

English Proficiency, Personality and Intercultural Adjustment of Japanese Students Studying in America

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Abstract

This study has attempted to discover to what extent a sojourner's L2 proficiency, personality and some other qualities he/she has can predict success in intercultural adjustment. Adjustment of Japanese high school students studying in the U.S. was assessed through a questionnaire in which they were asked to self-rate the degree of satisfaction and how they perceived various aspects of their life in America. Multiple regression analyses were conducted with four dependent variables which focus on different facets of adjustment:

- 1) relationship with host families
- 2) friendship with Americans (peers)
- 3) school achievement and English development, and
- 4) English communication effectiveness.

The independent variables were taken from tests and questionnaires administered prior to their departure, including standard English test scores and scores on extroversion in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The result showed that English test scores and extroversion were the main predictors of the students' intercultural adjustment among the variables studied. A clear pattern emerged that English test score was the stronger

predictor of achievement-related dimension, while personality was the stronger predictor in interactional dimensions. While recognizing the role that personality plays in intercultural adjustment, a suggestion is made to introduce intercultural skill training which enhances the students' interactional effectiveness in English.

Introduction

In recent years an increasing number of Japanese high school and university students have opportunities to study abroad, reflecting the mounting enthusiasm to "internationalize" Japan in education and other fields. According to a survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Education (1991), 4,826 Japanese college students and 4,483 high school students studied in colleges and high schools abroad for a period of three months or more in 1990, and approximately 70% of them went to the United States.¹ The Ministry of Education also reports that a total of 31,284 high school students participated in short-term study abroad tours organized by their schools or other organizations in 1990. Approximately half of them went to the U.S. and approximately 10,000 visited countries where English was the national language. Not much is known about the content of their overseas experience, nor has evaluation of the programs been made in a systematic manner. Those studies which have been conducted up to now focus primarily on short-term, school-sponsored programs (e.g. Higuchi *et al.* 1982; Tanaka, Koyama and Fujiwara 1991; Iwakiri 1993). This study is an attempt to investigate Japanese high school students' one-year study experience by considering the relationship between language proficiency, personality and adjustment.

Intercultural communication competence and language competence

Studies dealing with the adjustment process of individuals who sojourned in cultures different from their own for a significant period of time have been conducted mostly by psychologists and scholars in intercultural relations. Some researchers have tried to explain the process in terms of several stages of adjustment (e.g. Adler 1975; Mansell 1981; Farkas 1984), while others have tried to either identify factors which affect the international adjustment process or tried to identify individual qualities that facilitate intercultural adjustment. Since 1975, in particular, American researchers have been involved in defining intercultural

communication competence and identifying qualities that constitute such competence (e.g. Ruben 1976; Gudykunst 1977; Hammer *et al.* 1978; Hawes & Kealey 1981; Brislin 1981; Hammer 1987). Among the individual qualities the above mentioned researchers pointed out as important are: "show of respect" "flexibility" "tolerance for ambiguity" and a "non-ethnocentric attitude," to mention a few. All of them cite the ability "to establish interpersonal relationships," and "the ability to communicate effectively" as essential. In order to examine whether the skills considered important in interpersonal communication (e.g. "display of respect," "non-judgmental posture," "respect for different values, ways of thinking," "empathy") could predict the success / failure of intercultural adjustment, Ruben and Kealey conducted an empirical study (1979) using Canadian technical assistants who sojourned in Kenya for two years. The results showed that such qualities as "show of respect" and "non-evaluative attitude" correlated positively, while "self-centered role behavior" correlated negatively with adjustment manifested during their sojourn. The majority of these and similar studies, however, have been conducted by North American scholars on Americans studying or working overseas. Probably because of this, foreign language proficiency has never been identified as an important factor affecting intercultural adjustment. Nishida makes this point in her study (1985), "In most of the intercultural communication studies to date, researchers have not paid attention to the language spoken between the participants. Most of them assumed that the participants spoke English." She goes on to explain a situation in which Japanese sojourners are placed, "However, when we consider the intercultural communication effectiveness of the Japanese, we cannot ignore the aspect of the language spoken, because most of the time the Japanese have to speak foreign languages to communicate with foreigners" (p. 249). This situation is changing with the influx of people seeking jobs in Japan. In the future Japanese people will have more opportunities to communicate in Japanese with people from other cultures. Those who go abroad, however, such as the students who are the target of this study cannot expect people in the host countries to speak Japanese. To establish good interpersonal relationships and communicate effectively with the people around them are impossible without the ability to understand and use the language spoken in the host nation. Therefore the proficiency in the host national language must be a factor to be considered.

