

Communication Behaviors of Exchange Students  
as Perceived by Themselves and by Their Hosts:  
Japanese Students in Finland

M.A. Thesis  
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Intercultural Communication  
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University of Jyväskylä  
2011

# JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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Title Communication Behaviors of Exchange Students as Perceived by Themselves and by Their Hosts: Japanese Students in Finland	
Subject Intercultural Communication	Level Master's Thesis
Month and year June 2011	Number of pages 76 pages
<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Participating in an exchange program abroad has been popular for university students all over the world. Likewise, there have been many studies on exchange students' identities or culture shocks, or their communication behaviors. However, little is known on the communication behaviors of exchange students with viewpoints of the hosts.</p> <p>The purpose of the present study is to examine how Japanese exchange students at the University of Jyväskylä interpret their communication behaviors in relation to their self-construals by combining the views of Japanese exchange students themselves with those of Finnish students as hosts. In addition, another purpose is to find out the function of Nihongo Meeting, which is a combination of Finnish and Japanese students as a host group concerning the life of Japanese exchange students in Jyväskylä.</p> <p>The data collection was conducted qualitatively by interviewing 5 Japanese exchange students and 4 Finnish students in an unstructured interview style. To elicit the flow of communication behaviors, the interviews with Japanese exchange students were conducted twice at the beginning of their stay and again after 3-4 months. To find meaning between and behind the words expressed in the interviews, thematic analysis was used. By breaking down the answers based on three themes, the flow of communication behaviors in a new environment during the limited time emerged.</p> <p>The results of the study show that Japanese exchange students have been accommodating their communication behaviors according to the people around them. Also, the existence of Finnish students in Nihongo Meeting has been of a great help in starting their life in Finland. Yet, it has been distinct that their background culture, such as Confucianism, seems to stay in their behaviors no matter where they are during the limited period of time.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b> Exchange Students, Host Environment, Communication Accommodation Theory, Group-oriented Communication, Confucianism, Self-construals, Technologically Mediated Communication</p>	
<p><b>Depository</b> University of Jyväskylä</p>	
<p><b>Additional information</b></p>	

Tiedekunta Humanistinen Tiedekunta	Laitos Viestinnänlaitos
Tekijä Kanao Hirai	
Työn nimi Communication Behaviors of Exchange Students as Perceived by Themselves and by Their Hosts: Japanese Students in Finland	
Oppiaine Kulttuurien välinen viestintä	Työn laji Pro-Gradu
Aika Kesäkuu 2011	Sivumäärä 76
<p>Abstrakti</p> <p>Osallistuminen vaihto-opiskeluohjelmiin on ollut suosittua ympäri maailmaa yliopisto-opiskelijoiden keskuudessa. On myös tehty useita tutkimuksia vaihto-opiskelijoihin liittyen, esimerkiksi heidän identiteettiinsä, kulttuurishokkiinsa tai viestintäkäyttäytymiseensä liittyen. Silti hyvin vähän tiedetään vaihto-opiskelijoiden viestintäkäyttäytymisestä isäntien kanssa.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia, kuinka japanilaiset vaihto-opiskelijat Jyväskylän yliopistossa tulkitsevat omaa viestintäkäyttäytymistään. Tutkimuksessa yhdistetään japanilaisten näkökulma suomalaisten isäntien näkökulmaan. Lisäksi tarkoitus on tutkia Nihongo-ryhmän toiminnan liittymistä japanilaisten vaihto-opiskelijoiden elämään Jyväskylässä. Nihongo on joukko japanilaisia ja suomalaisia opiskelijoita.</p> <p>Aineisto kerättiin kvalitatiivisesti haastattelemalla viittä japanilaista vaihto-opiskelijaa ja neljää suomalaista opiskelijaa käyttämällä strukturoimatonta haastattelumallia. Japanilaisia haastateltiin kaksi kertaa, opiskelujakson alussa, ja 3-4 kuukautta myöhemmin. Temaattista analyysiä käyttämällä etsittiin merkityksiä sanojen välissä ja takana. Kolmen haastatteluteeman perusteella tehtyjen kysymysten vastauksien tarkan analyysin kautta tutkimuksessa tuli esiin ajassa tapahtuva viestintäkäyttäytymisen prosessi.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että japanilaiset vaihto-opiskelijat ovat mukauttaneet viestintäänsä ympärillä olevien ihmisten mukaan. Lisäksi suomalaisten läsnäolo Nihongossa on auttanut sopeutumisessa Suomeen. Kuitenkin on ollut selkeästi esillä, että heidän taustansa, kuten kungfutselaisuus, näyttää ilmenevän heidän käytöksessään riippumatta heidän olinpaikastaan rajattuna aikana.</p>	
Asiasanat Vaihto-opiskelijat, isäntäympäristö, viestinnän mukautumisteoria, ryhmäorientoitunut kommunikaatio, kungfutselaisuus, itsetulkinnat, teknologiavälitteinen viestintä.	
Säilytyspaikka Jyväskylän Yliopisto	
Muita tietoja	

Huge thanks to:

Professor Pertti Hurme for guiding me with my thesis to where I am now. Without him, I would not have reached here.

All the interviewees (Anna, Annika, Emi, Jussi, Kana, Kota, Naoya, Otto & Shogo) for sharing their thoughts and experiences.

Aki, Cindy Rose, Jiro-kun, Pauliina and Rumi-san for giving me great advice.

Lastly, my family, especially my parents who have been encouraging me to do whatever I have been interested in. Without them, I would not be here, certainly.

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## 1 Introduction

We, human beings, are changing every second. We think one thing at a time, and then come up with something else a second later. We are all surrounded by someone else, and are influencing each other all the time. Nowadays, the frequency of people living temporarily in another country is quite high. When we go to places and where cultures are different from our own, we are surrounded by different people.

Every year, the European Commission offers almost 200,000 students in Europe to study and work abroad within Europe on The Erasmus Program. The purpose is to broaden the students' experiences and views so that they will learn the idea of being European citizens. Such exchange program occurs not only in Europe, but also in rest of the world. Almost all the universities in the world have partner universities with bilateral or multilateral agreements worldwide. Not only the individuals but also the universities acquire ample amount of precious knowledge. Then, the new knowledge that both universities and students gain from exchange programs are passed on to the future in a university context. Thus, a virtuous circle is created.

得難きは時、会い難きは友。"Egatakiwa toki, aigatakiwa tomo" (from Saigyouzakura, Noh song). This noh song means that 'It is very hard to encounter good chances and good friends.' Exchange students overcome both difficulties at once. They have chances to meet new people to make friends with.

When students go abroad and communicate with people from different places, countries or cultures, they are confronted with facts that they have believed as standard but which are not necessarily common in different cultures or different people. However, some students might persist in their own standards, some might take the difference as it is and go with the flow, and some might try to simulate what others do. There is no correct answer to the question, 'Which is the best way to do in the context above?' The confrontation with the differences is what students gain from the experiences abroad and it is also the opportunity for university students to learn to understand the differences that everyone has and every environment has.

Where there are exchange students, there are the local students. The amount of contact

between the exchange students and the local students varies depending on each student, but even just the existence of the locals in the new place is usually a relief for people new there.

The purpose of this study is to examine the flow of the exchange students' communication behaviors in a new environment. The study focuses on both the exchange students as newcomers in the host environment, and the local students as hosts. In addition to the aspect of the relationship between hosts and guests, the study also addresses how exchange students' interpretations of themselves change during a semester in a new environment. There are several studies on exchange students in their communication behaviors and their adaptation to the new environment, but not much attention has been paid to both newcomer and host in the same study. Therefore, I would like to assemble both sides in this study to bring out alternative views to the exchange students' communication behaviors.

## 2 Communication and Cultural Environment

### 2.1 Previous Studies on exchange students

Exchange students get to meet new people in new environments, and develop their social abilities by nurturing their friendships. Rawlins (2008) states that friendships not only cultivate many abilities of young people, such as ethical sensibilities, identity, and sociability, but also may serve decisive effects on their future education, careers, or their whole life.

As Sassenberg and Matschke (2010) define, an exchange student is a student who stays in a host country for about 6 months to one year and enjoys almost the same status as the hosts, and often is a representative of her / his home country. Cushber and Karim (2004) also describe that exchange students are students who have left their home culture, entered a new culture, have been engaging in academic and social life, and then will go back to their home country after one or two academic semesters. Cushber and Karim (2004: 289) characterize study abroad as “significant and professional international and intercultural experiences for countless students worldwide.” Alred and Byram (2006) also states that study abroad will produce not only the language development but also cultural benefits for an individual, which includes intercultural competence and passions to pass on the experience to others back home.

There are several studies on exchange students' acculturation or adaptation in recent years. To begin with, Gallechenko and Vijver (2007) studied the relations between exchange students' acculturation to the Russian environment and their perceived cultural differences. The participants were from China, North Korea, former USSR countries, and African countries. The results from their study show that the wider the difference in the exchange students' perceived culture of Russia and their own cultures, the more stress they experience in their acculturation to the Russian environment.

More recently, Sassenberg & Matschke (2010) approached exchange students' transitions from the aspect of their self-concepts. Self-concept is what a person is to her / himself. The assumption was that the more exposure the exchange students have with the host group, the closer or more similar they will feel with the host group. They focused on the differences in answers acquired from asking both the former and the current exchange students the same questionnaires. The results showed that the former exchange students' commitment to host culture and host people was stronger than the current exchange students' commitment. The more



time exchange students have spent with the host group, the closer they feel towards them and tend to think of themselves in relations with the host group. This result describes a possibility that the exchange year helps exchange students to be open to other cultures and feel familiar with the cultures and the people.

In addition, Sassenberg & Matschke (2010)'s study shows that the students who have studied abroad tend to reflect their own identities and cultures much more than those who have not studied abroad. Current exchange students did not show as much changes in their attitudes towards their own identities as the former exchange students showed after they went back to their home countries. This depicts that the time could account for self-concepts of students who have studied abroad.

Sassenberg & Matschke (2010) focus on comparing the attitudes of former and current exchange students towards themselves and host groups regarding the time. However, their study do not cover the variations of the students' destinations in relation to cultural differences. In this respect Jan & Kim (2009)'s focus includes the results of how different individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures have some impacts on students who are from different cultural backgrounds.

Jang & Kim (2009) shed light on the differences in degrees and processes of acculturation between individualist-bound students and collectivist-bound students. Their target was to investigate if the characteristics of the host environment could be reasons for the acculturation and personality of both groups of students. Their research focused on two groups of participants, one group collectivist-bound from individualistic countries, and the other individualist-bound from a collectivistic country. The research found that in the collectivist-bound group, the more time the students spent being exposed to the host culture, the more knowledge they gained on culture, social rules, norms and values, but did not show much change in their personality, such as openness and conscientiousness, while the individualist-bound group exhibited more change in their personality than in their cultural knowledge during a semester. In their studies, the different degrees of adherence to social norms that both collectivist cultures and individualist cultures possessed were introduced. In individualist cultures people are said to be self-consistent in any situation, while in collectivist cultures, adherence to society is established as part of the norm. Therefore collectivist-bound students showed their development of cultural knowledge of the host such as norms and values in the new environment, whereas individualist-bound students showed differences, such as openness and conscientiousness of their personality.

Although Jang & Kim (2009) brought about new approach to examine the changes in people who go to different cultural environments, it is still not assured that we can draw a clear line between individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures. Schwartz (1990) criticizes the individualism-collectivism dichotomy in that this dichotomy tends to induce the misunderstanding that characteristics of both cultures always oppose to each other. More recently Oyserman & Lee (2008) suggest critical omissions in comparing individualism and collectivism. Their notion is that for instance although Europe is represented in a study, it does not mean that it covers every single country or culture of the area. Therefore it depends on “what is meant by individualism and collectivism” (Oyserman & Lee, 2008, pp. 330). Also as Oyserman & Lee (2008) mention, countries which are in Latin America, in Africa or with Islamic traditions are apt to be eliminated from the idea of individualism and collectivism, which is again a critical omission.

On the other hand, when focusing on particular groups of people from the same culture, the discord between individualism and collectivism does not appear much. Ayano (2006) studied Japanese students in the United Kingdom. From the counseling point of view, she focused on the students' perceptions and attitudes when they were in a new environment. She collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected by questionnaires making use of psychological tests, and qualitative data were based on students' own words in interviews. Her focus was to examine students' psychological status at the beginning of their stay and 6 months after, and at the end of one year, which was the end of their stay. The findings from her study showed a tendency of Japanese students to persist in their negative attitudes about their life in the United Kingdom during their time there.

Ayano (2006) also studied Japanese students' help seeking behavior. It turned out that Japanese students were friends with other Japanese people much more than with any other groups of people. They asked Japanese people for help almost 7-8 times more often than they would ask local people. Thus, Ayano found out that the Japanese students whom she studied were more concerned about other Japanese people around them than about other students including host students. Moreover, Japanese students found it very difficult to have real friendships with local students. Hence, Ayano suggested that universities should create opportunities for international students and local students to interact with each other more often.

