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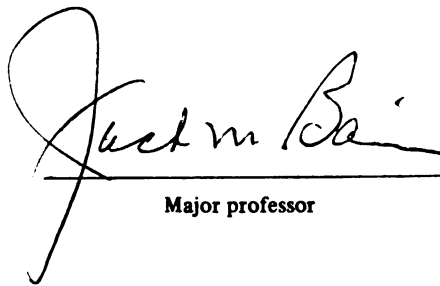
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF  
CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON:  
REEXAMINATION OF  
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Hisako Inaba

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**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON:  
REEXAMINATION OF  
STUDIES ON JAPANESE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS**

**By**

**Hisako Inaba**

**A THESIS**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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**ABSTRACT**  
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON:  
REEXAMINATION OF  
STUDIES ON JAPANESE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS**

**By**

**Hisako Inaba**

Many theories claim to be universal, hence applicable to the study of Japanese behavior. Whether these "universal" theories can, in fact, be applied to Japanese behavior will be the focus of this thesis.

The thesis includes the process of inquiry into the assumptions which have been used in the Japanese studies. By questioning criteria and assumptions, an attempt is made to clarify and redefine common terms used in cross-cultural comparison. The synthesis of conflicting views in the four major theories of Japanese communication behavior and the reexamination of assumptions and criteria will be attempted. Kumon and Hamaguchi's theory of "contextualism" based on Japanese emic view is used to criticize these theories.

The "contextualism" perspective explains the contradictions better than previous theories. The shift in perspective from a comparison on individual substance level to taking relationships of variables into account is suggested.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **a. Problem**

**Four experiences motivated me to question some of the literature on Japanese communication behavior.**

**First was the experience of working in a resource room of the Asian Studies Center of Michigan State University. When American students came to look for a resource on Asian cultures, I had many opportunities to talk with them. Because the meeting atmosphere was very informal, these students expressed their understandings on Asia in their terms. Contrary to my expectations, their understandings sometimes involved negative judgments.**

**The second experience was serving as a resource person to a course on Japanese Management. During the course, some American students expressed sympathy for Japanese students in the U.S. who the American students assumed would have a difficult time adjusting to the "traditional" and "conservative" Japanese culture upon their return to Japan. However, the aspects of Japanese culture and personality depicted by these**

Americans do not always bother me when I interact with other Japanese.

The third experience was interviewing I conducted for a project. The questions I prepared according to a research paradigm were viewed as very difficult to answer by Japanese respondents.

The thinking started in this experience became clearer when I attempted to answer the questionnaire of another student in the project. This was the fourth experience. Often, when I tried to put myself in the state which was required for answering a question, I could not think of a comparable situation in Japan. For example, one question asked how I would ask a professor to open a window when I feel too hot in the classroom. But in Japan, students never ask professors or teachers to open a window. It is impolite.

These experiences led me to start examining various concepts and methods used in research on Japanese communication patterns.

#### **b. General Understanding on Cross-Cultural Communication**

When foreigners arrive in the U.S. for the first time, "their home behaviors, attitudes, and values may not fit. There is ambiguity and unpredictability in the new setting that produces fear, anger, and stress in the newcomer" (Saltzman, 1986, p. 248). The situation of cross-cultural

communication has increased in the business, education and tourism areas between Japan and the U.S. in the past decades. Not only the visitors, but also often the natives who are exposed to the foreigners, experience fear, anger, and stress. The purpose of cross-cultural communication is to facilitate understanding of different communication behaviors between different cultures, and to avoid unwanted confusion.

#### **c. Major Contributions of Past Research**

Gudykunst (1986) organized past theories and developed a framework for the study of sociocultural variability and communication (p. 847). The major parts consist of 1) sociocultural variability, which in turn affects 2) social cognitive processes, 3) situational factors, 4) affect, and 5) habits. In addition to them, 6) intentions, and 7) understanding are presented as areas that influence the communication process.

In the sociocultural variability area, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) value orientations, Parsons's (1951) pattern variables, Hall's (1976) high/low context continuum, Witkin and Berry's (1975) structural tightness, and Hofstede's (1983) dimensions of sociocultural systems are well-known. Likewise, in the area of the social cognitive processes, the social categorization theories of Rosch (1978), Tajfel (1978, 1981a), and

Triandis (1985).

However, the assumption of sociocultural variability advocated by Gudykunst does not seem to me to be applicable to Japan. This is the study in which I would like to attempt to examine the applicability of theories of the sociocultural variability.

#### **d. The Research Questions**

Many theories claim to be universal and, as such, applicable to the study of Japanese behavior. Grounds on which this may not be the case are considered in this paper. Most of such studies are based on the culturally-bound notions of individual and society which have been developed in Western culture and adopted by Western and even some Eastern researchers. However, discrepancies and contradictions have been a major criticism. In this thesis, questions are posed as to the assumptions made in various studies. Definitions based on these assumptions, such as "group," "individual," "self," "race," or "ethnicity," are one focus of the thesis. The other focus is a reexamination of four major concepts or theories in Japanese studies.

#### **e. Scope of the Research**

Discussion of personal experience which motivated me to investigate this question is followed by an explanation of my theoretical position. The concept of similarities and differences is investigated in order to know in a theoretical sense. Then, discussion on cultural universals is extended. In the second part, four major theories are dealt with: Hall's high/context, Caudill and Scarr's value orientation theory based on Kluckhohn's theory, Nakane's theory of "vertical society," and Doi's theory of amae. In order to criticize the above theories, I use the Kumon and Hamaguchi's theory of "contextualism," which is based on the Japanese emic view.

#### **f. Aim of the Research**

To question the appropriateness of theories developed in the West and adopted by various researchers is the primary aim of this research. Secondly, it would be profitable if this study's usage of the emic approach would lead to a more appropriate method for conducting research on sub-cultural groups such as those of the U.S.

#### **g. General Character of the Research.**

**This is a critical view of cultural comparison. The literature on Japanese communication behavior is replete with contradiction and over-generalization which do not reflect the reality of Japanese behaviors. This study will examine and attempt to resolve the contradictory findings in the literature. After clarifying assumptions behind various concepts, an alternative explanation will be suggested.**

#### **h. Methodology**

**According to Bailey (1978), methodology includes "the assumptions and values that serve as a rationale for research and the standards or criteria the researcher uses for interpreting data and reaching conclusions"(p. 26). This study includes the process of inquiry into the assumptions and values which were used in many Japanese studies as a "rationale for research and the standards or criteria." By questioning criteria and assumptions used in these theories, an attempt will be made to clarify and redefine common terms used in cross-cultural comparison. An examination of the four major theories for explaining Japanese communication behavior reveals many contradictions. This thesis will point out limitations of earlier studies and attempt to provide an**



**alternative explanation which is a synthesis of earlier findings.**

## II. Communicative Context for the Problem

There are many theories about cross-cultural communication which claim to be universally applicable. The first part of this thesis will focus on the communicative context for the problem, and the second part will reexamine studies on Japanese communication.

Situations in which Americans interact with Japanese have been increasing year after year. At the end of 1984, the number of registered Americans who stayed in Japan was 29,036 (Ministry of Justice, 1986a). This number does not include the 76,000 American soldiers who also stayed in Japan (Norton & Skuja, 1983). In the same year, 437,745 Americans came to Japan and 434,390 Americans left Japan (Ministry of Justice, 1986a). This number is about 21 percent of the total foreign visitors and is increasing year after year(p. 835).<sup>1</sup>

A second relevant statistic is the number of Americans learning the Japanese language. In the U.S., most of the Japanese language teachers are likely to be native Japanese. This creates a situation in which Americans encounter Japanese, a possible cross-cultural communication situation.

Research shows that 17,803 colleges universities and research institutions on the North American continent teach the Japanese language, while 11,463 middle-and-high-school-level institutions, 11,007 private Japanese schools, and 564 public schools teach Japanese (Kokusai Kouryuu, 1987). In 1985, the number of students in America who studied the Japanese language was 37,441 (Kokusai Kouryuu, 1987).

Japanese students, travelers, and businessmen come to the U.S. and have inter-cultural encounters with many Americans. About 1,731,000 Japanese travelers came to American territory, including Hawaii and Guam, in 1985, and about 165,300 Japanese are currently living there (included are "prolonged residents" and "permanent residents" as of October 1, 1985.) (Ministry of Justice, 1986b, p. 91).

The above shows the potential for inter-cultural encounters between Japanese and Americans, and which are situations in which both people can learn each other's communication behaviors. There are other means of gaining such information about each other.

Mass communication, too, plays a role in providing information on Japan to the American audience, and on the United States to Japanese audience. Especially since Japanese auto companies started succeeding in the American market and then started establishing their branches in the

U.S., the number of articles and essays in newspapers and journals on Japan have been increasing, and likewise, television news coverage and special programs.

Mass communication is getting more important because the information that people acquire from other means is limited and there is little chance to prove its validity. Of course, mass communication is not perfect in providing information on foreign matters; it often gives a biased viewpoint on the communication behaviors of other cultures. Yet, if we have multiple sources, especially sources which provide visual and sound presentation, the information we get is closer to reality than we get from written materials alone. When cultural communication patterns are presented with situations which include visual and audio information, viewers seem to understand the context in which the specific communication process occurs.

When the information is in written form, or when there is oral narration accompanying a visual presentation regarding foreign culture, choice of variables and point of view seems to be already set. That is, when a person sees a picture without help from the interpretation of others, he/she sees whatever he/she wants to see. This person chooses the variables and decides how to see them. (Here, I do not make

inferences whether or not this person's choices are based on his/her language usage. ) But with an interpreter's participation, the variables seen are determined by the vocabulary used, and interpreted by the way the words are said. The number of books and articles about Japan has also increased dramatically; yet, objectivity problems are also pervasive in these publications.

This problem is one of the reasons for my research. The more I was exposed to this information on Japanese cultural behavior, the more I questioned the variables on Japan which have been discussed in the literature.

I am, of course, aware of the information on American culture introduced to Japan, and found very interesting differences between my understandings of it and that of the Japanese mass media. However, being a non-native, my understanding of American culture is very limited. If I were to try to explain American culture, the reader might think that it is very biased. Therefore, all I can do is to examine the studies on Japan about which I have substantial knowledge.

The time I started questioning this information was when I received many questions regarding Japanese communication behaviors from my American friends. Many of them did not seem to fully

understand Japanese communication behavior. Let me give some examples.

I met an American man who had been to Japan for one year to study at a college. He stayed with what he said was a very ordinary Japanese family. I had several chances to talk with him about life in Japan. He seemed to have read many books on Japan, and even took courses on things Japanese in a Japanese college. After coming back to the U.S., he showed me a lot of pictures and video tapes. Then, this striking comment: "Correct me if I'm wrong. Japanese people don't talk much, but in their minds, isn't there a lot of thinking going on?" Of course, he was correct. But the thing that struck me was not the fact that he was correct, but that his finding on this matter took such a long time. Before he reached this point, he had appraised Japanese behavior based on his own cultural measurement which seemed to be right to him. His communication activities with Japanese people were also based on this idea. Here, two kinds of misunderstandings are shown: one is his misunderstanding of Japanese; the other is my misunderstanding of the effectiveness of information on Japanese culture. In the latter, I assumed that the simple presentation of differences in cultural behavior automatically gives Americans a holistic understanding of Japanese people, including their

points of view.

The more I tried to understand what Americans like him understood from books and mass media, the more I became aware of the problems, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the approach taken by many authors and studies. Furthermore, I felt that the reason for the contradictions in explanations of Japanese communication behaviors is often rooted in assumptions made both by English-speaking authors and by Japanese authors who take an American viewpoint.

It seemed not only that the whole concept and nuances around much vocabulary are often treated wrongly in the U.S., but also that they are explained one-sidedly. Often, the vocabulary is used to indicate negative evaluation of concepts central to the description of Japanese culture, e.g., "group," "vertical society," "dependency."

Readers of these books and articles ordinarily have little or no opportunity to test for themselves these common ideas about Japanese communication behaviors. Even if they are fortunate enough to encounter Japanese communication behavior which is inconsistent with these ideas, and therefore to be prompted to evaluate the validity of the ideas, they may react with rejection or frustration, in which case they might stop their critical thinking.

The Japanese side should be criticized, too. English-learning Japanese students tend to think that concepts expressed in English seem more "scientific" and therefore "appropriate" in description (Itasaka, 1971, p. 185). The fact is that Japanese students often become less critical about concepts on daily communication behaviors when the concepts are expressed in English. Furthermore, guidebooks on Japanese character and personality published by the Japanese government, or offered through government-related agencies, seem to me to have propaganda-like explanations (Nishijima, 1988).

Therefore, it is understandable how American readers might arrive at an inaccurate stereotype of Japanese communication behavior.

There is another sphere one can draw upon to show how inappropriate cultural assumptions can cause problems. The voices of American residents in Japan show their frustration in understanding Japanese behaviors. Severe cases can be seen from reports by counselors who are working in Japan to give service to foreign residents of Japan.

