unfortunately, quit their jobs and find others in which they do not have to use their Japanese skills.

Ting-Toomey (1999) who discusses inter-cultural communication from various different aspects, regards Transcultural Communication Competence as the most important aspect of communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds. She defines three components of transcultural communication competence: (1) knowledge blocks; (2) mindfulness; and (3) communication skills (p.266). She explains knowledge blocks as follows:

> Without culture-sensitive knowledge, communication cannot become aware of the implicit "ethnocentric lenses" they use to evaluate behaviours in an intercultural situation. Without accurate knowledge, communicators cannot accurately reframe their interpretation from the other's cultural stand point. Knowledge here refers to the process of in-depth understanding of important intercultural communication concepts that "really make a difference" (p.266).

In order to meet the demand of knowledge of Japanese culture, the most important issue to discuss is what aspects of Japanese culture should be taught. Hosokawa (1994) argues that there is no consensus even among teachers about what and how to teach Japanese culture (p.iii).

The ultimate purpose of this paper is, therefore, to provide materials to discuss what aspects of Japanese culture we have to teach New Zealanders who would like to work with the Japanese successfully.

In Chapter 1 we will investigate features of Japanese culture which possibly confuse

New Zealanders working with the Japanese, based on previous studies. As these features are different from New Zealand culture, these New Zealanders may behave differently from the Japanese. These behaviours of the New Zealanders may be misunderstood by their Japanese employers, colleagues or clients and may cause conflicts at work.

To analyse these cultural features, we will use Hofstede(1980)'s framework of "Four Dimensions of Culture", which are masculinity (1.2), power distance between superiors and subordinates (1.3), uncertainty avoidance tendency (1.4) and collectivism (1.5). Since collectivism is the most important dimension of culture and strongly determines people's behaviour and styles of communication, we will have a more detailed discussion about it. The characteristic features of Japanese collectivism discussed here will be solidarity and loyalty (1.5.1), inter-dependence and homogeneity (1.5.2), and conflict avoidance tendency (1.5.3). The features of Japanese communication and behaviour patterns related to this dimension will also be discussed, namely group responsibility (1.5.4), and apologies (1.5.5). As well as all of the above issues, general work ethics will also be discussed (1.6). After the discussions above, an example of an intercultural conflict from a written source will be introduced (1.7). Application of the above cultural features will be discussed. Finally, cultural changes in contemporary Japanese society will be examined in order to find what aspects of culture are changing now (1.8).

However, difficulties in intercultural communication are not only due to cultural differences. The character and the nature of intercultural communication also causes problems. People are normally not aware of the difference between intercultural communication and general interpersonal communication before a problem occurs.

In Chapter 2 features of intercultural communication will be discussed based on several previous references. Possible factors which cause intercultural conflicts are: language barriers (2,1), inter-language / language reduction (2.2), cultural shock (2.3), the three stages of the adjustment process to a different culture (2.4), host - newcomer relationships (2.5), and stereotypes and prejudices (2.6).

In Chapter 3 we will examine research results. This research was conducted by interviewing Japanese managers and employees who work with New Zealanders. They spoke about their successes and difficulties in working with their New Zealand colleagues, mentioning actual examples. These results will be analysed to examine

whether the possible factors discussed in Chapter 1 and 2 are the factors of the real problems and conflicts. Some interviewees told about their working conditions or their own cultural shocks at the beginning of their work in New Zealand. These statements are also included in this chapter because they are important in determining cultural differences between Japanese and New Zealanders.

Chapter 4 is a conclusion, which consists of research findings (4.1), a further research perspective(4.2) and discussion about competence to succeed in intercultural communication between New Zealanders and the Japanese (4.3).

Today the necessity of understanding people from diverse cultural backgrounds is increasing. The world is becoming smaller with rapid globalisation of economy, technology and information systems. This researcher believes that the relationship between New Zealand and Japan as Pan-Pacific neighbours has great potentialities, not only economically, but also culturally and interpersonally. In order to achieve effective and productive intercultural communication, we have to learn to manage differences flexibly and mindfully.

CHAPTER 1

FEATURES OF JAPANESE CULTURE

Because the purpose of this dissertation is to clarify what factors make communication between New Zealanders and the Japanese difficult at work, we firstly have to discuss those cultural features of Japan which are different from New Zealand. Culture is one of the most important factors that determine people's behaviour. People's values and beliefs are unconsciously controlled by the culture to which they belong. The term culture has a wide range of meanings and what this term actually indicates may differ depending on one's perspective. Before starting the discussion, it has to be clear from what angle this multi-meaning concept, culture, must be discussed.

Ting-Toomey (1999) uses a good metaphor to explain the term when she states what intercultural communication is:

> Culture is like an iceberg: the deeper layers (e.g., traditions, beliefs, values) are hidden from our views; we only see and hear the uppermost layers of cultural artifacts (e.g., fashion, trends, pop music) and of verbal and nonverbal symbols. However, to understand a culture with any depth, we have to match its underlying values accurately with its respective norms, meanings, and symbols. It is the underlying set of beliefs and values that drives people's thinking, reacting, and behaving. Furthermore, to understand commonalities between individuals and groups, we have to dig deeper into the level of universal human needs (such as safety, security, inclusion, dignity/respect, control, connection, meaning, creativity, and a sense of well-being) (p.10).

As she explains here, people who make a commitment to intercultural communication have to make their understanding about different cultures deep enough to reach the universal human needs which lie at the bottom of the entire culture. At this depth, different values and beliefs may be considered equally valuable and sympathetic. This chapter is, therefore, an attempt to think about the Japanese at this deeper level.

We also have to define the term, "the Japanese", appropriately. The ambiguous definition of this term includes a wide variety of individual differences. Use of the term results in the ignorance of differences. The attitude to treat a certain group of people as being typically Japanese causes a harmful effect that recreates the stereotypical image that foreigners have: for example, a male middle-aged businessman wearing a dark suit, who is quiet and hard working. This may also cause prejudice and even an attitude to refuse to understand them when differences are emphasised. Moreover, this ignores the importance of the existence of groups on the periphery of this cultural group, such as women, the Ainu, the younger generation and Korean residents in Japan who are often forgotten (Mouer and Sugimoto,1995). The literature on "the Japanese" has frequently omitted these people. Considering this aspect, in this chapter, the differences based on generation, sex and locality will be referred to as much as possible. However, the term "the Japanese" will still be used. This is for the following reasons.

In a cultural group, there are obviously values that rise above the individual powers of group members. These values determine both the good and bad behaviour of a particular group and they are often quite different from that of the other groups. In a
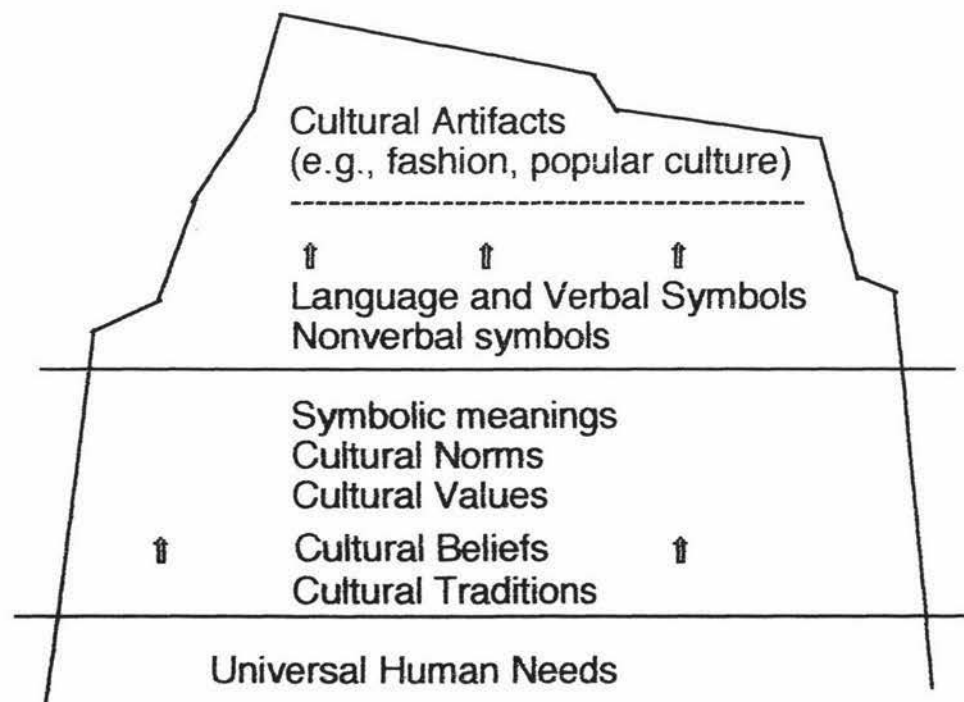
FIGURE 1.1 Culture : an iceberg metaphor
(Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.10)

group, there is an unspoken consensus of the group members. People who join this group must be aware of the existence of this consensus. No matter how Westernised or individualistic a Japanese person may be, he/she must follow rules based on the Japanese cultural values. If New Zealanders working with them do not know this, they can feel that small differences are big issues, as they cannot cope with them. This means they have joined the game without knowing the rules. These rules are, in the cultural group, called "common sense" and are never explained. The group members believe these rules are universal and never consider that other groups have different ideas or values.

Therefore, the topic discussed in this chapter is these unspoken common laws, not individual Japanese people. The term "the Japanese" indicates people who are obedient to cultural rules which control and determine how people communicate with each other. This relationship between "the Japanese" and individual Japanese people is consistent with the one between computer software and its documents. Each document is different in content and purpose, but all documents have a common aspect which reflects the same restrictions and advances of the software. If the software has the advantage of drawing, for example, many of the documents may have efficient and appropriate drawings in them. The discussions held in this chapter are not about the average document, individual Japanese people, but the software itself. This prototype of the Japanese cultural group will be called "the Japanese".

Recently, in the field of intercultural communication studies, it has become increasingly common to use the concept of "dimensions of culture" or "dimensions of cultural variability" as a theoretical framework to analyse differences in human behaviour between cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p.13). In past studies, when two cultural groups have been compared and some differences in communication behaviour were found, researchers frequently concluded that these differences were caused by "culture". This approach cannot lead us to investigate what aspects of the culture cause the differences in communication behaviour between these two groups.

Therefore, more subdivided concepts of culture were required, and in complying with this need, numbers of dimensions have been advocated. The most well-known examples of these are high / low context cultures (Hall, 1976) and the four dimensions of culture: individualism - collectivism, power distance, masculinity - femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980).

High / low context culture is the pre-eminent concept in looking at whole verbal communication scenes. The definition "high context culture" refers to communication processes where context is important rather than the actual language being used. Low context communication contains more explicit information. High context communication relies upon the information in the actual context, such as use of indirect messages or extensive use of ellipses (Hall, 1976, p.91). This type of culture closely fits that of the Japanese. New Zealand is in the low context cultural group for the nature of communication patterns where external information takes importance.

The four dimensions of culture, - individualism - collectivism, power distance, masculinity - femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980), - are effective in understanding both the ideas and values of a cultural group. This is because they are subdivided and as a result, the concept of each dimension is rather simple compared to Hall's argument.

Individualism - collectivism is an important key to understanding behaviour patterns of cultural groups. Collectivistic group members normally give precedence to group goals rather than to individual goals. Individualistic cultural group members give priority to an individual purpose. Japanese culture is an example of the former and New Zealand of the latter.

Power distance is a concept for understanding distance between superiors and subordinates in a group. A society which requires subordinates to keep strict manners toward superiors is regarded as a large power distance group. Japanese society is a group of large power distances in comparison to New Zealand.

Masculinity - femininity is an index of the degree of realisation of equal rights for men and woman. Japan is regarded as a strong masculine cultural group. The New Zealand society aims at men-women equal rights and has achieved a certain standard of that.

Uncertainty avoidance is a tendency to keep security of life. A group with a strong uncertainty avoidance tendency values continuation of the same state over changes. Members of this group normally think patience is more important than challenges as security of life is an important value. Japan has a strong tendency of uncertainty avoidance while New Zealand has a little of that.

In this chapter, cultural differences associated with individualism - collectivism will be discussed in detail, as a number of researchers consider that this is the most important dimension of culture (cf. Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis,

1988; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Moreover, this dimension of a certain culture determines the various styles of people's behaviour patterns, including the other three dimensions. For example, the aspect of power distance between superiors and subordinates in Japan is one of the most characteristic features of their hierarchical group organisation. Large power distance between superiors and subordinates in Japan is deeply associated with their traditional family structure which is strongly collectivistic.

Furthermore, Japanese collectivism deeply affects people's communication style. This style is reasonably high context compared to western countries as Hall (1976, p.66) observed. Though Hall points out some low context communication scenes in Japan, the general tendency of the Japanese communication style seems high context. They emphasise the homogeneity of group members and individual differences are often taken little notice of. In both spoken and written Japanese, frequent use of implicit expressions is a characteristic feature of the language. These implicit messages deeply rely on the cultural context of the Japanese, such as customs, non-verbal messages, and so on.

On the other hand, many individualistic cultural groups, including New Zealand, are low context. The communication styles of individualistic cultural groups often have a tendency to make use of explicit expressions.

Because of the reasons above, it can be said that the individualism-collectivism dimension is one of the important factors in determining basic values and behaviour. It is, therefore, a very effective dimension in comparing New Zealand and Japan.

1.1   Hofstede's research

The well-known work that Hofstede (1980) produced was a quantitative investigation into the features of a certain culture. He did a large-scale investigation into 40 different countries and measured each dimension quantitatively. The result of this research was regarded with high validity since most of the 40 countries analysed were ranked as had been expected. These concepts are, therefore, effective in understanding cultural differences in regards to this result.

FIGURE 1.2 shows the results for Japan and New Zealand in his research. This indicates;

FIGURE 1.2. Hofstede's research results, Japan and New Zealand

(numbers indicate the ranks among 40 countries)

	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity
Japan	22	4	22	1
New Zealand	37	30	6	15

(1) Power distance : Japan has an average power distance between superiors and subordinates, but New Zealand's distance between them is very small.

(2) Uncertainty avoidance : Japan has a strong uncertainty avoidance tendency, but New Zealand is above the average.

(3) Individualism : New Zealand is strongly individualistic and Japan is around the average.

(4) Masculinity : Japan is an extreme masculine country and New Zealand is around the medium.

According to this result, these two countries do not have any extreme gaps, but there are still notable distances in every dimension. They will be discussed in the following sections.

1.2   Masculinity - Strong sex roles

Japan is a masculine country. This masculinity based on Eastern ideas of Confucianism and Buddhism has been historically cultivated as a part of their culture. Therefore, it marks a strongly different feature from Western ideas. The Japanese do not really think of this feature as being a confrontation between powerful men and powerless women, but as a strict boundary of sex roles. Therefore, In Japan, if a woman accepts this boundary and lives in the territory given, she can have a reasonable amount of freedom,

security and fulfilment. Moeran (1991) explains it as ;

> We should realise that they (Japanese women) have their own separate spheres of existence, in which they wield quite a lot of power. In the family, for example, the husband is an apparently a head of the house, but his wife in practice takes full control of the upbringing and education of their children, and usually of household finances. In these respects, Japanese women are probably given more responsibility than many Western wives and mothers, and it is here that they gain their social identity (1991, p.43).

Many Western men will be surprised when they hear husbands are only given a daily allowance for their personal expenses in Japan. Because of this reason, not many women have been keen to make careers of business in the society. Men are not keen to have many women at work as they think it is their territory. This style does not fit into the modern Western ideal - equal rights for both sexes. Therefore, it looks like sexism from the point of view of Westerners, including New Zealanders. Because equality is one of the most important ideals for the Westerns, it is extremely difficult for New Zealanders to accept and follow this Japanese style. However, as a result of Western influence, many of the younger Japanese are also gradually changing their ideas.

1.3 Power distance between superiors and subordinates - Hierarchical structure of groups

A number of researchers point out the hierarchical structure of groups in Japan. This structure exceedingly affects power distance between superiors and subordinates at work in Japan. This feature is deeply associated with their collectivism.

This character of Japanese groups was firstly discovered by Benedict (1946). Though her work on Japanese culture is out of date, many aspects of her arguments are still useful in understanding cultural values that dominate the work ethics of the contemporary Japanese.

In order to understand characteristics of Japanese groups, Benedict emphasised the importance of the basic concept, to "take one's proper station". She explains it as follows:

Their reliance upon order and hierarchy and our faith in freedom and equality are poles apart and it is hard for us to give hierarchy its just due as a possible social mechanism. Japan's confidence in hierarchy is basic in her whole notion of man's relation to his fellow man and of man's relation to the State and it is only by describing some of their national institutions like the family, the State, religions and economic life that it is possible for us to understand their view of life (1946, p.43).

