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## Adjustment of criticism styles in Japanese returnees to Japan

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### Abstract

This study examined Japanese returnees' readjustments in criticism styles. First, we showed that criticism styles between Japanese and Americans were different, suggesting that Japanese sojourners need to adjust their criticism styles. Second, we tested Japanese returnees' criticism styles in two contexts: when interacting with either another Japanese person or with an American. Returnees differentiated their criticism styles based on these contexts; they preferred indirect criticism styles when interacting with other Japanese, which is contrary to stereotypical images about Japanese returnees. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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### 1. Introduction

Cross-cultural adjustment and readjustment are linked stages, and people's reentry must be understood as part of the entire intercultural adaptation process (Martin & Harrell, 1996). According to Kim's (1995) "stress-adaptation-growth model", sojourners experience internal transformations in their cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns by coping with intercultural challenges. Consequently, reentry involves adjustment to not only changes in the home culture that occur during sojourn, but also in returnees. A number of variables are related to those changes and are indicators of readjustment difficulties, including degree of cross-cultural

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adaptation (Bochner, 1973; Brislin, 1981; Brislin & Van Buren, 1974), gender (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990; Gama & Pederson, 1977), values (Uehara, 1986), and role conflicts (Bochner, Lin, & Mclead, 1980; Gama & Pederson, 1977).

As a major contributor to sojourners' changes, communication plays an important role in cultural adaptation. Kim (1995) said "... host communication competence facilitates their cross-cultural adaptation process in a most direct and significant way" (p. 180). In addition to grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, sojourners internalize the host national's communication norms. In fact, sojourners who successfully adapt to the host culture are able to switch their communication patterns toward those of the hosts (Kim, 1988). We call this "communication adjustment".

Martin's (1993) Reentry System Theory extended Kim's model, by suggesting that sojourners grow personally and intellectually through communication in their reentry environment (Martin & Harrell, 1996). When people return to their native countries, they learn how they have changed through interactions with others in their home culture (Koester, 1983; Martin, 1986a), and adjust their communication styles in order to reintegrate. We call this "communication readjustment". This also facilitates "Optimal competence" (Pearce & Kang, 1987), which refers to the internalization of more than one culture and the ability to communicate flexibly based on each cultural context. Therefore, returnees are expected to gain a broader communication repertoire during the communication readjustment process.

A few studies have examined aspects of communication readjustment, including sojourner's relationships during reentry (Brabant et al., 1990; Gama & Pederson, 1977; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1986a), perceived changes in communication with reentry relationships (Martin, 1986b), and returnees' interactions with their family or friends involving the sharing of information, coping with communication problems, and becoming bridge-builders (Wilson, 1993). No study, however, has specifically investigated communication readjustment itself. This study did so with Japanese returnees.

## 2. US–Japanese cultural differences in communication styles

Communication adjustment and readjustment occur when sojourners and returnees face great cultural differences. Americans' preference for direct communication styles in contrast to Japanese tendencies for indirect forms can be explained by Hall's (1976) concept of contextualization and Hofstede's (1996) concepts of individualism and power distance. In Hofstede's (1996) research, the US rated higher on individualism and lower on power distance than Japan. In Japan, people prefer to achieve group consensus and avoid conflict, especially in vertical relationships. Thus, direct forms of communication are interpreted as confrontational and face-threatening (Nishiyama, 1972; Okabe, 1987). Also, relatively high-power distance cultures like Japan foster status differences; people modify their behaviors based on



hierarchies more than do relatively low-power distance cultures such as the US, and high-context cultures such as Japan rely more on indirect and implicit communication because much information is conveyed by context, which is internalized in each individual; low-context cultures such as the US value direct and explicit communication.

US–Japanese cultural differences in communication styles have been reported in studies examining such topics as affect orientation (Frymier, Klopf, & Ishii, 1990), apologies (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990), argumentativeness (Prunty, Klopf, & Ishii, 1990), compliments (Barnlund & Araki, 1985), preferred speaking styles (Cambra, Ishii, & Klopf, 1978), communication patterns (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994), self-disclosure (Barnlund, 1989), social style (Ishii, Thompson, & Klopf, 1990), criticism styles (Nomura & Barnlund, 1983) and so on. In most cases, these differences have been interpreted according to the framework discussed above.