In Japan, there are three major organizations which provide counseling services to foreigners staying in Japan. They are non-profit organizations and use the English language to provide services. One of them, the Tokyo Community Counseling Service, analyzed problems



brought by clients (Olson, 1983, p. 32). The most fundamental problem is, according to them, the expectation of the foreigners to become a segment of Japanese society. That is, English teachers, students, and those who are married to Japanese want to become "Japanese" people, not Gaijin (foreigners). Most of the foreigners staying in Japan try to fully adjust to Japanese culture. They want to learn the Japanese language, customs, and culture, and if possible, to marry a Japanese. Yet, in reality, most of these clients feel they did not succeed in doing so.

Another organization which provides services to foreigners staying in Japan is called Tokyo English Life Line. The service is provided in English through a telephone answering service. The head of the organization writes that although there is no clearly stated relationship between the problems called in and cultural shock, most of the calls seem to involve problems stemming from cultural adjustment. According to their research, Americans staying in Japan called most of all for advice on problems of marriage and the family. Among their problems, the marriage of Japanese and Americans (especially in the case of a Japanese man and an American woman) is the major one, and problems with other people come second. The feeling of isolation and cultural shock comes fifth. (Third is the problem with law, and fourth is personal psychological

matters) (p. 41).

Here, problems of adjustment and frustration with Japanese communication behaviors seem clear. When the couples consisting of Japanese men and foreign wives were in America, they had no problems. Only after they returned to Japan, did problems suddenly emerge (p. 41). The majority of Tokyo English Life Line calls come from couples consisting of a Japanese husband and his foreign wife. Calls from Japanese-wife-and-foreign-husband couples occur only one-third as often (Olson, 1983). Thus, the Japanese-husband-foreign-wife couples seem to be better adjusted to American culture than to Japanese culture. What factors, then, determine the different adjustment to the two different cultures?

Understanding culture seems to be the key to the answer. When people understand the expectations in a culture, they can manipulate and control a situation through communication skills, thus keeping their problems from becoming serious. However, this works only when both people equally understand each other's cultural expectations. When only one understands, and when that one does not do a good job of explaining, then conflict is near.

One may think that those persons who called for advice are not representative voices of Americans in Japan. Let me present two related

reports that appeared in one of Japan's English-language newspapers. The president of the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese reported:

"People still stare at us on the train, and many call us gaijin (foreigners) with a negative connotation" (Asahi Evening News, Dec. 17, 1986, p. 6).

The head of a European community delegation to Japan, Laurens Jan Brinkhorst, said: "Europeans and Americans are sometimes treated as if they were Albinos.....When I sit on the subway it sometimes happens that Japanese ladies or gentlemen move away and sit somewhere else. It's more provincialism than anything else" (Asahi Evening News, Dec. 24, 1986, p. 4). Although his comment is judgmental, it is apparent that those Westerners are having tremendous difficulties with understanding Japanese behaviors.

In American society, such behavior, e.g., separation or distancing of Whites from Blacks in public transportation, would commonly be an expression of racism. In Japan, however, it is commonly something else, at least according to the view of Suzuki (1973), who would explain such Japanese behavior as displacement to escape from unstable psychological conditions (p. 200). This means that Japanese do not feel relaxed being physically close to "foreigners"--not because of the foreigner's particular physical traits such as Mr. Brinkhorst's white skin, brown hair, and blue

eyes, but because Mr. Brinkhorst does not seem to them to be a Japanese.

In other words, it is not the presence of Caucasian features: it is the absence of Japaneseness.

What is "Japaneseness"? Prerequisite to being perceived by Japanese as "Japanese" are certain physical characteristics, a clothing outfit within a narrow range, certain behaviors and sentiments, etc. This means that even a Japanese might be perceived by other Japanese as a "foreigner", and be reacted to as Mr. Brinkhorst reports being reacted to. For example, one of my Japanese friends in Japan wears a strange outfit on the subway, and complains that people stare and move away from her.

When interacting with others, Japanese need a lot of information about those others in order to present themselves to them and to make relationships with them. The typical Japanese would not feel that they had that kind of information about Mr. Brinkhorst or my strangely-dressed Japanese friend (or about today's younger generation in general, who their parents and grandparents call a "new breed" or a "new human race") and so would not want to risk having to relate to them. This matter will be further examined with the example of Japanese language usage in the last section.

This thesis will reexamine concepts that many Americans and other

Westerners accept about Japan. Americans try to understand Japanese communication behavior but have difficulty. The reason will be sought in the approach taken. That is, the logic and assumption which are used in their understanding by Americans may not be valid for Japan. I hope to show that, in fact, those concepts bring about misunderstandings.

### III. Definitions: Culture and Communication

#### 1. Definition of Culture

"Anthropology is a scientific study of humanity" (Howard and McKim, 1983, p. 11). The main questions anthropologists consider include: "How have cultures developed and what forces shape them? How are cultures learned? How do shared symbolic systems transcend individual thought worlds? How different and unique are cultures? Do universal patterns underlie diversity? How might cultural description be possible?" (Keesing, 1981, p. 43).

There are numerous definitions of "culture" in the anthropological literature. In the early nineteen fifties, Kroeber and Kluckhohn cited one hundred and sixty-four definitions of culture and divided them into seven categories based on the main emphasis expressed in each definition (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 149).

The most supported definition among anthropologists is the one which sees cultures as adaptive systems. This definition has come from

the evolutionary model of natural selection<sup>2</sup>. According to Keesing (1981), scholars embracing cultural adaptation theory agree on three broad assumptions:

(a) Cultures are systems (of socially transmitted behavior patterns) that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings. These ways-of-life-communities include technologies and modes of economic organization, settlement patterns, modes of social grouping and political organization, religious beliefs and practices.

(b) Cultural change is primarily a process of adaptation and what amounts to natural selection.

(c) Technology, subsistence economy, and the elements of social organization directly tied to production are the most adaptively central realms of culture. It is in these realms that adaptive changes usually begin and from which they usually ramify (pp. 44-45).

Howard and McKim (1983) define culture as "the customary manner in which human groups learn to organize their behavior and thought in relation to their environment" (p. 5). They include three principal aspects in culture: behavioral, perceptual, and material. "The behavioral component refers to how people act, especially how they interact with each other" (p. 5). The usual observation focuses on patterned behavior.

The views of people are considered as the perceptual aspect. This is observed in the "limited range of ideas about how people should act. The material component of culture includes the physical objects that we produce" (p. 5).

Anthropology emphasizes on universalism, holism, integration, and cultural relativism (Howard & McKim, 1983, p. 11). Universalism implies that the discipline deals with *all* human beings - "whether Bushman, Inuit, or Irish, we are all of one species" (p. 11). Holism implies that "*all* aspects of the human condition" (p. 11) are to be comprehended. This includes economy, political organization, religion, etiquette, language, technology, and child rearing. The integration of "facets of human existence" (p. 11) are taken into consideration, with an emphasis on interrelatedness of each with human condition. Cultural relativism is judging and interpreting the behavior and beliefs of others in terms of their traditions and experiences (p. 13) which means avoiding ethnocentrism, defined as "the interpretation of the behavior of others in terms of one's own cultural values and traditions" (p. 12). Ethnocentrism hinders understanding among people. "What is right in one culture is not necessarily right in, or for, another" (p. 12).



The above aspects of the study of anthropology will be the base for reexamining past research on communication patterns of the Japanese.

This perspective will also be the foundation for advocating the new methodology called "contextualism," which is dealt with at the end of Chapter V.

## 2. Definition of Communication

Communication has been defined as involving an intentional, transactional, symbolic process (Miller, 1975, p. 34). But not all definitions of communication include intention. The "speech" or "rhetoric" theorists such as Winans (1915) and Woolbert (1917) took "intentionality" for granted. On the other hand, Bostrom (1968), like Miller (1966; 1975), includes it. The problem with intentionality is testability. Miller states that inter-subjective reliability is an adequate measure.<sup>3</sup> However, it does not provide validity.

In addition to intentionality, Dance (1970) uses such factors as level of observation and normative judgment. Littlejohn (1983) divides communication theories according to the family of concepts developed by Dance.

Of the general theories of communication classified by Littlejohn, system theory best describes the cross-cultural communication process. System theory "captures the holistic, relational nature of the communication process, emphasizing ways in which elements interrelate to establish an indivisible whole" (Littlejohn, 1983, p. 6). According to Littlejohn, a system consists of four things: objects, attributes, relationships and environment. This is compatible with the theory of culture described in the preceding chapter. Howard and McKim's (1983) definition of culture and the principles of universalism, holism, and integration are compatible with the concept of system theory. This theory possesses certain common qualities: "a) wholeness; b) interdependence; c) hierarchy; d) self-regulation and control; e) interchange with the environment; f) balance; g) change and adaptability; and h) equifinality" (Littlejohn, 1983, pp. 30-32).

Intentionality, as stated before, cannot be proved or disproved except by the methods suggested by Miller; however, it is assumed to be associated with one of the qualities of general system theory. Its self-regulation and control characteristics imply goal-orientation or purpose. Littlejohn (1983) states: "What happens in a system is controlled by its aims, and the system regulates its behavior to achieve

the aims. The parts of a system must behave in accordance with its rules or canons and must adapt to the environment on the basis of feedback" (p. 31). Therefore, it is logical to have intentionality in the communication theory which seems to work best with cultural theory.

Other communication theories found in various literatures require further comment. All theories have epistemological assumptions called "world views" as stated by Littlejohn (1983, pp. 20-21). World View I emphasizes empirical and rational ideas. "It treats reality as distinct from the human being, something that people discover outside themselves. It assumes a physical, knowable reality that is self-evident to the trained observer" (p. 20). World View II emphasizes "constructivism, viewing the world in process. In this view people take an active role in creating knowledge. A world of things exists outside the person, but the individual can conceptualize these things in a variety of useful ways. Knowledge therefore arises not out of discovery but from interaction between knower and known" (p. 21).

The concept of "person" and his/her relationship to the world are seen as the same in both world views stated by Littlejohn. A "person" is seen as an independent, autonomous substance with a strong "ego" and desire to change his/her world. But this is not compatible with the

Japanese world view which found in various literatures. An attempt to describe how the Japanese world view differs from World View I and II will be made later in relation to various other concepts such as ki. From the present discussion, we can conclude that it is necessary to examine the communication theories which have been suggested by Littlejohn. In order to deal with the question of cross-cultural comparison, the issue of the universal characteristics across cultures should be sought first.

#### IV. Similarities and Differences

When researchers compare behaviors of two cultures, they often use encounter the terms "differences" and "similarities." However, their comparison usually reflects the variables which are highly evaluated in their own culture. At the moment we select the variables to compare, there is already a cultural value attached to them. In this chapter, an analysis of the comparison process will be made. The components which are included in a comparison and the assumption which is included in a usage of comparative terms will be clarified in the first part of this chapter. Even though various variables have different meanings in a different culture, there are some fundamental shared processes to enable comparisons of various cultures. On what ground, then, can comparison be made? This issue will be dealt with in the latter part of this chapter.

##### 1. Ordinary Usage.

It is commonly assumed by anthropologists that the ability to distinguish a thing or idea from other things or ideas is universal. "We

cannot think about the world, including human society, unless we divide it into classes" (Needham 1979, p. 3). Any language is assumed to reflect certain cognitive structures. However, discussion of the extent to which language *determines* cognitive structures is not the purpose of this chapter. The purpose, rather, is to clarify the ordinary usage of terms regarding comparison of any concepts. That is, (a) the components included in a comparison, (b) the assumption included in a usage of comparative terms, and (c) the organization of the concepts in a hierarchical way, all have to be dealt with in order to understand what comparisons of any concepts mean. First, two points have to be made clear: variables to be recognized and the assumption of the users.

**a. Variables to be Recognized.**

The dictionary meaning of "similar" is; "*adj* . 1. Showing some resemblance; related in appearance or nature; alike though not identical" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1978, p. 650)<sup>4</sup>. The meaning of the word "different" is; "*adj*. 1. Unlike; dissimilar. 2. Not the same; another. 3. Unusual; distinctive" ( p. 200). It seems that the meaning of "different" is negating the meaning of "similar" and has the additional meaning of "unusual; distinctive."

In the dictionary meanings, cultural assumptions are, of course, taken for granted. Any two objects or concepts which show some resemblance are called "similar." But what characteristics determine similarity? In other words, any two things or ideas which are "related in appearance or nature," can be said to be "similar." The question is the component of "appearance" or "nature." Variables which constitute "appearance" or "nature" vary across cultures, even among seemingly "similar" objects such as "human beings." Therefore, it is appropriate to suggest that both similarity and difference are cultural perceptions of the viewer. For example, the concept of "race" has recently been attacked by anthropologists after a long usage, because "few scholars can be found who will agree on any general racial classification" (Howard & McKim, 1983, p. 259).