She argues that Japan has a strict hierarchy in any group. From a family group, the smallest unit of a society, to the nation as a whole, and many groups in between. Of course work places and local communities are hierarchical, but even the groups of outsiders in the society, such as the Yakuza or Japanese Mafia groups and street kids groups are also the same. The structure of hierarchies is formed depending on the members' age, sex and position. From the lower to the higher in this hierarchy, absolute respect is required. Children must respect their parents ("*ko*" or filial piety) and warriors must respect their masters ("chu" or loyalty). "*Ko*" and "*chu*" are moral values based on Confucianism which determined Japanese behaviour from the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) to the end of World War Two (1945). For people outside of the group who want to understand them, the importance is that the Japanese accept the hierarchical structure as a natural factor and it is not worth trying to change this for them. In fact, it is not only worthless, but also may cause loss of benefits that can be gained by the acceptance of their own position within the hierarchy. Therefore, they are willing to maintain the structure and attempt to behave within the field they have been given depending on their position. For example, Benedict (1946) describes a process of decision making in a Japanese family:

The prerogatives of generation, sex and age in Japanese are great. But those who exercise these privileges act as trustees rather than as arbitrary autocrats. The father or the elder brother is responsible for the household, whether its members are living, dead, or yet unborn. He must make weighty decisions and see that they are carried out. He does not, however, have unconditional authority. He is expected to act responsibly for the honour of the house (1946, p.54).

A strict power distance exists, and the head makes a final decision. However, the other family members keep an eye on the appropriateness of this decision. Therefore, if these

family members have different ideas and opinions, they are allowed to express them. They are even allowed to oppose their father or the elder brother, as the person at the head of a group has a duty to listen to all members. The head has to avoid making an unreasonable decision so particular members do not suffer any inconvenience. However, the axis of decision making is not fairness unlike Western societies, but always the common purpose of all members and the honour of the family. This supreme value unites all members of the group and works to stop each member thinking from an egoistical point of view. Benedict (1946) states;

> The Japanese do not learn in their home life to value arbitrary authority, and the habit of submitting to it easily is not fostered. Submission to the will of the family is demanded in the name of a supreme value in which, however, onerous its requirements, all of them have a stake. It is demanded in the name of a common loyalty (p.55).

As she shows, this common loyalty is a key concept in uniting group members in a family.

The above statement is about a traditional Japanese family, in the context of pre-World War Two. It is different from present day families in Japan. The hierarchy in the family she described collapsed after World War Two. At present filial piety is not the best value anymore and the parent-child relationship is more friend-like. In other words, the power distance between parents and children has become smaller. This creates another new social problem in the loss of authority (Kawai 1976). However, the discussion about families in Japan is not the purpose of this paper, but does relate to groups at work. We can find a number of common aspects between the pre-war family structure and present day Japanese companies.

The above discussion is important in showing this connection. This hierarchy strongly remains in company organisations in Japan today as many observers point out. Japanese executives at the top of the hierarchy must be highly regarded and all of their employees must obey them strictly. Executives of a company have, of course, a huge responsibility to manage it well and are treated with a great deal of respect. One of their biggest responsibilities is for "their employees to take their proper stations" (Benedict, 1946) and for them to be able to bring their abilities into full play. This is one example

of the concept to "take one's proper station" as Benedict argued. This job - to "take one's proper place" - is one of the responsibilities of superiors in any group in Japan.

Parents for their children, husbands for their wives and elders for the youngsters, have strong privileges but at the same time, they have responsibilities to look after them, help them and protect them from others. Within a company, for example outgoing employees are placed in the sales department, those who are good with figures are placed in the accounting department and those who are creative are sent to the planning section. Usually the field of work of each employee is decided by the company rather than by the hopes and aspirations of these employees, especially within large companies. They are decisions made by superiors based on considerations about the aptitude of these employees. The personal hopes of these employees are placed second in importance in these decisions. Superiors also have a responsibility to listen to their subordinates and even if their subordinates say nothing, the superior must make sure they are free from obstacles to achieve group goals. This parental care taken by superiors towards their subordinates creates a deep, reliable relationship.

This researcher has one impressive experience to indicate the fact that superiors are not only job organisers, but also managers of employees. At the Japanese Language school she was employed at in Japan, all of the full time staff were expected to teach at a sister school in Korea during the summer holidays, as a part of their duties. Though she had heard the teaching schedule was quite difficult, she was looking forward to this new experience. However, her superior cancelled this trip when he heard that her honeymoon was planned immediately after the completion of this duty. His decision surprised all of the teaching staff, including herself. His explanation was that the honeymoon would be an extremely important life-long memory and he would not be able to face her husband if something happened to her in Korea. This researcher strongly opposed him and told him everything could be managed under her own responsibility, but finally gave up as she knew it was his good will which influenced his decision. The other teaching staff also understood this and accepted this decision which seemed unfair.

Consideration of superiors toward their subordinates frequently appears in this way. This is definitely not only a consideration to an employee, but also to someone within the family. The decision of the superior may cause two different reactions from his

subordinate. One is to recognise his good will and thank him for it as this researcher finally did. This is a reaction to accept this family-like relationship. Another reaction if a person cannot accept this decision (which is quite possible for those who come from an individualistic cultural background) is to see his decision as not fair because the opportunities at work are not equal for personal reasons, as this researcher first felt. Even if the subordinate understands the good will of the superior, he/she may feel it is an obstacle for achievement. As this episode shows, this relationship is quite difficult for individualists to understand. This is because the family-like feeling within a group is hidden by the strong outlook of hierarchy. More important values for individualists, at least at work, are equality or achieving goals based on their own willingness.

The expected reaction of subordinates toward a superior like the one described above is to behave toward their superiors in the way they would have towards their own fathers in the traditional pre-World War Two era. This includes respecting their superior just like they would their father, be very well mannered and finally support him in order to achieve group goals together.

This dual structure, the outwardly formal and hierarchical and the inwardly family-like and affectionate, is pointed out by Hall (1976). He states:

> In Japan, there are two sides to everyone-his warm, close, friendly, involved, high-context side that does not stand on ceremony, and the public, official, status-conscious, ceremonial side, which is what most foreigners see. From what I understand of Japanese culture, most Japanese feel quite uncomfortable (deep down inside) about the ceremonial, low-context, institutionalised side of life. Their principal drive is to move from the "stand on ceremony" side toward the homey, comfortable, warm, intimate, friendly side (1976, p.68).

The Japanese use these two opposite sides of this relation depending on the conditions they meet. More detailed discussion on this aspect will be held in 1.6 : Work ethics.

1.4   Uncertainty avoidance - Japanese management

The family-like interpersonal relations at work means, then, that work is something more than earning money for the Japanese. Their common management system, the

lifetime employment system, strengthens this tendency. Because they work for the same company for a long time, frequently until their retirement age, their loyalty to the company is very strong. A company is more than the object of their loyalty; it is also a kind of community of fate for them. Therefore, they think their lives will be improved if they work hard and improve the company. They have a lot of confidence in its management and think the company never abandons its employees. In fact, companies seldom lay their employees off in Japan. Even if a worker is not competent enough, they relocate him/her to an other post or retrain him/her. This is the system which makes them strongly identify themselves with their company.

Moreover, because of their seniority system, the longer they stay at the same company, the better conditions they receive, including wages and positions. It does not necessarily mean competence is not important. It means that employees are estimated not only by their business achievements, but also by competence in the total context, such as skills in managing people or the maturity of their personalities. Therefore, individual competition in a company hardly exists, though it is highly competitive between companies.

This paternalism of companies protects their employees from insecurity. The systems they use are highly uncertainty avoidant as Hofstede's research (1980) discovered.

1.5   Collectivism

Japan is a collectivistic country and New Zealand is an individualistic one. We have to discuss this in more depth because this difference causes many differences and considerably affects people's communication styles. Typical members of collectivistic cultural groups suppress their individual goals for the good of the collective goal and possess a sense of harmony, interdependence, and concern for others (Hui & Triandis, 1986). Within collectivistic cultural groups, decisions made by the group are favoured over individual ones. Individual initiative is socially frowned upon, and one's identity is based on relations with group members (Hofstede, 1980). Triandis et al. (1988) identified harmony, face saving, filial piety, modesty, thrift, equality in the distribution of rewards among peers and fulfilment of others' needs as the highest values which determine collectivists communication behaviour. They also argue that since collectivism does not like interpersonal competition within the group, members of the

group tend to circumvent disagreement and avoid confrontation. A tentative style of communication is preferred due to a lack of initiative.

On the other hand, typical members of individualistic cultural groups emphasise the importance of individual identity over group identity, individual rights over group rights, and individual needs over group needs. Individualism promotes self-efficiency, individual responsibilities, and personal autonomy (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.67).

This dimension is strongly related to the most basic moral values of the cultural group. The values for individualists are frequently the opposite of collectivists. For example, good students at schools in collectivistic groups are obedient and have a diligent attitude toward their work. Independence or originality is not regarded as highly as in an individualistic society. However, from an individualistic point of view, such students may be admired for their academic achievements, but their personalities may be seen as immature. This is because their intellectual horizons are often narrow and they tend to obey their parents or teachers too much. From an individualistic point of view, more independent behaviour based on one's own opinions are desirable characteristics. Therefore, individualistic cultural groups usually attempt to accept critical ways of thinking unless they have no common sense. This is because they believe each individual is different and has his/her own point of view. Unless one argues, the others do not understand him/her, as they are different. Everyone in the group has to accept this diversity. This belief encourages people to be expressive. However, collectivistic ways of thinking are not really generous in accepting criticism as they place importance on the maintenance of their society. Therefore, an opinion based on an individual point of view is not welcomed in these societies. The attitude and behaviour of a cooperative member of the society are expected.

Strong tendencies towards collectivism can be observed in many East Asian countries that have rice cultivation as a major industry. Historically, rice cultivation was a great industrial revolution which improved these societies in many ways. People moved to arable land and set up communities, as rice cultivation required a well-organised, large scale irrigation system which had been impossible for independent farmers or one family to work. This form of industry resulted in less independence in the community. The beginnings of the hierarchical structure of Japanese society had already appeared at this stage. Before this time, people had been more independent and free from group orientation, but this revolution realised people's dreams such as security, health and

wealth. We can see how much these positive values dramatically changed their lives through the huge population expansion during this time. This industrial revolution also created different human values, such as the importance of collaboration. The form of this industry depended heavily on land and the natural power to produce, rather than human behaviour, in contrast to the extensive farming practice which relies more on human labour involving livestock and technology (Sakuta, 1967, p.17).

That there are two cultural differences in this dimension does not of course, mean one of them is better or more developed. Individualism is common among European and American countries where modern civilisation took place. Individualists, therefore, may mistakenly believe that collectivism is a style of less developed countries. However, it does not necessarily mean individualism is a better type of culture than collectivism. The economic achievements of several decades by Asian countries (including Japan) which have a strong tendency of collectivism show this culture does not obstruct social improvements. On the contrary the philosophical question of whether independence, freedom or individualistic values can truly lead individuals to happiness has to be asked. However, it has to be pointed out that this is not a matter of judging which is better.

1.5.1   Strong solidarity and loyalty

The hierarchal structure of superior-subordinate relationships involves paternalism from the former to the latter and a great deal of respect from the latter to the former. This complementary relationship makes solidarity and loyalty deeper and stronger. Company organisations are, therefore, not only where the business of the company is done, but is also where deep human inter-personal relationships take place, similar to a family. Workers / employees have a strong feeling of loyalty to their companies as people usually feel toward their families. This inter-personal relationship is a good value in itself and helps to keep good order within the company. Each employee naturally accepts making some contribution from the heart for the purpose of maintaining and improving the work of the company. This is a cycle that the family-like character of a company creates.

When the Japanese form a group, it always has this structure and loyalty. Both of them help the Japanese to keep good order in their groups and avoid confusions which may be caused by powerful individuals who intend to gain individually. In Japan, therefore, good order cannot exist without this kind of loyalty. At least, the Japanese think so. Zimmerman (1985) describes a scene, where this loyalty and solidarity of company employees is shown, with surprise;

> As I walked into the reception area of this small country inn I heard shouts of *"Banzai, banzai!"*. I looked into a large room that was the source of this uproar, and saw about a hundred young men in black "happi-coats". Their eyes were glowing with pride, and there was a large sign in *kanji* (Chinese ideographs) that said, SALUTING THE GREAT CHIYODA COMPANY. Suddenly the men burst into military song led by enthusiastic *kacho* (section heads) and *bucho* (department heads). By the time my employees arrived the young men had finished their fourth rendition of the company song and were running to their buses shouting *"Banzai!"* and clapping one another on the back. How much of this demonstration was feigned by the young office workers, and how much was really heartfelt love of the company, is hard to say. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to believe that the display was less than genuine. I think I witnessed a very real demonstration of the employees' devotion to their company. My own staff were informally dressed and far less exuberant than the Chiyoda people, but as the weekend wore on they began to show some signs of dedication and love of the company, and it seemed to come naturally to them (p.12-13).

Not all Japanese company employees behave like this and, in fact, people who express their loyalty in this way may be a minority in Japanese society today. However, this strong emotional identification of employees is still hidden inside their minds.

Loyalty and solidarity are also important concepts in understanding the Japanese work ethic. Without considering them, it cannot be explained in any other way why the Japanese endure unreasonable overtime work, sacrificing their personal lives. They do not work overtime for the reason that they are forced to by their superiors. The motivation that encourages them to do so is the pleasure they receive in accomplishing their group goals effectively, to gain positive self-esteem as an achiever and fulfilment as a loyal member of the group to which they belong.

1.5.2   Inter-dependence and Homogeneity

The solidarity discussed in the last section is characterised by its strong inter-dependence and homogeneity. Doi (1973) argues a desire to seek interdependence is a psychological character of interpersonal relationship among the Japanese. He focuses on the Japanese term "*amae*" or interdependence. *Amaeru*, the verb form of *amae*, is an active verb which means "to depend and presume upon another's benevolence". In short, it is an action to seek others' help or love. He argues the Japanese actively seek this interdependence in any interpersonal relationships. This is, from his point of view, one of the strongest characteristics of the communication style of the Japanese. For example, Tezuka (1994) points out that for the Japanese the ideal style of communication is to understand each other without any verbal expressions. This expectation to be understood without expressing oneself is already *amae*, the idea of inter-dependence. Proving this, Doi (1973) states his experience in the United States When he was invited for a dinner and the host said "please help yourself", he felt this expression was unkind - as if the host was forsaking him (p.13). This is because in Japan a kind approach is to look after guests so attentively that the host anticipates their every wish. Asking one's preference is a rude and insensitive approach because the host has to understand the guest's preference before a request is made.

Doi refers to the psychological prototype of *amae* as the relationship between infants and their mothers. The Japanese unconsciously seek this affectionate mother-children relationship in any interpersonal relationship. However, he did not regard dependence only as a negative childish attribute but also as an important value of interpersonal relationships. He explains;

> The concept (*amae*), in short, serves as a medium making it possible for the mother to understand the infant's mind and respond to its needs, so that mother and child can enjoy a sense of commingling and identity: What is more, it has had the effect, among the Japanese who are much more aware of *amae* than the people who do not possess such a word, of permitting the *amae* psychology to exert a strong influence on every aspect of man's spiritual life (p.74-75).

This sense of commingling and identity based on '*amae*' is an ultimate value of communication for the Japanese. However, Doi argues this concept can be found in any people's minds. People in individual societies, such as Europe and America, seem to

strongly restrain themselves and do not recognise the desire of *amae* as it is against their ultimate values, individual freedom and independence. However, many positive values in individual societies, such as consideration, kindness, admiration, and even love, contain this "sense of commingling and identity" too. Therefore, *amae* is, to some degree, not to be ignored as part of the nature of a human, who always needs others. The Japanese have a strong desire to have this relationship with other people. This attribute enhances Japanese being group-oriented rather than being self-focused.

The features caused by the *amae* psychology vary, but one of the biggest is that it requires homogeneity of people. As discussed, *amae* is a desire to create a relationship to satisfy a sense of commingling and identify with others. If a person has a strong personality which is different from others, even if his personality is good, it is difficult for others to create a harmonious *amae* relationship with him/her. Different behaviour from others may mean a deviation from the group that he/she belongs to and contains the danger of destroying the order and structure of the group. This homogeneity creates harmony in the group. However, it also may cause uncomfortable feelings for people outside the group. This is because this solidarity and harmony is strongly exclusive and it appears to be difficult to join in from an outsider's point of view. Doi (1973) explains this homogeneity as follows;

> To persons on the outside who do not appreciate *amae* the conformity imposed by the world of *amae* is intolerable, so that it seems exclusivist and private, or even egocentric (1973, p.76-77).