Apart from the example of Japanese students whom Ayano (2006) examined in the United Kingdom, Japanese students in general are required to be as below. Current university students

in Japan are at the university to gain skills that can be used in their future career, not just to acquire wide and deep knowledge about some fields of study that interest them (Career Choice Survey by Benesse Educations Research & Development Center, 2005). One of the skills that university students might have or gain from time in university is a communication skill to manage with their environment and people around them, which are believed to be required for a society as workers to support the society (Hirao & Shigematsu, 2007). In the study by Hirao & Shigematsu, communication skill means the ability to build trust and to understand others' feelings. Although the study is about communication skills of university students in Japan and surveys on students' attitudes towards communication in general, there is no question about their experiences or ideas about communication with people from different cultures. This fact could indicate that Japanese society might not value the ability of students who have gained competence in communicating with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

When students communicate with people with different backgrounds, the communication becomes intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2005). Kim (1991, cited in Williams 2005) interprets intercultural communication skills as the result of an individual's capacity to adapt to new ways of communication as well as to modify their old ways of communication. Williams (2005) focused on students who during their studies have a study period abroad in a higher education institute, and examined whether their experiences in studying abroad would support their acquired skills, especially communication skills, relevant for their future career. Since her target was intercultural communication skills among communication skills, she introduced traits in communication, such as flexibility and open-mindedness, cultural empathy and non-judgmental perceptiveness, and personal strength and stability.

Williams (2005) examined two groups of students, where one group goes abroad and the other stays on their home campus. The research question was whether the former group of students already had higher intercultural communication skills than the latter group even before studying abroad. She also examined the development of their intercultural communication skills during their stay abroad. The results of her study showed that the group of students that studied abroad showed higher communication skills both before and after the semester abroad than the group that stayed at home campus. By comparing the students' communication skills both before and after the semester, this study shows that study abroad strengthens students' intercultural communication skills. It also reveals that simply being abroad is not enough for enhancing in communication skills, and the capacity to be able to interact with people in a new environment is

a must element for acquiring intercultural communication skills.

Previous studies on students who study abroad have shown various aspects that those students experienced, such as changes in attitudes towards host countries and people, their own personality, and the importance of students' abilities in interacting with people in any environment. Exchange students go out of their original culture and enter a different one. They are in the host environment where they encounter people from the host group and other exchange students from all over the world. During the limited time in the host environment, they might go through some changes in their attitudes towards the people from different cultures and backgrounds, and also towards themselves. Moreover, as the title of this study shows, the focus groups in this study are Japanese Exchange Students and their host group. Therefore the cultural differences among focus groups are also to be concerned. On these grounds, the following five concepts, Communication Accommodation Theory, Group-oriented Communication, Collectivism and Confucianism, Self-Construals, and Host Environment, are introduced.

## 2.2 Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

We all use language to convey our feelings and thoughts to communicate. Despite the different systems of signs we all use, for instance verbal language, nonverbal language and paralanguage, these systems function to express ourselves to others. Everyone has different ways of communication, such as the rate of speech, facial expressions, and words they use, something that Norton (1978, 99) calls communication style. According to Norton (1978), this is the way one interacts using language, nonverbal behavior and paralanguage to signal how literal meaning should be perceived, interpreted, or understood.

While Norton (1978) pull together elements from characteristics of people's communication behaviors and called it communication style, there is newer theory on one characteristic of people's communication behaviors. Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota (1995) explain Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as a multifunctional theory that focuses attention on the language, nonverbal behavior, and paralanguage used in communication.

Gallois (2008) describes people's tendency to associate with others and also to distinguish themselves from others. According to Giles & Ogay (2007, 293), "the adjustments individuals make to create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction" are the acts of communication accommodation. The accommodation is not necessarily only adjusting our behaviors to others, but in conversations with a person or people with different ways of thinking or talking from our own ways, we might try to detect ways to feel comfortable.

In CAT, the act of decreasing the distance between the interlocutors is called convergence, and that of increasing the distance is called divergence. Convergence is the change interactants make as they try to convey their empathy to others to develop bonds, and to reduce anxieties and uncertainties, whereas divergence accentuates the differences between the self and the interlocutor, also to maintain their own identities (Giles & Baker, 2008). Even as we try to converge to other interactants, there is at the same time divergence by which we try to maintain our own behaviors in communicating with others. According to Street and Giles (1982), divergence is not only for the expression to be distinctive from an interlocutor, but it can also be used for changing an interlocutor's behavior for the easier understanding of each other. By both convergence and divergence, humans create and maintain positive personal and social identities (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005).

Also, to understand others and try to have smooth communication, human beings interpret what others say or how they behave. Through this trial, we adjust our language patterns to others, pay attention to communicative behaviors, and take the contexts of the communication into consideration (Giles & Baker, 2008). According to Gallois et al (1995), besides divergence and convergence, there are three other strategies that make interactants closer and more equal in communication. One strategy is interpretability that leads interactants to use simpler words, speak slower, and ask more questions in order not to misunderstand others. Another strategy is discourse management which is to find the interlocutor's conversation needs and to choose the appropriate topic for the development of relationships. The third strategy is interpersonal control that refers to an addressee focusing on role relations and keeping others playing their roles in conversation by showing some examples, for instance, an addressee demonstrates interruptions in the middle of the conversation, and then the interlocutors know that they can do so as well. With these strategies, we are able to feel closer to the interlocutors and also make the interlocutors feel closer to us.

So far people's convergence and divergence have been introduced as positive features in

their communication behaviors in a way that people always have empathy towards their interlocutors. However, communication accommodation occurs to distinguish “their own group or others as friendly, ingratiating, hostile, arrogant, or stubborn, depending on the context” (Gallois, 05/06/2008). As Gallois (2008) mentions, the situation where many people speak two or more languages and use different languages in different contexts is one type of communication accommodation, and the situation where some people do not change the language to keep their identity or to show their hostility towards other people is also one type of communication accommodation.

Based on the previous studies mentioned so far in this chapter, it can be stated that humans tend to keep the balance in communication by asking the interlocutors questions, by trying to act in a similar way as they are, or by trying to keep our original ways, or doing both. When exchange students are in a new environment and encounter people with different backgrounds, they may go through a period of adjustment as they spend time in a new environment. Therefore, CAT needs to be acknowledged as one of the theories that support this study. Along with CAT, the cultural aspects that exchange students possess are to be discussed in the following section.

### 2.3 Culturally-rooted communication behaviors and self-construals

People are always in certain culture or cultures. Hall (1976) says that all the aspects of human life are inspired and developed by culture. Therefore, three possible cultural aspects in communication are introduced in the following.

Group-oriented communication. The term “self” in Japanese is *jibun*. “*Jibun* literally means 'portion given to self', that is, a portion appropriately distributed to a person out of a large whole, a piece of pie, so to speak.” Maynard (1997, 37).

Maynard's (1997) explanation above shows the attitude of the Japanese people toward self and society, that is, they are not separated from each other at all in the group where they belong. The focus is not on the contribution to the group, but on the relationship of the people in the group. Maynard also describes the communication behavior of the Japanese as basically rooted in society, something which requires people to acquire social accommodation,

responsiveness and cooperation from early in life. One example of Japanese people trying to learn how to behave in groups and to become part of the group in early stage of life is given in a study by Peak (2002), featuring children's behaviors in preschools in Japan and their teachers' and parents' expectations toward the children to maintain harmony within groups. While children in preschools are independent of their families, the anticipation of adults tends to be that the children grow in groups with other children. The study finds that 気をつける (to hold yourself carefully) and 人に迷惑をかけない (do not cause trouble for other people) are the most important goals of Japanese early socialization.

Related to Peak's findings, Tsujimura (1987) introduces quite a distinct characteristic of Japanese communication, 空気, which means 'air', but at the same time it can be translated as 'mood' or 'atmosphere'. Nowadays it is used in the expression 空気を読む which literally means 'read or feel the atmosphere', and it really means 'to be sensitive to the atmosphere of the group or the place, and behave as you are expected to in the group or the situations'. Reizei (2006) points out that the tendency of Japanese people to accommodate their styles of expressions in language to their interlocutors, such as using childish language when talking to children, and that this is one phenomenon that shows Japanese trying to keep the intimate atmosphere with the interlocutors. What Reizei says can also be connected to what Gallois (1995) introduces as communication strategies that people use to create intimate atmosphere with interlocutors.

No one forces you to 'read or feel the atmosphere' in Japan, but there could be some elements that bring about the expression 空気を読む. One of them is the fact that there are expectations of adults for children during their time in preschool, which may cause Japanese group-orientedness starting very early in their lives. The very strong characteristic of group-orientedness can be seen in school settings. That is the homeroom-class system in schools, extending from preschools to upper secondary schools. Even in secondary schools, students stay in their own classrooms where they belong to and teachers come there and give their lessons. Since many events in school are based on the class that each student belongs to, the extent of how much the students have developed in school life depends on the relationship they have in the class. Harada & Takemoto (2010) suggest the 'School Adjustment Model' that shows how the positive attitude to school life, learning outcomes, and the development of human nature are related to each other, and from the model we can see what kind of elements are needed for students to adjust well to school life. One of the significant elements in the development of

human nature is how to maintain the function of the group / class students belong to, and the idea of 空気を読む 'to be sensitive to the atmosphere of the group or the place, and behave as you are expected to in a group or situations' is mentioned. In this way, the concept of 'group-oriented' personality has been rooted in Japanese language and society from the early stage of people's lives.

The basis of individuals' communication styles is "to learn various patterns of interaction based on the norms, rules, and values of their culture" (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996: 510) in socializing with others, and by interacting with others, the basis of people's communication styles are formed. One possible element of Japanese 'group-oriented' communication style is Confucianism, which is believed to have been introduced to Japan in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. By referring Confucianism in Japanese communication styles, Collectivism that Japanese people tend to show in their communication behavior can be explained in the following.

Collectivism and Confucianism. One of the dimensions which affect people's norms and behaviors in communication is Individualism and Collectivism (I-C). According to Gudykunst et al. (1996), people in Individualistic cultures tend to feel responsible for those who have a relationship with them, and people in Collectivistic cultures have been considered to have feeling of 'oneness' with people in the same group and value solidarity of the group (Lebra, 1976). Moreover, the dimension of I-C has often been applied to the differences between the West and the East.

As Lee, Beckert, & Goodrich (2010) describe the difference in cultural aspects between the West and the East that the West expects more individual development while the East does not do so as much. That is to say, the West inclines to focus on aspects such as personal goals and individual competence, while the East tends to focus on group goals, cooperation, and interdependent relationships (Matsumoto & Kupperbusch, 2001). Based on this, Lee et al. (2010) explain that individualistic values are more pervasive in Western cultures and collectivistic values operate widely in Eastern cultures.

As mentioned above, when talking about I-C, the image of the West and the East comes to mind as a representative of I-C. The West exemplifies Individualism and the East is Collectivism, which gives an explanation of misunderstanding between the North Americans and Asians. Yum (1988) introduces Confucianism as the philosophical root of the communication behaviors of East Asians, that is the Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, and he adopts the concept of



social relationship instead of collectivism to explain the communication behaviors that the people in East Asia tend to exhibit and that seem unique to other people.

Confucianism is based on five virtues, of which Ren (仁), meaning sympathy and kindness for others, is considered to be the most important virtue. This shows that maintaining proper human relationships is the foundation for this philosophy. The dependency on others is accepted as a part of proper human relationships, or it is seen as the necessary part of human relationships. History of Confucianism of Japan tells that it was introduced to Japan around 5<sup>th</sup> century, and in 17<sup>th</sup> century it was adopted officially for use in government and then put into educational curricula well before modern curricula were enforced after the Second World War. Nowadays, although Confucianism seldom features in daily life, the principle of its idea stays deeply rooted in society and the people's lives.

Confucianism also has an impact on communication behavior. Yum (1988) introduces the effects of Confucianism on people's process-oriented communication behavior, that is, for example to make small talk to create a comfortable atmosphere for everyone present before starting the main discussion. In Confucianism, it is more important to establish and maintain good relationships with people than to focus on getting only results without any other contact with people in business. This emphasis on relationship maintenance is seen in the traditional Japanese rules of communication (Okabe, 1987), which favor indirectness in speech so as not to demand, reject or criticize the interlocutors. Guo and D'Ambra (2003) claim that people from different cultures tend to have different perceptions of communication media while working in a same multicultural organization despite the pervasiveness of new communication technologies in the world. This claim can be related to Yum (1988)'s statement that there are still differences in people's ways of thinking and ways of behaving, which have been philosophically and culturally rooted in people's lives.

Since it has been made clear that the concept of I-C works better in combination with other factors, such as the cultural aspects between the West and the East, the strong influence from the idea of Confucianism is to be regarded as a significant element in Collectivism.

Finally, the relations between how people see themselves and the cultural aspects are introduced.

Self-Construals. Kim (2001) claims that communication behaviors vary depending on a person's self-construals. A self-construal is “a constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning one’s relationships to others and the self as distinct from others” (Singelis 1994:

581). It is an acknowledgement of the self. In other words, it is one of the dimensions of the self, which is based on the idea that individuals have multiple selves that concern their relationships with others and their individuality (Markus & Kitayama 1991). Self-construals are divided into independent self-construals and interdependent self-construals by Markus and Kitayama (1991). They explain that independent self-construal is to see oneself as a unique being, and that interdependent self-construal is to view oneself as part of a social relationship and to behave with concerns about others in the relationship. Also Edward (2008) supports Markus and Kitayama's explanation by describing that a person with an independent self-construal inclines to portray herself as self-determining, while a person with an interdependent self-construal characterizes herself in terms of her associated group. A self-construal is the extent of how separate or connected persons acknowledge themselves to be from other people.