Many researchers dealing with Japanese "homogeneity" assume that "race" or "ethnicity" is a biological term. Furthermore, the assumption behind this term is that the component of "appearance" or "nature" is universally true. There is a logic these researchers assume; because race is the indicator of biological difference, the variable for classifying race into category in America is equally valid in Japan. That is, the biological differences perceived in one culture are automatically assumed as valid in

another culture. Howard and McKim (1983) conclude, "No basic biological differences have been found among contemporary races, and race appears to be equally insignificant as a determinant of behavior in a biological sense" (p. 259). However, as a sociocultural phenomenon rather than biological categorization, race still holds its significance because "anthropologists focus upon how ideas about racial differences influence behavior and seek to explain why people continue to attach so much significance to such things as skin color and hair texture" (p. 259).

The sociocultural usage of race is problematic for researchers on Japan. For example, on a Japanese driver's license, there is no space for describing eye color. The Michigan temporary operators permit, which does not require a picture, has a section for eye color and other physical information such as height and weight. Eye color is an important variable for classifying people in the U.S., but not in Japan, where, it does not vary, and so is not a "variable."

Americans sometimes seem to perceive Koreans, Chinese and Japanese as members of an East Asian race, in the biological sense. However, when we look into the Japanese usage of "nihon-jin(Japanese)," the reference differs depending on context. When the prime minister states, "we, Japanese," this implies the political nationality who has



protection from the Japanese government.<sup>5</sup> When Japanese students staying in the U.S. say "we, Japanese," it may imply the yamato-minzoku (ethnic group called yamato) which excludes Ainu, Korean, Chinese, Okinawan, and of course Japanese descendants living all over the world. In another situation, "Japanese" may refer to people who share a similar (sub-)cultural background. Assumptions about cultural similarity differ greatly from context to context.

For example, my golf-playing Japanese friend often criticizes the golf-course behavior (lack of manners) of other parties, saying, "Japanese don't do that kind of thing." His reference in this context implies "Japanese who play golf" rather than all Japanese; hence, his assertion is an over-generalization. Another Japanese friend criticizes three other Japanese for forming an informal group in the community, saying "Japanese always form a group."; yet she herself is not part of a Japanese social group. The over-generalization in these cases is neutralized by a context which includes covert assumptions for both the sender and receiver of communication. Therefore, Japanese receivers would understand that expressions like these are not meant literally.

Therefore, this relativity of meaning of "Japanese" is usually ignored in the discussion of "homogeneity," and the seemingly "right" biological

classification is considered as a base for assumptions. The variables which are used by Americans to describe race are not the variables used by Japanese. Because the color of hair, eye, and skin is not the determinant of race in Japan. Japanese seem to use various other variables depending on the situation. Shokubun and mibun are two schemes indicated by Kumon that Japanese use to classify people (Hamaguchi and Kumon 1986, p.93). They will be explained in the last chapter. The reason for a dominant Western scheme of race is that Japanese know how Americans classify people, or their point of view in this regard. They would agree on the classification used by Americans, because they understand the context which Americans refer to. In other words, Japanese see the level of analysis which Americans use in the interaction. Japanese would think, "from your point of view, it is right, and if I were you I would agree with what you have just said."<sup>6</sup>

#### b. The Assumption of Usage.

When we state "A is different from B," or "A is similar to B," there is always an assumption which is not always clear to both sender and receiver. That is, we assume that "A is *comparable* with B because they are related in 'appearance' or 'nature.' As a result of comparison, one

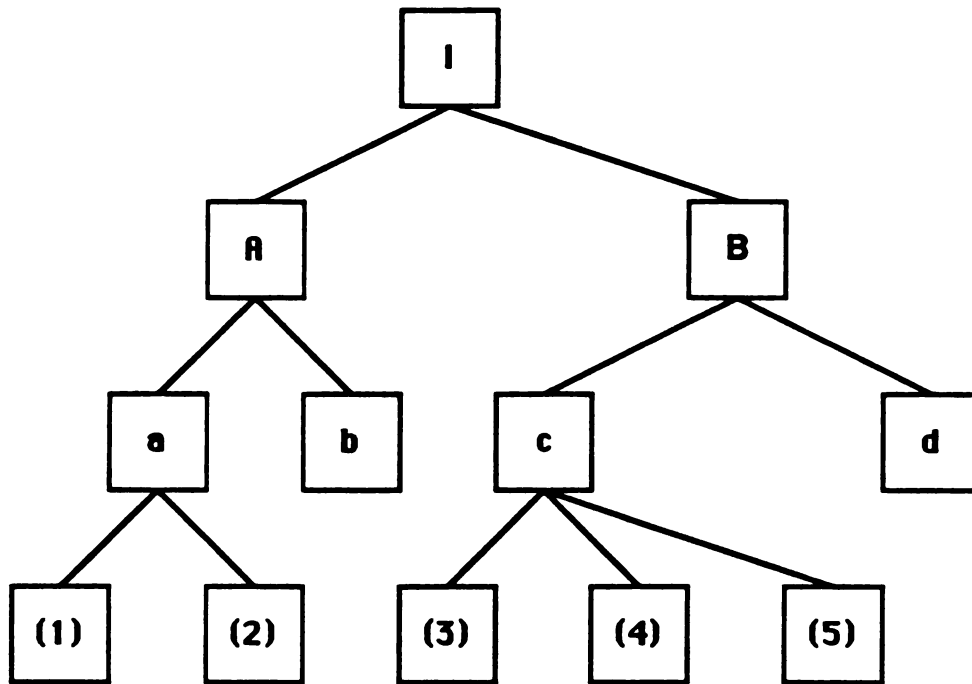
may say "A is different from B" or "A is similar to B."

The process of this assumption may be easily understood when we look at the figure often used in organization hierarchy. The advantage of this figure is that the relationship between concepts is observable, and the factors which are used to classify various categories may be explicit. (See Figure 1.)

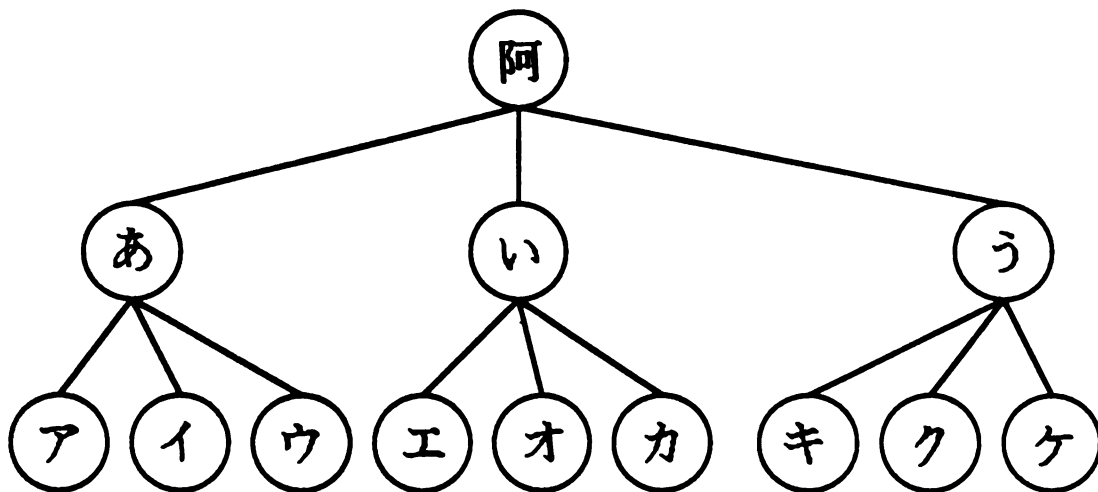
When we use the phrase "A is different from B," we assume that "A" is comparable with "B," and "A" and "B" are related in "appearance" or "nature." In the figure, "A" and "B" have separate positions, yet are connected by the lines to "I." They are comparable, we assume, because they share certain characteristics.

Attention should be paid to the features chosen for purposes of categorization. That is, on what ground do we divide categories "A" and "B"? This reasoning must always be in the classification scheme such as shown in the figure. That is, in the one-up level of organization, there is a shared variable, and the characteristics used to divide "A" and "B" have culturally meaningful reasons. Classification is thus considered according to the vertical concept and horizontal concept. These concepts constitute the scheme.

For example, when we try to compare "human beings" with "stone",



**(English characters and numbers represent semantic concepts of Americans)**



**Figure 1. Organization Figure (Imaginary)**

**(Japanese characters represent semantic concepts of Japanese)**

we assume both are substances on earth. For some people, the feature to divide into two categories may be "existence or nonexistence of mind", for other people, it may be "movability or non-movability by its own."

In cross-cultural comparison, features chosen for purposes of categorization are often assumed to be universal. For example, in the U.S. the heterogeneity of people is often used for comparison with Japanese homogeneity. The classification scheme which people in the U.S. use to distinguish the differences among them is used as the features for categorization. The question is, then, the appropriateness of application of this classification to a different culture such as Japan. In other words, the validity of the features for categorization is arguable. In Japan, as shown in the discussion of race, people distinguish among themselves based on their concept of an appropriate classification scheme, which is different from the appropriate classification scheme of American.

Features chosen for purposes of categorization to explain one culture can be utilized inappropriately in explaining other cultures. In addition to this, the relation between the concepts which seem valid in one culture might be overestimated in validity for another culture. For example, in America, eating behavior is not necessary associated with medication. But in China, neither can be explained without mentioning both concepts. The

most interesting contrast between Western and Eastern thought is shown in the idea manifested in Buddhism. In the Buddhism idea, the state of being "good" can exist only because of the existence of the opposite concept "bad." If there is no "bad," there is no "good." "Good" is considered to be created by "bad." To Buddhists, this creation implies that "good" has "bad" in it. If "good" does not have "bad" in it, it can not create the opposite concept of "bad." This is because creation is believed to be taken in substance. In other words, creation does not happen in a vacuum (Yamauchi, 1974, p. 81). Here, the complementary relationship is suggested in this idea. These two concepts are believed to be able to exist in a complementary relationship. There is no absolute entity in the world, according to the Buddhism.

The Triandis (1985) conceptualization of individualism-collectivism not only assumes the Western notion of an independent and autonomous person, but its dichotomization is Western. That is, these concepts, seen as opposites in the Western world, are not always seen that way in Japan. When the term "society" was first introduced to Japan in the early Meiji period by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1968), the translation was ningen kousai (human interaction) (Inoue, 1986, p. 30). Although there was a word, seken, which had a close meaning to "society" in Japanese, intellectuals of

that period did not utilize this for a translation of "society." Inoue mentions that there is a connotative difference between seken and "society." (1986, p. 30). Seken has more relational concept than "society." The translation given by the dictionary is "the world," "society," or "life" (Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary, 1974). Yoneyama (1976) defines seken as a general term to refer to aidagara (relationship) of people, and frame in which this relationship is held. (p. 16).

"A classification is a systematic set of classes, a class being regarded as a conceptual grouping of things (books, women, mountains) by virtue of particular resemblances that in some way or another associate them together.... classification by partition is that which is ordered by dualism" (Needham, 1979, p. 7). The dichotomous scheme consists of "two major categories under which everything is classed" (p. 7). According to Needham, there are triadic, four-, five-, seven-, and nine-section classification systems found in the world (pp. 7-15). The interesting finding with regard to dichotomous systems is that "in each pair, one category is defined in some respect as superior to the other" (p. 8).

This tendency is found in Triandis's (1985) "individualism-collectivism" scheme. Triandis suggests that collectivistic cultures place emphasis on the goals and needs of the ingroup over those of individuals.

Here, he assumes that the goals and needs of the ingroup are different from and incompatible with those of individuals. This would not be the case in Japan where many researchers believe collectivism is applied (e. g., Cathcart & Cathcart, 1976, pp. 58-66). Triandis's assumption is an illustration of the fact that the features social scientists choose categorization are culturally bound. Other Triandis suggestions concerning collectivism, such as "the norms of duty toward the ingroup rather than individual pleasure; beliefs shared with the ingroup rather than individual beliefs; and readiness to cooperate with ingroup members rather than maximizing individual outcomes" (Gudykunst, 1987, p. 853), contain similar assumptions. People in a collectivistic culture such as Japan do not necessarily assume that norms of duty are incompatible with individual pleasure. It is not appropriate to assume that beliefs shared with the ingroup are completely independent of individual beliefs. The process of maximizing individual outcomes does not always conflict with the process to cooperate with ingroup members. And finally, there is Western thinking behind the idea of "individual outcomes": it is not a universal concept.

When we compare an organization figure (Figure 1) with another one which has Japanese characters in it, the message would be clearer. In the



U.S., "two major categories under which everything is classed" are individual and group, in which individual is "defined in some respect as superior to the other (group)" (Needham, 1979, pp. 7-8). It should be noted that, in addition to the variables, features to make organizational levels clear are different. That is, the reason why Americans have to divide on the numbers of people which is the base for "individual" and "collectivism", is culturally bound. The pitfall of considering numbers as a universal concept is the assumption that each individual is a physically and emotionally separate entity. Individual separation of physical existence is regarded as a fact for social research. However, in Japan, the conscious distinction of self from others is not practiced. Existence is recognized only with relationship to others (Hamaguchi and Kumon, 1986). This implies that the features used for categorization in the research done by Triandis are not appropriate for the Japanese case.