Many young Japanese usually dislike this homogeneity today. It is stressful for them to identify themselves with this feature. The modern Japanese society ostensibly values individual personalities and criticises this homogeneity. Therefore, the more modern young Japanese are seeking to be recognised as individuals with different personalities. However, they do not really recognise the existence of interdependence under this homogeneity as it lies at the unconscious level of their minds. As a result, they are seeking both interdependence and individual diversity at the same time.

1.5.3   Restriction on self-expressions

Strong solidarity in a group and the desire of *amae* also cause an extreme tendency of

conflict avoidance as Condon (1974) and Christopher (1983) have pointed out. Individual members of this group should not be egoistic but should adjust themselves to the others. This effort can make a harmonious relationship containing a lot of *amae* inside. This tendency appears in the form of using indirect and polite expressions rather than straight and friendly ones. The Japanese prefer to use an extremely implicit way to communicate. This is a common style of communication in collectivistic countries. Ting-Toomey introduces a pair of contrastive conversations to explain this difference. These conversations are between friends, and one is asking the other a ride to the airport. One conversation is between American persons and the other is between Chinese. The [ ]s show what they are thinking in their minds. (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998, p.77):

Scene 1

American 1: We're going to New Orleans this weekend.

American 2: What fun! I wish we were going with you. How long are you going to be there? [If she wants a ride, she will ask.]

American 1: Three days, By the way, we may need a ride to the airport. Do you think you can take us?

American 2: Sure. What time?

American 1: 10:30 p.m. this coming Saturday.

Scene 2

Chinese 1: We're going to New Orleans this weekend.

Chinese 2: What fun! I wish we were going with you. How long are you going to be there?

Chinese 1: Three days. [I hope she'll offer me a ride to the airport.]

Chinese 2: [She may want me to give her ride.] Do you need a ride to the airport? I'll take you.

Chinese 1: Are you sure? It's not too much trouble?

Chinese 2: It's no trouble at all.

These Chinese collectivists hesitate in making a direct request as this example shows while American individualists show no hesitation. Japanese collectivists are almost the same as these Chinese people, but they tend to hesitate more. Normally it is good manners to show strong hesitation when the other offers help. The most likely

conversation scene of asking a ride to the airport between two Japanese will be:

> Scene 3
>
> Japanese 1: We're going to New Orleans this weekend.
>
> Japanese 2: What fun! I wish we were going with you. How long are you going to be there?
>
> Japanese 1: Three days. [I hope she'll offer me a ride to the airport.]
>
> Japanese 2: [She may want me to give her ride.] Do you need a ride to the airport? I'll take you.
>
> Japanese 1: No, thank you. It's just too much for you.
>
> Japanese 2: Yes, I'll be fine. You only have to ask me.
>
> Japanese 1: Are you sure?
>
> Japanese 2: Definitely.

This strong hesitation is frequently shown when someone offers help. The person who offers help, therefore, has to make an appropriate guess and understand the other's real intentions and force him/her to accept the offer. This guessing to understand one's real intention is a Japanese favourite non-verbal communication skill. They frequently use this skill to make a smooth and effective communication. This sensitivity and ability to make an appropriate guess to understand the other is highly regarded as an important competence in their society. Therefore, lack of this skill is often treated as incompetence.

A restriction of self-expression in Japan is seen not only when one makes a request, but also when one talks about oneself. In their conversations, modest expressions about oneself are highly important. Because of the Japanese homogeneity and the desire to keep a harmonious relationship, saying good words about oneself is not acceptable at all. Therefore, when a Japanese traveller comes to New Zealand, they find nothing more surprising than "personals" in the classified advertisement in newspapers. Saying about oneself "a handsome, affectionate male with a good sense of humour...." is a unbelievable behaviour for them.They think that whether one is handsome or not is recognised only by others and that no person should say that about himself/herself, even if he/she is really handsome.

Moreover, emotional and aggressive self-expression is regarded as immature and may

cause serious problems. Zimmerman (1985) gave a good example of this problem caused by an American businessman:

> Americans are notoriously unskilled at concealing their true emotion. An all too typical scenario at a first meeting with the Japanese finds a frustrated American trying to hurry the Japanese into some concrete discussion of business, and thereby ruining the chances that such a discussion will ever take place. The Japanese hate to be hurried. In a worst-case example, the frustrated executive will begin speaking too rapidly and using too much jargon even for his interpreter to understand. Often he will begin unconsciously to raise his voice, probably because of a vague feeling that people who don't understand plain English must be deaf. Ultimately, the unhappy fellow will get up and start walking around the room, gesturing with pointed finger in order to emphasise the main points of his monologue. During this display the Japanese will, at some point fairly early on, fall silent, and if the unfortunate American should pause for a minute in his delivery,he will discover that the atmosphere has become positively frosty. The results of such a meeting are invariably, negative, and it will take a long time and a great deal of patience on the part of the Westerner who gets off on the wrong foot if he is to build any meaningful relationship with the Japanese at all (1985, p.30-31).

The Japanese restrict their self-expression. On the other hand, self-expression is an important social skill in individualistic societies. Each member of the society is responsible for expressing their point of view to others. For the Japanese, this importance has been gradually recognised mainly in business fields, but it is not common yet. Particularly, aggressive and emotional ways of self-expression are totally unacceptable because of their tendency to avoid conflict. They will be regarded "not only as rude, but as signs of a weak character" (Zimmerman, 1985). The Japanese will be afraid and feel threatened when others behave in this way.

1.5.4 Conflict avoidance tendency

This tendency to avoid conflicts does not appear only when expressing oneself, but also

in general behaviour. Self-expressive behaviour and actions without consideration to others are considered rude and childish.

Misumi's study (1994) indicates that Japanese families which have hosted students from overseas listed 5 barriers to communication. Behaviour Japanese felt difficult to comprehend were: 1. Directness in approach. 2. Open self-expression. 3. Deviation from the model of collectivism. 4. Open behaviour regarding relationships with the opposite sex. 5. Self-centred attitudes. The actual meanings of these five are still ambiguous, but 1, 2, 3, and 4 are about these students' open and free behaviour and 5 is a direct example of individualistic behaviour. These students' open and individualistic behaviour broke the harmony of the families, although the foreigners did not intend to do so. The nationalities of these students are not mentioned. However, New Zealanders may possibly behave like these students as New Zealand is one of the most individualistic countries according to Hofstede (1980).

However, the Japanese, of course, cannot always keep harmonious relationships. They also sometimes behave in a self-centred way and want to argue among themselves.
As discussed before, Tezuka (1994) analyses that the ideal relationship for the Japanese is the one through which people can understand each other well without exchanging verbal messages. She states they are extremely sensitive to the feelings of others and adjust their own behaviour to match to what others expect (p.35). Because of their strong tendency towards collectivism, the Japanese restrain themselves from having strong egos. When a husband wants to drink a cup of tea, his wife understands that and makes it for him without any conversation. Children can feel and understand their parents' expectations and work hard at school without force. These are the most smooth and ideal communication styles for them. This skill, understanding others' feelings and adjusting one's behaviour to them, is one of the most effective non-verbal communication skills for them to avoid conflicts in advance.

But when they cannot avoid conflict, the Japanese find great difficulty in coping with it. Because they think conflict has to be avoided in advance, when it actually happens they do not have many effective strategies to deal with it. Open and direct discussion is normally out of their behaviour patterns. Obuchi (1991) reports that when Japanese university students face interpersonal conflicts, many of them try to accept them without making any positive actions. They try to bear it for a while and when they feel

they cannot be patient anymore, sometimes they withdraw themselves from the issue or the communication. They keep distance from the person or they sometimes become emotional. They may yell out, or most of the time, they become quiet and give up the further communication with the person.

It is good at this point to use an example of communication between a Japanese (Mr.J) and a New Zealander (Mr.N). Mr.J does not like Mr.N smoking cigarettes in front of him, but does not say anything because his cultural background does not allow him to do so. Mr.J gives a lot of hints to Mr.N to convey his wish, but Mr.N still does not understand. Mr.J gives up and tries to bear it. It is uncomfortable for Mr.J to stay with Mr.N, but Mr.N does not ever understand what Mr.J feels. After a while, Mr.J may suddenly give vent to his indignation when Mr.J feels he cannot stand it anymore. It surprises Mr.N and Mr.N will wonder why Mr.J is so annoyed. Mr.J has had a hard time, but Mr.N has not noticed. This is a common scenario of an emotional conflict between a Japanese and a New Zealander.

Mr.J feels he made every effort to cope with it, but the problem was not solved because Mr.N was too insensitive. Mr.N feels Mr.J should have expressed his feelings and that Mr.J is immature as he was too emotional. As this scenario shows, the Japanese expect others to make an appropriate guess. This style of communication is, however, extremely difficult for the people with different cultural backgrounds.

This appears not only on a one-to-one basis, but also while having a talk in a group. When the Japanese have a group discussion, they often: (1) do not express their own opinions clearly; (2) judge who is suitable for the leader's position. This judgment is made by each group member in silence based on their ages or social status, etc. Then they tend to follow the leader's opinion (Saito et al., 1996). (1) shows their attitude to adjust their behaviour to the others' opinions. (2) shows their strong unconscious desire to form a hierarchical structure (discussed in 1.3) to maintain harmony in the group.

1.5.5   Group responsibility

In Japanese groups, group goals are more important than individual goals. All group members share the same goals. As a natural result of this idea, all the group members share the jobs and responsibilities. The boundaries of jobs and responsibilities are not

as clear as in individualistic groups. For example, if a client makes a complaint to a company about a service, any of the employees, even if they are not responsible for the particular service, frequently have to apologise for it and attempt to solve the problem. In individualistic groups, individual employees have their own territory of jobs and responsibilities at work. What they are expected to do is to achieve the maximum in their own territories.

Supervising the entire situation is the job of a manager and each employee does not have to share it. New Zealand work places apply this concept in determining responsibility.

This conceptual difference, group responsibility / individual responsibility, is no small issue for employees when they are engaged in particular jobs. In each group, the respective concept is deeply imprinted into these people's mind, they do not know the other style. These concepts are also unwritten regulations for both people and have never been explained.

Therefore, when Japanese and New Zealanders work together, this may cause a serious conflict. A Japanese manager or employees will expect a New Zealand employee to share jobs and responsibilities with others, but this expectation will look unreasonable from the New Zealand employee's view. The more capable the New Zealander is and the more trifling the job to share is, the more seriously the New Zealander will feel hurt as he/she thinks they look down on him/her. This researcher has seen a New Zealand employee quit a Japanese company because the manager told her to clean up a dirty floor.

On the other hand, these Japanese show great deal of difficulty in taking responsibility in an individualistic way. They are not trained as single players and hesitate to act only on their own judgment. The next dialogue is a typical example of this. (Ms.Sueda is a Japanese American with a strongly independent self-concept, and Mr.Ota is a Japanese national with a strongly interdependent self-concept) (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.206-207).

> Ms. Sueda (enthusiastically) : Since we're all here today in the meeting, I would like to discuss with you my opinion on renewing our contract with the Fuji advertising firm. But before I do that, Ota-san, what do you think of the Fuji firm?

Mr. Ota (taken by surprise) : Ms. Sueda, what about the Fuji firm?

Ms. Sueda : Ota-san, I don't think they are working out for us. I don't think they are being aggressive enough in pushing our spring water products. I seriously think we should switch to a new firm. Their ads did not seem to have any impact on generating new sales for us.

Mr. Ota (after a long pause) : Ms.Sueda, Have you discussed this with others in our department?

Ms. Sueda (looking around) : Not really. That's why I'm sounding you out right now.

Mr. Ota : Well... it is a good idea to get as many people's opinion as possible on this important decision. Why don't we wait...

Ms. Sueda (impatiently) : But I'm really not satisfied with the Fuji's "soft sell" approach to our products. If you have any opinion, now is a good time to speak up. So what do you think?

Mr. Ota : Um... we really have to give this some more thought.... After all, we've cultivated a good relationship with the people in the Fuji firm...Maybe I'll check around with other people in the department after the meeting to get their input.

Ms. Sueda : Well, all your department people are here in this room. Why don't we ask them right now? Okabe-san, what do you think?

Mr. Okabe (taken by surprise) : Well... (a long pause) ...we should spend more time thinking together...

Ms. Sueda (very frustrated) : All right, everyone, wasted time is wasted effort. Ota-san, back to you. What do you really think?

Mr. Ota (glancing around the room and sensing tension) : Well... (a very long pause)... I couldn't really say right now... It takes time to make such an important decision.

This strong hesitation of the Japanese to express their opinions and take responsibility for themselves often makes a process of decision making very slow. People from individualistic countries, therefore, become irritated with it.

1.5.6   Apologies

The different senses of responsibility discussed in the last section cause different styles

of apologies. There are a number of researches about the difference between Japanese and English styles of apologies (Lebra, 1976; Sugimoto, 1996; Sugimoto, 1997; so on). These two styles show extreme contrasts. We can examine three different aspects of this difference: (1) the territory comprising those for whom one makes an apology; (2) the style and appearance; and (3) the purpose.

Sugimoto (1996) analysed thirty four books on etiquette from Japan and the United States. The focus of her research was to find out the different approaches to making apologies between Japan and the United States. She reports that while Americans apologise only for their own faults and for those of their children or pets who are not independent, Japanese literature advises that they apologise for a wide range of people, such as those within kin groups, subordinates at one's company or university, and sometimes people from the same birth place.

The next different aspect is its style. The Japanese style of apology is strongly characterised by the conflict avoidance tendency (discussed in 1.5.4). The style of Japanese apologies has two characteristics. The first is an immediate expression of the feelings of guilt. Among the Japanese, if they make errors, they say "I'm sorry" immediately after the error has occurred. They may say this several times to express their feelings of guilt. It is often not important, which individual is the cause of the problem, because of their idea of group responsibility.

The second characteristic is the lack of an explanation. Japanese normally do not explain the reason for the error. They think accepting one's fault quietly is an appropriate sign of one's willingness to recreate a harmonious relationship. Too much explanation may be treated as an attempt to escape from the fault and the feeling of guilt. Therefore, even if they are not guilty, some of them do not attempt to clarify their innocence. This attitude can be seen particularly among Japanese men as this is thought to be a manly attitude.

This style of apology remains strongly in Japanese society. Kawai (1996) reports what is taught at a primary school about these characteristics above:

> I had an interesting experience the other day. I saw a booklet which introduces a school that attempts to have a sense of internationalism because they think schools in Japan should be more international. In the book, there was an explanation about moral education. It said "sumimasen (I am sorry)" is an important word. Even if

you have not done anything wrong, it is important to say it." While teachers teach
it, they do not teach that there are also cultures where people never say "I am
sorry" unless they do something wrong. They teach that this value is important for
the sake of smooth communication in moral study classes. It is eminently difficult
for the Japanese to understand individualism from their hearts (P.11-12).

As a result of education like this, the Japanese generally do not have any hesitation to
use this expression even if it is not their fault.

On the other hand, New Zealanders do not learn this style of making apologies. They
believe apologising is an interaction to explain one's own circumstances which caused
the problem as well as to remedy the relationship. Because of their individualistic idea,
it is important to explain the reason verbally. This is based on their idea that each
individual is different from others and no one can understand the other without a verbal
explanation. For them, therefore, this expressive way of apologising is necessary to
recreate a good relationship.

This researcher has met a young New Zealander who spent her primary school time in
Japan. She mentioned she was happy at the Japanese school, but her older sister was
not. This sister had a serious problem with her Japanese teacher because whenever the
teacher told her off, she attempted to apologise for herself in this individualistic way.
She tried her best to explain the reasons why she talked with her friend during a lesson
and how she forgot the stationery item she had to bring to school. The teacher regarded
her reactions as an escape from her guilt and a resistance to the teacher and made her
keep quiet. This girl was seriously hurt and isolated in class. Finally she moved to an
international school which had no Japanese teachers and students. The reason why the
older sister had a problem and the younger one did not was because the older girl had
already learned the New Zealand cultural way of apologising and the younger one had
not.

As mentioned before, the Japanese make an apology even when they do not think they
are guilty. From an individualistic point of view, this apology is not sincere as the
Japanese do not feel individual responsibility while using this expression. The reason
why they say this is because they feel guilty for making the other person upset or
annoyed. They use this expression to make the person feel better again and remedy the

relationship. This is the purpose of apologies among Japanese.