### **3. Reentry processes and readjustment in Japanese returnees**

Japanese society tends to view returnees' behaviors and communication styles acquired from their overseas experiences negatively (Kidder, 1992; Miyachi, 1990; Sussman, 1986; White, 1988). As a relatively homogeneous, group-oriented society, Japan is intolerant of aberration and difference. Returnees, therefore, are under pressure to act as other Japanese and often try hard to assimilate (Kidder, 1992; Miyachi, 1990). Even before returning, Japanese sojourners anticipate readjustment problems with high anxiety (Miyachi, 1990; Sussman, 1986), and are more keenly aware of communication style differences between their host and home cultures, and are more motivated to switch their styles according to cultural contexts.

Japanese returnees do indeed acquire more direct communication styles during cultural adaptation (Kidder, 1992; Minoura, 1991). The stereotypical image of Japanese returnees, therefore, suggests that they keep these communication styles even when they switch back to Japanese (Kobayashi, 1983). It has been suggested that returnees who become accustomed to English communication styles have difficulty following Japanese indirect norms (Kidder, 1992; Kume, 1989). Ultimately, those who express themselves more directly due to their sojourn experiences face more severe reentry culture shock.

No study, however, has tested the notion that Japanese returnees who go through communication adjustment in the US readjust their styles upon return to Japan. This study addresses this void, focusing on criticism styles as an example of communication that may vary during adjustment and readjustment. In addition, Japanese returnees' communication styles were examined in two contexts — when interacting with Americans and with Japanese — and two levels of status — classmates and teachers. Previous studies have suggested that Japanese returnees experience difficulties in style switching based on status differences while communicating with Japanese interlocutors (White, 1988); our incorporation of this variable thus extended previous findings in this area.



We tested the following hypotheses:

- H1: (a) Japanese will employ more indirect forms of criticism toward classmates and teachers than Americans, and (b) the differences between classmates and teachers will be larger for Japanese than for Americans.
- H2: (a) Japanese returnees will employ more indirect forms of criticism toward Japanese classmates and teachers, but more direct forms toward American classmates and teachers, and (b) the differences between classmates and teachers will be larger in Japanese contexts than in American contexts.
- H3: (a) Japanese returnees will employ more direct forms of criticism toward Japanese classmates and teachers than Japanese, and (b) the differences between classmates and teachers will be larger for Japanese than for returnees.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Participants

One hundred nine Japanese (40 male, 69 female, mean age = 21 years), 111 Americans (38 male, 73 female, mean age = 25 years), and 70 Japanese returnees (19 male, 51 female, mean age = 20 years) participated. The Japanese and Japanese returnees were students at universities in and around Tokyo. The Americans were students at a major university in San Francisco. Forty of the Japanese sample had been abroad (mean length abroad approximately 6 weeks). The Americans consisted of 68 European Americans, 6 African-American, 14 Asian-American, 7 Hispanic-American, and 16 others; three had been abroad (mean length abroad approximately three months). All of the Japanese returnees had been in the US longer than 12 months (mean length approximately 48 months); English was the primary language used at school for all except one who had education in both Japanese and English; and mean length of stay in Japan since returning from the last sojourn was approximately 46 months. Although there were significant group differences in age between Japanese and American participants,  $F(2, 283) = 38.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , correlations between age and each item computed separately for social context in each group were not significant; thus we concluded that age did not confound the findings.