Those studies which investigated Japanese business people and students who sojourned overseas demonstrated that the sojourners felt that

language was a major problem. Diggs and Murphy (1991) showed that of the 14 problem areas cited including "school adjustment of children" and "absence of friends", Japanese sojourners in the United States adjudged "language difficulties" to be the greatest problem. In an attempt to identify the qualities that constitute "an internationally-minded person," Kawabata *et al.* (1989) sent questionnaires to 279 Japanese professionals, mostly college professors living and working in the United States. Respondents in this group selected the necessity to "be proficient in the language of the host country and have ability to express oneself" as the most important quality in the 15-item questionnaire. In our own study (Yashima & Viswat, 1991, 1992), we found that the students attributed their difficulty in adjustment to a lack of English competence. However, not much quantitative research has been undertaken to scientifically assess the relation between the sojourner's proficiency in the language of the host country and adjustment. In those cases where language proficiency was considered it was not measured in an objective manner but solely on the basis of a self-rating. In the above mentioned Diggs and Murphy's study, a correlation was calculated between self-rated language skills and satisfaction in the U.S., but no relationship was found. Marion (1986) and Cox (1988) reported that linguistic competence was among the factors closely related to academic difficulties of international students in the U.S. and Britain. Studies with international students in Japan by Iwao and Hagiwara (1977,1978,1979,1987), on the other hand, reported a negative correlation between self-rated language ability and a favorable image of Japanese. Although in many of these studies, a measure of English skills was based on self-judgment, mostly on a scale of four or five points, Marion's report was based on the relationship between TOEFL scores and academic achievement of international students in the U.S. Nishida (1985) in her study of Japanese sojourners' intercultural communication competence examined a correlation between the college students' initial English scores as tested through TOEFL (two sections; structure and written expression, vocabulary and reading comprehension) as well as the researcher's judgment of speaking and listening skills and their adjustment. A correlation between speaking and listening skills, and adjustment in the sense of interactional effectiveness, as assessed by the researcher, was reported during a four-week home-stay program in the United States, but no significant relation was found between TOEFL scores and adjustment.

Research questions

When we consider Japanese high school or college students' study abroad experience, we seem to take it for granted that the more proficient students are in the language of the host country, the better their adjustment will be and fewer the problems they will have. As a matter of fact, an English test is almost always used for screening purposes. However this hypothesis has never been confirmed in an empirical study, nor has the question been raised as to whether language skills affect various aspects of life overseas equally.

The research objectives in this study are 1) to investigate to what extent the second language competence as measured by standard English tests can predict different aspects of high school students' intercultural adjustment in America, 2) to investigate how other qualities such as personality traits and attitudes to different cultures, prior overseas experience interact with the language ability in the process of adjustment. Personality was chosen as one of the variables to be studied here, based on past research with Japanese children (Minoura 1984; Kobayashi *et al.* 1978), as well as insights gained through our former studies. Both Minoura and Kobayashi reported extroversion was a characteristic that facilitated the children's adjustment in the U.S., although the assessment was made based on a simple scale of two or three points.