New Zealanders' use of apology also aims at recreating a good relationship, but it is more self-oriented. This good relationship they think is dissimilar to the Japanese quiet harmonious one. It is created by discussion and cognitive and verbal understandings of each other. A harmonious relationship or an emotional unification of both parties, one making an apology and the other demanding an apology, are not expected here.

These three aspects, the territory, the style and the purpose, are the characteristic features of intercultural differences in apologising between Japanese speakers and English speakers. Therefore, for New Zealand employees, it is extremely difficult to make an apology in the way their Japanese managers, colleagues or clients expect.

1.6   Work ethics

The most characteristic feature of Japanese work ethics is symbolised by the well-known Japanese phrase, "customers are Gods". Business clients are always at the highest position in the hierarchy of politeness in Japanese society. Therefore, although being five minutes late for a meeting with a client may cause a disappointing result, being ten minutes late for a section meeting at a company is not a serious problem. As pre-war families were united and tried hard to keep the honour of their family, company employees now have to get their clients to endorse the good reputation of their company - that is, the honour of the company as well as its employees. Providing the best quality of services is, therefore, always the biggest concern for them. A careful and punctual approach to clients is essential.

In the company, a cooperative approach to others is important. An effort to make a big achievement by oneself is not welcomed in the work groups, especially at the beginning. Once a person is recognised as a good member of the group, the others open their minds to him/her and the work conditions would be much easier and more comfortable.

However, being a cooperative and good member of the group is not really easy sometimes. One issue of concern is the strong expectation for employees to work overtime. The Japanese generally work until late. Frequently, they are expected to work overtime without any allowance. This happens because of the strong expectation and

willingness of each employee to be a good member of the group.

As discussed before, for the Japanese, work is not only a place to earn money, but also a place to enjoy their solidarity and group achievements. They do not really think they are sacrificing their private time.

This feature is extremely hard for individualistic group members to comprehend. They do not think as the Japanese do. Individualistic group members work to achieve their own goals, not group goals. Therefore, they feel this unpaid overtime is not humane treatment.

1.7   An example of intercultural conflict

As we have discussed in this chapter there are several intercultural differences between Japanese and New Zealanders. These aspects are, of course, what New Zealanders working with the Japanese have to be careful about. They are, in other words, the unwritten regulations of communication at work that the Japanese keep.

In this section, we will discuss the application of these rules using an example of conflict. This is a case of an Australian student at a university in Japan. While the place of this conflict is a university and not a place of business, it is quite possible for the same sort of problem to occur at work. The main person in this episode is not a New Zealander, but Australian culture is very close to New Zealand so it is worth discussing this case. The story-teller is an American student studying at the same university.

Three years ago Jeff, an Australian student, joined my course. One day at a meeting of our course, he complained that a teaching assistant restricted his use of a word processor which belonged to our department and was shared by all students of the course. The professor asked the assistant the reason why he did it. He explained Jeff used it for a long time, often was away from it without turning it off and did not listen to the assistant even though he pointed it out so that it would be possibly trouble for others. Jeff asked everyone if there were any who had been in trouble because of his use of the word processor and if there were any who had been restricted in the use of the machine. There was no answer. The assistant said the others turned it off when they went away. I thought Jeff was right. It was not fair to restrict only him without determining whether in fact anyone else was inconvenienced by his use of the machine. However, the

judgment of the professor was different. He told Jeff to use it as the others did and then the assistant would not restrict his use.

Jeff stood up his face turning red. I expected him to argue. However he said "Sorry, I understand" in Japanese. The professor said it was good that he understood that and they could understand each other after a good talk as they were all the same human beings. After the meeting Jeff told me that he remembered to apologise quickly as I had advised him before, but he didn't want to do it anymore. He said he did not want to be "the same human as these racists". He left Japan shortly after that (Ohira, 1995, p.143-145) .

Firstly, we should think this story from this Australian student's point of view. There were no written regulations about the use of the word processor. He used it and there was no trouble. But the assistant suddenly restricted his use of it without warning. The reason was not explained to him. It was not fair to restrict only him. There had been no discussion and the unfair treatment was reserved for him.

Second, the Japanese point of view is much more simple. Jeff didn't think about others and was too self-centred. That was bad enough for them to treat him unfairly. They regarded him as a deviation from the group. There was no need to discuss this or listen to him because he didn't have any common sense.

Probably, Jeff had never thought that he had to restrict his own use of it before someone complained. If someone had complained about that, Jeff would have changed his behaviour happily. He did not intend to make trouble.

On the other hand, the Japanese had never thought they had to say that to him. It was not a matter of common sense for them to suggest at the meeting that he should restrict his use of the word processor because he was selfish. They were able to understand what others would feel and adjust their behaviour to what was expected because they belonged to the Japanese cultural group.

However, Jeff did not do so because he was not Japanese. He did not have this common sense because this common sense works only in Japan. He probably felt hurt and stressed because his argument was not accepted at all. They thought of the others' feelings, but did not think of Jeff's feelings. The reason why he called the people there "racists" was because they did not attempt to understand his point of view, and made an one-way judgment. Racism is an idea which is not tolerant to people's diversity. He

thought they were wrong as they didn't accept his different style. The Japanese assistant and the professor would be surprised if they knew he said they were racists. They thought Jeff was personally immature and too self-centred. They never knew his style was not unusual outside of Japan.

1.8   Contemporary Japanese society

Many of the discussions above were based on Japanese "modern" culture, not on the "post-modern". These features are, of course, still alive in Japanese society, but there are numerous new features. The biggest change for Japanese society in the 1980s and 1990s was the high standard of its economic achievement, which led the society to be called an "economic giant" in the world. In becoming a rich country, Japan has internally weakened the restrictions within social groups, such as families and companies. These groups used to be strong in order to protect each individual member. However, a good personal financial situation has given each member more freedom from their group and its restrictions. Nuclear families, for example, are in the majority in urban areas in present Japanese society. According to the national census report by the Statistics Bureau and Statistic Centre, Management and Coordination Agency of Japan, the average members per household have changed from 4.14 in 1960 to 2.82 in 1995. Members of these nuclear families have fewer restrictions to behave as a member of a traditional structural family. This means that many modern individualistic citizens have already been born in Japan. Of course, this happened through the influence of capitalism, which is based on the ideas of freedom and individualism of the West.

Young Japanese do, therefore, prefer more individual life styles rather than to be a member of a company which restricts their freedom. In the 1980's many young Japanese were called "furiitaa" or "free people". This refers to people who repeatedly took temporary jobs without belonging to a particular company or organisation. On the other hand, companies have noticed the inefficiency of the life-time employment system and have started limiting the number of employees. They still station employees with permanent contracts at the centre of companies, but for easy positions, such as receptionists and secretaries, many of them have tended to use people from temporary employment agencies. In the late 1990s, due to the economic recession, reformation of companies was widely carried out. Big companies are notably keen for this reform,

which is mainly for the purpose of dispensing labour costs, or more directly they have imposed redundancies. At this stage, the old idea of the society, to "take one's proper station", which was pointed out by Benedict (1946), has collapsed. Groups within a company which involved various people with different abilities no longer exist. Companies as business organisations which pursue profit with more financial efficiency and competitiveness have clearly appeared. This may be the beginning of the end of the life-time employment system. According to research about the conditions of job hunting in 1998, 18% of the unemployed were made redundant by their previous work places (Statistics Bureau and Statistic Centre).

As a result of this change, the companies will lose their employees' strong loyalty and solidarity which were discussed in this chapter. It will become more important for the employees to give their individual capabilities rather than their loyalty to their companies. This will be a big change in values of the society in the near future.

This tendency has been shown in the field of education too. The Ministry of Education announced a new national syllabus in 1998 which emphasised the transformation of education into one free from pressure. This syllabus also argued that education must be changed from that which teaches the importance of group discipline into that which develops a child's personality. This change was caused by a chaotic situation which had been seen in schools for some years. The number of students dropping out of school, bullying and juvenile crimes had been increasing. However, this change will be extremely difficult for educators to cope with as schools had pressed students to work hard and had taught group discipline. It was a total change in the significance of education so that it confused educators at the two opposites end of different ideas, the hard working and pressure free, and group discipline and personality development. Therefore, this confusion seems to have caused a deterioration in class discipline called "class collapse" (Kawakami, 1999), which exists widely in Japan today.

This tendency will be extended more in the future. In 1999 Prime Minister Obuchi invited outstanding intellectual people to organised informal gatherings for discussions to formulate a basic concept of 21st century Japan. Their report was presented in January of 2000, and discussed education, morals, information technology and its use, and defence. In the introduction, the report asserts that the 20th century was an era of organisations in the country, but the 21st century will be the one of personality. It says:

There will be a big possibility for the majority of the Japanese to have individual

power and freedom which was given only to a few people before. No matter how we draw a desirable shape of this nation and society in the future, the subject of it must be the people (p.95).

The most important values of the Japanese that we were proud of, such as strong family relationship, quality of education, and security and stability of the society, will collapse (p.95).

In the 21st century, when diversity will be the basic idea to rely on in this change of internationalising and information-oriented society, individual Japanese will have to have a strong personality (p.95).

The report says the change in this society has been rapid and morals and values in the previous era have already started disappearing.

This report was criticised by many in Japan for its vague and optimistic contents (Fukuda, 2000). However, the possible direction that Japanese morals and values can move towards in the near future seems to be this report's point of view. It will be an interesting change, but Japanese society will have to face much confusion.

1.9 Summary

The features of Japanese culture which possibly cause intercultural conflicts have been discussed. We can set up hypotheses as to what types of conflicts possibly occur when New Zealanders work with the Japanese as below;

(1) Strong sex roles

This feature of Japanese culture may cause a serious conflict when New Zealand women work with Japanese men. Because equality of both sexes is an extremely important value for New Zealand women, it is difficult for them to cope with Japanese ideas in this aspect.

(2) Hierarchical structure of groups

The politeness and formality this structure requires of each employee may be a problem for New Zealanders, because the good relationship they have between superiors and subordinates is friendly and casual. The Japanese superiors may be unsatisfied with the friendly approaches of New Zealand employees and feel as if they are not treated in an appropriate way.

(3) Japanese management system

The Japanese lifetime employment and seniority systems may offend New Zealanders. Young, competent New Zealanders especially may feel they are not treated fairly with regard to their competence and achievements. The Japanese managers and colleagues may think of these New Zealanders as being impatient.

(4) Strong solidarity and loyalty

The Japanese groups have strong solidarity among group members and loyalty to the groups they belong to. New Zealand employees who do not feel like this may have negative feelings towards this tendency of the Japanese. The Japanese may not understand that New Zealanders are not happy to be members of their group because New Zealanders often feel happier relying on themselves.

(5) Inter-dependence and homogeneity

The homogeneity which the Japanese groups requires of each member may be a hard task for New Zealanders.

(6) Restriction of self-expression

This communication feature of the Japanese will be difficult for New Zealanders to cope with because it is an important value to be expressive in New Zealand. The implicit verbal messages of the Japanese may confuse them as they feel the meanings of these messages are not clear enough. Moreover, when they express themselves openly to the Japanese, the Japanese may misinterpret them as being rude or selfish.

(7) Conflict avoidance tendency

This tendency may also cause strong conflicts between Japanese and New Zealanders. While this tendency of the Japanese is very strong, New Zealanders prefer debating and open discussions for solving conflicts much more than avoiding conflicts quietly. The Japanese also find difficulty in coping with New Zealanders' individualistic behaviour. This is because this behaviour frequently looks too self-centred and as if these New Zealanders want to deviate from their group. The Japanese will think them strongly negative and find a great deal of difficulty in coping.

(8) Group responsibility

The strong sense of group responsibility and a lack of the sense of individual responsibility are, for New Zealanders, also difficult cultural features of the Japanese to comprehend. The Japanese may appear individually irresponsible and cowardly. On the other hand, the Japanese also may judge New Zealanders as irresponsible because they do not have a sense of group responsibility as strong as Japanese do.

(9) Apologies

The Japanese and New Zealanders have different styles of apologies. Japanese frequently make an apology for a mistake made by other group members. They apologise for causing the others' hurt and upset feelings, not for their own feelings of guilt.

Japanese attempt to promote emotional harmony, while New Zealanders attempt to promote good verbal understanding. The style of the Japanese may look insincere from New Zealanders' point of view, and the New Zealand style does not look kind enough from the Japanese point of view. This misunderstanding may happen frequently and cause emotional conflicts.

(10) Work ethics

The characteristic features of the Japanese work ethics which New Zealanders may find difficult are:

(1) An extreme, and sometime overly careful approach to clients, including

politeness, services and punctuality.

(2) An extreme importance of cooperative approach towards others in a company and strong involvement in group work.

(3) Working overtime is usual and often it is done without allowance.

CHAPTER 2

FEATURES OF
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

In the previous chapter we discussed features of the Japanese culture which possibly cause difficulties for New Zealanders to comprehend. In this chapter, we will discuss features of intercultural communication which may also cause difficulties.

In this chapter the following six aspects of intercultural communication will be discussed. These six aspects are possible factors in causing intercultural conflicts.

    (1) Language barrier
    (2) Inter-language / Reduction
    (3) Cultural shock
    (4) Three stages of the adjustment process to a different culture
    (5) Host - newcomer relationship
    (6) Stereotypes and prejudices.

2.1 Language barrier

We are, normally, innocent of the differences between intercultural communication and general interpersonal communication. When we encounter people with a different language and culture, we notice first how big a language barrier is. This is because this barrier can obviously felt and it shocks many of us who have experienced interaction only with people speaking the same language.

When a person joins a different language group, suddenly he/she feels like a disabled person who has a speech impediment. Verbal communication skills including appropriate assertiveness to ask others for help when one is in trouble, are an important way for people to establish their social identity. The experience of losing all one's

verbal communication skills is tough and sometimes makes one depressed. Therefore, language skills are a big advantage in successful intercultural communication.

If a New Zealander working for a Japanese company does not speak Japanese well, he/she will feel isolated because of this barrier. If he/she is the only New Zealander working there, this feeling will be stronger. Generally, Japanese managers and employees do speak English, but when they want to relax they use Japanese. Neustupny (1987) states that local employees of Japanese companies overseas are frequently omitted by Japanese executives from their decision-making process. He explains it as the follows:

> What does normally happen? Even though this may not be a company policy, the Japanese executives tend to form a somewhat separate network. For instance, they say "we speak English the whole day, so at least at lunch-time we want to relax in Japanese." However, the lunch situation is one of the occasions for informal discussions, and since usually the non-Japanese executives cannot speak Japanese well enough to participate in these encounters, they become Japanese-only occasions. The foreign executives miss out not only on spoken communication networks. They cannot of course read either. Much information from the parent company comes in English, but the importance of information available only in Japanese is basic, and foreign employees of the company miss out here as well (p.108).

2.2 Inter-language and language reduction

If New Zealanders have Japanese skills, they are at a big advantage to achieve their goals at work. However, language acquisition is hard work and it takes a long time. The road to reaching the standard of fluency is rough and there are many obstacles. Communication in the second language contains a number of differences from one's first language. According to Neustopny (1982) use of inter-language and language reduction are characteristic phenomena in the second language communication.

Richards et al (eds, 1985) in the "Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics" defines the inter-language as;

the type of language produced by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning a language. In language learning, learners' errors are caused by several different processes. They include:

(a) borrowing patterns from the mother tongue

(b) extending patterns from the target language, eg by analogy

(c) expressing meanings using the words and grammar which are already known.

The strong influence of one's first language stays for a long time. This makes the content of verbal messages unclear and confusing. For example, one of the typical confusions made by New Zealand English speakers and native Japanese speakers is the answer to a negative question. In Japanese the term corresponding "no" is "iie", and this is used when the replier disagrees with the content of the question. An example:

New Zealander 1 : Aren't you going out today?
New Zealander 2 : Yes, I'm going shopping.

When two Japanese people have the same conversation in Japanese, it becomes:

Japanese 1 : Aren't you going out today?
Japanese 2 : No, I'm going shopping.

Therefore, when Japanese speak English, or New Zealanders use Japanese, this use of "yes" and "no" is frequently wrong. 'Yes' and 'no' are the most basic terms in making the content of a message clear.

Language reduction is a phenomenon where second language speakers have a strong tendency to reduce and simplify a topic even when their linguistic abilities have reached a satisfactory standard. This is because more rules have to be practised consciously or unconsciously when a second language is used. Second Language speakers have to be careful about grammatical structures, pronunciation, vocabulary and non-verbal aspects, all at the same time. This is extremely hard and often they can not control all of the necessary rules. Therefore, they give up trying to control all of these rules and reduce the topic itself. Therefore, second language speakers' conversations usually tend to be simple and short (Neustopny, 1982).