### 4.2. Instrument

Three versions of a questionnaire were created for all participants. All employed the same “disappointment” episode from Nomura and Barnlund’s (1983) Interpersonal Criticism Questionnaire. This episode was selected because their research found the greatest differences between Americans and Japanese on this situation. This episode was presented twice with one of two target persons each time:



(a) a same-sex classmate of the same age, and (b) a same-sex teacher. The original episode was adjusted to be realistic for both target persons. The final version read as follows “Your art class gave you an assignment to see an exhibition at an art museum. You asked (target person) for directions to the art museum. You looked for the museum following the directions he/she gave, but the directions were entirely wrong”. In the Japanese and English versions, the nationality of the target persons were matched to the subject, and the hypothetical incidents were written as taking place in their respective country. The version for the Japanese returnees consisted of two parts. The first part was in Japanese, and included hypothetical situations taking place with Japanese target persons in Japan; the second part was in English, and included hypothetical incidents happening with American target persons in the US.

Ten criticism styles from Nomura and Barnlund’s (1983) Dissatisfaction Scale (see the Appendix A) were employed. They were slightly modified to render the items more appropriate for rating. The questionnaire was originally drafted in English, and translation accuracy was verified using back-translation procedures, which occurred without incident.

#### *4.3. Procedure*

Subjects completed the questionnaire either individually or in a classroom, along with a demographic survey that included detailed questions about sojourn experiences. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to assess how people would react to situations in which they found another person’s behavior dissatisfying. They were asked to imagine themselves in these situations and to rate how likely they would employ each criticism style on a 7-point scale from 0, would never do it, to 6, do it all the time.

#### *4.4. Scoring*

Principal component factor analyses with Varimax rotation were conducted to examine whether any underlying factors existed among the 10 criticism styles. Analyses were conducted separately for each target person and cultural context, and separately for each sample as well as aggregated across samples. No factor was identified consistently across samples and situations; thus each style was analyzed separately, using Nomura and Barnlund’s (1983) classification as a guideline: higher scores on criticism styles 1 through 5 (“passive withdrawing”) were interpreted as indirect while higher scores on items 6 through 10 (“active aggressing”) were direct.

### **5. Results**

All hypotheses were tested by full-factorial ANOVAs with analytic comparisons using the error terms from the appropriate interaction in the overall ANOVAs. Bonferroni tests were used to control for Type I error (Keppel, 1991).



### 5.1. Hypotheses 1a & 1b

A four-way ANOVA (Country  $\times$  Gender  $\times$  Target Person  $\times$  Criticism Styles) was computed on the American and Japanese data. The main effect of country was significant,  $F(1, 210) = 14.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that cultural response sets might be operative. Thus, we standardized the data within country and recomputed the overall four-way ANOVA.

The interaction effect of country by target person by criticism styles was significant,  $F(9, 1890) = 6.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; thus, we examined the simple effects of country separately for each criticism style and target person. (The non-significant four-way interaction indicated that gender did not affect these analyses, and was thus ignored.) With classmates, we found significant cultural differences for criticism styles 1 (hiding dissatisfaction), 5 (humorously), and 8 (sarcastically) in the predicted direction (Table 1). Americans, however, had significantly higher scores on passive style 2 (to a third person) than did Japanese. With teachers, Japanese and Americans significantly differed on criticism styles 1 (hiding dissatisfaction), 4 (ambiguously), 6 (constructive suggestions), and 7 (directly) in the predicted direction (Table 1). Thus Hypothesis 1a received considerable support.

To address Hypothesis 1b, simple effects of target person were computed on each item separately for each country.  $R^2$  effect sizes for target person were calculated, converted to Fisher's  $z$  (Cohen & Cohen, 1983, p. 53), and compared using  $z$ -tests. None was significant; thus, hypothesis 1b was not supported.

### 5.2. Hypotheses 2a & 2b

A four-way ANOVA (Gender  $\times$  Cultural Contexts: US and Japan  $\times$  Target Person  $\times$  Criticism Styles) was computed on the Japanese returnees' data. The cultural context by target person by criticism styles interaction was significant,  $F(9, 594) = 3.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; thus, simple effects of cultural context were computed separately on each item for each target person. Once again, the non-significant four-way interaction indicated that gender did not affect these analyses, and was ignored. Toward classmates, Japanese returnees' ratings on criticism styles 1 (hiding dissatisfaction), 2 (to a third person), 5 (humorously), 6 (constructive suggestion), and 7 (directly) were significantly different across cultural contexts in the predicted direction (Table 2). We also found significant differences for criticism styles 1 (hiding dissatisfaction), 2 (to a third person), 6 (constructive suggestion), and 7 (directly) toward teachers in the predicted direction (Table 2). The only finding contrary to hypothesis was higher ratings on a passive criticism style 3 in the American context. Thus, Hypothesis 2a was supported.