Concept of adjustment

According to Brislin (1981), adjustment includes the core elements of people's satisfaction as perceived acceptance by hosts, and ability to function during everyday activities. In Ruben and Kealey's view (1979), cross-cultural adjustment consists of three elements; culture shock, psychological adjustment and interactional effectiveness. According to them psychological adjustment is "the general psychological well-being, self-satisfaction, contentment, comfort with and accommodation to a new environment after the initial perturbations which characterize culture shock have passed" (p. 21). In addition, interactional effectiveness is defined in terms of : (a) participation, social adjustment, or cross-cultural interaction, and (b) transfer of skills. The high school students in our study did go through a difficult period in the initial stage of their stay, which we characterized as culture shock. In particular many reported having

difficulty making friends at school and experiencing loneliness and distress. Quite a few suffered from mismatches with host families which resulted in their changing families. Based on our initial studies with high school students we can conclude that students' adjustment depends on 1) to what degree they are satisfied with their host family; whether they feel accepted as a member of the family; whether their communication with the host family is smooth, candid and enjoyable; 2) how much they enjoy school life; and whether they can make friends with American students at school, with whom they can have lunch, share the same interests and/or spend time in various activities; and 3) less importantly, how well they can keep up with school work.

Method

Informants

The initial participants were 81 Japanese high school students (25 boys and 56 girls) of 15 to 18 years of age, who lived with families and studied in America for one year. Fifty-three of them left Japan for the United States in the summer of 1992 and came back the following summer, while 28 left Japan in the summer of 1993 and came back in the summer of 1994.² Thirty-two students had previously been overseas mostly for short trips from one to three weeks long. The final sample size was 57 as would be explained later. According to a motivation survey³ we conducted in earlier studies (Yashima & Viswat 1991), the most important reasons to study in America were: first they wanted "to learn to speak English well," second, they had an "interest in America and Americans," and third, they hoped "the experience would work in their favor when getting a job."⁴ The earlier study (Yashima & Viswat, 1991) also shows that these students have an extremely positive image of Americans and a strong desire to contact with them at the time of departure.

Prior to their departure, an orientation session was held in Japan, during which time part of the data was collected. In addition, the students participated in a three-week orientation program in San Francisco before being placed in communities all over the United States.

Procedure

In the orientation session prior to departure, English tests, a series of questionnaires and a personality type test were administered.

Test of English As a measure of English proficiency, the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (SLEP) consisting of a 75-item listening comprehension section (SLEP 1) and a 75-item reading/grammar section (SLEP 2) was administered.⁵ In the 1992/93 study oral interviews were conducted and rated by two TESOL specialists who are native speakers of English teaching at Japanese universities. The students were rated on six aspects of oral proficiency, grammar, pronunciation, attitude, amount of information conveyed, appropriateness and overall fluency. The interrater correlation was .916. As the correlation between the results of the SLEP and interview tests was quite high (Interview with SLEP1: $r=.703$, Interview with SLEP2: $r=.611$), we concluded that SLEP1 and 2 were sufficient for measuring the overall English proficiency of the participants for the purpose of this study.

Pre-departure questionnaire The pre-departure questionnaire consists of three sections: 1) a section asking for demographic information, 2) a motivation scale, and 3) a section designed to test the students' attitude towards different cultures and Japan consisting of 9 statements adopted from Tanaka, Koyama and Fujiwara (1991). To each statement the students responded on a 4-point scale, from "I don't feel this way at all. (point 1)" to "I mostly feel this way (point 4)."

Personality type test As a measure of personality type, a translated version of Myers-Briggs Type was used. This consisted of 105 item questions. Detailed explanation of the test is found in Briggs-Myers and Myers (1980).

Experience Abroad The students were categorized into three groups depending on the length of stay in foreign countries: Group 1--students who have never been abroad; Group 2--students who have traveled abroad for a week or less; Group 3--students who stayed abroad for a month or less but more than a week. None of the students had ever stayed abroad for more than a month.

Four months after their departure from Japan, questionnaires were mailed to the students to assess the students adjustment with regard to overall satisfaction, English communication effectiveness, and performance of social skills. We will refer to this questionnaire as the Adjustment Questionnaire. The Adjustment Questionnaire was prepared based on the concept of adjustment discussed in the former section, referring to findings

and information collected through preliminary studies conducted between 1988 and 1991.