Exchange students are obviously away from their home. In such a different situation, they encounter people from different places and cultures with different background. In line with Gardner, Gabriel and Lee (1999) who found out that the situational factors have an influence on self-construals, exchange students are subject to be influenced not only by cultures and people, but also by the environment.

## 2.4 Host Environment

Exchange students are strangers and local students are hosts in the university context. When exchange students meet local students, a stranger-host relationship begins. Sooner or later they may become friends, but the stranger-host relationship still remains because the status of exchange students is always that of visiting students for a semester or a year, and that of local students' is more permanent. Kim (2001) affirms that "Strangers' communication and adaptation in a new cultural environment cannot be fully understood without taking into account the conditions of the environment" (p.147). Thus, changes that take place in exchange students through communication and experiences in the host culture are connected with the conditions of local students in the university context.

Kim (2001) introduces three environmental factors for strangers in new cultural surroundings. One is Host Receptivity which represents how open the hosts are towards

strangers. In other words, it is the host's active willingness to welcome and include the strangers. In communication between exchange students and hosts, host receptivity can be manifested in distributing useful information about anything from general issues to cultural events, which shows inclusive attitudes of hosts. As Korkalainen (2009) states, whether strangers feel comfortable being in a new environment or not depends on the communities and societies how open and friendly they are in welcoming strangers and providing them with support.

The second factor is Host Conformity Pressure. It is the combination of hosts' behaviors that they do to help strangers accept the host's environment both the hard and soft way. Host Conformity Pressure sometimes exerts pressure on strangers to shift their lifestyles towards those of hosts, such as the language they use and the outfit they wear in public, while it sometimes tolerates strangers' own styles. By operating push and pull, strangers gradually find a position where they feel comfortable.

The third factor is Ethnic Group Strength. This means that strangers' experiences in a new environment are to some extent influenced depending on how much power the strangers' ethnic group holds. Kim (2001) discusses the role of Ethnic Social Communication. According to her, for short-term adaptation, strangers tend to seek a place for comfort in the same ethnic people or group. This helps strangers from psychologically going to pieces in a new environment. Meanwhile, the dependence on the ethnic group sometimes delays the acquiring of host culture.

All three factors, Host Receptivity, Host Conformity Pressure, and Ethnic Group Strength, apply to the environment of both exchange students and local students. How the host environment influences the exchange students' communication behaviors will be looked into from the point of host environment. This will help this study contain different views than solely focusing on exchange students.

Being exchange students brings about changes in several aspects of the individual such as their communication behaviors and how they see themselves. How they go through those changes depends on from where and to where they go for an exchange, and what kinds of environments they are in. The previous studies also show that the students experience changes not only when the students are in a new environment but also when they go back to their home countries. On top of that, culturally-rooted aspects of communication behaviors cannot be ignored. The relations between Confucianism and group-oriented communication, and how they

function in exchange students' communication behaviors are the keys to this study. To make the situation of this study clear, in the following chapter, the context of the study will be introduced.

### 3 Context of the Study

#### 3.1 Japanese Exchange Students and Nihongo Meeting

There are more university students coming to Japan to study than those going out of Japan to do the same. The number of students who went on study abroad programs was estimated to be 24,000 in 2008, where those who were on programs that last less than one month occupied almost half the number, while the whole number of international students in Japan in the same year was nearly 123,000 (Japan Students Services Organization, 2010).

The study by Asaoka & Yano (2009) focuses on the attitudes of Japanese university students toward study abroad. They conducted a survey on several different groups of Japanese university students, such as students who have studied abroad or are currently studying abroad, and those who have never studied abroad. While the results from the survey reveals that those students who have experiences from studying abroad reported more maturity in themselves, more understanding of different cultures, and more appreciation to their families and friends, those who have never studied abroad or have no intension of doing so show little interest in exploring different cultures as well as much anxiety and fear toward being surrounded by different cultures.

However, the study mentions the situation where several obstacles exist in front of Japanese university students before studying abroad. One is poor second language acquisition, which deters students from even thinking about going out of Japan. Another big obstacle is the fear of being later than their friends in job-hunting and graduating, where pressure from their families and society is involved, too. Since most Japanese university students financially depend on their families, the voice from their families sounds bigger than their own voice. On this situation, Asaoka & Yano (2009) made it apparent that students are good at following plans suggested by parents, university, and society.

All things mentioned above considered, the current Japanese Exchange Students are Japanese university students who have the potential to be good at following what the society thinks is correct, and at the same time they are students who have been out of Japan and are ready for a new realization of themselves. They are also ready for a change of attitudes.

The Japanese government nowadays encourages people to study abroad (2008, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MEXT). MEXT points out the

importance of Japanese individuals to broaden their possibilities and abilities through experience abroad, and also the creation of wider connections with people without concerns about boundaries between each country. The University of Jyväskylä has many partner universities around the world, including 4 universities in Japan. In academic year 2010-2011, there are 5 Japanese exchange students (JESs) at the University of Jyväskylä.

Arriving in Jyväskylä, JESs undergo different situations from what they would do back home. Situations such as tasting salmiakki, or leaving their jackets in the corridor before classes, or speaking a non-Japanese language most of the time, and spending lots of time with other international students are some of them.

Another new situation is to attend a Nihongo Meeting. It is a weekly gathering of Finnish students who are interested in Japan or learning Japanese, and Japanese students, and sometimes some other nationals. A Nihongo Meeting is a unique group of people in the sense that no other group with the mixture of Finnish students and students of a certain nationality appears to exist as a regular event. It takes place every Wednesday at 5 in the afternoon in a library cafe of the University of Jyväskylä. There are usually 10 -15 students around the table and they talk about anything that interest them. Some seek help with their Japanese homework or Finnish homework. The meeting itself is quite casual, and there is no pressure in having to comment on something or express their opinions or anything. It is a good place to meet their friends and make new friends, and also it has been the perfect place to plan some events with the participants, such as a weekend at a summer cottage or a trip to Stockholm. The great significance that the Nihongo Meeting has is the fact they have lasted nearly 10 years without any leaders to organize. It has simply been a meeting place for people who are interested in Japan or Japanese no matter where they come from.

JESs start to make contacts with Finnish students in Nihongo Meetings. The people find out about this meeting by word of mouth. The languages used there are Japanese, Finnish, English, and sometime other language depending on the participants. It is often one of the few possibilities for JESs to get together with a group of Finnish students as almost all the activities that they attend such as classes and parties are designed mainly for international students.

Besides the unique characteristics that Nihongo Meeting has, JESs are placed in another unique environment in Finland.

### 3.2 Technologically Mediated Communication

Most of current university students have been familiar with various communication technologies, such as mobile phones and the Internet, through their everyday lives. Hutchby (2008) describes current ways of communication as technology-centered. To start with, the pervasiveness of mobile phones is outstanding. The advancement of mobile technology has made it possible to communicate with people without visible cables such as landline telephones and broadband connections of the Internet. This means that anyone with a mobile phone is within reach of someone else almost everywhere. Hutchby (2008) also mentions the rapid rise of the Internet as an important tool for communication. He emphasizes the growth of Broadband Internet connections with home computers worldwide; meanwhile he acknowledges the situation in Japan as a mobile phone paradise where subscriptions of mobile phones that enable people to connect to the Internet exceed Broadband Internet connections. This distinctive characteristic of a use of mobile phones show that Japan has its own interpretation of the Internet that is different from other international standards.

In Japan, the total number of mobile phone subscribers is about 115 million (as of Aug.31, 2010) according to Telecommunications Carriers Association, almost reaching the number of population in Japan. On the other hand, as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications reveals the large gap in prevalence between mobile phone-based Internet connection and Broadband Internet connection, the former reached the first place and the latter remains in the 13<sup>rd</sup> place in the international comparison (2010).

Akiyoshi & Ono (2008) emphasize the power of mobile phones to lower the obstacle for using the Internet, as compared to networked computers. The relatively affordable price of mobile phones with internet access has helped people who would not be able to purchase a computer to get connected to the Internet. Soininen (2005) studied the markets of mobile Internet both in Finland and in Japan. He describes that the use of mobile Internet in Japan is the mainstream way of getting online, while at that time it was very limited in Finland. Comparing the statistics from 2008 on the Internet prevalence rate (<http://www.globalnote.jp/> based on the statistics of ITU <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/index.html> ) between Japan and Finland, Japan is placed in 15<sup>th</sup>, while Finland is in 6<sup>th</sup>. These comparisons show that the lower usage of the Internet outside mobile phones in Japan and the stronger usage of that in Finland.

According to my own observation, although JESs own mobile phones, it seems that the

main communication technology is the Internet on their own computers. For them who were used to communicating with people mainly on mobile phones in Japan, coming to Finland where the use of the Internet appears to be more prevalent than Japan is a big change they need to deal with. They use the internet not only to keep in contact with their family and friends back in Japan, but also to communicate with people in Finland. Their life in Finland involves the technological change from national to international, not to mention cultural change.

The context where JESs are situated show a great change in TMC, and also they place themselves in a geographically remote place from their home. However, Nihongo Meeting provides them with an opportunity to feel at home to some extent, and with friends who have something in common with them. It can be stated that JESs in the University of Jyväskylä are surely in a special context with regards to the existence of Nihongo Meeting as well as TMC.



## 4 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to find out how Japanese Exchange Students (JESs) communicate in Finland by studying JESs and also Finnish Students (FSs) to combine FSs' points of view as hosts on JESs' communication behaviors. The main focus is how JESs' interpretations of their own communication behaviors with others will be affected by the whole environment around them through their stay in Finland during a limited time.

### 4.1 Research Questions

Although there have been studies which shed light on exchange students and changes that take place in them during their stay abroad when they communicate with hosts and other people, as far as I know, no study on a small group of exchange students has been done, nor a study by qualitative research methods with similar focus. Also, previous studies mention the consequence of host group on the acculturation of exchange students, but not much voice of the host group have been included into research. Therefore, this research follows what happens to JESs in a new environment with new people around them, and how the existence of both Nihongo Meeting and FSs is related to JESs.

Research Question 1: How do JESs interpret their experiences in Finland on their communication behavior?

Sub question 1: How do JESs interpret their communication behaviors at the beginning of their time in Finland and after living in Finland for 3-4 months?

Sub question 2: How do FSs interpret JES's communication behavior?

This research question addresses JESs' communication behaviors in both verbal and nonverbal communication, and the interpretations of Finnish students who have been in contact with them ever since they arrived in Finland. By contrasting FSs' view of JESs' communication

behavior and their attitudes in hosting JESs, I would like to approach the answer to this question.

Research Question 2: How do JESs see themselves at the beginning of their time in Finland and after living in Finland for 3-4 months?

This research question addresses JESs' self-construals which show how they see themselves by looking at both when they have just started their life in Finland and after they have spent 3-4 months there. In addition, what elements can possibly prompt them to interpret their own self-construals will be examined.

Research Question 3: How does the Nihongo Meeting function in JESs' life in Finland?

Sub question 1: What do FSs and JESs attain from the meeting?

Sub question 2: What does the Nihongo Meeting mean to both FSs and JESs?

A Nihongo Meeting is the mutual starting point for the relationships between FSs and JESs. The third question addresses the link between the life of JESs and the host environment, by revealing the implication of the meeting to both groups of students. It is worth noting that the FSs who go there have been taking part in the meetings longer than the JESs and, consequently, have been observing both present JESs and those who have been there during previous years. Therefore it is necessary to examine the meetings both through the expectations and views of JESs and the FSs' in order to find out the function of the meeting to JESs' life in Jyväskylä.

## 4.2 Data Collection

Hermanowicz (2001) states that there are so many items to take into account when studying human subjects, and the list of the items is always growing and changing. When studying on human subjects, the interview is a good method of data collection (Routio, 2007). According to Routio (2007), the interview style works well if the researchers cannot predict the

outcomes, or some human subjects are likely to provide more knowledge on the issue in the interview than the researchers have, or the researchers need to ask extra questions to know more about the issue.

Interview styles. Trochim (2006) describes that the purpose of conducting qualitative research is to understand what people think about some issues. Although it is much harder work than imagined, interviewing is a powerful way to understand human beings (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Since structured interviews usually limit the range of the answers from the interviewees, to cover the research questions that contain various aspects of the interviewees' elaborate interpretations of communication behaviors, and to understand the complex changes or similarities in JESs, both the face-to-face semi-structured and the face-to-face unstructured interviewing style were considered (Bernard, 1988). According to Bernard (1988), although the semi-structured interview is quite a free-directing interview, it is conducted with a list of questions and topics that guide the interviewer, and following this list helps her / him to collect reliable data from interviews. Although the interviews are conducted based on a list of questions, a semi-structured interview allows an interviewer to diverge from the list if necessary. It is also suitable for research where the data have to be collected during a short period of time (Bernard, 1988). On the other hand the unstructured interview is conducted without a list of questions, and the interviewer does not have the control over the interviewee's responses, but the interviewer needs to have a definite plan in mind how the interview should go, and to wait for the interviewees' words to come out. Thus when there is a lot of time and interviews can be done several times with the same interviewees, unstructured interview works well.

To elicit what the interviewees have in their mind as deeply and clearly as possible, the unstructured interview would be most appropriate. However, the time to be allowed for interviewing both JESs and FSs is limited since the target of this study is to examine JESs' communication behaviors by analyzing their interviews from both at the beginning of their time in Finland, at the end of the first semester, and FSs' observations in between. Hence, semi-structured interview style was chosen as the way of data collection of this study.