To address Hypothesis 2b, simple effects of target person were computed on each item separately for each cultural context. Effect sizes for target persons were converted to  $z$  scores and differences between cultural contexts were tested using  $z$ -tests. None was significant; thus, Hypothesis 2b was not supported.



Table 1  
Descriptive statistics and country simple effects analyses testing hypothesis 1a

Target person	Criticism styles	Country		SS <sup>a</sup>	F <sup>b</sup>	p
		Japan	US			
Classmate	Item 1	0.69 <sup>c</sup> (2.56) <sup>d</sup>	-0.27(2.09)	49.70	18.27	<0.001
	Item 2	1.06(2.73)	2.06(2.39)	54.44	20.01	<0.001
	Item 3	0.60(2.83)	0.58(2.56)	0.02	0.01	ns
	Item 4	0.12(2.78)	-0.30(2.16)	9.32	3.43	ns
	Item 5	3.26(2.68)	2.06(2.37)	79.14	29.10	<0.001
	Item 6	0.19(2.68)	0.52(2.39)	5.97	2.20	ns
	Item 7	1.03(3.07)	1.23(2.57)	2.15	0.79	ns
	Item 8	-0.87(2.66)	0.07(2.57)	47.61	17.50	<0.001
	Item 9	-0.99(2.55)	-1.40(1.97)	9.37	3.44	ns
	Item 10	-2.82(1.54)	-2.34(1.77)	12.64	4.65	ns
Teacher	Item 1	1.91(2.84)	0.35(2.44)	132.72	48.79	<0.001
	Item 2	3.09(2.24)	2.68(2.12)	8.82	3.24	ns
	Item 3	-0.34(2.62)	-0.13(2.50)	2.38	0.88	ns
	Item 4	0.38(3.07)	-0.79(2.24)	75.18	27.64	<0.001
	Item 5	0.90(2.97)	1.26(2.45)	7.17	2.63	ns
	Item 6	-1.12(2.73)	0.24(2.47)	100.28	36.87	<0.001
	Item 7	0.15(2.90)	0.82(2.71)	4.49	9.01	<0.005
	Item 8	-2.03(2.14)	-1.53(2.19)	13.55	4.98	ns
	Item 9	-2.00(2.01)	-2.43(1.60)	10.05	3.70	ns
	Item 10	-3.12(1.02)	-2.92(1.36)	2.14	0.79	ns

<sup>a</sup> All dfs are 1,1890.

<sup>b</sup> F was calculated using the repeated-measures error term for an interaction effect of country by target person by criticism styles from the overall ANOVA using standardized scores (SS = 5142.80, DF = 1890, MS = 2.72).

<sup>c</sup> Mean.

<sup>d</sup> Standard deviation.

### 5.3. Hypotheses 3a & 3b

A four-way ANOVA (Group: Japanese v. Japanese returnees in Japan × Gender × Target Person × Criticism Styles) was computed to address Hypotheses 3a and 3b. The group by target person by criticism styles interaction was significant,  $F(9, 1557) = 2.33$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Once again, the non-significant four-way interaction indicated that gender did not affect these analyses, and was ignored. The simple effects of group were thus computed separately for each criticism style and target person.