The Adjustment Questionnaire

The Adjustment Questionnaire consists of the following sub-sections:

- 1) The satisfaction scale: The satisfaction scale consists of 20 items concerning various aspects of life in America such as "depth of friendship with Americans," "the amount of conversation with hosts," and "improvement of English." The students were asked to evaluate the degree of their satisfaction with each of these items on a 5-point scale, from "dissatisfied (point 1)" to "very much satisfied. (point 5)."
 - 2) Self-rating of overall adjustment to host family and school: The students rated their overall adjustment to host family and school on a 5-point scale from "not at all adjusted (point 1)" to "very well adjusted (point 5)."
 - 3) English communication effectiveness: The students were asked to evaluate perceived difficulty and ease of communication in English with the people around them (expression and comprehension, each on a 5-point scale, from "have great difficulty (point 1)" to "have no difficulty at all (point 5)."
 - 4) A measure of social adjustment, performance of social skills as described in Furnham & Bochner (1986) and Tanaka (1991): The students rated their use of social skills in their interactions with friends at school --23 skills selected based on information from the preliminary study, (each rated on a 4-point scale, from "never use the skill (point 1)" to "often use the skill (point 4)."
- In addition 21 skills in the host family situation, as well as 6 skills needed in a classroom were examined. Finally, the students were asked to choose five skills which they had found most important and useful in each of the first two settings. This subsection is not the main focus of this study, but a part of the results will be referred to and incorporated in the discussion of the overall results and implications of this study.

An example of each subsection in the Adjustment Questionnaire is shown in Appendix. Of 81 students 69 returned the questionnaire. Among those 69, 12

had not taken the pre-departure tests. Therefore, 57 students completed the both procedures.

Analyses and Results

Responses to the motivation scale confirmed the results of our former study. The three most important reasons to study in America were: first, "to learn to speak English well," second, "interest in America and Americans," and third, "the experience would work in their favor when getting a job." SLEP test scores were calculated for both subtests and the total score. All the data was input into a computer and a series of statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS AIR statistics package. A factor analysis of the section on the attitudes to different cultures and Japan consisting of 9 items yielded 3 factors; 1) Interest in foreign countries, 2) Awareness of being Japanese, and 3) Lack of worldwide outlook. The results are shown in Table 1. The scores of questions measuring extrovert/introvert preferences in the personality type indicator will be used in the analysis. It is assumed that the higher the score, the more extroverted his or her behavioral tendency is, with the total score of 23.

A factor analysis of the satisfaction rating consisting of 20 items yielded 5 factors:

- 1) Relationship with host family
- 2) Friendship with Americans
- 3) School atmosphere
- 4) School care
- 5) Achievement (Development in schoolwork and English).

The results are shown in Table 2. Correlations between these factors and other measures of adjustment were calculated. It was found that Factor 2 was significantly correlated with overall adjustment at school ($r=.77$), which seems to indicate to the students "friendship with Americans" means "making friends at school." [See Tables 1 and 2 on the next pages]

Table 1

Factor Analysis of 9-item questionnaire on interest in different cultures and Japan
(Varimax rotation, Principle-component analysis)

<u>Items in the questionnaire</u>	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Interested in international events	.74	.06	-.15
Knowledgeable about the Japanese culture	.80	.10	.14
Have seldom been out of hometown	-.65	-.05	.10
Familiar with life and manners in foreign countries	.02	.75	-.18
Have awareness of and pride in being Japanese	.25	.60	.42
Realize Japan's role and responsibility in the world	.03	.85	.13
Patriotic, have love for Japan	.18	.13	.85
Do not want to live outside Japan	-.35	.06	.71
Want to work in the area that will contribute to the development of the world	.18	.38	-.51
Eigenvalues	2.27	1.89	1.31
Percent of variance explained	25.30	21.00	14.60

Table 2

Factor Analysis of 20-item Satisfaction Scale
(Varimax Rotation, Principal-Component Analysis)