Selection of the participants. Since the number of JESs coming to study in Jyväskylä is small, I contacted them even before they left Japan with the courteous help of previous JESs. I sent them e-mails explaining what this study was about and asked them to participate. Fortunately, all the five prospective students confirmed their participation into this study. The selection of Finnish participants was done according to the answers from JESs to the question,

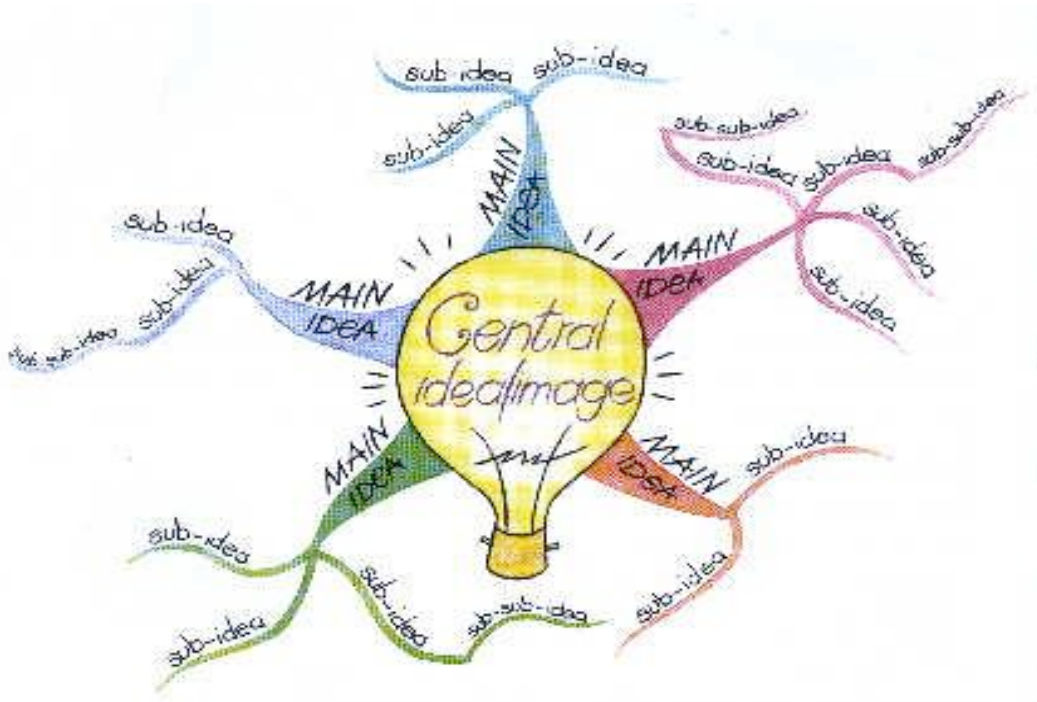
'With whom that you've met in a nihongo meeting have you spent time the most?' Based on their answers, I contacted each FS at Nihongo Meetings. Luckily enough, four FSs showed an interest to the study and affirmed their participations.

Interview with JESs. In order to obtain data from JESs about their communication behaviors and views toward Nihongo Meeting, interviews with them were conducted twice during their first semester in Finland. The interviews were conducted in Japanese because it is the mother tongue of JESs and I. All the interviews were face-to-face, one JES at a time and I, in a casual situation, and recorded for later transcriptions. Four out of five JESs came to Jyväskylä at the beginning of August to attend the intensive Finnish course; hence, their first interviews were done about 10 days after their arrivals. One JES who came at the beginning of September was interviewed also about 10 days after the arrival. The second interviews were conducted at the end of November, 2010.

The interview questions were presented in three themes which are Functions of Nihongo Meeting as the starting point of JESs' life in Finland, Communication behaviors of JESs, and Self-construals.

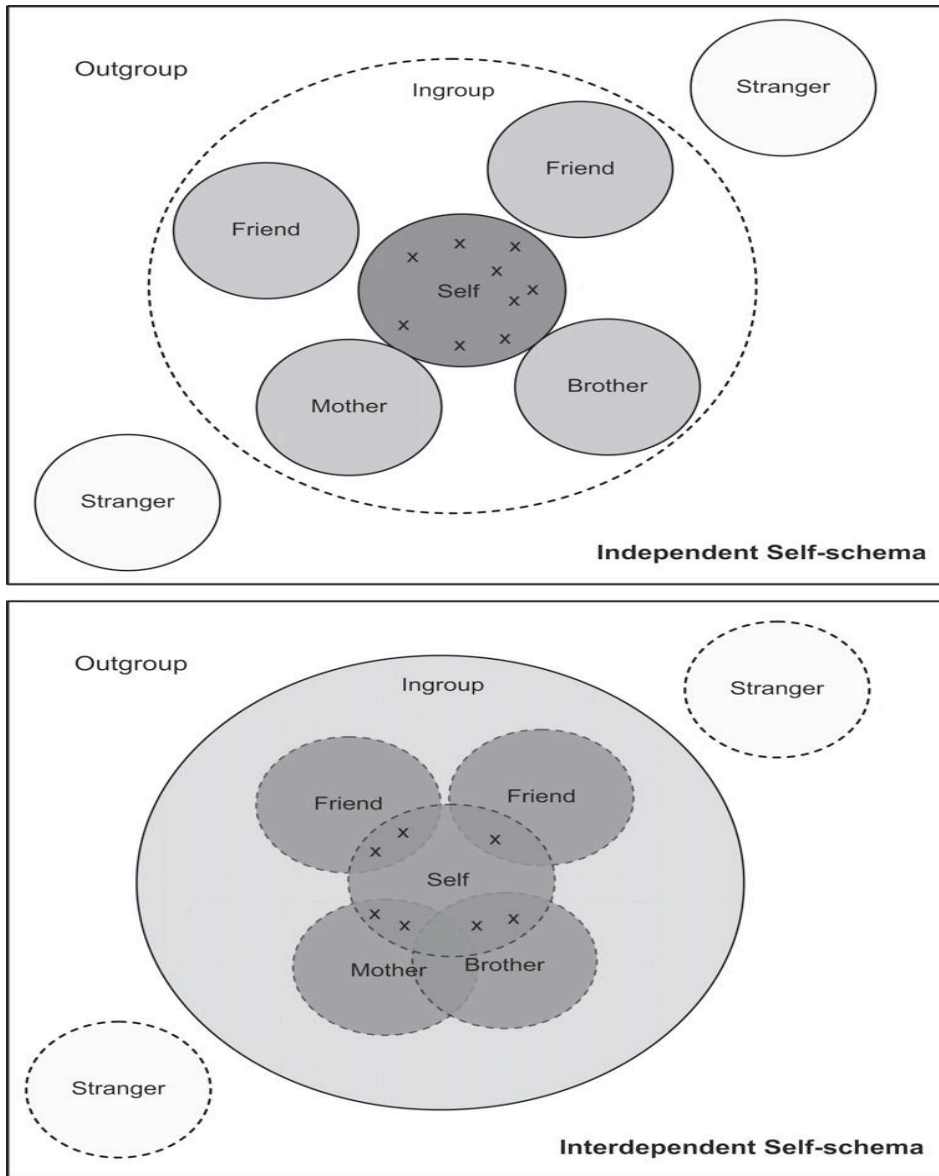
Before the interviews, they were asked to draw a mind map with themselves in the middle of the map in relation to their communication networks. Since it does not require any artistic ability nor has any regulation to follow, it is possible for them to draw as freely as they wish. A mind map was used to help them talk about their communication behavior as comfortable as possible. In every interview with JESs, they were asked to draw a mind map which starts with them in the middle and shows their communication network at the time of the interview. Eppler (2006) explains the functions of a mind map based on Buzan's (1995) mind map figure. The main features of Buzan's mind map figure are that it is to be used for personal note taking and reviewing and to start with main topic or a person / persons in the center and branch out to the related topic or a person / persons. According to Eppler (2006), a mind map can visually show the relations of the interviewee with the topic concerned, and it helps not only the interviewee to remember some of the question-related issues but also the interviewer to construct the interview easily. Therefore, the order of the themes of the interviews was based on their mind maps. The newer mind map figure from Buzan (2004) is shown as Figure A.

Figure A: Mind Map figure from Tony Buzan © 2004 "Mind Maps for Kids: Rev up for Revision"



First, JESs gave such information as previous experiences abroad and their everyday life in Jyväskylä, and then I explained the concept of self-construals by showing Figure B. Then they answered how they see themselves at the time of the interview followed by the topics based on mind maps. I asked them for detailed information about the relations with people and groups described on mind maps. They explained how those people and groups are connected with themselves, what they mean to them, and their ways of communication. The three themes were included in the conversations in the interviews as needed. For lists of questions asked in the first and the second interviews with JESs, please see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Figure B. Independent and interdependent self-schemas. Figure adapted from Heine (2008) based on Markus and Kitayama (1991).



Interview with FS. The interviews with FSs focused on their attitudes as hosts and their interpretations of JESSs' communication behavior based on their experiences with both current and previous JESSs. Each interview was carried out only once and the languages we used were both English and Japanese because two of them were quite fluent in Japanese and they changed their language to the one that felt more comfortable in answering the questions. The interview setting was one FS and I, and the whole interview was recorded for the later transcription. The time of the interviews was the end of October and the beginning of November 2010. For a list of

questions asked in the interviews with FSs, please see Appendix 3.

The core of the interviews with FSs was their interpretations of JESs' communication behaviors, which is related to Research Question 2. Each interview started with their general contacts with JESs, and moved towards their perceptions of unique characteristics in communication behaviors of JESs. Also their views and expectations for Nihongo Meeting were discussed to cover Research Question 3.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study. Boyatzis (1998, 6) states, "Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information." To encode the data, themes that emerge from the transcribed interviews function as codes. In this study, finding out both aspects on the JESs' differences / similarities between the first and the second interviews and what FSs have in their minds are the first step to answer the research questions. To discover what is hiding between and behind the words, it is necessary to look deep into what JESs and FSs have delivered in the interviews. To achieve this, thematic analysis was chosen. In order to encode what they said in the interviews, the following themes were used as categories.

The crucial part of this analysis is not only to focus on the answers to each question, but also to scrutinize all the utterances related to the themes below. Several themes are appointed to each research question.

##### Theme 1: Functions of Nihongo Meeting as the starting point of JESs' life in Finland.

This theme focuses on the relationships among the participants of Nihongo Meeting and its meanings to JESs.

- What the meeting means to JESs / FSs
- What JESs mean to FSs and what FSs mean to JESs.
- The gaps between FSs and JESs in attitudes towards the meeting and each other.

## Theme 2: The communication behavior of JESs

This theme deals with communicative behavior of JESs in general, with questions about what they notice in their behavior when interacting with people. This theme is based on the comparison of the two interviews with JESs, and also how FSs see JESs' communication behaviors. The focus is the points below.

- Notions of their own communication behaviors at two points in time and their interpretations.
- How TMC influences JESs' communication behaviors
- FSs' notions in JESs' communication behaviors

## Theme 3: Self-construals

In order to find out what type of influences shape JESs' own perceptions of themselves during their life in Finland, it is necessary in this research to focus on self-construals which describe how a person sees themselves in relations with others (Singelis, 1994). Therefore the answers to the following questions are categorized to this theme.

- Do you think yourself to have an interdependent self-construal or an independent self-construal?
- Why do you think so?

Also, by analyzing what JESs have mentioned in whole interviews and the two sets of the mind maps from each of them, the insights to this theme come out.

After analyzing all the interviews according to the themes above, the results were obtained. The following chapter will present the results and give excerpts from the interviews.



## 5 Results

In this chapter the results of the interviews of five JESs and four FSs are presented. Each interview with JESs lasted for about 70-90 minutes and with FSs lasted for about an hour. They answered to each question thoroughly, deep in thoughts. The transcriptions from all the interviews ended up in almost 50 pages in size A4. From the interviews, three themes which are nihongo meeting, JESs' communication behavior and their self-construals have been identified. Then the main findings of the interviews will be summarized.

### 5.1 Background information of JESs and FSs from the interviews

All JESs have previous experiences abroad for short periods of stay each time, such as traveling with their family or participating in volunteer field research projects. Although each of them has a different major in the university, they all have the same reason for joining the exchange program, to brush up their English skills outside Japan. Another common factor that they reveal in the first interviews is that no one mentioned an interest in Finnish culture or language as their reason to come to Finland.

Also, all of them had no difficulty in starting their life in Finland. They had quite a positive impression about Finland before coming to Finland.

I think there is something similar to Japanese people in people's mentality in Jyväskylä or in Finland. Finnish people in general have been very helpful and kind. (JES 1)

People are very helpful, and kind. It is exactly what I read in books and blogs about Finnish people before coming here. I feel this way now because I have the preconceived image of Finnish people and I tend to see them as helpful and kind people. (JES 2)

As for FSs, two of them have been in Japan for a year as exchange students and one has been in Germany for half a year and one has been abroad for short periods of time. They gave several reasons for their interests in Japan and Japanese language, such as comic books, history, and Budo. FSs also had a quite positive image about Japan through their interests. The more they learned Japanese language and culture, the broader their interests grew.

I had been interested in the culture and the language. I just wanted to learn. Looking from outside, the language and culture look very exotic and interesting how those letters and characters are formed. (FS 1)

Even though my starting point of being interested in Japanese language was manga, which I feel embarrassed to say now, I am interested in both traditional and contemporary culture of Japan. (FS 3)

## 5.2 Nihongo Meeting

For those Japanese exchange students who come to Jyväskylä, Nihongo Meeting in the university library cafe is their first encounter with Finnish students. As they have heard about the meeting from previous students before coming to Finland, they have some preconceptions and expectations about the meeting and the Finnish students there.