We tend to cluster characteristics on our assumption of the world. As Tajfel (1981) stated, once categories are formed, people have a tendency to exaggerate differences on critical dimensions between categories (i.e., social group membership) and minimize these differences within categories when category membership is salient. These "critical dimensions" are selected by the culture of the group and may not be

universal. The appropriateness of these "critical dimensions" is judged only in the cultural context with reference to the purpose of the structure.

### c. Assumption in Organization Figure

What is assumed in the scheme of organization figure is that all semantic systems incorporate the relations of contrast and of hierarchical inclusion. This means that "the extension and importance of the categories resemble the vertical differentiation of ranks in an army" (Needham, 1979, p. 7).

There are various terms which have been used to identify the semantic world of a cultural system, such as "ethnoscience," "folk taxonomy," "structural semantics," and "ethnosemantics." "Componential analysis," known as one of the ethnosemantics studies, provides the base to determine what "goes together" in unfamiliar languages so that we do not impose categories used in our own linguistic environment.

Technically, it aims at "constructing verifiable models of how specific bodies of cultural (of ideational) content are coherently organized, insofar as such content is represented by words and expressions in a people's language" (Goodenough, 1968, p. 186). Historically this analysis is taken

from linguistics, and is used to illustrate the categorization of kinship relations by anthropologists such as Goodenough (1951), Conklin (1955), Lounsbury (1956) and Goodenough (1956).

The procedures are as follows: "(1) collection of a corpus of terms through use of eliciting frames (Black and Metzger 1965; Metzger and Williams 1966); (2) reduction of the corpus to a set of stable, mutually contrasting terms; (3) investigation of the semantic organization of the reduced set of terms, using the principles by which native speakers contrast terms and group them into larger categories; and, (4) development of a set of native rules of correspondence by which informants relate their native concepts to the world of practical experience" (Johnson, 1978, p. 160).

As an example, Metzger and Williams (1966) give an analysis of "Tzeltal firewood." According to them, a taxonomy of Tzeltal natural categories is divided into three categories at the first level: "people" "animal" and "trees-plants." The category of "people" is further broken down to "Indians" and "non-Indians." "Animals" are broken down to "snakes" and "animals other than snakes." "Tree-plants" are divided into "trees," "shrubs," "grasses," and "vines." In "trees" category, there are 240 items. From this organization of the semantic scheme of Tzeltal, we may

know their way of looking at the world. Certain things are more valued than other things. For example, the classification of Indians and non-Indians seems important. The number of items in the "tree" category seems to show the equal importance of each tree to their practical experience. If a person from Tzeltal meets with a Japanese whose classification of "tree" has two categories, needle-leaf trees and broad-leaf trees, misunderstanding would easily occur.

There is a problem of deciding on the best structure, as stated by Burling (1964), because there are usually several formal structures that can be constructed for any set of contrasting terms.

Apart from the studies done by anthropologists, linguists such as Katz and Fodor (1965), and Nida (1975) attempt to investigate the semantic world. Nida states that "since the structural relationships of semantic units (1) reflect a classification of experience, and (2) are subject to change as beliefs and attitudes toward the symbols and the corresponding referents change, one should reckon with the semantic structure as providing significant clues to a people's orientation toward life" (Nida, 1964, p. 32).

One study done by Nida's method of componential analysis attempts to reveal the difference between the Japanese and Occidental concepts of

god. According to Imaizumi (1965), the Occidental meaning of god is divided into two categories, "deity" versus "non-deity" on the first level. (See Figure 2) The deity concept will then be divided into "true" versus "false" concepts. The "false" deity will then be divided into "seen" versus "unseen." The division will be further extended to encompass six categories. In the Japanese case, kami, the first translation given in the dictionary, is divided into two, "specific" versus "vague." Then the specific kami will be further divided into "national" versus "foreign." The national concept will be divided into "human" and "superman." The human concept will be divided into two categories of "living" and "dead." Thus the six categories are acquired (pp. 86-87). (See Figure 3). The hotoke of Buddhism is also considered equivalent to kami. (See Figure 4). This study clearly demonstrates Japanese-American difference in the features for the categorization used to divide the upper categories such as that of "God". In the American case, characteristics such as "true" or "false," "seen" or "unseen," "healthy" or "unhealthy," and "superhuman" or "subhuman" are the major criteria for dividing variables. On the other hand, in the Japanese case, "specific" or "vague," "national" or "foreign," "human" or "superhuman," "living" or "dead," and "friendly" or "fearful" are the major criteria for dividing the concept of kami. In the case of

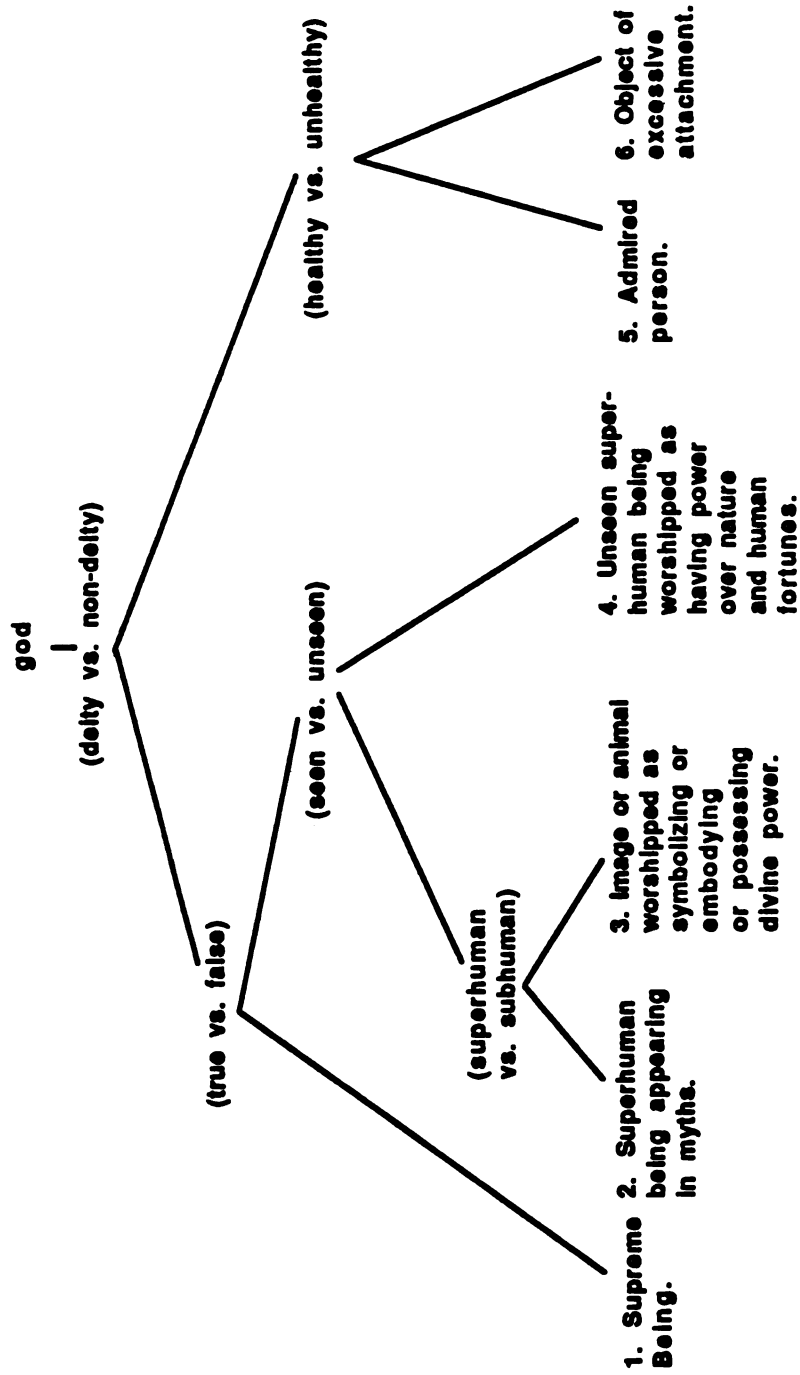


Figure 2. Semantic Components of "god."  
 Recreated from Imaizumi, H, (1965). An Intra-Linguistic Investigation  
 of the Japanese Concept of God. Gengo Kenkyu 49, 86.

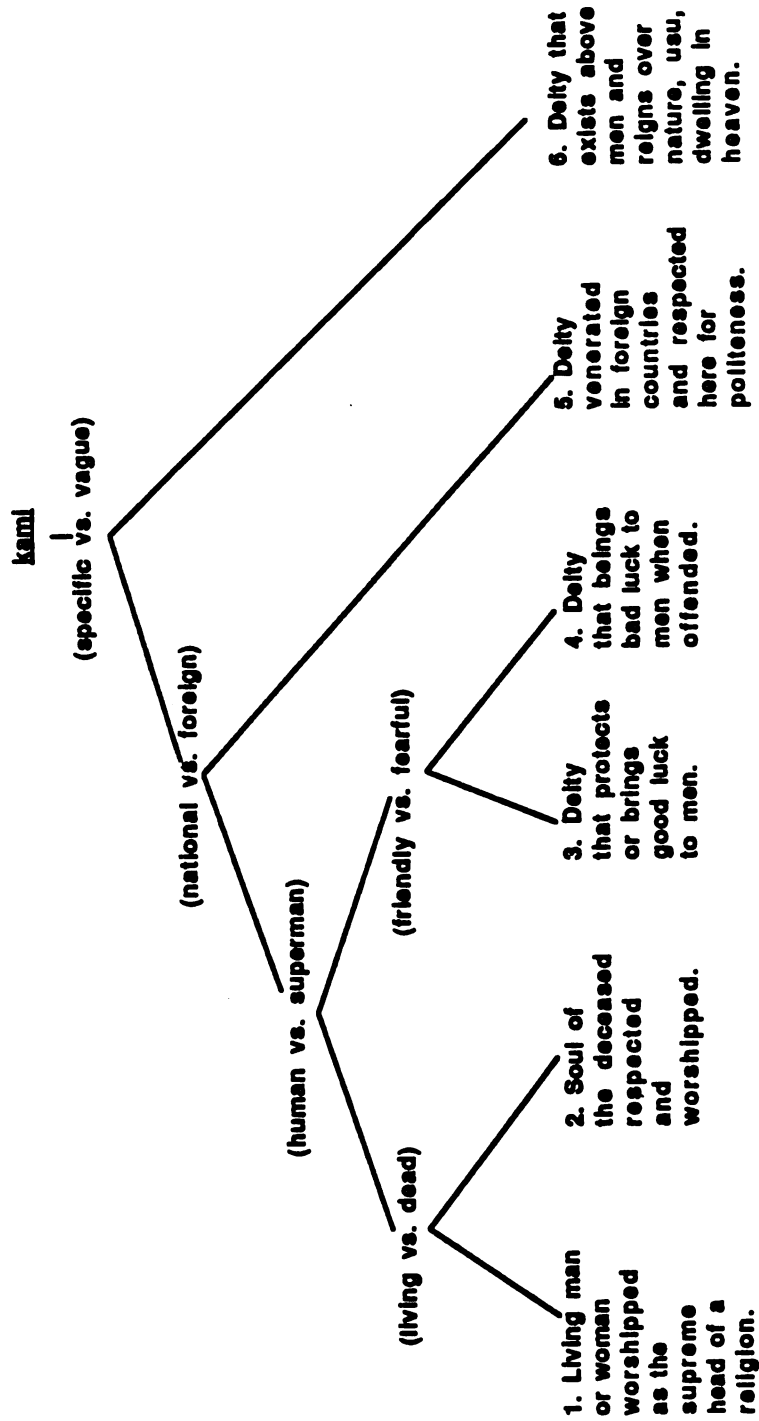


Figure 3. Semantic Components of "kami."  
(Source: Ibid., p. 87.)