Scale Item	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Closeness to host family	.80	.04	.19	.24	.20
Care by host family	.87	.02	.18		.12
	.07				
Food of family	.80	-.24	.13	.82	.15
Amount of conversation with the host family	.81	.13	.11		.21
Rooms and facilities at the host home	.76	.13	-.12	.25	-.33
Number of American friends	.07	.82	.37	.06	-.01
Depth of friendship with American friends	.05	.89	.24		-.06
Amount of conversation with American friends	.00	.87	.20	.06	.20
Range of activities participated in with American friends	-.08	.85	.02		.01
Extra-curricular activities at school	.01	.51	-.02	.44	.38
School environment	.40	.23	.81	.22	-.11
School atmosphere	.11	.22	.85		.08
Attitude of Americans in general towards Student	.28	.30	.66		.34
Care by teachers	.38	-.06	.42	.70	.07
Teachers' teaching style	.34	-.09	.25		.77
	.06				
Content of classes	.15	.10	.18		.69
	.26				
Participation in class	.40	.33	-.22	.47	
Academic achievement	.45	-.06	.16		.3
English development	.14	.29	-.10	.03	.73
Human development	.05	.33	.19	.15	.63
Eigenvalues	6.63	3.73	2.08	1.37	1.03
Percent of variance explained	33.10	18.70	10.40		6.90

Taking the findings from the preliminary studies into consideration, we decided to use two interpersonal dimensions, Satisfaction Factors 1, 2 and Factor 5, academic achievement and development in English, as the dependent variables for ANOVA and multiple regression analyses. These three factors correspond to the three facets of living in America which our preliminary studies identified as being most important. In addition, self-rated "English communication effectiveness," that is, perceived ease or difficulty of communication in English, was also taken as a dependent variable, because this dimension can be seen as a manifestation of communicative competence in real life situations and is an aspect of adjustment. In order to examine whether or not the students' prior experience of overseas trip influence their adjustment this time, one-way ANOVA was performed with each of the dependent variables. The independent variable was "experience abroad (three categories)." It was found that prior experience abroad did not affect any of the four aspects of adjustment.

In order to choose independent variables for multiple regression, we have correlated variables taken from pre-departure tests and questionnaires with the four dependent variables as shown in Table 3. Our basic policy was to choose ones that have significant correlation with any of the dependent variables and use them as independent variables. However, as SLEP 1 and SLEP 2 correlate highly with each other ($r=.76$), and both of them correlate highly with SLEP total scores ($r=.94$, $r=.94$), using them all as independent variables is believed to interfere with the regression process. Therefore, we decided to use only the SLEP total scores.

The multiple regression analysis with four dependent variables was performed respectively, with three independent variables: "awareness of being Japanese," extroversion, and standard English scores. A summary of the results is shown in Table 4. [See Tables 3 and 4 on the next pages]

What predicts satisfaction in the relationship with the host families? It would appear that only extroversion is associated with this dimension. As for the other interactional dimension, satisfaction with friendship with peer Americans, the following predictive pattern emerges: the tendency to score high on extroversion in the personality type test, and a higher scores on standard English tests result in a greater degree of satisfaction. Here personality type was by far the stronger predictor than English test scores. Against our expectation, "awareness of being Japanese" seems to have negatively affected this dimension.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between adjustment measures
(dependent variables for multiple regression analysis)
and pre-departure variables

Pre-departure variables	Relationship with host family	Friendship with Americans	School achieve- ment	Communication effectiveness
Interest in foreign countries	.19	.11	.21	.24
Awareness of Japan's position in the world	.21	-.16	-.09	.30*
Lack of worldwide outlook	-.03	.03	.04	-.15
Extroversion score	.51**	.41**	.36*	.30*
SLEP 1 score	-.08	.14	.47**	.42**
SLEP 2 score	.04	.22	.40**	.44**
SLEP total score	-.02	.19	.47**	.46**