This causes ambiguous verbal messages. Therefore, good verbal and non-verbal communication skills are highly important in intercultural communication. Non-verbally, consideration, mindfulness and sensitivity are important capabilities.

Practically, verbal skills such as asking again, repeating important information and expressing the message clearly are important.

2.3 Cultural Shock

Many people hardly notice a cultural barrier. After starting relationships or getting the language barrier out of the way, one finds cultural differences are the deeper and more serious barriers. When one is in a different cultural group and has to adjust oneself to the group, one often experiences a strong identity crisis. This is because one's values and morals brought from one's own cultural group are not treated as important and this makes any change confusing. This may result in the loss of self-confidence one has built up in one's cultural group. This psychological crisis frequently damage one's identity seriously.

There are a number of different ways to get over this crisis. Frequently, a kind and helpful approach from people in the target cultural group helps a lot. Successful experiences, such as achieving one's targets, also may help one to regain self-confidence. Through these experiences one can get over the crisis and learn appropriate social skills in the target cultural group.

2.4 Three stages of the adjustment process to a different culture

A number of researchers have conceptualised the sojourners' adjustment process from various developmental perspectives. According to them, the sojourners' adaptation is a U-curve or W-curve process. Ting-Toomey (1999) introduces the model of Lysgaard (1955) as one of the most common examples:

> Lysgaard (1955) developed a three-phase intercultural adjustment model that includes initial adjustment, crisis, and regained adjustment: the first is the

optimistic or elation phase of the sojourners' adjustment process; the second is the stressful phase when reality sets in and the sojourners are overwhelmed by their own incompetence; the third is the setting-in phase when sojourners learn to cope effectively with the new environment (p.247).

Making use of this concept, Neustupny (1982) observed foreigners living in Japan and analysed the attitudes of the Japanese toward them. He argued that they experience three stages from the beginning of their stay, which are (1) honeymoon (2) refusal (3) acceptance. These three stages are almost same as the Lysgaard's model above.

In the first stage, they experience a 'honeymoon period' with the Japanese. It is easier to make friends at this stage and their Japanese skills receive plenty of compliments even though they make a lot of errors. The reasons why the Japanese behave like this varies, but one of the reasons is certainly because the behaviour of these foreigners has a character which is common to the weak in a society, like children or older people. They need help and cannot behave independently. Not only for the Japanese, but also for any people, it is an important value to help a weak person like this (p.112).

However, after a number of experiences, when their Japanese reaches a certain standard to express themselves freely, they find themselves not accepted as readily by new people, and their old friends, who have been considerably generous, start getting bad impressions of them caused by these errors.

The reason why it happens is because some of them can form Japanese sentences well, but unconsciously offend many rules of Japanese communication, including those based on cultural values. However, they do not notice the offence they may have caused. Without noticing this, they can frequently make Japanese people feel uncomfortable. Usually these offences against the rules of communication in Japanese hardly appear until foreigners acquire reasonable standards in Japanese language skills. Once their Japanese skills achieve that standard, these offences may occur anywhere as these foreigners are not certain about the rules. Therefore, the more various the communications, the more often it may happen. Though there are individual differences and not all language learners experience this stage. This analysis describes reality sharply.

When people are at the refusal stage, they are sensitive and vulnerable as they feel something has gone wrong. The things they enjoyed at the honeymoon period do not entertain them any more, but they cannot find the new stage to go up to. They have to

experience a number of failures to be confident enough to go up to the new stage.

New Zealanders working with Japanese will have a similar experience. Each relation with Japanese managers, clients and colleagues is a miniature of the experience of living in Japan. This experience must often be hard and they may feel they suffer unreasonably.

However, this hardship is also an opportunity to learn different values, behaviour and ways of thinking. This experience will expand their horizons and make them able to take a broad view of things.

2.5 Host - newcomer relationship

When people with different cultural backgrounds encounter each other and interact, there is usually a host-newcomer relationship. This relationship decides which culture mainly determines values in the interaction. When New Zealanders visit Japan, for example, they are newcomers in Japan. Newcomers have to learn the target culture to survive in the target country. As they are new members of the group, they have to adjust themselves to fit the different values or styles of behaviour of the group. The Japanese people whom these New Zealanders meet in Japan are expected to be kind and tolerant to the newcomers, but they do not really have strong feelings of identity crises as they belong to the dominant cultural group. This experience is harder for the New Zealanders than the Japanese. When a Japanese person goes to New Zealand, they will undergo a similar experience.

However, it is a little more complicated for New Zealanders working in New Zealand for a local company with Japanese connections. New Zealand cultural values must dominate, but there will also be some Japanese ones. This is because usually the places where they work are companies with Japanese capital or those which have many Japanese clients. These New Zealanders must have some knowledge in order to meet the demands from the clients and managers. This experience may be hard for the New Zealanders as many things are foreign to them. But the Japanese workers who work with them also may not feel at home as they are in New Zealand, not in Japan. It means that in the workplace, the New Zealanders are newcomers in their efforts to learn Japanese culture, but as entire persons, the Japanese are newcomers in learning New Zealand culture. This dual structure may confuse both groups, because it is difficult for both of them to decide which cultural rules dominate in which aspects.

The next quotation gives is a typical example of a problem caused by this confusion :

> A Japanese manager employed three people in the United States. After one year, when he raised their salaries evenly, one of them made a complaint. She said it was unfair to rise their salaries evenly as she had been working much harder than the other two. She told the manager he had to reward her hard-working with a higher salary than the others. (Kawai, 1976, p.51)

This episode is a typical example of intercultural confrontation. The definition of fairness is different between Japanese and Americans. Japanese collectivists think giving the same conditions to everyone shows fair and equal treatment, but American individualists think treating everyone differently depending on their competence and effort shows fairness. This quotation does not reveal how the manager solved this problem, but once a problem occurs, the solution is sometimes very difficult. The worst possible result would be for the Japanese manager to feel that the employee has to accept his way as this is a Japanese company, and for the American employee to feel that this is the United States and the manager should adjust himself to the American style. The stronger their beliefs are, the harder it is to compromise. If the employee was in Japan, she would have to accept the Japanese style as she is a newcomer. While she would be reluctant to accept it there, she would be even more reluctant to accept the manager's decision in the United States, as she would not be aware of the reasons behind it.

New Zealanders working with Japanese may have the same feelings. They are not really aware of their status as newcomers at the beginning. When they find difficulties later, they feel cultural shocks. This may cause serious intercultural tensions.

Usually Japanese do not argue strongly even if a conflict occurs as they prefer harmonious relations. However, if the conflict is associated with their work ethics, they would show an obstinate negative attitude towards the New Zealander. This is because their work ethics are strongly related to their most basic values.

2.6 Stereotypes and prejudices

One of the difficulties in coping with stereotypes and prejudice is that frequently they sound superficially reasonable. They ignore individual diversity.

However, it is easy for people to adopt these attitudes because they are based on a fear of things not understood or different from oneself. Therefore, they are the biggest barriers to communicating with others from different cultural groups successfully.

Ting-Toomey(1999) explains that stereotyping is an exaggerated set of expectations and beliefs about the attributes of a group membership category. A stereotype is an *overgeneralization* about an identity group without any attempt to perceive individual variations within the identity category. (p.161)

If we want to communicate with different people in a natural and appropriate manner, we must adapt to the styles of the target culture. It does not mean we have to copy the target cultural styles, but we have to interact carefully. Without this adjustment, intercultural barriers lead to stereotyping and a superficial level of communication. Stereotypes block communication and understanding.

Davison (1996) has made a list of typical stereotypes of the Japanese and American as the chart in the next page.
There is no reference which shows the Japanese view of typical New Zealanders. But considering the general opinions of Japanese sojourners, it would be something like their Americans, as both belong to individualistic cultural groups, although New Zealanders are probably less emotional, quieter, and more easy-going than Americans. The New Zealanders' view of typical Japanese will be similar to that expressed by Americans. Additionally they may emphasise the hard-workingness of the Japanese.

It is very difficult to avoid stereotypes and prejudices. This paper, for example, may contribute to the creation of prejudices and stereotypes of the Japanese and New Zealanders, according to some people's point of view. In order to be as free as we can from any stereotypes or prejudices we have to avoid making snap judgments of others. A respectful approach toward others and a positive mental attitude are also extremely important. For example, from a New Zealander's point of view, the Japanese often look too serious or diligent. Such an attitude is a big barrier to intercultural communication. If someone has a negative image toward the other, the other will surely respond to it and have negative feelings in return.

Davison (1996)

Typical stereotypes of the Japanese and American

JAPANESE VIEW OF A TYPICAL AMERICAN	AMERICAN VIEW OF TYPICAL JAPANESE
loud, insensitive, over-emotional	passive, inscrutable, humourless, boring
self-centred, likes to be the focus of attention	never risk giving an opinion, so impossible to understand
free personal expression often appears boastful	always says "yes" but often means "no"
socially clumsy, "like a bull in a china shop"	

Prejudice may cause discrimination. It also has a strong influence on the self-estimations of the people stereotyped and prejudiced against. For example, when European people colonised other areas of the world, they treated the people living in these countries as uncivilised people. It caused these colonised people to have strong feelings of inferiority towards European people. Japan has never been a colony of European countries, but the people potentially have this feeling of inferiority (Kawai, 1984).

Research about the different approaches of the Japanese towards Europeans and other people does not exist. However, some literature in the form of essays can be found. Kishi (1983), a Japanese actress who lived in France for 20 years, mentions a story she heard from a taxi driver in Paris. The driver states:

Japanese are weird. They say nothing from the beginning to the end. They can see my taxi meter showing seventeen francs, but when I charge them twenty five

francs to cheat them, they pay that much with a tip saying thank you (p.143).

She strongly argues that it is not because they can not speak French. She takes an episode she experienced in Singapore as an example:

> When Singapore was still called an under developed country, I went there with a filming team. One of the team members was a nice, charming man who worked hard for the team. Once he yelled out to a taxi driver in terribly broken English. What he said was "don't cheat. If you go the wrong way to earn more money, I will take you to the police". I said it had to be said after something bad happens. He replied, "no, you are too nice to them. Malaysians are lazy. They are liars so they may do anything if you are nice." The taxi driver glanced at us through the mirror. I can still remember his sad and dignified eyes. I can assert that if the same Japanese person went to Paris, he would change himself into the weird Japanese person the taxi driver in Paris told me about (p.148).

We should not over-generalise this episode because it is only the impression of one writer based on her personal experience. As noted above, it is difficult to find scientific research results that show that many Japanese people approach Europeans and others differently. However, the feelings of average Japanese people towards Europeans seem quite different from those towards non-Europeans as Kishi (1983) described above.

It may be, then, the Japanese working with non-European New Zealanders, such as Maori, and immigrants from Polynesian and Asian Countries, may behave in a different way from what they do towards European New Zealanders. However, such an examination lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, six features of intercultural communication which possibly may cause conflicts have been discussed. Two of them, (1) and (2) below, are associated with the use of a second language, and the other four, (3) to (6) below, related to social psychological issues.

(1) Language barrier

The existence of a language barrier is one of the biggest features of intercultural communication. This frequently causes serious problems in the process of communication, such as misunderstandings and conveying wrong information.

This may also cause a psychological problem for second language speakers. Because these speakers lose their verbal and social skills, many people, including themselves, feel as if they have a speech impediment. This lowers their self confidence and the other may misinterpret them as being incompetent.

(2) Inter-language / Language reduction

When people use a second language, they frequently make errors.

These second language speakers tend to borrow patterns from their own mother tongue and extend patterns to the target language to supplement a lack of their knowledge of the target language. This is called inter-language. This influence of their mother tongue may cause communication problems as the meanings of their messages are sometimes not clear.

Language reduction is the unconscious habit that gives second language speakers a tendency to reduce and simplify the topic when they speak. This is because they have to mind many rules, such as grammatical structures, pronunciation, vocabulary and non-verbal aspects, all at the same time. This makes them reduce the topic because it is too hard for them to control all of the rules. This may cause communication problems when these reduced messages are too simplified and the listeners cannot understand the messages in detail.

(3) Cultural shock

In the process of intercultural communication, people find dissimilar values from their own. Because they have consciously or unconsciously been believing in the rightness of their own values, and these values have become part of their identity, they feel shocked. These shocks are often very strong and can result in identity crises. This psychological experience makes them have negative views and feelings toward the target culture and the people who belong to the cultural group. This will affect the communication and relationships they have. Sometimes they withdraw themselves from the intercultural

relationships.

(4) Three stages of the adjustment process to a different culture

There are three different stages of an adjustment process to a different culture. These stages are: 1. Honeymoon; 2. Refusal; 3. Acceptance. The honeymoon period is a good time for the people who are meeting a different culture at the beginning. However, when they improve their language skills and get used to the different cultural ways and the language, they sometimes feel rejected by the target culture and the people. Cultural differences they have not been really conscious of until now become big issues about how to cope at this stage. After they get over this stage, they can gain the most reasonable and balanced ways to cope with different culture. Therefore, the second stage of the adjustment process, Refusal, is the most difficult time for them. During this period, they maintain negative feelings toward the target culture and lose their self-confidence. Sometimes they withdraw themselves from intercultural relationships.

For New Zealanders working with the Japanese, this theory is useful for determining what stage they are at in order to adjust themselves to fit Japanese culture. For the Japanese, it is also important to adjust themselves to New Zealand culture.

(5) Host - newcomer relationship

This relationship determines which culture dominates each intercultural communication process. It is difficult for New Zealand employees to determine the power balance of cultures in New Zealand places that have Japanese managers or clients. This confusion may possibly cause conflicts between Japanese and New Zealanders.

(6) Stereotypes and prejudices

Stereotypes are exaggerated sets of expectations and beliefs about the attributes of group members. Japanese people for example tend to view New Zealanders as being individualistic and easy going. Such judgments are superficial and the ideas ignore individual diversity.

Prejudice may cause discrimination. The Japanese generally seem to have a feeling of inferiority toward European people and superiority towards other people. This tendency will be difficult for New Zealanders to cope with.

These features have been explained in this chapter as negative factors which disturb smooth communication. However, two aspects should be emphasised. The first is that these difficulties may help people to expand their personal horizons. A cultural shock may be, for example, the beginning of a change from a narrow-minded weak view into more far-sighted tolerant one. Secondly, these difficulties also provide ideal opportunities to improve one's communication skills both verbally and non-verbally. This experience also helps people to gain maturity. When people overcome these difficulties, therefore, they can achieve not only success in communication, but also personal growth. This cannot be experienced if they keep staying within their own cultural group and protecting their identities with a sense of security.

Today we can gain a much greater quantity of knowledge than before without going out of our own cultural group because of the rapid improvement in information technology. Such knowledge, however, does not improve the quality of our personalities. Real experiences in meeting dissimilar people, in attempting to comprehend what makes communication difficult, and overcoming the difficulty are extremely educational and challenging.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1 Nature of research

3.1.1 Objective

The objective of this survey is to find the factors of intercultural misunderstanding and conflicts New Zealanders encounter when working with the Japanese. For this purpose, this survey aims to clarify and specify real examples of both successful and unsuccessful communication between New Zealanders and Japanese at work. These cases are seen from a Japanese perspective because these New Zealanders are often not aware that they are misunderstood by the Japanese.

3.1.2 Method and participants

The method of the research was through interviews. The participants consisted of 17 Japanese people working with New Zealanders. The reason why the participants are Japanese, not New Zealanders are:

(1) New Zealanders working with Japanese are often not certain about the Japanese culture and its communication rules.
(2) Because of a lack of this knowledge, they sometimes unconsciously offend against these rules and fail to communicate.
(3) However, these New Zealanders are not always aware why they failed to communicate because they know neither the rules nor the fact that they have caused offence.
(4) Therefore, these New Zealanders have to know the Japanese perspective on the intercultural conflicts which occur at work.

The profiles of the interviewees are shown in FIGURE 3-1 on the next page. The interviews lasted from thirty minutes to two hours.

3.2   Reports from Interviewees

An analysis of the important factors of the successful / unsuccessful communication follows each report. Some interviewees spoke about their working conditions or their own cultural shocks at the beginning of their work in New Zealand. These statements are also included in this chapter because they are important in understanding cultural differences. In the comments about the reports, sometimes some reports of other interviewees who had a similar point of view are included. This is because these reports are too short to discuss independently.