Toward classmates, there were significant group differences for criticism styles 1 (hiding dissatisfaction), 2 (to a third person), 8 (sarcastically), and 9 (angrily) (Table 3); all of these trends, however, except style 2 were opposite to the predicted direction. Toward teachers, Japanese and Japanese returnees significantly differed on criticism styles 2 (to a third person), 8 (sarcastically), and 9 (angrily) toward the



Table 2  
Descriptive statistics and cultural context simple effects analyses testing hypothesis 2a

Target person	Criticism styles	Cultural context		SS <sup>a</sup>	F <sup>b</sup>	p
		Japan	US			
Classmate	Item 1	3.37 <sup>c</sup> (1.59) <sup>d</sup>	2.50(1.77)	26.58	35.44	<0.001
	Item 2	2.39(1.69)	1.96(1.54)	6.43	8.57	<0.005
	Item 3	2.63(1.65)	2.66(1.74)	0.03	0.04	ns
	Item 4	2.10(1.85)	1.94(1.68)	0.86	1.15	ns
	Item 5	4.09(1.60)	3.67(1.82)	6.01	8.01	<0.005
	Item 6	2.36(1.78)	2.90(1.92)	9.92	13.23	<0.001
	Item 7	2.51(1.93)	4.09(1.73)	86.43	115.24	<0.001
	Item 8	0.84(1.21)	0.89(1.31)	0.06	0.08	ns
	Item 9	0.74(1.22)	0.91(1.37)	1.03	1.37	ns
	Item 10	0.17(0.56)	0.30(.81)	0.58	0.77	ns
Teacher	Item 1	3.71(1.88)	3.04(1.88)	15.78	21.04	<0.001
	Item 2	3.37(1.97)	2.54(1.69)	24.03	32.04	<0.001
	Item 3	1.90(1.64)	2.36(1.60)	7.31	9.75	<0.005
	Item 4	2.14(1.82)	2.17(1.73)	0.03	0.04	ns
	Item 5	2.50(1.86)	2.89(1.77)	5.21	6.95	ns
	Item 6	1.66(1.90)	2.13(1.89)	7.78	10.37	<0.005
	Item 7	2.70(2.00)	3.61(1.82)	29.26	39.01	<0.001
	Item 8	0.47(0.86)	0.67(1.11)	1.40	1.87	ns
	Item 9	0.49(0.94)	0.55(1.05)	0.12	0.16	ns
	Item 10	0.24(0.69)	0.26(0.76)	0.01	0.01	ns

<sup>a</sup>All dfs are 1,594.

<sup>b</sup>F was calculated using the repeated-measures error term for an interaction effect of cultural context by target person by criticism styles from the overall ANOVA (SS = 445.25, DF = 594, MS = 0.75).

<sup>c</sup>Mean.

<sup>d</sup>Standard deviation.

teacher (Table 3). All of them except style 2 were contrary to the hypothesis. Thus, Hypothesis 3a was not supported; in fact, the opposite was found, with Japanese returnees appearing “more Japanese” than did Japanese.

To address Hypothesis 3b, simple effects of target person were computed separately for each item and group. Effect sizes were calculated and converted to *z* scores. *z*-tests did not support group differences in the modification of criticism styles based on interlocutor’s status; thus, Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

## 6. Discussion

As predicted, Japanese preferred to use indirect criticism styles such as “hiding dissatisfaction” toward both target persons, and to express dissatisfaction “ambiguously” to teachers and “humorously” to classmates more than did Americans. Americans preferred using direct criticism styles such as expressing dissatisfaction “through constructive suggestions” and “in a direct way” toward



Table 3  
Descriptive statistics and sample simple effects analyses testing hypothesis 3a