* p<.05

** p<.01

Table 4

Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent variables	Step	Independent variables	Multiple R	R ²	Beta		
Satisfaction with host families	1	Extroversion	.49	.24	.49***		
Satisfaction with friendship with Americans	1	Extroversion	.47	.22	.50**		
	2	English Test Score	.53	.28	.32**		
	3	Awareness of Japan's role in the world		.60	.36	-.29*	
Satisfaction with Achievement and English Development	1	English Test Score	.46		.21	.49***	
	2	Extroversion		.60		.37	.40***
Communication effectiveness in English	1	English Test Score	.49		.24	.51***	
		2Extroversion		.60		.35	.34 ***

***p<.01 **p<.025 *p<.05

The variables that predict satisfaction in school achievement and development in English were the standard English test scores and extroversion. The same pattern persists for perceived communicative effectiveness in English. In the last two cases, the English score was the stronger predictor than extroversion.

Regression analyses were repeated with five independent variables, the above three plus "interest in foreign countries" and "lack of worldwide outlook," but the results were almost identical with the ones reported above.

Discussion

Regarding the first research question "to what extent English proficiency test scores predict the students' adjustment overseas," we could say that those whose initial English competence was high tend to feel more satisfied with their improvement in English and academic achievement during their stay in America. The English test score is the best predictor with regard to the academic dimension. English test scores do not seem to affect the students' relationships with host families. This facet of students' life in America is the one which language proficiency affects least. On the other hand, English proficiency test scores could predict to some extent how satisfied students would be with success in making friends with Americans at school. Although both the host family and the school are given environments, it seems that making friends at school requires more active involvement and effort on the part of the student than developing a good relationship with the host family. This is probably why English language competence was a predictor of satisfaction with friendship with Americans at school, while it was not a predictor of satisfaction with host family relationship. From our past studies we learned that the relationship with the host family is determined to a large extent by the expectations the student and the family had of each other. Unrealistically high expectations of the other party tend to result in disappointment. In addition there is a match factor and a human relations factor which cannot be predicted by the English test score. It seems in making peer friends at school, language plays a more important role. Unless one makes some contribution to conversations with friends, he or she won't be accepted as a member of the peer group. In vertical relationships such as parent-child relationships, and teacher-student relationships, one-way communication may be possible, or at least a

delayed response or no response is tolerated to a greater extent, but to establish an equal relationship with a peer, two-way communication is mandatory and the response should be quick and relevant.

The result shows that "awareness of being Japanese" negatively affected this dimension -- "satisfaction with friendship with Americans." Those who regard themselves as being knowledgeable about foreign manners, who have pride in being Japanese, and realize Japan's role in the world may have tendency to be too conscious of being Japanese and this might have worked negatively. We need further research to find a sound explanation.

The variables that predicted the students' perceived communication effectiveness were both the English test score and extroversion. This means that those students whose English test scores were high before they left Japan found their communication in English to be effective after they arrived in America. Contrary to our expectation the students' prior experience of traveling overseas did not affect their adjustment. This is probably because most of the students who had been abroad were those who stayed for only a short time.

The most striking result of multiple regression analyses was that an extroverted attitude contributes to all four aspects of adjustment studied here, particularly the students' adjustment with host families and their success in making friends at school. Although English proficiency was the stronger predictor of academic achievement and English effectiveness, extroversion was the stronger predictor of the success in the interactional dimensions. This means that the combination of English skills and extroverted behavioral pattern facilitates successful intercultural adjustment to the highest degree. Given the same English competence, the more extroverted the person is, the better the adjustment in the United States will be. One explanation may be that extroverted people are more optimistic and this is reflected in the self-rated adjustment scales. Another explanation may be that people with an extroverted tendency may be more communicative and sociable, as Briggs-Myers & Myers states in their book (1980), "In the extroverted attitude, attention seems to flow out, or to be drawn out, to the objects and people of the environment. There is a desire to act on the environment, to affirm its importance, to increase its effect. Persons habitually taking the extroverted attitude may develop some or all of the characteristics associated with extroversion: awareness and reliance on the environment for stimulation and guidance; an action-oriented, sometimes impulsive way of meeting life, frankness; ease of

communication; or sociability" (p. 13). There is also a cultural reason which might have worked favorably for people who had a stronger extroverted tendency. We may gain some insights by considering responses to the social skills section and also to open-ended questions.