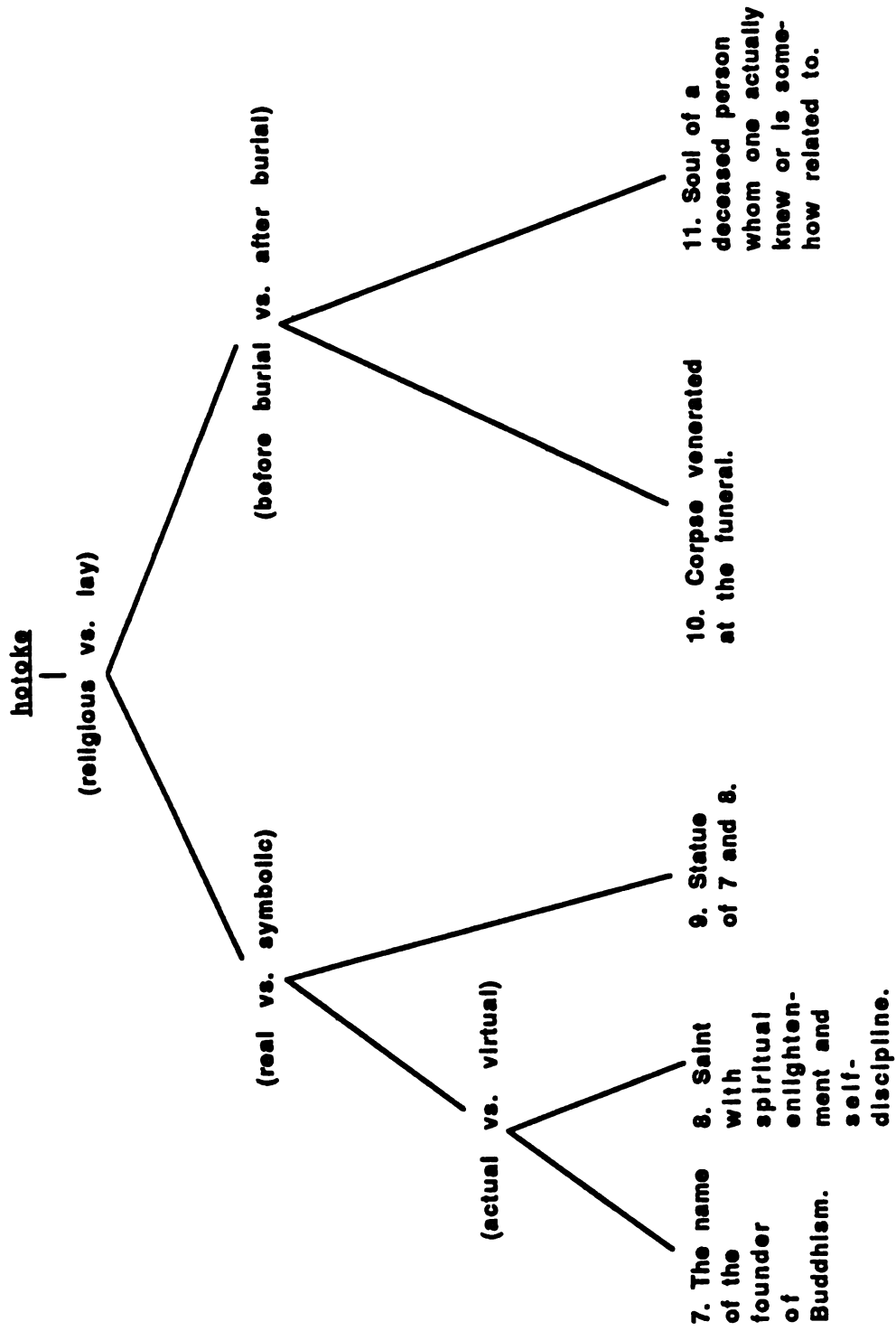


Figure 4. Semantic Components of "hotoke."  
(Source: Ibid., p. 88.)



hotoke, "religious" or "lay," "real" or "symbolic," "actual" or "virtual," and "before burial" or "after burial" are the criteria. None of the criteria used in the American's case are used in the Japanese case.

The implication of the Imaizumi work in the context of cross-cultural study is that when a Japanese communicates with an American about god, the source of misunderstanding is clear. This discussion may be further extended to imply general differences between Japanese and Americans. The definition of a specific concept, its relationship with other concepts, and the features that make the classification and category are different between American and Japanese. However, the universal characteristics is its structure, that is, the organization of the concept in a hierarchical way.

## 2. Cultural Universals

As seen in the previous section, the semantic world is very different from culture to culture. How, then, is it possible to compare cultural behaviors? What we have to look for is independent variables which are universally accepted as appropriate. In other words, we are going to look for the features for the categorization of levels which divide the organization figure vertically. The category placed at the top of the hierarchy is the concept called "culture." What are the features which divide various cultures?

Universal features are often assumed in various studies. As a matter of fact, the definitions of culture advocated by various scholars are based on the assumption of universal features. Whitely and England (1977) analyze 164 definitions provided by Kroeber and Kluckhohn. "Common to these definitions is the inclusion of knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of a society"(p. 440). This implies that all culture has the above characteristics.

Murdock (1945) argues that there are 70 variables which represent an exhaustive list of "cultural universals" common to all cultures. The list includes: age grading, athletic sports, bodily adornment, calendric systems, cleanliness training, community organization, cooking, and sixty-three

more variables (p. 77).

However, as one may suspect from the previous argument, the comparison of these categories does not seem appropriate. What is considered to be independent of other categories in one culture may not be in another culture. For example, cooking in China can never be an independent variable totally separated from medicine. Therefore, comparisons based on "universal" categories such as these are suspect and may not be meaningful.

Among structural anthropologists, Lévi-Strauss assumes that "the human mind is the point of origin for universal principles that order the ways in which we behave in, and think about, the world" (p. 40). According to him, "these universal principles are to be found in the structure of the processes of our thought" (p. 40). However, untestability and an inability to explain cultural diversities are considered as major problems of structuralism (Howard & McKim, 1983, p. 40).

In studies of color terminology (Berlin and Kay, 1969), kinship (Lounsbury, 1964), and folk botany (Berlin, 1971), Keesing (1981) sees underlying universal semantic structure. "What universals there turn out to be..... (are) universals of process, of logic, of structure, of organizational principles, rather than of substance" (p. 56).

In addition, Geertz (1973) strongly advocates the "nonexistence of *consensus gentium* (a consensus of all mankind)" -- "the notion that there are some things that all men will be found to agree upon as right, real, just, or attractive and that these things are, therefore, in fact right, real, just, or attractive" (p. 38). However, his position does not seem to reject the universals of process, of logic, of structure, or of organizational principles.

#### a. Learnable Process

The implication may be that if the processes which organize the individual concept and/or variables are universal although diverse categories are present, they can be *learned* by people through the communication processes. Perhaps "the underlying cognitive processes and structures are likely to be more similar than the diverse surface forms in different cultures" (Keesing, 1972, p. 312).

Communication processes thus may play an important role in learning. Even if units of categories and their modules have different definitions in a different culture, we can learn to verify fundamental principles governed in the structure which we acquire in the culture in

which we grow up.

This learned knowledge is effectively used in cross-cultural orientation programs. For example, Saltzman (1986) describes the role of "one hundred and fifty-percent persons" as models of inter-cultural behavior and interpreters of the new culture. 150% persons are "culturally expanded people, people who understand and find value in both their first and second cultures. They are effective in interactions with people from both cultures. They have knowledge of many roles, attitudes, and skills which they appropriately utilize in various situations" (Wasilewski, cited by Saltzman, 1986, p. 251). 150% persons having "reached a stage of adaptative pluralism not only understand that cultures are different but" (Saltzman, 1986, p. 252) "that such difference must always be understood totally within the context of the relevant cultural frame" (Bennett, 1986, pp. 54-55). These people are seen as important resources in the early stages of the new foreign student's adjustment. The experienced, successful guide of 150% persons "enables the newcomer to reduce ambiguity, stress, and anger" (Saltzman 1986, p. 255). The interesting thing is that even sensitive Americans such as foreign student advisors cannot model how foreign students can function effectively in American culture because, Saltzman states, they themselves are

Americans. This is because Saltzman is focusing "more on the needs of the new foreign student to efficiently and effectively reduce the stress caused by the ambiguity and uncertainty of the American scene." She believes "this can be done best with the insight and modeling of 150% persons" (p. 256).

Perceptual, cognitive, affective, and behavioral orientation is thus best provided by 150% persons who have already learned the process of both cultures. That is, the foreign students who play the role of interpreters have already learned the process, logic, structure, and organizational principles of both cultures. Thus, they can "model and interpret appropriate, effective bicultural behavior for the new comer from home" (p. 255). At the same time, the American counterparts are unable to see these process, logic, structure, and organizational principles of the cultures of foreign students. They lack opportunities to grasp the holistic view of each culture. In order to learn the holistic process of cultural systems, an on-going systematic way of presentation of a culture is a necessity for a learner. That is, the best way to learn is to live in that culture and to experience it holistically. Unfortunately, this limitation reminds me of my working as an interpreter in Japan having no structural knowledge of America. The result may be the unconscious enforcement of

the Japanese way of doing various things on American visitors. This is not to suggest that the Japanese way be changed to accommodate Americans living in Japan. The suggestion is in the way of presentation of cultures. I, as a native of Japan, was not able in Japan to be a model of 150% persons. However, in the U.S., I can be a model for newcomers from Japan.

Thus the universal characteristics advocated by Keesing provide a more useful paradigm in cross-cultural studies.

#### **b. Functional View**

Goldschmidt (1966) argued that behaviors for cross-cultural comparison must have similar functions (Goldschmidt, 1966). Berry (1969), along the same line, states, "Functional equivalence of behavior exists when the behavior in question has developed in response to a problem shared by two or more societal/cultural groups, even though the behavior in one society does not appear to be related to its counterpart in another society. These functional equivalence must preexist as naturally occurring phenomena....." (p. 122). As Frijda and Jahoda (1966) state, "Obviously, if similar activities have different functions in different societies, their parameters cannot be used for comparative purposes" (p.

116). The functions stated above are at macro levels, such as cultural institutions. At micro levels, the functions of each category are not always mutually exclusive.

The practical problem for researchers is that comparison involves various categories of micro level. For example, the concept of "self" assumed in the Anglo-American cultures is applied to the comparison of families. The comparison at macro level holds equivalence, but content such as this lacks the insider's (emic) view<sup>7</sup> of a culture. All that researchers obtain from this kind of comparison is a value judgment on the family researched. Therefore, careful examination of the insider's view in relation to the macro-level functional view is our next task.

### **c. Emic and Etic**

Emic is usually considered subjective and etic objective, but this simplistic understanding only furthers the tendency to avoid an emic view in behavioral science research. Berry (1969) summarizes the emic and the etic approaches as follows: "An emic approach studies behavior from within the system, examines only one culture, structure discovered by the analyst, and criteria are relative to internal characteristics. Etic studies



behavior from a position outside the system, examines many cultures, comparing them, structure created by the analyst, and criteria are considered absolute or universal" (p. 123).

Triandis (1972) recommends that researchers use both emic and etic measures. As one may have noticed in the earlier chapter, because the nature of universals advocated by Keesing and functional equivalence by Berry, the etic view is necessary. In addition, because individual substances are defined by the emic view, and are the composition of organization, the emic view is necessary to understand the holistic structure of a culture.

The practical problem observed in various researches is how to obtain the emic view. Here, the method of obtaining taxonomies on the semantic world of a culture has its significance. The method that formerly was rejected in favor of the universal viewpoint still possesses importance. Without an emic view, cross-cultural comparison becomes meaningless.

In my view, the emic/etic concepts are not continuous but rather mutually compatible. This is because the nature of universalism lies on the etic, which, as seen in the previous section, does not denote universalism of the substance level. Rather, emic should be used to

explain the units of the total system. The etic view should be used to explain the way they are organized, the way they function, are processed, structured, and so on.

The pitfall is that the categorization of etic concepts used in various literatures is sometimes culturally bound, therefore these are not actually "true" etic. For example, a number of people such as "one" or "many" is used to categorize "individual" and "others" in much literature. Although the number such as this, which is used to explain the organization of the human world, seems to hold an etic concept in American culture, the appropriateness of application of this concept to Japanese may be in question. This is because the fundamental concept of "self" is different in Japan from that of America (see Hsu, 1971). The appropriateness of etic usage in another culture could be judged from the definition of the categories used in any culture. In other words, the relationship with other categories in a given culture gives the base for judgment on etic nature.

## V. Reexamination of Studies on Japanese Communication Pattern.

When we categorize Japanese communication pattern, there is a logical necessity of viewing studies on Japanese. As I explained previously, the concept of culture cannot be an independent variable. That is, there are qualitative as well as quantitative differences between cultures.

When we explore only the question of how people communicate differently, this does not promote understanding, and does not fulfill the purpose of science. A certain level of logical explanation must be required for the observed behaviors.

However, the explanation on the given behaviors is often based on the observers' cognitive structures. The various academic fields, for example, represent somewhat interesting cognitive diversities: economists look for certain variables to explain social phenomena, so do sociologists, psychologists, educational specialist, and so on. The required task here is that we decide upon the appropriateness of the explanation provided.

## 1. High/Low Context

Hall (1977) divides communication into two types: high-context and low-context. (p. 91). A high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or is internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (p. 91).

Hall observed and collected information on Japanese communication patterns, and illustrated how little information handled by Japanese is coded and explicit (pp. 44-45, 57-69, 127, 160-61). Thus, he classifies Japanese communication as high-context.