3.2.1   Power distance - Superior/subordinate relationship

Report 1

> He (a New Zealand employee) was diligent and hard-working. He asked me a lot of questions about how to behave towards his superior. Because being formal was really foreign to him, he worried about it too much. He tried to behave exactly the same as the Japanese do. Finally, he quit the job and went overseas. He gave up of his own free will because he felt he was inadequate. (Interviewee 10)

In New Zealand, a friendly and casual relationship between superiors and subordinates is regarded positively. They may be uncomfortable in a formal and polite relationship situation. They do not understand what standard of formality and politeness are expected by Japanese executives. The report above proves their feelings.

Report 2

> As a manager, I am very happy with New Zealand subordinates. They are polite and show respect to me. For example, when we walk together in the corridor, they

Research Participants' Profiles

	Industry Field	M/F	Age Group	Period of stay in New Zealand	Immigrant or Sojourner	Kind of work / Position	Experience of stay in other countries	Period of work (years)
I - 1	Tourism	F	D	D	I	Tour Guide		20
I - 2	Tourism	F	C	D	I	Tour Guide		3
I - 3	Education	F	D	D	I	Teacher		11
I - 4	Service	F	B	C	I	Tour Operator		3
I - 5	Tourism	F	B	C	I	Tour Operator		4
I - 6	Service	M	B	D	I	Information centre for Japanese tourists		5
I - 7	Education	F	C	D	I	Teacher		12
I - 8	Trade	M	D	B	S	Manager	the US, Thailand	1
I - 9	Car wholesale	M	C	C	S	Administration	Asian Countries (short term)	3 1/2
I - 10	Education	F	C	D	I	Counsellor		11
I - 11	Tourism	M	C	D	1	Tour Guide		10
I - 12	Education	F	D	B	S	National Advisor		1
I - 13	Tourism	F	C	D	S	Tour Guide		15
I - 14	Trade	M	C	B	S	Manager	Australia	1
I - 15	Education	F	C	D	I	Teacher		10
I - 16	Education	M	B	C	I	Teacher	Australia	3
I - 17	Other	F	C	D	I	Translator	Australia	10

Age group	
A	Under 23
B	25-35
C	35-45
D	45-55
E	55+

Period of stay	
A	Under 1 year
B	1-3 years
C	3-5 years
D	5 years +

always walk behind me and open the door for me. I feel their respect from these small things. When I go to Japan and see the younger Japanese employees in the main office, I say to them they would not be allowed to walk in front of me if they were in New Zealand. Of course a manager has to have dignity, but I want to have "friendly dignity". I do not want to make them nervous. I want to be close to them so I sometimes go to their desks and tell some jokes. They are not intimidated by me. (Interviewee 14)

This is a comment made by a manager of a Japanese company. This report clearly shows that he expects appropriate politeness and respect from his subordinates and dignity shown towards himself. "friendly dignity" is, however, not a typical Japanese way of being a manager. This may be because of this interviewee's personality and his past experience of living in Australia for several years when he was young. He has shared the New Zealand/Australian culture in which friendliness and openness are important values. Generally Japanese superiors look serious and tend to make their subordinates nervous.

This is a case of a successful relationship between a Japanese superior and New Zealand subordinates. From a New Zealander's point of view however, it seems difficult to cope with the formality the Japanese culturally expects.

The Japanese manager above is satisfied with New Zealanders' politeness. He says he feels their respect from their behaviour, such as opening a door for him and walking behind him. Such behaviour is very common and well regarded in New Zealand culture. Because Japanese do not have these customs in their culture, this behaviour looks more special and polite to them. It means the ordinary standard of formality and politeness in New Zealand is good enough to satisfy Japanese superiors. New Zealanders, therefore, do not seem to have to worry about this formality too much.

Report 3

My boss (a New Zealander) has very good communication skills and a positive way of thinking. He is diligent, but not too serious. I think it is his cheerfulness. Even when a grave problem occurs, he copes with it with a smile. If he was Japanese, perhaps he would be too serious, and that would make us nervous too.

His strength is his personal connections in this industry. Because of his well socialised personality, he has good relationships with many people. For example, when we can not reserve accommodation, he makes a call to a person he knows well, and then most of the time it works. This strength of his has helped to solve problems many times. His weakness may be his carelessness. Often he makes careless errors. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses so we can help him when he makes an error and I am sure he can help us when we have difficulties. We can trust each other very much. (Interviewee 4)

This successful relationship between a New Zealand superior and a Japanese subordinate clarifies two aspects.

Firstly, the style of New Zealand superiors is welcomed by Japanese subordinates. This interviewee likes the cheerfulness and easy-goingness of her superior very much. She has neither a formal approach nor overly respectful feelings to him and talks about him as if he was a friend. This is an example of an ideal New Zealand superior. This ideal model in New Zealand is also agreeable for Japanese. This interviewee prefers her boss's easy-goingness to the serious way of work of Japanese superiors. This means that not all Japanese like the formality and seriousness of their culture. Probably, more young Japanese today will be feeling this friendliness is more comfortable for them. Secondly, this example shows the importance of a sincere attitude towards work. This New Zealand superior has some similarities to the example in Report 12. Both of them have fun at work and socialise well. This attitude to work is different from the Japanese way. However, the attitude towards work of this New Zealand superior is sincere and diligent. The interviewee trusts him because of this sincerity. This seems the boundary for the Japanese to decide whether they can trust someone or not.

3.2.2 Uncertainty avoidance - Japanese management -

Report 4

No matter if you are a New Zealand or Japanese employee, it is fine, as long as the job can be done appropriately. It is not fair to consider the reasons for uncompleted or unsuccessful results at work as being the fault of one's nationality.

Work achievement must be evaluated, nothing else. If someone makes many errors, the manager of the company has to fire him after appropriate warnings, whether he is a New Zealander or Japanese. This is the most fair solution to problems. However, Japanese managers generally only stay in New Zealand for about three or four years. This country is not a big market for Japanese companies, so they do not achieve a lot of success in their business. They tend to be more anxious about conflict with the local society than about their business achievements. Because my work place is a non-profit organisation, they are extremely careful about this. For that reason, they have a strong tendency to avoid the issues which may cause conflict with employees like laying off staff. What they will do is to say nothing to the employees, who don't work hard or are slow. They leave them as they are while other capable and hardworking employees are given extra work to do. While I am rushing to complete urgent jobs in the office, the other employee is reading the paper for 2 hours in the morning. Unfairly, he earns more than me as the Japanese government adopts the seniority system. This happens only because he has been at the organisation longer than I have. This system discourages me. It is not fair. I think managing staff fairly is one of the biggest responsibilities for managers. (Interviewee 18)

This participant pointed to this aspect from a 'local' employee's point of view. She is a Japanese immigrant in New Zealand and working for a Japanese governmental non-profit organisation. Executives of Japanese organisations overseas are generally short term employees who are posted there by the main office in Japan. However, some Japanese employees who gain positions in this country are immigrants like this interviewee. Therefore, their working conditions and salaries are on a different scale from the short term employees and the same as New Zealand employees. Therefore, they tend to have the same perspective as New Zealand employees when they think about the systems of Japanese companies.

3.2.3 Collectivism

3.2.3.1 Style of work

Report 5

The person with whom I am working was not really nice to me. I felt she treated me with contempt, especially at the beginning of my stay in New Zealand. I was not familiar with things, such as where to ring to get my computer, desk and many other things. When I asked questions about this to her, she said it was not her job to look after me and I was ignored. Maybe she thought I was a stupid person as I did not know anything. But, it is natural for anyone when they come to a new country, isn't it? After she saw me working as an experienced and well-trained teacher as well as a supervisor, she changed her attitude. But she is still too competitive toward me. Our positions do not require competitiveness and we need to cooperate with each other. For example, she hides information she has while I give everything to her. I am used to her style now, but it is really unfortunate, because if we can work together well, we could achieve much more. I think she is too competitive. The reason why she is like this may be because her position is only a one year contract. Unless she shows her own achievements, she might lose the job next year. She is a solo mother of one, so it will cause a serious financial problem for her. I think this pressure makes her narrow-minded and too competitive with others. It may be the problem of the employment system in New Zealand because you need stable conditions to work well. (Interviewee 12)

In individual societies one's individual performance has to be shown to the others. They normally think others do not understand them unless they express themselves. Therefore, in order to get a good estimation, they have to continuously show their capabilities. However, if they are keen only on their own achievements, they may become too narrow-minded and competitive, as in this example. When these achievement-seekers see someone who does not speak English fluently and asks them many basic questions, they naturally feel this person is a trouble. They may treat him/her like a child who cannot be independent.

In Japan, skills in forming a good relationship with others is a part of one's capability.

A person like the one in this example is regarded as incompetent in Japanese society. They think, as a matter of common sense, that everyone has to help a newcomer.

Like this interviewee, when a Japanese newcomer meets competitive individualists who refuse to help him/her, the Japanese person is extremely shocked and hurt. Average New Zealanders will feel bad too if they meet someone like this. But the shock the Japanese feel is perhaps more serious as they feel the value of their importance is denied. Each encounter is seriously important for sojourners in determining the image they have of the country.

It is also inefficient to work in a too individual way as this interviewee states. Japanese believe that collaboration between two people can always achieve more than one competitive person.

This interviewee thinks the reason why her co-worker is too competitive is because her position is insecure and the future is uncertain. We are not discussing this because it is a problem of New Zealand society. But her understanding of her co-worker's personal circumstances helped her to get over this problem. She thought about her co-worker and understand her at the level of basic human needs; she felt an empathy beyond the conflict. This is an effective strategy to cope with intercultural conflicts.

3.2.3.2   Expressing oneself

Report 6

> It was not a co-worker, but a student of mine. When she had a bad test result, she criticised the test. Her criticism was not really serious for me, such as the time was too short or the questions were too difficult etc. It was clear that both the time and the difficulty of the test were appropriate for the students. However, I was surprised with her attitude. She was obviously angry with me. She looked at me sharply and shouted aggressively. She slammed the door when she left. Actually she was rather a good student and trying hard in class so I had been happy with her until that time. She was completely different from usual and behaved as if I had set an unreasonable test. Because it was the first year of my teaching in New Zealand, I was very upset. I had never seen any students behave like her while I taught in Japan. Later she came to me to apologise about it and said she was very

upset with the test result. I was impressed with her honesty and politeness to me and made a good teacher-student relationship again. (Interviewee 15)

The relationship between teachers and students is also similar to the one between superiors and subordinates. This case above goes against two Japanese cultural rules: the strong tendency to avoid conflicts involving aggressive self-expression and the hierarchical structure of teacher-student relationships.

As the example of the American businessman in 1.5.3 shows, the Japanese do not accept aggressive self-expression. What they do when they see someone aggressive like this is, as discussed before, to ignore them. An interviewee remarked:

I do not think the Japanese say anything even if the behaviour of someone is not acceptable. They just stop having interactive relations with him/her. (Interviewee 2)

Here are some other reports about aggressiveness:

A good co-worker for me is one who does not get emotional and aggressive easily. (Interviewee 2)

My co-worker is not attentive and argues aggressively. When a problem happens, what she does is to attempt to make me understand only her point of view. She does not listen to others to understand them. (Interviewee 3)

The other Japanese cultural rule this case goes against is the Japanese hierarchical structure of teacher-student relationships. Students normally do not have a right to complain about given assessments in Japan. They feel this behaviour is shameless and selfish because it goes against their idea of order and discipline in the group. If the content of the complaint is regarded as reasonable, the problem may be solved later. However, the low estimation toward the person who made the complaint in an aggressive way would continue as Japanese are critical of the personality of the aggressive person, not of the complaint. Outcome of this case was satisfactory because it took place at a school in New Zealand. However, such behaviour cannot be accepted by Japanese managers and clients.

Report 7

> She always expresses herself clearly. For example, when I ask for an urgent job to be done on the same day, she tells me whether she can do it or not. Well, suppose I have asked her to do a job in the early afternoon. If she cannot complete it, she comes back to me around four o'clock to tell me it cannot be done by five o'clock. Then I can think about measures to meet the condition, such as, to ask her to do overtime or get another staff member to help her. She sometimes does overtime, but sometimes does not. Even if she does not, it is fine because I could complete it somehow. The worse case is to find the person doing the job has left the job uncompleted at the end of the day. (Interviewee 9)

The Japanese do not like aggressive ways of self-expression as discussed before. However, calm self-expression is needed and is important at work as in this report. The 'worst case' in this report is a typical case of a lack of communication. It can happen between the same language speakers, but can happen more often between different language speakers. This is because communication does not take place smoothly between different language speakers as explained in the previous chapter.

A number of interviewees described good co-workers with excellent communication skills (9 out of 17). This was an unexpected result for this researcher as good communication skills are not treated as one of the important values in Japanese culture. The typical Japanese person seemed to have poor communication skills according to international standards, as Neustopny (1982) criticised. This may be because the ways in which they express politeness leads to strong tendencies to avoid conflict. This tendency has developed a strong feature in their communication style, such as avoidance of direct expression or consideration of others wants, as discussed in 1.5.4. The interviewees admired their co-workers' good communication skills. This is because the Japanese workers need good communicators to work with as they have a language barrier.

Other descriptions given of cases of good co-workers relating to this aspect are:

> She has good communication skills. She is cooperative and attentive. She can communicate with all sorts of people including the Japanese because she has the capacity to accept personal and cultural differences. (Interviewee 3)

He is responsible and diligent. He is socialised too, so it is very easy for me to communicate and work with him. (Interviewee 7)

Report 8

When I taught Japanese, I often went to conferences and workshops for language teachers. There were several Japanese teachers who could never speak Japanese. Some of them learnt Japanese only for a short term, such as once a week for a year. I was sure there were much better speakers of Japanese as a second language in New Zealand. I wondered why these good speakers were not employed to teach Japanese. Later I found some reasons why this is. One reason was because schools couldn't afford Japanese specialists. Many Japanese teachers had previously taught French. Even though Japanese language had become more popular than French, schools couldn't fire their French teachers. Most of them learned Japanese in order to stay in their positions. Another of the reasons was because many of them were eminently expressive and assertive. They could pretend that they knew a lot of Japanese by using 'big words'. In reality, the others at their school didn't know what their Japanese skills were actually like. Most of the leaders at these conferences and meetings were these kinds of people. More sincere teachers who had been studying Japanese for a long time and knew the language and culture well were mostly much more quiet and modest. I could have much better conversations with them. I thought that the more expressive and assertive you are, the better positions you could get in this society. This society has a lack of depth in seeing a person's personality. I trust Japanese people much more to evaluate a person. In Japan, even if you are neither expressive nor assertive, people can recognise your ability and capability. I feel shame when I see those incapable people in important positions. (Interviewee 15)

In New Zealand culture, assertiveness and expressiveness are good values. In Japanese culture, these characteristics are not regarded as good. Therefore, the Japanese, like this interviewee, do not agree with the fact that people with these personality traits should be offered positions of responsibility. From her point of view, they look neither capable nor honest and it seems unfair.

3.2.3.3 Group responsibility

Report 9

This report is from a Japanese employee working for a tour agent.

> Accommodation for a tour-group was not booked. This kind of mistake is one of the most serious ones at our work because the clients did not have a place to stay. The operator who made this mistake did not accept responsibility and said it was someone else's fault. She said that she forgot to book it, but someone else should have checked what she had done later on. That person could not find this mistake so this was that person's error. That was her apology. Of course, I could not accept it at all. I think this was just a sophistry and she was irresponsible. (Interviewee 5)

This is a case of a conflict related to matters of group responsibility (1.5.5) and self-expression (1.5.3).

This case is reported as one of the most serious but typical conflicts in the tourism industry. The other interviewees from this field, (Interviewee 2, 4, and 11) reported similar cases.

In New Zealand, as discussed in chapter 1, the boundary of territories of employees' responsibilities are clearly fixed. However, individual jobs do not exist by themselves. Some jobs are deeply associated with other jobs and people have to shift over the boundaries when necessary. When they have responsibilities for these kind of jobs, frequently confusion or conflict occurs. The above episode is an example of this. So long as they take individual responsibility, some people want to regard a job as within their own territory if it has been successful, and out of their territory if it is not. For the Japanese, who have a completely different system for taking responsibility, this is totally unacceptable behaviour and is seen as escaping from ones responsibilities. They think no matter whose fault something was, every member has to try hard to solve the problem. They do not mind working over the boundary at all.

They usually do not like to look for the person at the origin of the problem as it may destroy a harmonious relationship at work. The Japanese are generally tolerant towards

those who do this but only if they show feelings of remorse as discussed in 1.5.6.