Social skills

Social skills are by definition, observable and learnable skills which facilitate individuals' social adjustments (Furnham and Bochner 1986). Furnham and Bochner propose social skill training for intercultural competence based on a theory that "interpersonal difficulties across cultural boundaries stem from the participants not possessing the requisite social skills." The theory concerns itself with "everyday, common, even apparently trivial situations which nevertheless cause friction, misunderstanding and interpersonal hostility." Instead of making vague statements about culture shock, it attempts to quantify social difficulty on various dimensions and then reduce it" (p. 241). Prior to the training a series of verbal and non-verbal behaviors sojourners have difficulty with are identified. The participants are then trained to use these social skills through "behavioral techniques such as video feedback, role-playing and modeling to realistically simulate real-life situations" (p. 242). The program can be tailor-made, focusing on skills a particular group has difficulty with. These social skill items in the Adjustment Questionnaire were selected based on the preliminary interviews and questionnaires as well as feedback from host families. In other words these were the skills the students who had participated in this program felt to be of importance in interacting with people in America or those which their host families found to be useful. Among the 23 social skills for interacting with the peer at school listed in the questionnaire, what the students felt particularly important were the skills related to willingness to talk and self-exposure, such as "talk to someone without hesitation even if I have not met him/her before," "talk about my ideas without worrying about making mistakes," "talk as much as possible whenever I can," "participate in school activities, including clubs and preparation for school events," "find and talk about shared interests with someone such as about sports or music." Although these skills were regarded as important, they were not necessarily the well-practiced ones. "Smile at people when I first meet them" also ranked high and was often mentioned in the section where the

students are invited to give advice to those who are going to America.

With regard to skills needed in interacting with host families, among the 22 skills listed some nonverbal skills were adjudged most important: "volunteer to help with household chores," "spend time with family members after meals and so on," "follow family time schedule." Skills related to communication efforts, "find some way to communicate and make myself understood," "report to host family what is happening at school," and "confirm what someone has said by having questions or statements repeated when I don't understand," were selected as next in importance. Openness and frankness as in "express feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction openly rather than hiding them," "discuss all misunderstandings rather than leaving them unsettled" were also recognized as important, but were not so well practiced. In addition, classroom skills such as "speak out in class actively" and "raise my hand and ask questions in class when I don't understand" were felt to be important but were the least practiced of all the school related skills.

On the whole what they felt to be most essential for adjusting in the U.S. were to be out-going, to have participating behavioral patterns, and to open themselves up through talking, although they are not always successful in performing what they think are essential. This probably is related to some extent to differences in culturally-based communication styles and behavioral patterns. Barnlund (1975, 1989) analyzed communicative styles of Japanese and Americans and showed that the amount of self-exposure of Japanese people was much smaller than Americans; Americans talked more in depth and on more extensive subjects than Japanese with families, friends and strangers. According to Ishii (1984), in order to maintain harmony with one another, verbal expression is subdued in the Japanese culture, and ambiguity and vagueness are preferred over direct and clear cut expressions of one's opinion. Japanese students, in their socialization process, are taught not to contradict others or to express their opinions too strongly. This is one of the reasons why Japanese students appear to be so quiet in a Western classroom, an observation often made by EFL teachers (e.g. Sato 1982). Social skills which are identified by the students as important include both verbal and nonverbal skills. But in order to perform verbal skills, a certain level of linguistic competence is necessary. Often the students are in a double-bind situation: not having sufficient linguistic competence and having to verbalize meanings which in Japan can be conveyed without words. In a society, where verbal expression is highly valued and expected, the