By the time of the first interviews with JESs, they all had participated in Nihongo Meeting at least once, and by the time of the second interviews, some had been participating in the meeting almost every week and been active there, whereas some took distance from the meeting even though they went there once in a while when they felt like it. As for FSs who took part in the interviews, they have been part of the meeting for over 3 years, and go there regularly.

Both JESs and FSs agree that it is difficult for exchange students to meet Finnish students and get to know each other in daily life on the university campus since there are not many courses offered that exchange students can take with Finnish students. Most classes JESs take are targeted mainly for exchange students taught in English, and Finnish language courses. Most of them come to Finland at the beginning of August to take part in the intensive Finnish language course, and start their life in Finland and have questions about their life. This is the time when the Nihongo Meeting really helps JESs. According to the interviews, they used the expression 羽を休め, which literally means to lay their wings down, to describe their first impression of Nihongo Meetings. The meeting was the place where they could feel relieved from stress that they were experiencing in their new life in a new environment. They felt some kind of stability in the meeting, because they knew where to go to when they need help. To be able to make some friends who can speak Japanese from the meeting is the biggest comfort they receive. In the first interviews, JESs all expressed their expectations for acquiring something from the meeting.

They felt relieved to meet some local people who are interested in Japan and speak Japanese, so that they could ask them for help at the beginning of their life in Finland.

Here I have realized that it is hard to meet Finnish people, so it would be a nice to place to meet the local people. I would like to find out if some of the books on Finland and the people are correct, such as the people are very similar to Japanese, and quiet. (JES 1)

If I start to miss something about Japan or speaking Japanese, this meeting will be a good place to feel home. (JES 3)

When I have some questions about life here, I do not need to hesitate to ask, because the people in nihongo meeting seem helpful, and speak Japanese. For me, getting information in Japanese is more comfortable than in English. Especially now I do not live close to other Japanese exchange students, so it is hard to get the information in Japanese. Getting information in Japanese is more comfortable in English. I prefer face-to-face communication rather than sending messages in general. So Nihongo Meeting is a nice opportunity for me to meet both Finns and Japanese. (JES 5)

When I asked JESs what they could contribute to the meeting, it took a while for them to answer the question.

Tell them about Japan. Just have fun with them. (JES 4)

I will be able to teach some Japanese. Culture...they might already know more than I do, so it is difficult. (JES 2)

I would like them to have more interests in Japan through me. (JES 1)

FSs also are concerned about the situation of exchange students.

Being an exchange student means that you are with other exchange students most of the time and you do not get to meet local people, so I think it is a good place to meet the locals. It would have been nice if there had been such a meeting in the university in Japan when I was there for a year. Although I got to know some Japanese friends towards the end of my stay, if such meeting place had existed, things must have been different, especially at the beginning of my stay there. (FS 1)

It does mean it is sort of important to make connections with the people who are interested in their culture. (FS 3)

While JESs and FSs start their communication and friendships in Nihongo Meetings, their attitudes towards the meeting vary, and there are differences among JESs, too. FSs feel that the meeting has started to lose its original purpose which was to be a place for people who study Japanese or are interested in Japan to get together and practice their Japanese or talk about Japan. However, they feel that they go there as a weekly routine to get together with friends who study or are interested in Japan without much practice of Japanese or talk about Japan. This atmosphere makes JESs or other newcomers who expect the meeting to be well-organized feel puzzled as they spend some time in the meeting.

On the other hand, FSs have recognized themselves as hosts for JESs and have been active with them who are in Jyväskylä now (and also the ones who were there previous years) in sharing Finnish culture, such as baking, going to sauna, and visiting their hometowns with JESs. They show their willingness as Finns to offer JESs as much opportunity to encounter real Finnish ways of living as possible. They also reveal their pride to be Finns and their eagerness to let JESs experience authentic Finnish culture, which they would like to share also with current JESs. However, they have not had as much opportunity as they would like to do that at the time of the interviews.

I feel that I am responsible for them to have authentic experiences and to arrange things for them. Now that they are in Finland, they need to be interested in Finnish foods, houses and everything. As a Finn, I feel like I am a tour guide. I believe, in Finland, Finnish people are the key to the real culture. We could let JES do something that they never thought they would do in Finland, something not in a guidebook. (FS 3)

When they arrive in Finland for the first time, we are there for them to help, so I think the shock they would get must not be as much as without us. However, we have not spent much time together so far. Of course they have many events organized for all the exchange students and are busy with them. Hopefully we will have more time to share in the near future. (FS 4)

It is important for JES to make connections to the local people here, but at the same time they are also in the group of other exchange students, not just nihongo meeting, which occupy them. So although I would like them to come to the meeting as much as possible, I have been wondering how important this Nihongo Meeting is to JES. (FS 2)

In the second interviews, the opinions each JES had towards Nihongo Meetings show variation. One started to take distance from the meeting, some go to the meeting, but just do their homework and leave, and some have started to be active with the people in the meeting, for

instance organizing some events.

The amazing thing about the meeting is that the people go there anyway no matter what happens, and I feel that this is the place I can go to, and feel that I can depend on the people there. Everyone goes there from their sincere motivations to talk in Japanese, or talk about Japan, or to meet whomever interested in Japan. Their attitude motivates me to go there as often as possible. I would like to be of help for them somehow. (JES 3)

I go to the meeting almost every week. The atmosphere there is warm and home-like. It is the best place to meet Finnish students. Spending time with them is the significant part of being in Finland. I can practice my Finnish, and also I am learning something about my country Japan. When I was in Japan, I did not study anything about my home country, but FS make me think about Japan. (JES 1)

I go there once a month at most, because I do not get the meaning of the meeting. The language they speak is mostly Finnish, so it is hard to get involved the conversation. But, I would like to learn more about Finnish culture, so maybe I should go there more often. (JES 2)

I go there when I do not have any other sports activities at the same time. The main reason why I go there is to get some help for my Finnish homework. I have been busy and do not have much time to spare there, so once I am done with the homework, I go back to my study again. I feel a little guilty about this, but I just do not have enough time. (JES 5)

We have not done anything together, which we should do. I would like to cook Japanese food with them. Also, the meeting there sometimes seems unorganized, so I should suggest some ideas to them as a newcomer. (JES 4)

While all JESs have recognized the Nihongo Meeting as something reliable, but it does not mean that they participate the meeting often.

One situation that has been noticed from the interviews is the fact that both JESs and FSs have many expectations of each other and it has to some extent become a cause for frustration.

Even though there are some differences in the attitudes towards the meeting between two groups of students, it surely has been of much help for JESs to have FSs and the Nihongo Meeting available when they started living in a new environment in Finland, getting to know local people. One of the FSs said: "Finnish people are the gateway to the Finnish culture". Indeed, there are some frustrations and some negative aspects recognized as well as some positive aspects.

### 5.3 Communication behaviors of JESs

Comparing the two sets of the interviews of JESs, some changes of their communication behaviors have been found out, and out of these changes, implications of the environment to their communication behaviors can be spotted. There are three grounds for this identification, which are JESs' recognitions of the need to accommodate their ways of expressions, their nonverbal behaviors in communication, and the use of TMC.

To begin with, in both sets of the interviews, the question about their preference in the ways of communication, which is either face-to-face or over TMC, was asked. As all the JESs answered face-to-face as their preference, I would like to open this part of the findings on their face-to-face communication behaviors.

FSs' views on JESs' communication styles. FSs have paid quite a lot of attention to both the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of JESs and have expressed their assumptions why JESs act the way they do. While JESs were not aware of their communication styles at all in the first interviews and they did not have much to say when asked about their ways of communication, FSs point out that JESs' expressions are less direct and shy than those of other nationalities.

Their frequent use such words as “maybe” and “probably” might mean that they do not want to say anything 100 % certain, and with those words they are trying to keep things uncertain, unclear to some extent. (FS 2)

I have noticed a couple of times that JES hold back what they want to say, even though they know what to say. They seem shy for doing so, but they are looking at the situation as a whole, and thinking about others more than themselves. (FS 1)

What FSs noticed as the unique ways of Japanese people in general and JESs' communication behaviors are pinpointed in how JESs described themselves and the situation in Japan in their own experiences. Paralleling to FSs' notices on JESs' communication behaviors, JESs' own views are going to be introduced in the following.

JESs' views to their own communication styles in comparison to others. JESs observed how the people around them behaved, for instance the active participation of other exchange

students to discussions in classes. Then they tried to find communication behaviors that would suit the environment. This is one of the new ways of behavior that they have learned in Finland.

JESs pointed out differences between other exchange students and themselves in communication behavior. One of the differences was that other exchange students expressed their opinions very clearly and directly, whereas JESs kept to themselves what they wanted to say. In their interpretations, this difference could be nurtured with the idea that it would be better not to stand out among people in Japan, while it would not be so in some other cultures.

When deciding on what to order in a restaurant, I tend to think about others' preferences and do not show mine. I want to see what others think and do, then decide what I take. (JES 4)

To me westerners act really openly without hesitations. In the Finnish class, Asians do not ask questions, but westerners ask questions spontaneously. The volume of the voice is different for sure. When introducing ourselves in class, they say their names loudly, which seemed to me very brave. They communicate with anyone. Compared to them, we are shy and try not to stand out. Also in Japan, I think, people are paying too much attention to whether they read the atmosphere correctly or not. There are many students who have something to tell or to plead for, but cannot express it out. Because they think like 'if I say this, what will others will think?'" (JES 3)

In the first interviews, JESs expressed the need to change gears when they talk in a foreign language and talk to foreigners. They also mentioned the difficulty of making jokes and making people laugh by verbal means. However, they didn't show much awareness of their own nonverbal behaviors.

I have a hard time choosing expressions to make them laugh, or smile. With Japanese, of course, I know certain words or expressions that make others laugh...And with non-Japanese, I cannot predict whether they laugh or not at what I say, so I always think seriously first before uttering something. (JES 2)

I have not paid much attention to my communication behavior, except when I speak in English, and then I have to push myself more than when I speak in Japanese. (JES 4)

Yet, when asked what kind of changes they have noticed in communication since their arrival in Finland in the second interviews, all JESs responded by acknowledging the differences in their way of expressing their thoughts and opinions. They admit that being in a new environment and observing how people around them act, they have grasped the demand to

disclose their own opinions verbally, and they think that they have learned to say things more directly than they used to.

I have learned from being in classes and being with other exchange students that it is necessary to express my own opinion - otherwise my voice is never noticed. And I have noticed that I do so as well. I have noticed that here making some comments on someone's opinion is golden. In Japan, it seems like it is offensive behavior to certain persons, but here even though you say something negative to someone's opinion, people value the fact that you comment on it, and when the conversation is over, there are no harsh feelings left there. It is more like if you keep quiet here, you get an offensive attack from others for not participating in the conversation. (JES 2)

I have come to say things more straight forward than before, because I feel that I need to do so to let others know what I am thinking. I used to say like, I am busy, but I might be able to go, if I try, but now I would say, 'No, maybe I cannot go'. (JES 3)

In Japan there is some atmosphere that everyone waits until someone says something. Here I see other exchange students say what they want to say when they want to say, and they do not seem to care about other people's opinions but first they say their own opinions, and then decide what to do. That kind of attitude influences me. I try to express more what I need to say here. (JES 4)

In both the first and the second interviews, JESs named several groups of friends with whom they spent a lot of time with and talked. In the first interview, those groups of friends were described in the mind map as part of their communication network, but in the second interviews JESs gave much information about those groups of friends by describing what they gained through communicating with those friends. The examples set by other exchange students that they have met in Finland come up as references for various questions and on JESs' own communication behaviors. They thought that their communication behaviors were altered by the relationships with their new friends.

Gaining confidence in using non-Japanese language. So far, the implications from the environment where JESs are situated have been powerful, but at the same time, there are several different notions in their communication behaviors in regard to the languages they use. Some of them have expressed developing more confidence in using foreign languages as one of the reasons for the change in their communication behaviors. One of them feels that he is less polite in the Japanese he uses and thinks it is because of the languages he has been learning and using in Finland, while another JES perceives himself as expressing his feelings in a different way in



Japanese and in other languages such as English and Finnish. He keeps his old habits when he speaks Japanese, and uses new ways of expressing himself when speaking English or Finnish.

When my friends say something, and I have some opinions about it, now I can express them. I think it is because I have gained some extent of confidence in using English. It is all depends on the language. (JES 5)

I express myself clearer than I do in Japanese. When I am invited to an event, and cannot make it, I can say no in English. But when I speak in Japanese, the vagueness remains. In other language, my personality changes, I think. (JES 4)

One FS also recognized changes in JESs' communication behaviors.

Yes, they have become more direct than they used to be, but it might have something more to do with the fact that they have got to know me better. (FS 1)

Politeness. Concerning JESs' characteristics in communication behavior, their politeness in their use of languages was mentioned both in the second interviews with JESs and in the interviews with FSs. All FSs that I interviews with have similar notions about JESs' communication behavior, whereas each JES shows different interpretations of their behavior in politeness. Also, FSs expressed their confusion about Japanese politeness. They wondered why Japanese would act very polite even after becoming close friends. Moreover, since it seems to FSs that JESs are polite all the time, it is hard for FSs to appreciate their politeness truly.