Target person	Criticism styles	Sample		SS <sup>a</sup>	F <sup>b</sup>	p
		Japanese	Japanese returnees			
Classmate	Item 1	2.69 <sup>c</sup> (1.61) <sup>d</sup>	3.37(1.59)	19.47	14.97	<0.001
	Item 2	2.93(1.72)	2.39(1.69)	12.39	9.53	<0.005
	Item 3	2.64(1.79)	2.63(1.65)	0.00	0.00	ns
	Item 4	2.33(1.75)	2.10(1.85)	2.31	1.78	ns
	Item 5	4.31(1.69)	4.09(1.60)	2.23	1.72	ns
	Item 6	2.38(1.69)	2.36(1.78)	0.01	0.01	ns
	Item 7	2.91(1.93)	2.51(1.93)	6.56	5.05	ns
	Item 8	1.71(1.67)	0.84(1.21)	32.15	24.73	<0.001
	Item 9	1.64(1.61)	0.74(1.22)	34.10	26.92	<0.001
	Item 10	0.48(0.97)	0.17(0.56)	4.08	3.14	ns
Teacher	Item 1	3.46(1.79)	3.71(1.88)	2.68	2.06	ns
	Item 2	4.20(1.41)	3.37(1.96)	29.42	22.63	<0.001
	Item 3	2.05(1.65)	1.90(1.64)	0.91	0.70	ns
	Item 4	2.50(1.94)	2.14(1.82)	5.42	4.17	ns
	Item 5	2.82(1.87)	2.50(1.86)	4.46	3.43	ns
	Item 6	1.56(1.72)	1.66(1.90)	0.44	0.34	ns
	Item 7	2.35(1.83)	2.70(2.00)	5.15	3.96	ns
	Item 8	0.98(1.35)	0.47(0.86)	11.05	8.50	<0.005
	Item 9	1.00(1.27)	0.49(0.94)	11.23	8.64	<0.005
	Item 10	0.30(0.65)	0.24(0.69)	0.12	0.09	ns

<sup>a</sup>All dfs are 11,557.

<sup>b</sup>F was calculated using the repeated-measures error term for an interaction effect of group by target person by criticism styles from the overall ANOVA (SS = 2024.10, DF = 1557, MS = 1.30).

<sup>c</sup>Mean.

<sup>d</sup>Standard deviation.

teachers and “with sarcastic remarks” toward classmates far more than did Japanese. These findings reinforce the notion that Japanese tend to employ indirect forms of criticism to keep group harmony. In a high-context culture such as Japan, avoiding conflicts and saving the other person’s face are fundamental to communication. Straightforward expressions are avoided in order not to threaten target persons’ face (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Both Japanese and Americans hesitated to express their dissatisfaction angrily or in an insulting way regardless of the target persons’ status. Non-significant cultural differences in these styles showed that using these extremely direct expressions were considered unacceptable in both cultures.

Americans preferred to express dissatisfaction toward classmates “to a third person” more than did Japanese, which was unexpected. Multiple interpretations of this finding exist. For example, it may be due to the nature of interpersonal relationships in Japanese society, which is generally characterized by a strong sense of belongingness and long-term commitment. Revealing negative feelings about a classmate to a third person may affect the third person’s feelings towards the target



person, which may affect group dynamics, leading Japanese to be cautious about using this style. However, when Japanese subjects felt dissatisfaction toward teachers, they did not hesitate as much to tell that to a third person, indicated by higher mean scores and non-significant group differences. These probably occurred because teachers do not typically belong to students' ingroups and would not have a direct influence on their group dynamics.

This finding may have also occurred because of a greater tendency in the US for Americans to use third party disclosure as a means to access power, or to achieve personal goals in interpersonal relationships. That is, Americans may see third party disclosures, particularly of criticisms, as a way of furthering personal gains, or even to cope with the stress and frustration of the episode that gave rise to the criticism in the first place. In either case, these interpretations, and others, need to be examined further.

Although Hypothesis 2b was not supported, the patterns of significant and non-significant differences between Americans and Japanese seemed to reflect power distance. With the exception of criticism style 1 (hiding dissatisfaction), all significant differences were found either toward classmates or teachers, but not toward both. The results of criticism styles 6, 7, and 8 gave particularly interesting insights.