Hall uses the example of Japanese honorifics to show the high-contextuality. "Without the honorifics," he states, "what one speaks is a most dreadful, unintelligible melange of Japanese words." (p. 33). He also provides an example from legal communication: "In a word, the function of the trial (in Japan) is to place the crime in context and present it in such a way that the criminal must see and understand the consequences of his act." (p. 112). "In Japan, the over-all approach to life, institutions, government, and the law is one in which one has to know

considerably more about what is going on at the covert level than in the West."(p. 112).

Opposed to this view, Minami (1987) demonstrates the high-contextuality of honorific usage in the U.S. and the low-contextuality of Japanese language. According to Minami, there is a larger number of vocabularies of honorifics in Japan than in the U.S. The Japanese usage is more fixed in its expression, and the grammatical rules prescribe detailed usage. In contrast, the English usage of honorifics requires a more detailed context. Minami, as opposed to Hall, sees honorifics as found not only in the vocabularies and grammar, but also in the rhetoric, elocution, vocalization, and gestures. Thus, he deals with honorifics as general, not purely verbal, expressions.

This point gives us an important insight into communication. That is, the purpose and function of communication cannot be fully described by looking at verbal behaviors only. We need to take both verbal and nonverbal behaviors into consideration. But Hall's position involves dichotomization of the usage of only verbal communication. He then relates high and low usage to other variables, such as cohesive force of the sociocultural system. (Hall, 1977, p. 93). More on this relationship shortly.

First, however, two examples of low-context communication in

Japan, as opposed to Hall's view of Japanese communication as high-context. One is the school rules for students. Sakamoto (1987) researched the students' rule books of about 1,400 public junior and high-schools in Japan and found an amazing level of detail in the rules . For example, some books include this rule of how to eat lunch: "student should eat a lunch in the order of milk, bread, and okazu (the dish other than drink and bread or rice) alternately. Pay special attention to the speed; do not eat too fast or too slow" (p. 1058).

Another example of low-context communication in Japan is provided by Kindaichi (1975). He uses various expressions, such as hanashi ni hanaga saku (blossom out into topics), sekenbanashi (having a chat), nagadenwa (long telephone talk), dassen (digression), idobata kaigi (women's gossip), kageguchi (backbiting), and tsugeguchi (talebearing) to show the talkativeness of Japanese. Above all, a greeting and speech in Japan should be, and are, long. This is clearly seen in the initial interaction of a visiting junior with a senior yakuza (gangster). The junior starts by asking the senior to withhold his opening greeting. The senior abases himself before the junior. Then the junior says that he is younger than the other, so he says that he has to start first. This is only the introduction to the greeting. Then the junior thanks the senior for his

reservation, and ask for permission to start. He starts explaining the place he was born, the place of residence of oyabun (pseudo parent yakuza), the name of oyabun, and his own name. Then he asks for a long relationship. The senior then answers by thanking him, and stating his name. He, too asks for a long relationship. Then he asks the junior to sit back. But the junior asks the senior to sit back. Then they agree to sit back together. Then, at last, the conclusion of the greeting is initiated by the junior. He explains at length how he came to see the senior yakuza: "It's very kind of you to see me and grant the favor to me. Yesterday I came from the east on tokaido (one of the main roads), visited X-oyabun. He and his wife welcomed me with kindness, offered me a one-night stay. When I left, they gave me a lot of gifts and pocket money. Then I came here. When you have a chance to go east, please see this X-oyabun and say hello for me to him" (Kindaichi, 1975, p. 104).

To return now to the matter of relationship between language usage and cohesive force of the sociocultural system: Does it necessarily follow that because people live in a high-contextual communication environment, they understand each other and thus cohere well? Do people form a group just because they share the "same" information? To Hall, Japanese culture is integrated as one: from him, apparently, there is no conflict between

groups. This view ignores the various existing conflicts between groups in Japan. There are group forming tendency in Japan on one hand, and conflicts between groups on the other. At what level, then, do people share *what kind of* information? This question may suggest further investigation.

The key point here is this: Because of communication in daily life is a matter of the verbal and nonverbal modes operating together, the frequency of the verbal mode alone cannot provide the independent variable for cultural comparison. The combination of both modes is required for a message to get through. Although the situation seems highly ambiguous and full of uncertainty to the eye of the person from the low-context culture (Hall, 1976, p. 112; Ueda, 1974, p. 185), the people of Japanese culture communicate with each other on an everyday basis with little serious trouble. That is, the less frequent verbal articulation does not cause ambiguity for Japanese speakers.

The implication of above statement is that the purpose and aims conveyed in communication process in Japan seem very different from that of another culture such as American. Hall's high/low -contextual communication is based on the assumption which states there are certain things to articulate in language with another assumption which implies



purpose and aims in communication is universal. He states that people in another culture do not practice to articulate certain things in which "universal" purpose and aims are implied. Therefore, when the people of low-context interact with people from high-context, inter-cultural conflict will occur.

However, "the certain things to articulate" vary from culture to culture. In my point of view, Japanese become frustrated when they are exposed to the low-context communication of Americans, if it can be generalized, not only because of redundancy of messages, but also the uneasiness in obtaining wanted cues. For example, to know a person is trust-worthy or not is very important for Japanese. The cues such as facial expression, verbal nuances, and behaviors with which Japanese are familiar can not be easily obtained from initial interactions with American. Not only the familiar cues, but also the variables which Japanese evaluate highly, such as the amount of excuses for not doing an expected work, give difficult time to Japanese when interact with Americans. The redundancy of messages in English may be seen though grammatical usage of subjects in most of the sentences. From a Japanese point of view, "I," for example, does not need to be repeated every time a person states his/her opinion. In the interaction, the person can be easily inferred from the context by

Japanese.

What we know about one thing differs culturally. With verbal communication, we try to reduce uncertainty. Gudykunst et al. (1986, p. 859) researched the influence of language on uncertainty reduction. They claim, "people from high-context cultures, for example, focus on factors that give an indication of others' background and social status, while members of low-context cultures focus on individual attitudes, values, and beliefs" (p. 859). If the generalization can be made as I stated before, the above correlation can be withdrawn. However, not only the problem of generalization of the independent variables but also the categorization of factors seems in question.

The problem is that the further factor which gives explanation beyond superficial behavioral differences is not found here. Questions that need answering are: What role does this questioning of others' background have? What is the purpose of this communication? For what do people from high-context cultures use the personal background information? If we miss this fundamental point which might give a base for prediction of behaviors, the whole picture is destroyed. What Gudykunst et al. do is compare behavior with behavior, assuming communication purpose or function are the same across cultures.

However, what if these purposes and function of communication are not universally true? Returning to the definitions of culture and communication, and agreeing with the idea which states communication is a means to an end, we must consider it possible that general communication purposes vary across various cultures.

Here is a personal example of difference in purpose and function of communication between Japanese and American: My Japanese friend K was at one time talking about his father to his American girlfriend C who was going to visit Japan to see K's family. C, as she learned from her class on Japan, knew that she had to bring a gift for them. Then she started asking what kind of things K's father liked to do. The answer was "I don't know." She tried various forms of English sentences and vocabularies since she was an English teacher, but could not obtain even a piece of information on his father. Then she asked me, "Why doesn't he know anything about his own father? Are they living together? He doesn't even know the favorite color of his father." I found out that questions which C asked were not at all a Japanese concern. If a receiver liked a gift, it would be nice, but not necessary. The main focus for Japanese is not the things given, but the kimochi (willingness, in this case, if translated.). The important thing in the relationship between father and son, for example, is

not what and how much they know about detailed behavior, but rather the feeling of trust. Thus he knows that his father will help him and not betray him, whatever happens.

By the way, this example may show the discrepancy in the behavior and the purpose between one culture and another. In short, the validity of behavior in one culture is not universal either. That is, knowing certain information about another person does not insure that the knowing person will automatically be trusted by the other in Japan.

## **2. Individualism**

Various studies deal with the concept of "groupism," and individualism as a base of comparison between Japanese and American communication patterns.

Caudill and Scarr (1979) used the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck theory of value orientations to research the Japanese value orientations. The key Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck idea is that there is an ordered variation in value orientations: "Value orientations are complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically distinguishable elements of the evaluative process -- the cognitive, the affective, and the directive elements -- which give order and direction to the everflowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of 'common human problems'" (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p. 4).

Caudill and Scarr examined three problem areas selected from Kluckhohn's theory: 1) man's relation to nature and supernature, 2) his place in the flow of time, and 3) the relationship man has to his fellow human beings. Each problem area is assumed to have three solutions. Thus, starting with the last, the problem area "the relationship man has to his fellow human beings" has lineal, collateral and individualistic solutions.

Likewise, "his place in the flow of time" has past, present and future orientated solutions. And "man's relation to nature and supernature" has the solution of a) subjugation to nature, b) harmony, and c) the mastery-over-nature position.

Caudill and Scarr developed a questionnaire whose items give a hypothetical life situation followed by three alternative solutions which the respondent is asked to rank in order of preference. It was administered to a total of 342 Japanese high school boys and girls and 277 parents of the above. Parental occupations were classified as either, traditional or modern. The questionnaire items were like these;

**[R2] Help in case of misfortune 7.**

A man had a crop failure, or, let us say, had lost most of his cattle. He and his family had to have help from someone if they were going to get through the winter. There are different ways of getting help, as in the following.

**[Coll]** Would it be best if he depended on his brothers and sisters or other relatives all to help him out as much as each one could?

**[Ind]** Would it be best for him to try to raise the money on his own, without depending upon anybody?

**[Lin]** Would it be best for him to go to a boss or to his head house (honke), and ask for help until things got better?

**[T6] New Factory 9.**

People in a community heard that there might be a new factory built very close to where they lived. When the people talked about this they said different things.

**[Pres]** Some people say they never know about these things. It may turn out to be a good thing or it may not. They want to wait and see how it works out.

[Fut] Some people are all for the factory and do all they can themselves to get it brought in. They feel that new things like this are always good and will bring improvements to the whole region.

[Past] Some people do not want to have the factory moved into the area. They say that it will change things and people too much. They don't want to upset the old ways. (pp. 46-47).

Contrary to the expectations of many researchers, individualism was the dominant value orientation in four of the seven relational items, i. e., items dealing with "the relationship man has to his fellow human beings" (labelled "bridge building," "help in case of misfortune," "personal property inheritance" and "land inheritance").

The authors explain the primary of the individualistic orientation in terms of changes brought about by Occupation reform such as land reform and legal reform.

However, these results on the relational items suggest that there exists what Lebra (1976) means by "metacommunication." She states, "many respondents to Caudill and Scarr's test, well aware of postwar ideological change, may have chosen an individualistic orientation to meet the expectations of test givers or possible audiences" (p. 158).

As in any cross-cultural comparison, the most important issue is validity. As stated earlier, the same categories may not represent the

same concept in a different cultural setting. Furthermore, there is the problem of polarization of categories. In short, there are serious definition problems. For example, as we saw, Caudill and Scarr (1979) use "individualism" as one of the solutions to the relational problems defining it as follows: "individualism is rooted in the uniqueness (whether physical, psychological, or cultural) which each person has when compared with another. Practically speaking, an emphasis on individualism means that each person essentially makes his own decisions and acts on these in a manner relatively independent of other persons" (p. 41).

The first definitional problem is the word "another", the second, "uniqueness", the third, "decision making", and the forth, "independent."

In my point of view, Caudill and Scarr could not see the Japanese meaning of "another" person. As I noted before, comparison always includes assumptions on the sharing level. When we compare two persons they must have shared characteristics for comparability. The additional quality needed is that this comparison is based on the subjects' point of view. In other words, the classification scheme provided from the outside world may not work at all. The subjects decide who is the "other" person when they are asked a question based on this concept. Thus, the "other" person may not be the one whom researchers expect them to think of.



From the outside world, they all look alike and thus are assumed to have similarities at the universal level. However, the fact is, the phrase "another person" is not clear or specific enough in terms of the natives' view.

"Uniqueness," as seen in the "organizational figure" of semantic concepts, (Fig. 1, p. 27), includes the similar message as "differences" explained in the previous section. The question is "On what level do we compare?" The examination of uniqueness requires the condition and variables required for commonness at the designated level. What constitutes commonness varies from the situations in which people take part.

This would be the most misleading concept of the four we are considering here. In most literatures, the Japanese are found to think similarly, and not to have individuality. However, when we look at the multiple groups to which Japanese belong (Yoneyama, 1976, p. 37), the picture of the shared variables such as experience and knowledge becomes clear. That is, for example, in group A, a person shares the experience of X with others, and in group B, he/she shares other things in common with other people. A may be a group consisting of some graduates from the same high school, and B may be a hobby group which started a couple of

years ago. Then the uniqueness can be recognized only on the base of commonality of the specific group.

The third concept is "decision making." This action may or may not be consciously recognized by a Japanese as an independent category. The question regarding this issue is "how," "who" and "on what matter."