This tolerance is based on the concept of *amae* as discussed in 1.5.2. An argument about the territory of the responsibility without expressing feelings of remorse, touches one of the most important moral attitudes of the Japanese. It seems to them only an action designed to place guilt on the other person. This is most selfish behaviour for them as it effects the maintenance of harmonious relations within a group. This is, in their eyes, worse than the error itself.

The other intercultural difference shown in this case is the way of self-expression and apologising. "This in not my fault" is the usual expression in arguing one's rightness in New Zealand. In Japan, because of the tendency of conflict avoidance, people do not argue in such a direct way. They usually state only some words and wait for others to make an appropriate judgment. This is because in collectivistic groups the rightness of one's behaviour is judged by the group. Therefore a person who argues her's rightness like the woman in this report is, from the Japanese point of view, a shameless, selfish person.

In Japan, the aim of work is to achieve together. Each individual in an organisation is only a part of the whole because of their collectivistic idea. Responsibilities are shared by all of the individual members. Therefore, the boundaries of work for the individual members are only set for convenience sake and are vague. Many Japanese believe that they have to work beyond these boundaries if it is required. It is usual for them to help others, no matter who, superiors, colleagues or subordinates. Consequently, during the normal daily routine, they are not conscious of the boundaries of responsibilities and they are flexible in changing their territory depending on the situation. This means that the movement of the whole organisation determines how each individual contributes to each individual job. This is completely opposite to the New Zealand style where each individual's responsibilities are considered first.

Therefore, when Japanese meet this way of thinking for the first time, they are surprised and have a strong negative feeling. They think it is inefficient and selfish as it goes against the way of taking responsibility in Japan. Another interviewee, number 12, reported her cultural shock associated with this aspect.

When I arrived in my new post in New Zealand, there was nothing prepared for

me including my office and desk. I was invited by the New Zealand government so they had to prepare them. The reason was because a member of the administration staff was on holiday. I complained about this, but another staff member told me I had to wait for the administrator to come back. I was astonished by the fact that there was no one who could make these arrangements for me. (Interviewee 12)

3.2.3.4   Apologies

Report 10

When he makes errors, he makes funny apologies to the clients. Well, "funny apologies" means he puts the guilt on the other person, the weather, or anything else in tricky ways. The clients, of course, become dissatisfied and sometimes report it to the top of our company. He repeats the same apology to the boss. I always think it is better for him to keep silent. I do not know why he apologises in such childish ways. (Interviewee 11)

As discussed in 1.5.6, this style of apology will surprise the Japanese. This normally makes them feel irritated. This is because in the Japanese cultural rules, his action is seen as a way of avoiding responsibility, even though he actually does not mean that. He makes excuses only because he thinks he has to. He behaves like this only because that is a rule of individual groups. This is a common misunderstanding between Japanese and New Zealanders.

Report 11

Accommodation was not booked. It was not the fault of the agent, but the hotel. But no matter whose fault it is, the clients do not have a place to stay anyway. In this situation, the Japanese clients expect an apology from the guide. If the guide apologises to clarify whose fault it is, it will make the clients more upset. From their point of view, this kind of apology is to run away from responsibility. They

will also feel the guide is not kind and has no empathy for them. They just want to hear an apology from anyone. We have heard a lot of complaints from clients about this kind of problem. (Interviewee 2)

The different concepts of responsibility involve different ways of making an apology. In individualistic groups one has to apologise for an individual error. In collectivistic groups, one has to apologise for a mistake made by any member of the group which one belongs to, as discussed in 1.5.6. In this report, everyone who is involved in this tour business, the guide, the hotel, and the tour agency, is in a group in which members share the same goal - to entertain the clients. All of them have to collaborate towards this goal. This is unspoken rule, therefore the client expects the guide to apologise for the error the hotel made. If a New Zealand tour guide has been brought up with the concept of individual responsibility as in this report, he/she can never understand the need to apologise in these circumstances as the error was not his/her own.

The other interpretation of this style of apology is that Japanese do not make an apology for the error itself, but for the inconvenience and discomfort the client suffers.

3.2.4 Work ethics

Report 12

I am having trouble with a colleague whose desk is next to mine. She talks a lot during work time and has breaks very often. She also often talks on the phone with friends. Because of the noise she makes, such as talking and laughing, I cannot concentrate on my work. She makes many careless mistakes, too.

I have had a talk about this problem with my boss. He said this was because of the difference in ways of working between New Zealand and Japan. New Zealanders prefer working while having fun. The Japanese like to concentrate on work and enjoy each step of work to achieve something. I understood what he meant. When I am busy, for example, Monday morning when some tour groups have arrived during the weekend, there is a big pile of paperwork on my desk. I want to start working and complete it as soon as possible. But, New Zealanders do not start working without having a chat about how their weekends was, the weather or

their new clothes, etc. Sometimes I get fed up with it. Once at work we had a vote to decide whether we should have FM music or not. Most of the New Zealand staff said they could work more efficiently with music, but most of the Japanese staff said it would interfere with work concentration. I think this was an obvious difference between us. (Interviewee 4)

This case will be understood as a lack of motivation in the New Zealand cultural context. In invidividualistic cultural groups a judgmental approach towards each individual is not acceptable. It is better for them to avoid criticising another's personality and rather think of any failings as a lack of skills or an attitude yet to be learnt. The criticism then should be directed against one's actions, not against one's person. This tendency seems to be based on their tolerance of members diversity.

The Japanese, however, would simply think this person is lazy. In their collectivism, criticism is often directly aimed at another's personality. Anyone who is against the rules is severely criticised as showing a deviation from the group. This may be because of the tendency to require group members to be homogeneous.

In Japanese collective groups, a diligent approach toward work is highly expected. This expectation is very strong; sometimes it is stronger than expectations of one's competence. Loafing on the job may be regarded as not only laziness, but also a deviation from the group. Therefore, the New Zealander in this report is disliked by the Japanese colleague. From this interviewee's point of view, her colleague is not only a lazy co-worker, but also a person with an undesirable personality.

The worker's boss offered her meaningful advice. The New Zealanders' way of working, he explained, is easy-going. The problem arises when both the Japanese and New Zealanders cling to their own style of working. In this work place they have failed to establish good intercultural relationships. This kind of failure seems to occur more often in big organisations than in small ones.

Report 13

She (a New Zealand employee) works hard. She is also keen to learn. When she found we used a strategic management system, Total Quality Control Management, which is common in our company, she was interested in it and

asked some questions. Later she read some books on it as I recommended. While she was reading those books, we had many good discussions at work. I have seen many women working hard like her in New Zealand. (Interviewee 9)

This is a report about a good New Zealand employee working for a private Japanese company. She is probably an ideal worker in terms of the international standard. This interviewee admires her not only for her style of work, but also for her motivation to learn. Having a lot of motivation towards work is one of the common values between Japan and New Zealand. It may be more valuable for the Japanese as they regard a sincere approach, including motivation to learn, as more important than individual competence.

Another report that states the same hard-workingness of New Zealanders was made by Interviewee 12, who is the National language adviser of Japanese:

I think there are many New Zealanders working hard. Motivated people certainly do. When I tell teachers that they can contact me whenever they need help, many of them come to see me. It is often during weekends or evenings after finishing their work. I think they are happy to work hard to improve their teaching skills. Many of them are conscientious in their work. (Interviewee 12)

Both of these interviewees admire these New Zealanders for their hard-workingness. The Japanese seem to like these motivated New Zealanders very much. Motivation toward work is, therefore, highly important for New Zealanders working with Japanese, as work is not only a matter of earning money for them, as discussed in 1.6.

Report 14

The building where my office is closes at 5 o'clock. I now leave here at 5 because my next door neighbours said using power only for me was a waste. When I started working in New Zealand, I was the only person who worked here until late. Now there is no one because I stopped doing this. First when people here said I shouldn't work late, I felt rather strange. I felt as if they were criticising me though I was working hard. Later I found they were criticising me because I was

breaking the New Zealand custom. They weren't happy with that.

It was a bit hard to train myself to stop working at 5 because I had already had work habits to keep working until completing a job once I had started. At the beginning when I stopped work in the middle of doing a job because I ran out of time, I felt I was doing something wrong. (Interviewee 16)

This report is not about New Zealand workers, but about the interviewee herself. This report shows how deep the Japanese culture is. What she explains is that her style of work was different from the New Zealand way, and it was hard for her to adjust herself to the others' style. This probably will be the common feeling among the Japanese about working overtime.

Report 15

We are extremely busy. Because we are so busy, New Zealand colleagues normally do not stay here long. Now workers are all Japanese in the company. I understand why they leave. We have a numbers of things to do. If we do not do them today, we would have to do them tomorrow. It is certain that more jobs will come tomorrow, so it will be harder tomorrow if jobs are not finished today. If we do not do them tomorrow, it will be twice as hard the day after. This is a bad cycle. We cannot manage all of the things we have to if we all go home at 5. The company expects us to work overtime. I am not happy with it, but I know the company itself cannot survive if these many jobs are not done, because competition is very severe in this field. If I say no, what I can only do is quit this job. It is not worth us moving to another company as the others in this industry have exactly the same conditions. So I had to accept it. Once I decided to accept it, I wanted to try hard and be positive at work and do my best. But when I go home late at night,

I can see some windows of buildings in Queen Street which still have lights on. They are all Japanese companies. I get a strange feeling when I see them. (Interviewee 11)

This is a report of a participant who works in a tourism company. He reluctantly works overtime, but shows empathy towards New Zealand employees resigning for this

reason. This seems the typical condition of companies in the tourism field. The other company in another field works under different condition.

> Our business is trading. The employees in our company generally work individually. Each employee is responsible for their own jobs so they do overtime as it is needed. I have never heard complaints about it. They sometimes work during the weekend too without being forced. For example, one employee had numbers of things to do on one Friday. But he wanted to go to a party. So he did not do overtime on Friday, but he came back to work on the Saturday, the next day. I think they are doing quite well with this. (Interviewee 14)

This style, individual responsibility and individual workload, is reasonable for New Zealanders because the goals of each employee can be recognised clearly as parts of the goals of the company.

Report 16

> A New Zealand employee I am working with is punctual. I cannot explain well why a 10 minute delay can be a serious problem for Japanese clients, but he knows that. I suppose this is for his own effort as a professional guide because his personality is rather easy-going. (Interviewee 11)

> A New Zealand co-worker of mine had difficulties because he did not mind being late. He was generally disorganised at work and seemed to think each error was a trifling matter. Even though he had a good personality, it was hard for me to work with him. (Interviewee 2)

There are some other reports about this aspect.

> Sense of time is different between the societies of Japan and New Zealand. The Japanese are punctual and New Zealanders are easy-going. Japanese newcomers are usually surprised with this at first. They find it, for example, when a telephone company does not come at the appointment time or bank tellers do not mind making their customers wait. Examples of this are everywhere. When we receive

these services, we have to wait as we do not have a choice. In fact after I have lived here for a while, I got used to it. I never make complaints about it anymore as I have found myself unusual here. But when I do my own work, I do not want an unpunctual co-worker. (Interviewee 17)

Compared to the Japanese, New Zealanders do not mind waiting. Japanese are hasty. When Japanese clients have to wait for a long time at a check-in counter in a hotel, often I can see them becoming irritated because it is not common in Japan. I sometimes joke that this is the easy-going way of New Zealand society so please enjoy the difference from Japan. I myself am comparatively slow among the Japanese. I also say, jokingly, I had a hard time when I was in Japan as I was not punctual. Actually, it is true. (Interviewee 11)

I think punctuality is one of the important aspects in revealing one's own personality for the Japanese. If a person is late for the first meeting, they would feel that he/she does not consider the others' feelings and is not trustworthy. (Interviewee 13)

These reports show the importance of punctuality, especially at work.
The common aspect among these reports is that in one's private life it is not an important matter, but at work it is serious. This double standard may confuse New Zealanders as they do not have the sense of a big difference between work and private sphere.

3.2.5 Language barrier

Report 17

When I started working in New Zealand, I had difficulties with the language barrier. I sometimes did not understand what New Zealanders said and they sometimes did not understand what I said. When I had communication problems like these, some people tried hard to make me understand using gestures and easier English, and repeating the same things. Sometimes they spoke much clearer

English to me than to others. This help was very important for me at that time. There were a few people who instantly gave up communication with me after I said I did not understand them once. They looked unhappy with me. Those people upset me. It was my fault that I had not learned enough English before getting the job. But I do not think those people who gave up communicating with me could communicate with any other language speakers except native speakers of English. The breakdown was partly my fault as well as their lack of communication skills. If I was a manager of a company, and if my subordinates behaved like them, that would seriously upset me. (Interviewee-16)

As discussed in 2.1, good communication skills where a language barrier exists are more important than those between same language speakers. Therefore, good verbal and nonverbal communication skills are big advantage for New Zealanders working with Japanese.

3.2.6   Three different stages of the adjustment process

Report 18

He was a colleague of mine. He had lived in Japan more than ten years and was a fluent Japanese speaker. Maybe as his personality was a bit immature, he made many errors. He often took off suddenly without notice so the others had to do his job. When a Japanese staff member complained about it to him, he ignored her. Then we found he never listened to others who criticised him. He was friendly to the people who complimented his Japanese, but not to the people who treated him normally. In Japan, foreigners can get a lot of attention like a movie star. He seemed to like to be treated in this way. (Interviewee 13)

Many New Zealanders who speak fluent Japanese have lived in Japan. They are generally easier for the Japanese to work with because they know Japanese culture well. But there are some exceptions, as above. As explained in the last chapter, there are three stages in the process of adjustment to a different country and culture: honeymoon, refusal, and acceptance. The colleague of this interviewee thinks he is at the second stage, but is still seeking to be treated as if he is at the first stage.

This interviewee and the other Japanese staff regarded his attitude as unacceptable, and expected him to change. However, he did not understand why and was unhappy with them. He probably could not forget the nice honeymoon stage. Many New Zealanders who have been living in Japan have had happy experiences in the first honeymoon period and this has motivated them to continue their study of Japanese. However, everyone must overcome the second stage unless they stop their studies and commitment to Japanese society.

Report 19

It is not a serious problem for work, but concerns a person I did not like. I have seen a Kiwi who asked too much of some Japanese people. Well, maybe I have to say I have seen some Japanese who spoilt a Kiwi too much. This Kiwi asked one of these Japanese, well Mr. J, to get something from Japan. Mr. J rang a friend in Japan, asked him to buy it, and the friend posted it to New Zealand. It was not only once, but three or four times. If they had been very close friends, it could be all right. But they were not really familiar with each other. He, the Kiwi, had been to Japan and spoke fluent Japanese. He also had many Japanese friends, so probably he had known the Japanese usually do not say no, when someone asks for help. His relationships with the Japanese were always profitable for him like this. Of course Mr. J is responsible for it too. So maybe it is not my business. But I do not think this is a friendship. (Interviewee 11)

This example is a similar case to the previous one, but more personal. This person seems at the second stage of adjustment, the refusal stage. His approach to the Japanese around him is probably same as at the beginning of his stay in Japan.

This attitude seems immature and too dependent from the Japanese point of view. This interviewee strongly dislikes his attitude because he seems to use the Japanese for his own profit. This interviewee also states Mr J is not a workhorse for this New Zealander, but an equal who happens to fulfil his practical expectations. As discussed in 1.5.4, conflict avoidance, saying no, is difficult for the Japanese.

3.2.7 Prejudice

Report 20

> I think New Zealand employees are generally easy-going. I mean a good quality
> of life is more important for them than challenging jobs. The reason why they
> think so is maybe because they do not have to earn a lot of money to achieve a
> high standard of living. Economic figures say the Japanese are richer than New
> Zealanders, but as for the quality of life, such as housing, New Zealanders are
> commonly much richer than the Japanese. (interviewee 8)

This is not a report of a particular case of communication. The reason why this
comment is put in this section is because this seems the most stereotyped impression
about New Zealand employees that many Japanese have. Generally Japanese emphasise
the easy-goingness of New Zealanders as a big difference from themselves. When they
talk about this as a personal life style, they think it is a good value. However, when
talking about a style of work, there are some negative feelings about it as it goes against
the Japanese work ethic (as discussed 1.6).

In fact, New Zealanders' lives are, of course, not much easier than those of the
Japanese. For example, the housing costs this interviewee mentioned are a big financial
pressure for all New Zealanders. Houses are cheap from the Japanese point of view, but
New Zealand salaries are also much less than those in Japan.

Furthermore, many New Zealanders work hard as introduced in Report 13 in this
chapter.