Significant cultural differences were also found in criticism styles 6 ("through constructive suggestions") and 7 ("in a direct way") toward teachers but not toward classmates, with both groups rating lower on these styles toward classmates than toward teachers. But, the differences in American scores between target persons were not as great as the Japanese scores, which could be interpreted as indicative of a stronger sensitivity towards power distance than Americans. Japanese returnees differentiated their criticism styles in the predicted directions based on cultural context, suggesting that Japanese returnees followed Japanese high-context, collectivistic norms, favoring Japanese standards. A slight gesture or facial expressions were used more frequently toward American teachers than Japanese. Although this finding seems contradictory to the hypothesis, it may also reflect Japanese cultural norms of facial expressions toward a higher-status person. In Friesen's (1972) study, for example, Japanese participants masked their facial expressions by displaying either no emotion or by smiling when they saw disgusting stimuli in the presence of a higher-status experimenter. Americans expressed disgust whether they were alone or with the experimenter. These findings suggest that Japanese are more sensitive about showing negative nonverbal expressions toward higher status people than Americans.

The findings also indicated that Japanese returnees adjusted their criticism styles, using a straightforward approach with Americans while using passive criticism styles with Japanese. That is, they exhibited communication flexibility reflecting the social norms of the cultural context in which they were engaged. In fact, contrary to our hypotheses, Japanese returnees unexpectedly preferred to use more indirect criticism styles than did Japanese, and did not differ based on the interlocutors' status. Japanese returnees showed significantly stronger preferences in criticism styles such as "hiding dissatisfaction" toward classmates, while Japanese preferred to use criticism styles such as "with sarcastic remarks" and "expressing angrily" towards



both target persons. Significant group differences in “expressing to a third person” in both social contexts was in the expected direction; even this, however, might reflect Japanese returnees’ sensitivity to the nature of ingroup relationships as discussed earlier.

These findings suggest that, in spite of their stereotyped image, Japanese returnees follow Japanese cultural norms and even interacted in a more indirect manner than did Japanese, contradicting previous notions (Minoura, 1991; Uehara, 1986). We interpret this over-adjustment as Japanese returnees’ attempt at self-protection from rejection. To fit back into the collectivistic Japanese society, they suppress their expressiveness and follow stereotypic Japanese cultural norms (Kidder, 1992). Though they need to reduce the gap between their style and that of other Japanese, these findings indicate that Japanese returnees gain bicultural communication skills, and may even overcompensate when engaging in their home culture.

This research was not conducted without limitations. In particular, the use of a single episode and only same-sex target persons limit the findings, which clearly need to be replicated across multiple episodes with multiple interactants. In addition, unequal sample sizes may have resulted in weak power and less control of Type II error (Keppel & Saufley, 1980). Heterogeneous profiles of the Japanese returnees, such as their age at the time of their sojourn, length of sojourn, and length of stay in Japan since returning need to be controlled more. These factors may influence the degree of cultural adaptation and readjustment, and may contribute to cultural differences in criticism strategies discovered in this study. These limitations may be addressed in future studies in which various communication styles among returnees are examined in different social contexts besides criticism styles in vertical relationships.

Nevertheless, the findings reported in this study are interesting and provocative about the nature of communication adjustment and readjustment of Japanese returnees, and suggest the need for future research involving peer ratings or qualitative approaches to examine possible discrepancies between cognitive and behavioral levels of returnees’ communication styles. Additionally, future studies will need to incorporate psychological dimensions of culture, such as individualism–collectivism, as possible mediators of the cultural differences observed in this study. Such studies will undoubtedly help to improve our understanding of the cultural distance and issues Japanese returnees have to deal with..

#### **Appendix A. modified criticism items of Nomura and Barnlund’s (1983) dissatisfaction scale**

##### *Criticism styles*

1. I attempt to hide my dissatisfaction from this person.
2. I express my dissatisfaction to a third person.
3. I express my dissatisfaction to this person by a slight gesture or facial expression.
4. I express my dissatisfaction to this person ambiguously.
5. I express my dissatisfaction to this person humorously.



6. I express my dissatisfaction to this person through constructive suggestions.
7. I express my dissatisfaction to this person in a direct way.
8. I express my dissatisfaction to this person with sarcastic remarks.
9. I express my dissatisfaction to this person angrily.
10. I express my dissatisfaction to this person in an insulting way.

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