However, this process is not considered by Japanese as the key issue to "individualism" in Japan. A western-trained researcher often tries to ask "who" to decide on a certain matter. For example, the practice of arranged marriage is considered by Westerners as "traditional," and is generally disliked. The reason seems to lie in the locus of decision making.

However, I, as a interviewer of social science, often encountered uncertainty about this issue with Japanese. The issues such as marriage, selection of school, or going abroad, "nantonaku (in some way)" is the expression often used by a Japanese when he/she is asked who decided. This answer seems to suggest that there is no conscious effort or norm to make sure who whithin the group decides on a certain matter. Thus, if we impose our criteria to judge their individualism included on this variable, the total picture becomes biased.

I sometimes hear an American say, "A Japanese adult cannot even decide by himself a simple matter." Of course there is a decision-making

process in Japanese culture. The main difference is in "how." Many researchers write about key concepts around the decision-making process. Among them, the "consensus" approach and the concept of "harmony" seems delineated.

Gibney (1979) writes about the decision-making process in the companies in Japan, "The committee in Japan is neither a debating forum nor rubber stamp. It exists to exchange different views and to achieve in the process a meeting of minds, that kind of comforting harmony -- the wa ("harmony") principle -- which means almost everything to Japanese community living" (p. 194). However, this formal process of committee is not always practiced in the family and other informal gatherings. In the informal gatherings the following concepts seem important: "Consensus," "egalitarianism," and "privacy."

"Consensus" is actually seen from the result and *feeling* obtained, but the measure to get consensus does not include the straightforward exchange of opinions. "Soudan (consultation)" usually takes the form of presentation of fact rather than of opinion. Logically speaking, what fact a person uses to explain the situation implies the position and decision he/she will make. The truth of the fact is inferred from the trust one developed over time with another person. This is full of nuances included

in language and nonverbal codes; the seemingly mere presentation of fact or idea actually contains the judgment of the person who presents the fact or idea.

The way of the daily practice of decision-making at informal gatherings and on an individual level includes the egalitarian nature of information sharing in Japan. Hall indicates this egalitarian nature is associated with high-context culture (Hall, 1976. p. 39). However, the variables associated with the concept of "equality" in Japan are not the same as America. In Japan, equality of information distribution is the prerequisite for becoming group members, while in the United States, personal attributes play an important role in determining group members. That is, various attributes of individuals are equally taken into account in the U.S. culture. However, the meaning of attribute is determined by American culture, and not the same as Japan. This will be shown in the comic example later in this section.

In the informal gatherings, there is the egalitarian nature of information sharing in Japan. The definition of attributes in the U.S. is different from that of Japan. These concepts are related to the differences found in the answers to the questions: "To what extent an individuality is taken into account in a group?" and "What consists of an individuality?"

If the Japanese concept of individuality is different from that of American, the concept of "privacy" must be different in Japan. Indeed, the distinction between what is private knowledge and what should be "public" knowledge is greatly based on the situation and the nature of the group. For example, many Japanese students staying in the U.S. observe that American students make comments on the professor's statement by drawing on their own personal experience. The Japanese students feel this is private knowledge, and should not be shared with other people in a classroom.

The fourth concept drawn from the definition used by Caudill and Scarr is "independent." This concept, although a highly relativistic expression, has to deal with the assumption on *which* variable the condition is referred to "independent." In other words, the question is, "What activities are independently pursued in the decision making process?" As seen in the previous discussion, the variables dealt with in the concept of "individualism" show the fundamental difference in "independence." To what extent a person is consciously aware of the independent process of decision-making is an irrelevant question in Japan. This is because the process of decision-making cannot be regarded as autonomous. Furthermore, the decision-making process at certain levels

with which many researchers are concerned involves more than one person, if we look from the Western way of counting the individual.

The view often taken from the comparison of "individualism" and "groupism" is the treatment of individual humanity. What is associated in the usual understanding of "groupism" in English connotation, is that "the individual contributes to the group goal at the expense of his personal interest" (Lebra, 1976, p. 34). Araki states that there is a denial and rejection of individuality in Japan (Araki, 1973, p. 81). Many researchers cite the old proverb, "If a nail sticks out, it will get struck back." However, characteristics which "stick out" are not all the same, and not all are "struck back." The individuality and personality traits called "kosei" which are "struck back" are determined by the situation and the groups in Japan. This should not be regarded as a total denial of individual competency. Rather, the variables which are "struck back" are determined according to the purpose of the system.

I offer here an example from the comic book titled Jarinko Chie, which has sold more than 20,000,000 copies in Japan (Haruki, 1987). The main figure is a fifth-grade girl living with her mother and father who run a small restaurant. She has several schoolmates: Hirame, who wins the

first prize in drawing contest and is a laggard; Takashi, who always follows after his classmate Masaru and is ridiculed about his dependency; and Masaru, who is the chairperson of his class and who speaks ill of Chie, the main figure.

The characteristic which is "struck back" is not Hirame's excellence in drawing, nor Takashi's excessive dependency, nor Masaru's excellence in organizational ability, but Masaru's attack on Chie. If a great deal of empathy is involved in the comic reading, the number of copies sold seems to support the sentiment seen in the story.

Individualism, as seen in the above discussion, contains various assumptions, and does not provide the base for cultural comparison of Japan and America. Theories based on this individualism includes the conflicting object between individual and group. This issue in Japan is widely treated in the organizational settings.

Studies on "Japanese management system" show the basic principle which assumes the fulfillment of the workers' interest as a result of a complex process, is equated with the company's main concern. Clark (1979) states that "Employees frequently talk of 'our company' (uchi no kaisha), and ascribe to it a character quite independent of management or

any other group within it.....Relations between employees of all types and their company are, ... a compound of relations with the company as corporation, and with the company as community" (p. 181).

The relationship between workers and companies can be seen in the situation of labor unions. In Japan, most unions are classified as enterprise unions, and sometimes criticized as company-dominated unions from the Western world. This might show the compatibility of interest of both management and employees.



### 3. "Vertical Society"

Nakane's (1974) theory of "vertical society" attempts to explain the group forming mechanism in Japan. According to her, group formation is based on two criteria: attribute and frame. Attribute "is used specifically and in a broader sense than it normally carries." "Frame .... indicates a criterion which sets a boundary and gives a common basis to a set of individuals who are located or involved in it" (p. 155). She states that "Japanese stress situational position in a particular frame, rather than universal attribute" (p. 155). The practice of introducing their members in terms of affiliation to a company or association is thus widely seen in Japan. As Clark explains (1979, p. 180), Nakane also uses the usage of uchi (my house) and otaku (your house) for explaining group consciousness. Furthermore, kaisha "does not mean that individuals are bound by contractual relationships into a corporate enterprise while still thinking of themselves as separate entities; rather, kaisha is 'my' or 'our' company, the community to which one belongs primarily, and which is all-important in one's life" (p. 157). The level of this emotional involvement is seen to be exceedingly high in Japan. Although many observers report that the younger generation called shinjinrui (literal translation is 'new race,' but the meaning is not biological.) does not manifest this emotional

involvement, overall, the sentiment of commitment to groups is still strong in Japan. The above discussion may well explain the fundamental differences in assumption on individual interest and that of an organization or a group. That is, when individual interest does not have conflict with that of organization's, a person tends to have exceedingly high emotional involvement. If organizational interest interferes personal interest, the exceedingly high emotional involvement seems impossible.

However, there is a contradiction in reality if Nakane's theory is applied. According to her, the Japanese primary group is a single field. Because this field requires the total involvement of individual, it is impossible for a person to belong to two or more fields. Not only the way of belonging, but also the relationship between individuals is set by vertical structure. Thus she names the Japanese society as "vertical society" (Nakane, 1967).

Yoneyama (1976), as opposed to Nakane, argues that the ordinary Japanese can belong to several fields at the same time. He explains the many fields he himself belongs to in his roles as a child, a father, a teacher, a writer, a member of a think tank, and a researcher (p. 64). He continues that persons who are under the warm care of a seniority system and life-long employment are the small minority who belong to big

companies, public services or who are self-employed (p. 66). Small-and-medium-sized business enterprises comprised 99.4 percent of all business enterprise in 1978 (apart from primary sector industry: agriculture, forestry, and fishery). Workers in small-and-medium-sized enterprises comprised 81,1 percent of all workers in 1978 (apart from the primary sector) (Government of Japan, 1980).

Another reason to question Nakane's theory is presented by Fukutake (1976): the ko-kumi groups in the southwestern region of Japan give equal status to the members. Other groups called za, kabunakama, murasoshiki, machigumi, and kou do not allow a small number of people to have authority (p. 67). Nakane's theory, therefore, may not be applied to all segments of Japanese society.

One more comment on Nakane's theory from my point of view: even if a person belongs only to a single field, a Japanese does not introduce him/herself to a stranger who is not expected to know the name of the school or company. Furthermore, when "uchi" is used to refer to one field, that is equally important to the speaker as other fields are. That is, the usage of "uchi" is not limited to indicate to one field, and may refer to various fields depending on situation. In addition, it also depends on another person's expected knowledge, and context.

#### 4. Amae

The concept to amae is discussed by Doi (1974) as a key notion in understanding Japanese communication behavior. According to him, amae has no equivalent in English; it is the basic desire "to depend and presume upon another's benevolence" (p. 145). Hamaguchi (1985) summarized Doi's theory as follows:

- 1) In this primary usage, amae refers to the attitude of an infant who has passed the stage when it cannot differentiate itself from its mother but is still attached to the mother and is dependent upon her.
- 2) In Japan the desire for amae exists among adults too, and human relations based on amae are common outside family boundaries.
- 3) In Japanese society, an ambivalent sense of amae that can be easily transformed into a negative sense (grudges, sulking, jaundiced view, etc.,) is accepted as a principle of human interaction.
- 4) The Japanese do not have a sense of identity (the firm belief that "self exists") unless they are imbedded in their group where they have abundant opportunity to amaeru (verb form of amae), or depend upon other members of the group. (p. 294).

Hamaguchi introduces two opposing views to Doi's theory, and their interpretations seem more appropriate.

The first one is Kimura (1972) who feels Doi's definition of amae is a distortion of the idiomatic usage of the Japanese language. Kimura states

"amae implies a state in which identification of self with others is already established, enabling people to rely on the affection between them and to behave familiarly" (Hamaguchi, 1985, p. 294). "The word amaeta(gari) which is widely used in the Kansai district, signifies people who are adept at the art of depending on others and at the same time are equipped with *a rich sensibility for choosing those on whom they can safely depend* (Hamaguchi, 1985, p. 295. Italics are not in the original). The behavior of amae, is thus seen as "well adjusted adults, possessing the skills necessary for existing in the Japanese world" (Kimura, 1985, p. 295).

Another criticism of Doi's theory is done by Aoki introduced by Hamaguchi. "Aoki contends that in the case of adults, amae refers to a predisposition to expect favors from other people. Amae in this sense cannot function unless those who amaeru have the discretion to judge the degree of favors they can expect from others in any particular situation" (Aoki, 1976, p. 172; and cited by Hamaguchi, 1985, p. 295). She continues,

"When seen in comparison with modern societies in Western Europe formed on the premise that ego is supreme, traditional Japanese society, which attached importance not to individuals but to interpersonal relations and group morality, does indeed appear to be a society in which dependence is salient. But this dependence is *interdependence* and is different from amae which is *unilateral dependence*. In fact, in order for interdependence among people to be socially balanced, each person must have a substantial degree of autonomy and moderate

desire." (Hamaguchi, 1985, p. 295).

Aoki's view clearly states that there is an autonomy of the individual in Japanese culture as a base to function amae.

Let me give a personal experience of cross-cultural communication conflict regarding the amae concept.

K is an American woman who has a substantial knowledge of Japanese culture. We met by introduction from other people, and became relatively close. We talked on the phone, and saw each other several times a school term. But the feeling I developed about her became negative over time. Then I reviewed the relationship, and found that the favors I had been doing for her had become a burden. At one point when she asked me to tape many TV programs on my VCR, I was ready to say "No." to the relationship. I did the favor for her at this time and have avoided doing any more favors since then. Of course the relationship is over.

From an American point of view, the matter of saying "no" does not damage the whole relationship. But from the Japanese point of view, "no" to the favor is almost the final word to the relationship. Of course it depends on the kind of favor, but in this case the taping was not a life-and-death matter.

I talked over this incident with other Americans, explaining that I

interpreted K's favors as excessive amae and my feeling of friendship with K was not close enough to do such favors. Their view was that K was just *using* me, and took advantage of me. One said that she was not my *friend* .

Whether or not K was operating in the American or the Japanese system may be the difficult question. Usually, Japanese staying in the U.S. do not classify their interactions with others into the American way and the Japanese way. The covert agreement seems to be made according to the individual personality and the nature of the interaction. As Adler (1976) states, "The identity of multicultural man is based, not on a 'belongness' which implies either owning or being owned by a culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality. He is neither totally a part of nor totally apart from his culture" (p. 364). Thus, one of the sources of the conflict I had with K may have been a difference in the degrees of "multiculturality." However, no matter how much we are "multicultural," the model of negotiation is based on the cultural method with which both of us are familiar: American, Japanese or a mixture of both. Therefore, to know the variables which are important in the negotiation which involves amae seems important.