JESs seem very polite, sometimes, too polite in any language (Japanese, English, and Finnish) to FSs. We assume that it is because that they have not got close enough to be frank, but still, we feel that JESs act too polite. Also, even though we have good friendships with JESs, there are some cultural habits that JESs have and we cannot understand fully. (FS 1)

Sometimes I get confused about their expression because it is hard to tell if they act such from their politeness or from their real feelings. Do they say something because they have to compliment something, or because they really think what they say? Maybe in comparing Japan to Finland, in Japan, it is more like to be polite to be polite. (FS 3)

On the other hand, one JES expressed her intention of maintaining her polite behavior when communicating with teachers and professors in Finland as she used to do in Japan. Even

though she knows that the way of paying respect to the people older than she is in Finland is different from the way she is expected to do in Japan, she tries to keep her identity as a student by being constant in her communication behavior with teachers and professors. At the same time, she tries to communicate in the Finnish way between friends no matter how old they are. Another JES recognized a change in his politeness in his communication behavior.

Even though there are no such expressions 'politeness' in English as there are in Japanese, when I talk to teachers in the university, I try to be as polite as I can. To students, I try to make no difference in speaking even though they are older, but to the teachers I want to draw some lines between students and teachers. They say that I do not need to do so, and I know that in Finland, there is no need to do so, but I do not want to change my attitude towards it. It might change if I spend more time here, maybe... (JES 5)

In my use of Japanese language, the expression of politeness is gradually disappearing. I think it is because I am here. In English and in Finnish, there is no strong expression that shows the hierarchy, so it helps. (JES 1)

A barrier to overcome in communication with westerners. In addition to the common interpretation of JESs' own communication accommodation behaviors, there is another significant change that one of them has experienced during the semester. He expressed a huge barrier that he felt towards non-Asians in the first interviews, something which he had felt ever since his childhood. For him, the first impression that he received when meeting someone who looks different from Asians was like a threat.

I find it difficult to go over the big wall of 'ethnicity'. I really feel that strongly, and I am sure that they are feeling the same towards us. I feel anxious about what I say when I am with them. When being with westerners, I am always thinking "what will happen if I say this or that?" I do not feel that pressure when talking with Japanese or Asians, so I tend to be with them. (JES 2)

He tried to relate the reasons for this inclination to his level of English to communicate with non-Asians, but the biggest obstacle was the appearance of the people he met. During the interview, he opened himself up about this issue and spoke out his experiences and thoughts that he somehow needed to change or at least lessen the feeling of the barrier towards non-Asians.

In his second interview, he talked about his efforts to lower the barrier by pushing himself to attend events organized for exchange students and talk to the people there as much as possible, and actually he has made good German and French friends. Although he honestly claimed that

he still feels much easier to talk with Asians than non-Asians, he realized that he had to push himself to change, then go on to the next step where he can broaden his communication network and learn as much as possible about other cultures during his time in Finland.

I still have the feeling of difficulty in communicating with non-Asians, but if I push myself to meet them and talk with them, I can overcome the first barrier, and then it goes as smooth as it can. If I would not try, nothing would happen. So I decided to attend some meeting or events, and by attending those there is a mutual topic to talk with others on mutually interesting topics, and that has become the starting point of friendships. That helps me a lot. (JES 2)

His case represents that pushing oneself to accommodate oneself to the environment to feel comfortable in the relationships with others is one of the aspects that JESs experience while being outside Japan with many people with different backgrounds and different appearances, and it also shows that JESs are learning to transform themselves to what the environment they are in require them to be. His struggle might arise because of his politeness and willingness to keep the conversation going. One FS mentioned the difference in Japanese communication behavior compared to other nationalities.

From my experience with exchange students from all over the world, JESs have always tried to keep the conversation going with me. (FS 2)

This FS's notion implies that there can be some characteristics in Japanese communication behaviors nonverbally besides their verbal behaviors.

JESs' nonverbal behaviors. After a semester in Finland, JESs have gained confidence in using English to communicate with others, and they did not say much about the need to change gears. However, they perceive the existence of some behaviors when they communicate, e.g. they have more nonverbal behaviors such as overreactions, haptics and facial expressions than they did or noticed at the time of the first interview. Some have tried to adjust their behaviors to others, while some are still conscious of how to make people laugh as part of their friendly communication.

I react to everything more than I used to. I think when I want to let others know what I think or what I want to say, I use more gestures, and overreact. Maybe because of the

lack of the vocabulary, nonverbal language helps me a lot. (JES 2)

Although I have gained so much confidence in English, there are still some limitations in my English vocabulary, so I cannot make any jokes in English. But to cover my limitation of my English vocabulary, I use more nonverbal ways of communication. For example, I poke someone when I am talking to them, or I have become used to more hand gestures. When I speak in Japanese I do not recognize myself as using gestures as much as I do when I speak other languages. (JES 5)

JESs have been trying to create comfortable communication atmosphere with other people in a new environment. In other words, their trials and ventures might have caused their struggles.

There is a small, but very stereotypical notion of the Japanese way of communication; smiling. FSs mentioned it in the interviews, but JESs did not mention it as the behavior that they see themselves do. One JES talked a little about it from what he had heard, not from what he had experienced.

They seem very calm without much gestures but with lots of smiling. I find their calmness very similar to many Finns, but the smiling part is different from Finns. JES smile even when it is not a happy situation. (FS 2)

I have read that there are certain behaviors Japanese people do, which bother other people, such as when we think seriously, we smile..., so I try not to do so. (JES 4)

This subtle gap of interpretation of the same behavior can be explained in the difference in whether it is visible or not, as it is obvious that JESs' smiling faces are visible to FSs, not to JESs themselves. In regard to visible or not, I asked JESs their preference in either face-to-face communication or technologically mediated communication.

Face-to-face or Technologically Mediated Communication. As mentioned before, on the preference of the ways of communication between face-to-face and TMC, JESs' preference of the situation where communication takes place is face-to-face, which remains the same both at the beginning of their stay in Finland and after a semester. However, the reasons why they prefer face-to-face are different between the first and the second interviews. In the first interviews, they were more conscious of what others say with the facial expressions to make sure what they really mean because of the lack of confidence in English. By the time of the second interviews their

relationships with their friends were well-established, and meeting them has become part of their life in Finland. Therefore they choose face-to-face communication as their preference of communicating with people. Even though the reasons for their preference differ in the first and second interviews and they acknowledge the convenience of Facebook for communicating with friends very much, they prefer face-to-face communication to online communication in both interviews.

In the first interviews:

With the people here, I would like to talk to them face to face, because I want to see their facial expressions and gestures to make it clear what they mean. (JES 3)

In the second interviews:

I see people very often. I feel lonely if I do not see them, and it is really fun to see people and speak English. There are some people whom I meet often. (JES 3)

I definitely like 'face-to-face'. I do not like chatting online over an hour or so. I can meet someone and talk face-to-face for the same amount of time or more. Whether I see their faces or not is great difference. It is much more fun to see and talk. (JES 2)

JESs' preference in face-to-face communication is reflected in their relations with their friends in Finland. The longer they are in Finland, the more frequently they would like to see their friends. However, there have been some shifts in their use of TMC since their arrival to Finland from Japan.

The changes in JESs' use of TMC. JESs prefer face-to-face communication rather than online communication, albeit they have started to be more active during the semester in Finland than they used to do in Japan in technologically mediated communication (TMC), especially in communication using computers. When they were in Japan, their main device for TMC was their mobile phone, but the situation has changed after arriving in Finland: The degree of dependency on their mobile phone has decreased in Finland. Back in Japan, mobile phones are in their hands whenever and wherever they are, and almost every one of the mobile phones used in Japan has advanced functions. Japanese mobile phones typically have internet access that enables people to do many activities such as to make contacts with others on the spot, to read

books and to play games on their mobile. Therefore, when they used to be in Japan, their main communication tools were, undoubtedly, their mobile phones, whereas the mobile phones they purchased in Finland do not have those functions. In addition, computers are everywhere on the university campus, and indeed in their own rooms. Thus, even after less than 2 weeks in Finland, they converted their communication tools from mobile phones to computers. This is what all JESs were surprised at because when they were in Japan, they did not use computers as much as they have started to do in Finland, let alone Facebook.

Back in Japan, I was not using Facebook or internet-based communication tool. Actually, I opened my Facebook account just before leaving Japan. Mobile phone was the main tool. I personally do not like mobile phone; I prefer writing letters, although I do not write letters... So realistically speaking, I was very much dependent on my mobile phone to contact people in Japan. (JES 4)

I did not expect a life without using mobile phones. In Japan, you cannot manage anything without it. I used my phone all the time in Japan. (JES 1)

In Japan, the people around me use mobile phones only to contact people. I did not contact people in Japan by using computers. (JES 3)

On the other hand, in Finland, JESs cannot contact people as they used to do so in Japan. Therefore they adjust their use of TMC to what they can have in the place where they are, and they have started to make more use of Facebook to contact friends.

It is convenient. I feel that the relationships with friends will keep going even after this academic year. You can send messages to as many friends as you can, so if we want to discuss something, we send messages to them, and we can see all the people's opinions, and then decide what to do at the end. (JES 4)

When I do not see my friends, I use Facebook chat. I think it is very useful to know what kinds of events are happening and what others are up to. (JES 2)

I do not use mobile phones except for emergencies, because everyone checks Facebook every day. If I want to organize something, I send messages through Facebook. With Facebook, you do not need to know friends' email addresses. All you need to know are their names and faces matching. Compared to when I was in Japan, I use it much more. (JES 3)

JESs seem to have transformed their use of TMC naturally from the Japanese way to that of Finland, but it does not mean that they gave up everything. Although they use Facebook to communicate with friends online quite a lot, they also use the communication tool which their friends in Japan do to communicate.

Although some of my friends in Japan have Facebook accounts now, we use mixi to communicate. I think that we started to use mixi when we were in high school, so it is our tool of communication no matter where we are. (mixi is the biggest social networking service in Japan) (JES 3)

I have been part of the committee for the university festival and I was busy with the work concerning the committee while I was in Japan, and even now this committee takes up some of my time even though it has been over 4 months since I left Japan. I do not do anything, but I care about what they have been doing, and also keep contact with certain people from the committee. There is also mailing list. I can get some information about their updates. I also use skype and Twitter, and sometimes emails. (JES 1)

In a new environment, JESs started to use new ways of communication behavior, which they do not adapt themselves completely to. They handle both new ways that they have learned in Finland and the already-established ways from previous environment in a well-balanced manner.

#### 5.4 Self-construals of JESs

In both sets of the interviews, JESs were asked to draw mind maps on how their communication networks looked like with themselves in the middle of the networks.

The mind maps they drew in the first interviews showed their strong connections with the people in Japan, and their explanations about the relationships with those people took longer time than themselves.

I am completely dependent on my family financially, emotionally, although I have been living by myself in an apartment since I started university. My whole family is very supportive, and I tend to rely on their support often. (JES 4)

I have close relationships with my cousins more than my older brother. Because he has been away from home since I was small, I have little contact with him. In Japan I used mobile phone emails to contact him, or just meet up. (JES 2)

I talk with my friends often over skype. Some of my friends from high school are also abroad, so skype is a good way to communicate. In Japan we get together quite often. (JES 5)

The patterns of their networks stay rather similar at the beginning and after a semester in Finland with more groups added and a few groups deleted in the second mind maps. As JESs have spent more time in a new environment, the network of people in a new environment broadens. However, their attitudes towards their families and friends seem to have grown stronger than the time of the first interviews.

First of all, I realized that I was totally supported by my parents. I would like to get a job that enables me to support my family in the future. I feel responsible for it now. (JES 3)

Nowadays, I do not hear from my family much and wonder if they are OK... I think about them and I need to take care of them well more than I have been. (JES 1)

I contact them once a week, and talk to them over skype once in a couple of weeks. Now I am thinking of going on to the master's program outside of Japan, so the time I will be able to spend with them is limited, so I would like to spend as much time with them as possible. (JES 4)

The patterns of the mind maps were almost the same in both the first and the second interviews, while the way each JES drew was different from each other. For instance one JES made the border between Japan and Finland clear, and another JES described the distance of relationships with groups of people by the length of the lines that connect the groups and himself. One prominent similarity in their mind maps is that barely any individuals' names are mentioned, and instead, the networks are described between the groups of people and JESs.

Another change in mind maps was the number of their friends in Finland. It is obvious from their mind maps that the more time they spend in Finland, the more contacts they have and the more attachments they feel towards their friends in Finland. Indeed, in the second interviews JESs talked about their friends in Finland and what sorts of cultural activities they shared together more than they did in the first interviews.



After drawing a mind map, JESs were asked about their self-construals: whether they feel themselves closer to interdependent or independent in their relations with others. The answers they gave to the question in both interviews have stayed the same, but their explanations for the answers have changed.

In the first interviews, JESs answered either 'interdependent' or 'closer to interdependent' about their self-construals, mainly explaining their life so far and their relationships with their family, and the ones who are not close to their family referred to their close friends and teachers.