students are making an effort to express themselves in a foreign language which they acquired through less-than-effective school education programs. Extroversion, I believe, is the quality that enables the interactional behaviors to be performed with less psychological pressure and strain. In other words the "affective filter" (as defined in Krashen, 1982) in the second language production must be lower in extroverted individuals. While recognizing the role that personality plays, we feel there should be a way to train students to behave more effectively in social situations. The application of social skill training in the English-teaching program as a preparation for overseas study is a way to equip students with what Canal (1983) calls sociolinguistic competence together with conversational competence, and might be a solution for helping students to become better-prepared to cope with interactional difficulties.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier the students have a tendency to attribute their maladjustment or inability in making friends to lack of English competence. The result of this study proves that their perception is partially correct. The level of English proficiency a student has prior to departure affects the student's adjustment in the U. S., particularly academic achievement and development of English communication skills. When it comes to interpersonal/interactional aspects of adjustment, language competence is not a strong predictor but personality is; a person with an extroverted orientation has an easier time adjusting to the American society. In other words, we could conclude that to raise the level of English proficiency before departure is necessary, yet it is not sufficient to solve the problems in interpersonal situations. Withdrawal, or lack of contact resulting from an inferiority complex not only slows down the intercultural adjustment process but also leads to a reduction in the amount of English input received through interaction with others, crucial to improving oral/aural communication skills in English. Scarcella (1990) notes that communication difficulties with reduced input and increased social distance can "ignite a vicious cycle" that hinders second language development (p. 342). English teaching sessions usually offered to the students prior to overseas study experience are general in nature targeted to unspecified groups of learners. Designing a custom-made intercultural training course through combining English teaching sessions with social skill training may help the students overcome some of the problems they

face. Since many of the difficulties the students are likely to encounter have been identified, equipping them with a selection of appropriate linguistic forms that will enable them to perform each skill is the work of language teaching specialists. Training students in the performance of social skills in English which are particularly relevant to intercultural adjustment is a way to end the vicious cycle suggested by Scarcella and activate the language learning process through richer and more enjoyable interactions with the people around them.

Notes

- 1 The Japanese Ministry of Education's most recent survey released in March 1994 showed 4,487 high school students studied in high schools overseas for three months or longer in 1992, with 3,119 in the U.S.A.
- 2 They participate in the Academic Year in America program through the coordination of a Japanese organizer, JIIS (Japan Institute of International Studies).
- 3 The motivation scale consists of 18 reasons. The students were asked to choose the five most important reasons for their studying overseas and rank score them in the order of importance.
- 4 In the Ministry of Education (1991)'s survey on objectives of studying abroad, which allowed students to choose more than one reason, 84.5% of the high school students selected as an objective "To broaden my outlook," while 77.6% selected "To improve foreign language skills." "To experience life in a foreign country," was chosen by 77.2% of the participants, and 70.9% thought "Studying abroad will be beneficial for their future."
- 5 Secondary Level English Test developed by Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J. is a test used by the Japanese organizer that coordinates the Academic Year In America program and sends students to the United States. TOEFL, a better-known standard test, was not used in this study, because it was judged to be too difficult for the Japanese high school students to be reliable and valid.

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Appendix

(An example of each section in the Adjustment Questionnaire, English translation)

A. The Satisfaction Scale

How much do you think you are satisfied with the following aspects of your life in America? Choose one on a 5-point scale which describes your feeling best about each of the items below.

5 --- very much satisfied	4 --- fairly satisfied
3 --- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2 --- not so much satisfied
1 --- dissatisfied	

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. School environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 2. Atmosphere of school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 3. Teachers' care | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Teachers' teaching style | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 5. Number of American friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| . | | | | | | |
| . | | | | | | |
| 20. | | | | | | |

B. Overall adjustment to family and school

<School>

How would you assess your adjustment to school life?
Please indicate on the continuum.

1	2	3	4	5
do not have friends; do not enjoy my school life at all			and take part in school events ;	have many school friends
enjoy myself a lot				