The above comment on New Zealanders seems a too handy interpretation for the
Japanese to understand the different style of work of New Zealanders. New Zealanders
who want to work with the Japanese should know the existence of this prejudice. No
matter whether it is agreeable or not, this is a general understanding of them.
Anemotional refutation of this does not create a fruitful relationship. Discussions about
this prejudice may be effective for both New Zealanders and Japanese to get to know
the real people.

Report 21

> This co-worker seems to have thought the Japanese language was just like Maori.
> I am happy to treat Maori and Japanese the same since I respect Maori culture and
> language, but she does not. She was surprised when I told her that Japanese has a
> wide variety of honorific expressions. She thought these two languages were
> inadequate compared to European languages which is her major. (Interviewee 12)

It is a common worldwide prejudice to regard European or American cultures as
developed and the others as under-developed. However, studies of anthropology and
other fields report each culture has plenty of complex and well-organised social systems
even if the people there look barbarous from the point of view of those in 'developed'
countries. If New Zealanders who work with Japanese are not conscious of this issue,
serious conflict can occur.

Of course Japanese feel upset when they hear the arrogant misunderstanding this
example illustrates. There are not many reports about racial discrimination, but four
interviewees (4,7,15 and 18) state they sometimes have a slight feeling that they are
discriminated against. For example:

> I can not explain it well. I just feel it sometimes. It is not strong, but it exists. For
> example, my boss does not listen to us, the Asian language teachers. But he does
> listen when European teachers talk. This is maybe because they argue themselves
> more strongly than us. Or maybe just because we are not good at debating. But he
> does many small unfair things like this. I can't remember what these things are.
> They are too small to remember. But the feeling I have when he does these things
> remains. That's why I feel he looks down on us. I do not think he consciously
> does it. He does not notice himself behaving like this and will strongly deny if I
> point out his racism. (interviewee 15)

It seems here that an obvious discrimination does not exist, but it does in invisible,
ambiguous and slight ways. We cannot find out whether it is because of racism or any
particular reason as this interviewee guessed. It also may be because when the Japanese
are not confident enough with themselves, they feel they are looked down upon.

Report 22

> I heard of this episode from a friend in Canada, but I think the same thing can happen in New Zealand too. When Japanese tourists visit Canada and their tour guide is Canadian with European appearance, they do not complain about the guide's poor Japanese skills. Even though he/she makes many errors, they normally say "Your Japanese is good". But when they have a Japanese-Canadian tour guide, they expect the same standard of Japanese skills as Japanese living in Japan. They will complain about minor errors in his Japanese. This guide may be the third generation of a Japanese immigrant, so he learned Japanese as a foreign language. Japanese is of course, as difficult for him to learn as other Canadians, though he looks perfectly Japanese. This is an inferiority complex of the Japanese towards Europeans rather than tolerance."
>
> The same phenomenon appears in Japanese companies in New Zealand. Japanese managers are more generous to European employees than to the Japanese. It may be because they express themselves well, but I do not think they would listen to me if I express myself as they do. Our manager does not give jobs to the New Zealand employee who reads the newspaper for one or two hours in the morning. He gives jobs to me while I am busy working. I have wondered why that is many times. (Interviewee 18)

This participant is annoyed with the different treatment her Japanese boss shows towards Japanese employees and New Zealand employees. She emphasises that the inferiority complex the Japanese feel towards European people causes this problem.
This researcher has also seen some Japanese sojourners in New Zealand who look down on Maori and Polynesian people. Therefore, non-European employees of Japanese companies could possibly experience the same treatment.

3.2.8   Others

Report 23

This is a report from a Japanese employee working for an information centre for

Japanese working holiday makers in New Zealand.

> He (a New Zealand employee) is an all-around player with great management
> skills. He manages time effectively and keeps his promises and appointments. Our
> clients usually visit us when they have problems, such as looking for a flat. He
> remembers these problems well and when appropriate items come out, he deals
> with them quickly. Because he was on a working holiday while he lived in Japan,
> he can understand their unease and feelings of isolation. I think he sympathises
> with them. He says a lot of Japanese people were nice and kind to him while
> staying Japan, and he wants to do the same thing to the Japanese visitors in New
> Zealand. His approach and his friendly and kind personality are very important
> for our business. He does not make us feel like there is any language barrier, as
> his Japanese is really good. But we do not feel a cultural barrier either. One of our
> clients jokingly called him " a Japanese person wearing a European costume". He
> wants to manage his own business in the future. I think he should do this as he is
> extremely capable. (Interviewee 6)

Good management skills are highly regarded by the interviewees throughout this
survey. This will be discussed later. However, this co-worker's strength does not only
includes these skills, but he has a friendly personality and behaves in a way where
Japanese clients feel no cultural barriers. This interviewee thinks this is because of his
good Japanese skills. However, by themselves these are not good enough to get over
cultural barriers. If he was proud of his Japanese language and management skills and
behaved confidently as some capable New Zealanders do, perhaps these Japanese
clients would not get the same impression about him as written above. Showing too
much self-confidence may be thought of as arrogance. The more capable a person is,
the more careful he/she should be in the Japanese culture not to show too much
confidence.

His biggest strength would probably be his feelings of empathy with his clients,
Japanese holiday makers, and his ability to convey this empathy. His previous
experience staying in Japan impressed him and he wanted to repay the kindness shown
to him. To repay obligations is an important value in Japan as Benedict (1946) pointed
out. His humanistic attitude beyond culture has made him loved by his clients.

In New Zealand it is often observed that young exchange students who spend some time

in Japan and return to New Zealand become more open and helpful to Japanese people they come into contact with. They frequently change their attitudes even towards people from Asian or other countries. These students are aware of the difficulties of surviving in a foreign country and the importance of the help of others. This awareness changes self-centred achievement-seekers into people with positive inter-personal relationships. This phenomenon can be explained by a more extended reading of the term obligation. An obligation is not necessarily to be repaid to the exact same person who gave the help. It can be repaid to anyone else, as the New Zealand employee in the above example demonstrates. For these students, therefore, unlike the Japanese young people described above, it can sometimes be a pleasure to do so as they know the value of inter-personal relationship. This behaviour may appear to be an example of good communication skills from the Japanese point of view.

Of course, a certain degree of maturity, attentiveness, and willingness to achieve is needed to acquire new values as described above.

Report 24

Many interviewees (6, 9, 11, 14, 15 and 16) say that good management and professional skills are the most important. All of these interviewees admire their co-workers' excellent skills. One of them says:

> My best co-worker is a person working at the administration section. She is reliable because she has excellent management skills. She never forgets what we ask her to do and she does these jobs quickly and accurately. The messages she gives us are always clear. I think she is a well-organised person. This is most important for me. I do not know her personally well, but I trust her very much. (Interviewee-16)

Co-workers with good management skills like this example may be the most desirable for Japanese workers. For them, personalities or characteristics of a person are normally not an issue in everyday business environments.

The other interviewee says;

> I think basic management skills are essential. It is important for business

anywhere. Just some simple skills to manage jobs effectively. For example, when you have many jobs to do, you have to think which has to be done first and give priority to the job. You should not do them in the order that the jobs were asked. I mean that these kinds of skills are very important for professional business people. But you cannot learn these skills at school. You have to learn these skills through experience. So, it may be that an ability to learn through experience is an important quality of being a good business person. (Interviewee-9)

Basic management skills are a universal value and people need to have these skills if they want to engage themselves in business. This interviewee emphasises the importance of this aspect.

Report 25

The next example is slightly different from the others. This is about a humanistic project put in place by a New Zealand employee and Japanese executives in a car wholesale company.
The project ran when they closed their factory in 1998. One hundred and sixty factory workers were made redundant at that time. This upset the company executives and they discussed some possible support for these workers.

A back up system to support these workers and to help them find alternative employment was put in place. A New Zealand employee was given the job of carrying out this operation. She was able to speak a little Japanese as she lived in Japan for one year as an exchange student at high school. Her Japanese was not perfect. Our English is not perfect either. But she always patiently had conversations with us. She understood our intentions for this project very well. She would probably feel empathy for it and so she did the job very well. For example, it was difficult for these workers to write appropriate CV's by themselves. She helped them to do this. She also collected a lot of information about job opportunities and training to get new qualifications such as truck drivers' licences and fork lift controllers. She also collected information about job vacancies. She was engaged in this job for six months as well as doing her usual work. This job would have been hard for her, as these jobs were not in her

specialty of work, but she did extremely well. Almost at the same time, other car companies closed their factories too, but through her ability and effort, we were the only company that helped these workers that much. (Interviewee 9)

It did not necessarily mean that she worked hard for this project because of her experience in Japan. However, it is certain that both of parties, she and the executives, communicated with each other successfully relating to this aspect. This may be because the project was based on an idea to support dismissed workers which is a universal accepted human value. Both she and the executives of this company knew the importance of it. This can be one of the fruits of good communication between people of different cultures, but sharing the same value.

Report 26

Well, I often see other Japanese managers of trading companies. What we say to each other is very similar. Our employees are not as motivated as we expect. I think the more educated, the less motivated. Many of them graduated from University of Auckland with Business Degrees. They can do what they are told but they are not willing to create business by themselves. But this may be an international tendency of the younger generation as young Japanese are the same. They seem to be in invisible frames of their own territories and afraid to extend it. What I do to them is to give some hints for new business opportunities. For example, some successful examples of business and sometimes I give them particular names of good product to develop. After getting the information, they try hard to develop these. (Interviewee 14)

This interviewee analyses the common attitude towards work shared by young New Zealanders and the young Japanese. He means they are both obedient, but not active. This common feature may be a typical type of personality spoiled by well-developed, peaceful societies without serious poverty. Not many of them are hungry for success. Beyond cultural difference, there is a borderless tendency towards this by young people. One of the reasons of this phenomenon is a globalisation of information systems.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

4.1   Research findings

We have discussed the following conflicts related to work from the point of view of Japanese managers and colleagues:

Collectivism
- Style of work
- Expressing oneself
- Group responsibility
- Apologies
Work ethics

Uncertainty avoidance (Report 2) and one example of prejudices (Report 21) were not included in this list. This is because these reports are about problems with Japanese culture for a Japanese local employee. Her focus concerns her personal point of view towards Japanese culture, not the difference between the New Zealand and Japanese culture.

Examples of the three different stages of the adjustment process (Report 17 and 18) are also not included here. This is because they are problems of interpersonal relationships, not working relationships.

These results show that issues related to the individualism - collectivism often cause conflicts as pointed out by many researchers.

The aspects with which Japanese managers and colleagues are satisfied with New Zealand employees are:

Superior / subordinate relationship
Collectivism; expressing oneself

Work ethics

Others : good management skills and personality, collaboration for the sake of human
value

Many interviewees thought good management skills are the most important aspect of
business. These result in effecient business which are valued in all countries.
Most of the successful cases indicate that various values are shared by New Zealanders
and Japanese beyond cultural differences, including the business efficiency mentioned
above. These values are highly regarded by the interviewees.

Some aspects are included in both the first group and the second group above. These
aspects are difficult for only some New Zealand employees. This means that an
individual diversity is more serious than an intercultural differences in these aspects.
Therefore, from the point of view of these Japanese interviewees, the difficult
intercultural aspects for all New Zealanders to cope with are the ones listed only in the
first group, which are (1) style of work, (2) group responsibility and (3) apologies. They
are all aspects related to the individualism - collectivism dimension of culture.
These results indicate that individualism - collectivism is the most important cultural
dimension in determining people's values and behaviour as many researchers argue.
These aspects have to be taught to New Zealanders before they work with the Japanese.

4.2   Perspective for the further research

Since all the research participants are Japanese, these results refer to the problems form
their own point of view, not from New Zealanders'. New Zealand employees must have
their own awareness of the issues. This is the limitation of this research. For example,
there was no report about Japanese masculinity in this research as the Japanese
participants have no awareness of this issue. However, this may cause a serious
problem for New Zealand employees, especially female employees. They may feel the
Japanese managers, colleagues and clients treat them in unfair ways. Because of the
strong ideal of equal opportunity, these female employees will find great difficulty in
coping with this. Therefore, there is an urgent demand to set research to find out what
issues New Zealand employees find difficulties with when working with the Japanese.

Another perspective is changes in Japanese culture. As discussed in 1.8, contemporary Japanese society is rapidly changing its values and ideas. In order to know these changes and find out what they will be like in the future, it is important to know the difference in values between older and younger Japanese.

4.3 Competence to succeed in intercultural communication

A number of researchers discuss what to do to succeed in intercultural communication.. Their ideas are various, but can be roughly divided into two groups. The first group argues it is important to learn practical skills to communicate with people from other cultures and the second group thinks that what is most important is one's mental attitude towards people from other cultural background. Both of them have strengths and weaknesses. The first group can make a clear successful result in a short period, but there is a risk that the communication will be too superficial. The second approach is often too idealistic. For example, it often emphasises "flexibility" or 'tolerance", but these concepts are hard to learn. In this section we will discuss both of them as these two are the practical side and the psychological side of intercultural communication and, therefore, both of them are important.

As discussed before, (1) knowledge blocks ; (2) mindfulness; and (3) communication skills are the Transcultural Communication Competence Ting-Toomey argues for (1999). Knowledge blocks are what this dissertation aims to provide. (2) and (3) are the competence what the above two groups argue are necessary for success in international communication. We will have brief discussion about them.

Tanaka (1991) argues that social communication skills in the target culture are the most important aspect of intercultural communication. These skills consist of three factors:

(1) cognitive knowledge to understand the values and behaviour patterns of the target culture and competence to interpret the meanings of others' behaviours correctly.
(2) behavioural competence to be able to use the behaviour patterns of the target culture as necessary.
(3) good mental and physical health.

After learning the appropriate social skills, one can behave in the target culture in ways which do not cause too much stress or anxiety.

These three show that it is important to learn behaviours from those in the target group. These are only people from whom we can learn new social communication skills. Therefore, an open attitude without a negative feeling towards differences is extremely important in learning these skills.

Mindfulness includes several attributes, such as tolerance, flexibility, and so on. Ting-Toomey (1999) points out some important attributes and abilities for achieving intercultural communication as in the list below. The attributes and abilities she listed are quite theoretical and, as a result, seem difficult to understand for average people.

Important attributes and abilities for achieving
intercultural communication
Ting-Toomey (1999) P.272

ATTRIBUTES	ABILITIES
Tolerance for ambiguity	Ability to meet new situations with mindfulness
Open-mindedness	Ability to respond to cultural others in non evaluative ways
Flexibility	Ability to shift frame of reference
Respectfulness	Ability to show respect and positive regard for another person
Adaptability	Ability to adapt appropriately to particular situations
Sensitivity	Ability to convey empathy verbally and nonverbally
Creativity	Ability to engage in divergent as well as systems-level thinking

However, observing the successful cases, we can find that one small action may change a relationship for the better. For example, one Japanese manager states that he is very happy with his New Zealand subordinates as they show their respect by opening a door for him. This kind but ordinary action makes him feel happy with his subordinates. The following report was not included in the previous chapter, because this conflict is rather interpersonal. However, this example shows a dramatic process to establish a reliable relationship.

> My co-worker is good. Now I trust her very much. But when we started working together, it was difficult for me to think so. I am sure she had the same difficulty in coping with me too. I thought she was too assertive and selfish. For example, she was very nice to the boss, but not to us. She used us for her convenience. Many students complained to us about her lessons because she made many errors. We also had many terrible arguments when we had to make decisions because our opinions were often completely different. I thought she was one of those typical Westerners who were self-centred. She probably thought I was a typical stubborn Japanese. Because we had to collaborate, we reluctantly did it while having many arguments. Some years later, one day she said something very nice to me when I was feeling down for some reason. I cannot remember what she said, but unexpectedly she was kind, though I was not. I started wondering if I had misunderstood her and she might be a much better person than I had thought. She also tried hard to improve her Japanese and teaching skills. After this effort, there were no complaints anymore. Since I noticed that, I have changed my view towards her. She is actually a very positive person. I found I had had a prejudice against her because my first impression towards her was not good. Now I can understand that at the beginning she had had a hard time because she was not familiar with the place. Because she was struggling to survive, she could not be nice to everyone. I think I have changed too. I am more open than before. Maybe we have got used to the different style of each other too because we have worked together for a long time. I now pay respect to her strong willingness and positive way of thinking. We still have arguments because our opinions are often different, but now we can enjoy them because we can hear different perspectives and ideas. (Interviewee 16)

The nice word which this New Zealander said was the beginning of the change. Her effort as a professional and the self-examination of this Japanese person made the change possible. These small, but mindful approaches towards each other and more positive attitude towards work made this relationship successful.

As this example shows, the attributes and abilities to succeed in intercultural communication are an accumulation of these kinds of small actions, not difficult propositions to be sunk in thought.

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