Interdependent would fit me. Since I came to Finland, I gradually feel the importance of my family. Also I realized that because of all my teammates (Lacrosse) being there around me, the club activity was so much fun. This kind of feeling came after I situated myself away from those people. (JES 3)

I am closer to interdependence. My friends and my girlfriend have been supporting me. To come here, to study abroad, my friends and I studied very hard. They also had their dreams to study abroad, and most of the time they stimulated me to do more. I felt that I was not alone. (JES 2)

I used to be a very dependent person, without own opinions. When I was practicing kendo, it was not something I wanted to do. It was more like my parents' wish for me and my brother to practice kendo. In junior high school, I quit. Then in high school, I realized that I needed to study to go to the next level. I ponder about my future often; also I ask teachers or elders now. (JES 1)

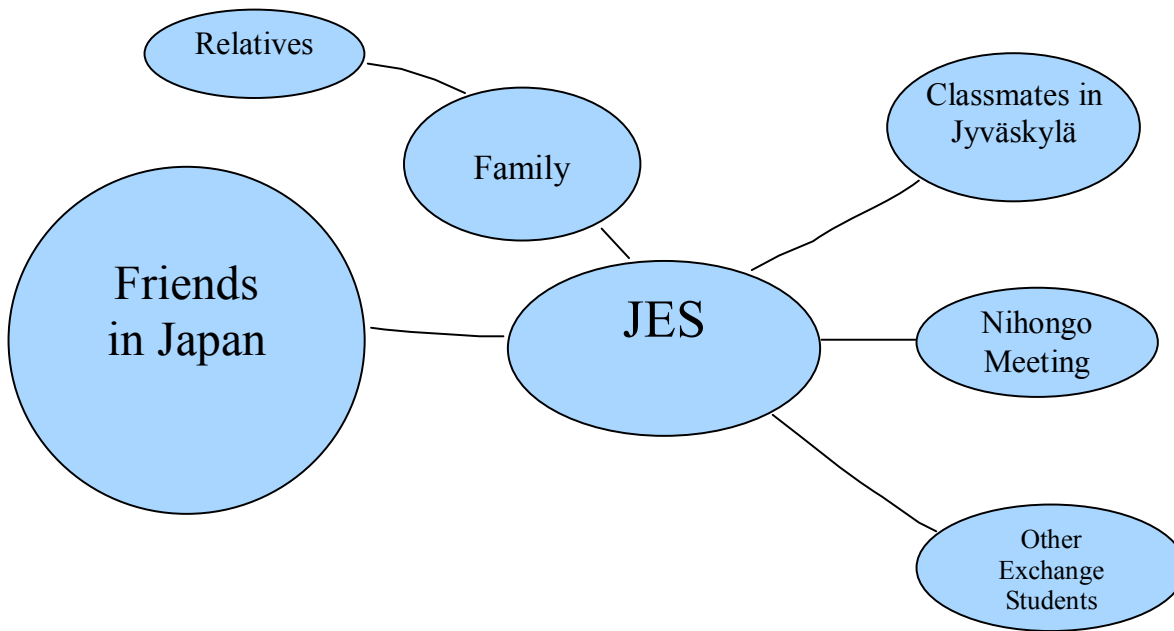
I cannot say which is good or bad. I am sure it is going to change, but for now I would say I am more Interdependent. For example, when a group of my friends go out, I always try to call as many people possible who are not present at that moment. (JES 4)

In the first interviews, the reason for JESs to feel interdependent on other people was that they had been dependent on their family and friends back in Japan, who were the ones who supported them all the time. They also acknowledged that they were part of the groups that they belonged to, for instance sport teams, schools and families.

The following examples of one JESs' mind maps show the changes of her communication networks during a semester in Jyväskylä, Finland.

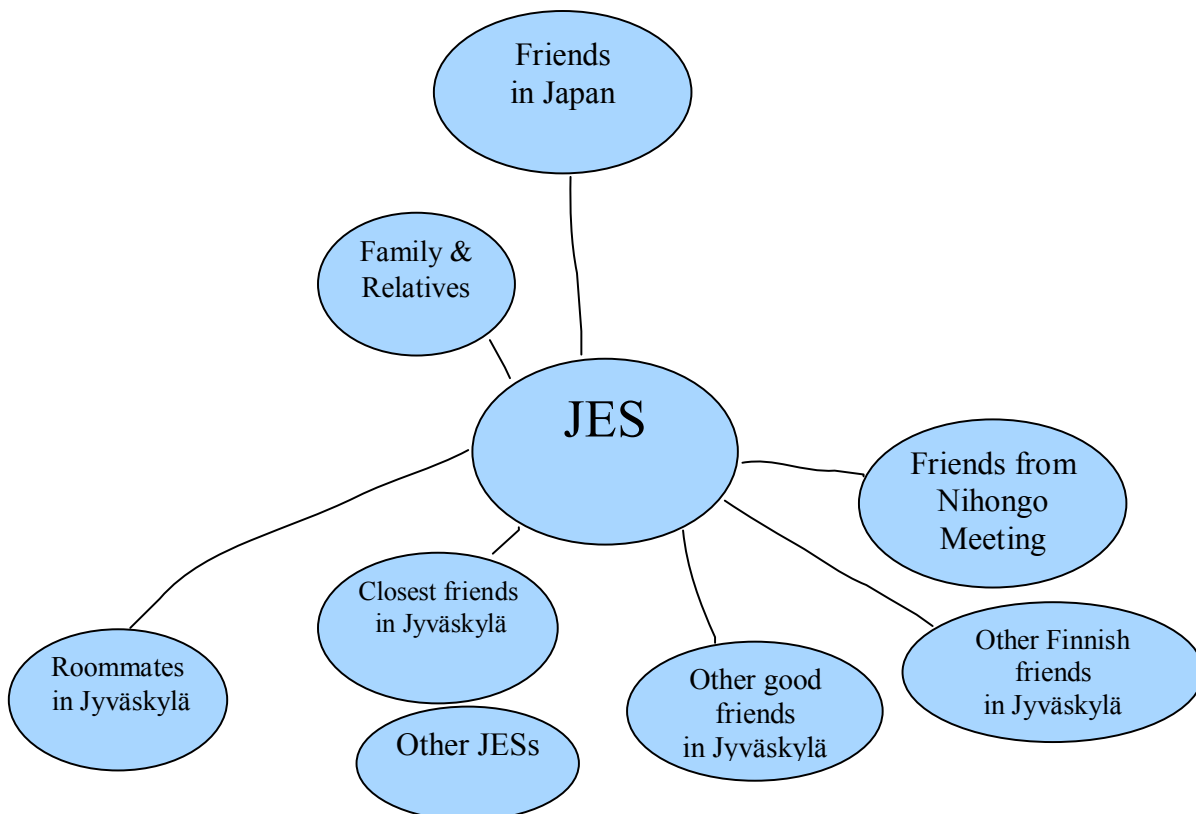
Mind map 1

From the first interview



Mind map 2

From the second interview



In the second interviews, their recognition of themselves in the relations with others did not change much, but they expressed the reasons for their answers with more confidence than in the first interviews. After a semester in Finland, their feelings towards their families back in Japan have grown stronger than before. They mentioned being greatly influenced by other exchange students and Finnish students about their own future careers and lives.

I would say I am interdependent. Since I came here, the feeling of being interdependent has got stronger, I think. Talking with my friends around me now has been helping me to think about my future, and I think I have been motivated by them to think about it. I have been getting good influences. Because of their presence, I am pushing myself also. (JES 5)

Interdependent. Since I came here, I started to think more about them and try to recall how I have been with my family. Now I feel that I am fortunate enough to have my family and come here. (JES 1)

Interdependent, I think. I have been influenced by the people around me all the time. Especially here, there have been so many opportunities to think about my life and career because of all the other exchange students and Finnish students. Also, since I came here, the attitude towards my family has changed, I think. In Japan, it is supposed to be 'cool' to be independent of your family in university time, but here it is 'cool' to be close to your family...this kind of atmosphere is here, I think. And now I think that is 'cool' to go with the Finnish way. (JES 4)

Even though being influenced by people around them every day in the new environment, JESs' self-construals have not changed. It goes without saying that with the influences from the environment, they reflect on themselves and their life, and then try to step into the next stage of their life and career. Their identities remain relatively steady during a semester in a new environment.

## 5.5 Summary

During 3-4 months in the new environment, JESs have started to pay attention to their own communication behaviors as well as their own self-construals, which they did not think much about or pay attention to before this period of time. The interpretations of their own communication behaviors between the first and the second interviews show their efforts to accommodate themselves to how other people around them behave in both face-to-face communication and TMC, but at the same time, they keep their own ways of communication as before.

On their relationships with Finnish students and the Nihongo Meeting, it can be said that JESs have been interested in them and also developed more interests in Finnish culture through them. FSs try to understand the differences in JESs' communication behaviors and are always willing to welcome them every year. However, it takes JESs longer than a semester to establish strong connections with the people in Nihongo Meetings, because they meet only once a week regularly. Furthermore, JESs are busy with other events with the group of exchange students, especially at the beginning of the stay in Finland. Although the Finnish students from the Nihongo Meeting and the meeting itself help JESs to start their life in Jyväskylä comfortably and JESs appreciate the fact that the meeting exists, JESs have not done as much activities as Finnish students would like them to do during the first semester in Finland. What has been revealed as the gap of the attitudes between two groups of students is that FSs were ready to host JESs in every phase of their stay in Finland while JESs did not realize it until almost the end of the semester.

Admitting that JESs have communicated with Finnish students from the nihongo meeting quite often, they mention other exchange students as their major impacts not only to their communication behaviors, but also to their self-construals. After spending most of their time in Finland with other exchange students with different backgrounds and cultures for 3-4 months, they have absorbed much from the time spent with other exchange students, and have been developing themselves more and more.

## 6 Discussion

The results of the interviews describe JESs' communication behaviors and the implications of the environment that surrounds them. According to the results, they have recognized some changes in their communication behaviors and their attitude towards their own lives. Their recognitions of their own communication behaviors have developed during the semester by communicating with friends from other countries and cultures, and they have started to pay more attention to their own communication behaviors as well as those of others. In the second interviews, they also manifested much more concern for their future career and their family than they did in the first interviews. The results describe both JESs' and FSs' attitudes towards the Nihongo Meeting as well as the difference in the level of commitment to the meeting. In this chapter, I would like to deliberate over the results and examine them in the light of previous research and the theoretical background.

To begin with, obviously it is not possible to generalize the changes that the JES go through and what FSs interpret as JESs' communication behaviors as hosts since only 9 students have been interviewed (5:JES, 4:FS). Therefore, this deliberation and examination of the results are interpretations of the participants' observations of JESs' communication behaviors and the environment that surrounds them on the bases of both previous research and the theoretical background.

Research Question 1: How do JES interpret the effect of living in Finland on their communication behaviors?

When comparing the first and the second interviews with JESs, some changes in communication behaviors that they experienced emerged. Also, the changes were made clear by their own recognition of their communication behaviors in the second interviews after a semester in Finland.

JESs learned new ways of communication and accommodated themselves to a new environment and people around. Besides gaining confidence in using English to communicate, which was their main purpose of becoming exchange students, other communication-related

factors were acknowledged. Having spent 3-4 months in Finland with other exchange students and Finnish students, they acquired new ways of communication. This is what Cushier and Karim (2004) define how exchange students in general are like, and this JESs' acquiring new ways of communication can be regarded as cultural benefits (Byram, 2006) that they produce from the experiences abroad.

After a semester in Finland, they conveyed their astonishment about their communication behaviors, especially about the fact that they started to express their own opinions more directly and clearly than before.

At the time of the first interviews, just saying no to invitations or suggestions from their friends was difficult for them. One FS noticed JESs' frequent use of maybe, and thought that JESs were trying to keep their words unclear and uncertain to some extent. However, from the Japanese perspective, it was one way of maintaining good relationships with people and they had been doing so as a matter of course. In Japan where the idea of Confucianism has been part of people's lives philosophically and culturally (Yum, 1988), JESs' indirectness for maintaining their relationships with others follows what Okabe (1987) describes as Japanese traditional rules that favor the people who do not offend their interlocutors. Therefore indirectness was their natural communication behavior at the time of the first interviews. What another FS described as a unique characteristic of JESs' communication behavior was that JESs sometimes would hold back what they wanted to say. He analyzed this behavior and presumed that it would be so because JES would look at the situation as a whole and think about others more than themselves. This FS's analysis relates to the idea of Confucianism again.

In addition, the idea of Ren in Confucianism which values sympathy and kindness for others also explains why Japanese act very polite even after becoming close friends. FSs expressed some confusion about JESs' politeness, but knowing the idea of Ren and the idea of Confucianism itself might help FSs understand why they act as they did.

Gudykunst et al. (1996) describe the learning process of communication styles (Norton, 1978) as to appreciate the differences in interactions that everyone shows based on the norms they have. JESs have been in the situation where they can learn different styles of interactions by socializing with their friends from all over the world.

What they have learned from people around them and how they have tried to find a comfortable way of communicating are about creating, maintaining and decreasing social distance from others in interaction (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The changes in their communication

behaviors can be explained by Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT, Giles & Baker, 2008; Giles & Ogay, 2007; Gallois et al., 1995), which describes people's tendency to pay attention to the language, nonverbal behavior and paralinguistics of the others and to accommodate their own communication behaviors to others and to the environment. Gallois (2008) explains that this human behavior appears because people want to associate with people around them and also to distinguish themselves from these people. From the interviews, JESs' willingness to associate with people around them is strongly shown in their communication behavior. In addition to the general human behavior that Gallois (2008) suggests, the Japanese tendency to keep an intimate atmosphere with their interlocutors by accommodating their styles of expressions in language (Reizei, 2006) may be an explanation for their communication behaviors.