The source of unexpected conflict such as above depends on the degree of intimacy estimated by both parties. As above authors state, in

order to amaeru (verb form of amae), Japanese have to estimate the degree of favors and relationship at each occasion. From Japanese' point of view, K , first of all, did not agree with me regarding our degree of relationship, and second, our evaluation of the degree of favor was not in agreement. Therefore, the negotiation was not done effectively.

The situation in which Japanese measure the degree and kind of amae is depend on the feeling of closeness obtained in the relationship. That is, the feeling of intimacy to some extent determines kind and degree of amae. However, the concept of intimacy in Japan seems different from that of America. According to Hsu, "intimate" relations imply "relationships in which all parties can afford to let their guards down, can communicate their worst troubles to each other without the fear of rejection, and can count on comfort, sympathy, and help from each other without the onus of charity" (p. 26).

If Japanese' understanding of relationship with others is similar to that of Americans, cross-cultural communication conflict is relatively easy to solve. Just saying "no" to a "friend" for a "small favor" in America includes various culturally bound definitions. Thus, the tendency of inter-dependency behavior in Japan includes complex evaluation of other



variables as well.

The above illustration suggests that in the cross-cultural interaction of Japanese and Americans, various variables in the specific context should be taken into account. Relational factors such as the degree of relationship in Japanese terms are considered necessary variable in order to understand Japanese communication behaviors. This position will be the main discussion of the next section.

## 5. "Contextualism"

Hamaguchi (1985) uses the term "methodological individualism" to indicate the paradigms used in analysis of past and existing Japanese studies on behavior (p. 291). This paradigm includes Western notions of "the individual," "the group," or "personality" as a theoretical framework. The "group" notion of the Western world, is also perceived differently in Japan. The questions are, again, regarding the assumption and definition of "group" in various contexts. In other words, to what extent individuality is taken into consideration in group work is one question. Furthermore, critical discussion focuses on what individuality in Japan consists of and how this is different from American individuality. This is not a discussion of the rejection of importance of group notion in the Western world. The main concern is: In what kind of situation, is what kind of individuality taken into account for the purpose of the system.

In the college environment, many Japanese students experience difficulty in cooperating with American students when group work is assigned. A Japanese knows, when he/she works as a member of a group, that group work has to be done at the expense of personal interest (American notion). He/she has to come to the place for a meeting at a specific time and proceeds to participate in whatever work is assigned. However, the tendency to have difficulties in obtaining consensus and

cooperation among members of a group which consists of American and Japanese students is often indicated by the Japanese students. In a situation like this, a Japanese often encounters excuses and explanations which American students make for not doing the expected work. These excuses and explanations are not expected by Japanese, because for them, group commitment and actual pursuit are evaluated more importantly. Group is considered as the place for commitment by Japanese.

The Japanese "collectivistic inclination" is often indicated by various researchers (e.g., Nakane, 1974 ). The principle of this behavior is interpreted as "to contribute to the group goal at the expense of his personal interest (Lebra 1976 p. 34). However, this interpretation does not seem to effectively explain the Japanese behaviors.

An alternate way of interpreting behaviors of "collectivistic inclination" would be to understand that an individual tends to make commitment in organized activity because he/she knows that interdependency and complementary relationships are the means to an end. This alternate view allows us to see that there is individuality and self-reliance in decision making rather than a sacrificing of personal goals to the group goal as in the Western interpretation.

Kida (1983) interprets the "collectivistic inclination" in decision making of a village assembly or in any organization as follows. "Of course

the majority rule is liberal, but it is not accepted as the best way to survive everyone in peace. The Japanese know the worst way to organize people is to divide up the group into segments" (p. 3). Here, interdependence is considered as a condition to bring about welfare to everyone.

Japanese common thinking is that if two persons help each other, the product or the result would be better than the sum of two persons' effort. One plus one becomes three, they believe. This extra "one" is explained by Hamaguchi (1985) as culturally-formed relations of self and others. He advocates that the unit of analysis for Japanese and other East Asian behavioral research be the contextual rather than the individual. Hamaguchi's term for the contextual is kanjin shugi, which - as Lebra (1974) comments - fails, when translated ("mutual dependence," "mutual reliance," "regard for Interpersonal relations as an end in itself"), to convey its unique meaning (p. 463). But let us see what the contextual perspective is, regardless of Hamaguchi's name for it, and the problem of name translation.

In a communication situation, the kanjin (Japanese, in this sense.) changes his/her bun (share, status, role, or slot) according to the relationship with others and the atmosphere which includes nuances of relationship at the specific time and place. Therefore, the variables which

are included in deciding the communication behavior of Japanese are more complex than what Westerners have thought them to be. Furthermore, each factor has to be regarded as functioning only in relation with the other factors. The selected multivariables work simultaneously with the vivid creature-like atmospheres called "ki," (to be defined). What is called the change in the unit of analysis does not include clear-cut division between individuals, and separate entity of self. Thus identification of the group goal with an individual one naturally exists.

Ki in Chinese philosophy is considered as the power of life (Onishi, 1957, p. 1) It exists not only in living creatures but also in all substances in the natural world. It is considered as a principle of life, such as spirit. In Japanese psychology and interpersonal relationships, ki loosely means "mind," "spirit," or "heart." "The use of the word ki occurs in over 40 such expressions which may be classified roughly into the following categories; (1) consciousness, awareness, or sanity, (2) interest, intention, or volition, (3) mood, feelings, or emotions, (4) temperament, heart, or mind," (Wagatsuma, 1983, p. 200). However, these usages do not include compound words such as kuuki (air, atmosphere), taiki (atmosphere), fun'iki (atmosphere), seiki (ether, essence, spirit), kouki (flavor, savor, smell fume) and so on. As Doi (1956) explains, ki is the "mind in action" (p. 95). The word fun'iki and kuuki includes the relation which is called

aidagara by Kumon (Hamaguchi and Kumon, 1986, p. 91). This relation is considered to have its own ki. In other words, ki of aidagara is considered to play an independent role between individuals. The power of this ki is, thus, beyond the individual's control and manipulation.

The concept of "self" of a Japanese, thus changes according to the context. For example, the change to call "myself" or "I" taking place such as watashi, boku, ore, atakushi, temae, otousan, okaasan, and so on, is dependent on context. The label of other parties, also, accordingly changes. Suzuki (1976) demonstrates how these words for self and others change accordingly: "For example, in many families today fathers identify themselves in conversation with their children as otousan (father-polite) or papa. But if that same man who calls himself papa to his children is, let us say, a schoolteacher, then he will probably call himself sensei (teacher) when he is talking to his pupils in school. And should he find a lost child crying by the roadside, he will most likely call himself ojisan (uncle; general term for male adults when addressed by children), and say something like, 'stop crying, now. Ojisan will see that you get home all right,'" (p. 255). By looking into the terms for self and the address terms (terms for others) of Japanese and making comparisons between other European languages, Turkish, Arabic, and the languages of the Eurasian subcontinent, Suzuki found an interesting psychological tendency of

Japanese. In his study of a forty-year-old male elementary school teacher, Suzuki found seven terms for self and nine terms for others including a personal name. More broadly, he found that the usage of Japanese terms for self and others has a function of mutual recognition and clarification of role of both parties at the specific time and space. This is because the English term for self, "I," does not require "others" to indicate "self." The "self" in English precedes "others" as "ego." That is, the "I" is recognized first and the "others" next. In the Japanese case, Suzuki argues that the order reverses. Only after "others" are recognized in the specific situation is the term for "self" determined (Suzuki 1973 p. 196). He labels this process "other-dependent type self-definition." "The self is defined in relation to the addressee, only after having assimilated oneself into the addressee's position (Suzuki, 1976, p. 265). Thus, Japanese are able to start having communication with confidence only after they see others in face-to-face situation at specific time and space and understand relationship to others in a larger context.

The aidagara consists of three bun (share, status, role or slot) and they include shokubun (the bun to accomplish the goal in the various life situations based on one's concept of occupation or duty), mibun (qualification for the shokubun), and kibun (atmosphere and feeling of whole situation based on ki). These three factors are required to provide

a full foundation for Japanese communication behavior. The first shokubun is a constantly changing role or status according to the other parties; the second mibun is a non-manipulatable condition of self which is heavily related to the concept of classification of people (or race) in Japan; and the last kibun is a constantly changing atmosphere and feeling of the whole situation based on ki. Kibun is the bun of ki, thus the individual is considered to share the ki of aidagara.

The above explanation of difference in the units of analysis is really based on the view of Japanese. Use of such a perspective would give a more appropriate picture and explanation of Japanese communication behavior.



## VI. Conclusions

The amount of interaction between Japanese and Americans has been increasing year after year. These potential cross-cultural encounters present a situation in which both people need to learn each other's communication behaviors. However, the information available to both parties in understanding each other's cultural behavior has not brought about effective understanding. Rather, this information has only encouraged distorted images of each other.

This thesis focused on information on Japanese behavior. In order to compare two different cultural behaviors, the issues of assumptions and criteria involved in "similarities" and "differences" were raised. The discussion implied that the moment we compare two variables, we have already assumed agreement in similarities in a different level of thought. In other words, the comparability is covertly assumed before the comparison of the intended level is done. The result of lack of recognition of this assumption in various literatures is seen as providing a negatively-stereotyped American view of Japanese, as well as resulting in many

contradictions and discrepancies. The reexamination of Japanese studies demonstrated some of these contradictions and discrepancies.

Hamaguchi's "contextualism" suggests that we take three things into account in order to analyze Japanese communication behaviors: shokubun, mibun, and kibun. The analysis of aidagara based on these concepts seems to explain Japanese communication patterns more appropriately. This is a difference in the units of analysis. All the communication conflicts which were presented in this thesis could be well explained by the difference in looking at the aidagara of Japanese and the relationship of Americans. The reason why I could not answer the questionnaires prepared by other researchers became clear. I needed the appropriate information to decide on the answer for whatever the question asked. And the appropriate information must have emic content.

Hamaguchi suggests that we extend the usage of kanjinshugi to measure other cultures. However, I do not agree with the idea of applying this paradigm to the Western cultural behaviors. As Lebra (1984) states, this would be another case of improper imposition of emic interpretation: "If Western ethnocentrism is to be ruled out, so should Japanese ethnocentrism." (p. 463) Emic is thus a culturally bound standard. The comparison of two or more cultures based on the emic of one culture

(including "methodological individualism") is, in other words an ethnocentric view. What seems available is to apply the emic standard to the individual substance level of a given culture, and the etic standard to the process, logic, structure, and organizational principles.

## NOTES

## NOTES

1. The total number of foreigners who came to Japan is 2,036,488 and the ones who left is 2,005,182, according to the Ministry of Justice (1986a).
2. Natural selection is defined as "the mechanism by which changes occur in a population as a result of some individuals having more surviving offspring than others." Plog, F., & Bates, D. G., (1980). *Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, P. 20.
3. If persons B and C agree that person A is acting in accordance with intention Y, then A *has* intention Y. in Miller (1966).
4. Because the second meaning is limited to the geometry usage which is more relevant here, it is omitted.
5. The argument over racism stated by the former prime minister Nakasone was widely held, in 1986. (Time, Oct. 6, 1986, pp. 66-67; Business Week, Oct. 13, 1986, p. 66). E. C. P. Stewart (Asahi Evening News, Nov. 5, 1986) commented on Nakasone's remarks on "'intelligent' Japan compared with American minority groups." Stewart uses several concepts such as uchi (inside) versus universal, and race (inclusive)

versus race (exclusive) to explain. "For the Japanese, race refers primarily to the inclusive primordial sentiment of identity, the 'Yamato People.'" For Westerners, race is "exclusive," because "identity is rooted in the individual." And this concept is historically believed to be used "to attain political integration, particularly beginning with the Meiji period, and ending with the Pacific War" (Stewart, 1986 in Asahi Evening News, Nov. 5, 1986). Thus, Nakasone's remarks based on the inclusive concept of race seems to have been criticized from the exclusive concept of Western race.

6. This empathic skill is discussed widely in various literatures (Lebra, 1976, pp. 38-49; Gudykunst et al., 1986, p. 572). Lebra defines the omoiyari (empathy) as "the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling, to vicariously experience the pleasure or pain that they are undergoing, and to help them satisfy their wishes" (p. 38). "The ideal in omoiyari is for Ego to enter into Alter's kokoro (heart), and to absorb all information about Alter's feelings without being told verbally" (p. 38).
7. Emic and etic views were first introduced by Pike (1966) from the discussion of phonetics (vocal utterances that are universal) and phonemics (culturally specific vocal utterances).

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