Gallois et al. (2005) state that people accommodate their communication behaviors to the environment that surrounds them to create and maintain positive identities. This communication accommodation behavior includes convergence with the environment and also divergence from the environment (Street & Giles, 1982, Giles & Baker, 2008). One JES's intention of maintaining her polite behavior in Finland to certain people as she would do in Japan and her intention of changing her communication behavior when communicating with her friends in Finland might show a good example of the maintenance of positive identities as Gallois et al. (2005) suggest. Also it shows the fact that she accommodates her communication behavior according to circumstances. It is a part of communication accommodation to maintain her own identity and to feel comfortable in relationships with friends and acquaintances by converging, and also to develop bonds with others by diverging as Giles & Baker (2008) indicate. By not only doing as others do but also keeping her own style in some situation, she balances her identity in a new environment.

CAT can also be applied to JESs' other communication behavior, such as “changing gears” when they use English and talk with non-Japanese or non-Asians. One of them who struggled in starting communication with non-Japanese people and his effort to change his attitude towards people of different ethnicities show another communication accommodation behavior. In the first interview with him, he found it difficult to find mutual topics to talk with non-Asian looking people. He also assumed that they would feel the same way about him. He sounded then as if there were no possibility for him and them to understand each other. Yet, during a semester in Finland, he realized that he needed to do something about his attitude

towards them, and then he started to attend more events where he could meet people and acquire mutual topics to talk with them. This is one of the three strategies that Gallois et al. (1995) suggested, discourse management.

To change gears when talking with people of different ethnicity in a foreign language occurs no matter where JESs are. However, this change in them can be a result of being in a new environment for a certain period of time among many different people, which made this communication accommodation behavior more outstanding than staying in the home environment. As the study by Asaoka & Yano (2009) found about the attitudes of Japanese university students who studied abroad, more maturity and more understanding of different cultures are reflected in a JES's effort in a new environment.

In view of their communication accommodation to the new environment, the research by Jang & Kim (2009) may give a reason to JESs' changes. They state that the possibility of change in personality of individualistic-bound exchange students is bigger than collectivistic-bound exchange students. However, it is not clear which country is collectivistic and which country is individualistic, and also there is always much variation within a country. Therefore, I would like to place Japan as more collectivistic than Finland on the grounds that individualistic values are more pervasive in Western cultures than Collectivistic values (Lee et al., 2010), and also on the grounds that the East tends to focus on group goals, cooperation, and interdependent relationships (Matsumoto & Kupperbusch, 2001). Moreover, the interviews with JESs describe themselves as a part of the group of people they belong to, which can be interpreted that they are closer to collectivism, which is having the feeling of oneness with the people in the same group (Lebra, 1976).

In their communication accommodation, JESs first tried intentionally to do as other people did because doing so felt like they understood each other better. This JESs' characteristic in communication behavior again can be associated to the idea of Confucianism as Yum (1988) introduces. They observe people and situations around them and do what is best adapted to the environment to maintain their relationships with people and the environment.

In view of JESs' behavior of observing the situation around them, there is another way of explaining why they tend to do so, which is group-oriented communication. The fact that they accommodate their ways of communication to others around them is also interpreted as an act of being sensitive to the atmosphere of the group or the place, and behaving as they are expected to do in the group or the place (Tsujimura, 1987). Since childhood, it has been appreciated to



maintain the harmony within the groups as Peak (2002) observed in a study of kindergartens in Japan. Expectations from society, including family and schools, can shape children's communication style into group-oriented and make them accommodate themselves to the environment. Moreover, a group-oriented attitude that society requires people to have is reflected in classroom settings in schools. This helps a group-oriented personality to grow in people (Harada & Takemoto, 2010) and also in people's communication behaviors.

Such a group-oriented personality is hinted at in the comments of one JES. He sees what everyone else at the same table orders, and decides his order to make for more variations on the table. In this way he thinks about other people in the group more than he thinks about himself. Also, he tries not to smile as much as he used to in Japan because he read that Japanese people's smiling behavior even when they speak about serious matters bothers other people. Both thinking about others and the group he belongs to and not doing what others would not like are rooted in group-oriented communication behavior.

However, JESs have a wish that shows their intentions of being distinct from others around them. Their wish is to make their friends laugh in conversation. It can make them feel comfortable in the place where they are, but at the same time it can be their way of contributing to the group they are in. Alas they find it very difficult to do so with their limited vocabulary of English. Thus, they recognize themselves perform more nonverbal acts, such as overreacting to what other people say, or using hand gestures to receive more attentions from their interlocutors.

In addition to the communication behaviors discussed above, Technologically Mediated Communication (TMC) cannot be ignored in people's communication behaviors nowadays. It has been revealed that the pervasiveness of mobile phone-based internet usage in Japan is outstanding and JESs were so dependent on their mobile phone that they were amazed with the fact that they could manage their life without their mobile phones at hand. The device they use to contact people has changed from a mobile phone-based internet to a computer-based, broadband internet connection. Since they barely used a computer-based internet connection in Japan, the transformation in Finland was quite big. Although it was quite a change for them at first, JESs managed to build up their communication through the computer-based internet.

Among JESs, the most frequently used way of contacting friends is through Facebook. Their use of Facebook is active especially in communicating with their friends with whom they spend quite a lot of time in Finland. As they used to contact their friends with mobile phone-based messages and social networking services in Japan, they have been using Facebook for the

same purpose in Finland. They take advantage of the convenience of what they can do with what they have in Finland. They have been flexible in TMC as well as verbal and nonverbal communication.

In addition to being surrounded by people with different backgrounds and experiencing new ways of communication, there is another explanation to JESSs' changes. Williams (2005) and Kim (1991) state that an individual's potential capacity and willingness to communicate in a new environment influence exchange students' communication behavior. JESSs have been trying to accommodate their communication behaviors to the environment, such as both converging with their friends and diverging themselves from others. This behavior itself arises from their potential ability to do so as shown in Table 1. Therefore, their potential ability and willingness to communicate help them find and maintain their comfortable communication behavior during their time in a new environment.

So far, the background reasons for JESSs' communication behaviors and explanations for their interpretations of their own communication behaviors have been discussed. All JESSs noticed similar changes in their communication behaviors and mentioned certain people and the environment as big influences. Additionally, it has been suggested that their own cultural and personal backgrounds, such as the idea of Confucianism, group-orientedness, and their own capacity and willingness to communicate with people, are also the bases for their communication behavior in every situation.

JESSs have been through several changes and they have been dealing with differences that they have encountered in communication with other people in a new environment. Nevertheless, there is one communication aspect of which their notion has not changed during a semester in Finland. That is their preference in face-to-face communication. This preference can be rooted in 空気 'mood' or 'atmosphere' (Tsujiura, 1987), and to 'read or feel the atmosphere' of the interlocutors. 'Mood' or 'atmosphere' can be anywhere, but JESSs' preference clearly describes their notion of difference between TMC and face-to-face communication. It can be said that despite JESSs' frequent use of TMC, their preference in face-to-face communication has been a result of the elements that rooted in their lives philosophically and culturally as Yum (1988) suggests and it is also shown in Table 2.

Table 1. JESs' interpretations of their communication behaviors

	At the beginning of JES's stay in Finland	After a semester in Finland
Communication Behaviors	-Indirect -hard to express themselves freely	-Less indirect - Try to say what they think as much as possible
JESs' own interpretations	-Not to stand out among people -Not to offend people	-Influence from other exchange students
Related ideas	-Cultural & Philosophical ideas (Confucianism) -Group-orientedness	-Communication Accommodation -Capacities to communicate in a new environment

Table 2. JESs' preference in communication contexts

	At the beginning of JES's stay in Finland	After a semester in Finland
Preference in either Face-to-Face or TMC	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face
JESs' own interpretations	-Want to see the interlocutors' faces to know what they really mean	-Want to see their friends as much as they can, because it is much more fun than TMC
Related ideas	-Prefer reading the atmosphere -Cultural & Philosophical ideas	-Prefer reading the atmosphere -Cultural & Philosophical ideas

Research Question 2: How do JESs see themselves at the beginning of their time in Finland and after living in Finland for 3-4 months?

In the first interviews, the talks on mind maps were more about JESs' relationships with people in Japan, but even after only 2 weeks in Finland, several groups of other exchange students and Finnish students whom they met in Finland were described in their mind maps

besides their friends and families in Japan. Although the proportion of these new groups of people on their mind maps in the first interviews was much smaller than the people in Japan, it already showed that JESs were already in the situation where they might start to experience international and intercultural happenings as Cushber & Karim (2004) define the situation where exchange students are in. After experiencing the time with other exchange students and Finnish students during a semester in Finland, their mind maps showed changes. As their mind maps exhibited the expansions of their friends' networks in Finland while maintaining most of their old networks, the impacts they received from the people they had met in Finland became bigger and bigger. They undergo the similar experiences which are described as follows: exchange students are students who have left their home culture, entered a new culture, and have been engaging in academic and social life (Cushber & Karim, 2004), and they are often the representative of their home country (Sassenberg & Matschke, 2010).

In both the first and the second interviews with JESs, a question on their self-construals was asked to find out whether they see themselves as independent self-construals or interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). All of them explained that they felt themselves as an interdependent self-construal with reasons that described the people who had been influencing their lives in any possible way. This acknowledgement is what Singelis (1994) states a self-construal as thoughts, feelings and actions concerning their relationships with others. Moreover, JESs' views towards themselves as an interdependent self-construal show that they characterize themselves in terms of their associated groups (Edward, 2008).

In the second interviews, the same question on JESs' self-construals was asked. They all answered the same as they had done in the first interviews. However, their reasons for acknowledging themselves as an interdependent self-construal was more for their new friends' and environment's sakes than their relationships with the groups of people that they had mentioned in the first interviews. JESs described how strongly communicating with their new friends they met in Finland made them think more about their own future than they used to do. Also, the reasons for their changes in communication styles were their friends in Finland and their different communication behaviors and thinking. Hence, JESs' recognitions of their own self-construals and communication behaviors have been influenced by situational factors as Gardner et al. (1999) point out.

A new environment influences exchange students and changes their attitudes towards both the people around them and themselves. At the time of the second interviews, JESs had

been away from their home and family for a semester. They started to think more about their families and appreciated them more than before. Their change in attitude towards family is in line with Jang & Kim (2009). These researchers claim that individualistic-bound students show more change towards openness in their personality than collectivistic-bound students do. JESs started to follow their conscience which they believe to be right.

Maynard (1997) explained the meaning of Japanese term of “self” as “portion given to self”, and her explanation can be applied to how JESs saw themselves in relationships with groups of people where they belonged to. In addition to the idea of “portion given to self”, the people in the Japanese society tends to “read the atmosphere” which means to be sensitive to the environment; this may be a signal for changes in their self-construals. Tsujimura (1987) introduces that 空気 which means 'air' is a distinct characteristic in Japanese communication, and JESs may also be prompted by this characteristic. Moreover, Peak's (2002) research on the Japanese people's tendency to expect children to behave collectivistically from an early stage in their life is one explanation for their own interpretations of self. Also, Harada & Takemoto (2010)'s finding on how relatively students' positive outcomes from school and their ability to maintain the harmony in the groups they belong to is associated with each other is another explanation of their interdependent self-construal.

JESs' recognition of their self-construal on the scale of either an interdependent or an independent self-construal did not change during a semester in Finland. How they had been educated or brought up remained the basis of the interpretation of their own self-construals. Moreover, in JESs' case, their interpretation of their interdependent self-construal got stronger after a semester in Finland than at the time of their arrival. The study by Asaoka & Yano (2009) finds that students who have studied abroad show more appreciation to their families and friends than the students who have never studied abroad, and JESs are no exception. They also have shown their appreciations to their families back in Japan and to their new friends in Finland after a semester there.

In JESs case, the interpretations of their self-construals do not change much during a semester in a new environment, but their appreciations towards the people they are related to or friends with seem to grow stronger than before. These outcomes may relate to their cultural backgrounds such as the idea of Confucianism and group-orientedness as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. JESs' interpretations of their self-construals

	At the beginning of JES's stay in Finland	after a semester in Finland
Self-construal	Interdependent	Interdependent
JESs' own interpretations	-Dependent on their families and friends -Have strong connections to the groups they belong to.	-Appreciate their families and friends more than before -The people JESs met in Finland have had effects on what their attitudes towards their life and future
Related ideas	-An idea of "self" as "portion given to self" -Confucianism	-Confucianism -Group-orientedness -Notions of appreciations towards the people they have relationships with

Research Question 3: How does the Nihongo Meeting function in JES's life in Finland?

First of all, JESs found it quite comfortable to stay in Finland since the beginning of their exchange year. They did not encounter any problems that would distract their life. They were surprised at this fact, but the positive image they had toward Finland and Finnish culture might have helped them feel comfortable in their life in Finland. Gallechenko & Vijver (2007) found that exchange students' perceived cultural differences influence their acculturation process and degree of stress. Hence, their image of Finland helped them spend their time in the country without much stress. Besides their positive image about Finland, what I describe in the paragraph below can have an effect on their well-being in a new environment.

When JESs arrive in Finland and start their life, they are introduced to Nihongo Meeting where students who study Japanese language or are interested in Japan get together once a week in a library of the University of Jyväskylä. They generally found it very helpful and felt secure to be able to ask questions in Japanese and to make themselves understood in Japanese. Also, the meeting is appreciated as a place for FSs and JESs to make contacts with each other and to start their friendships. Their notion towards FS and Nihongo Meeting shows different outcomes from Ayano (2006), who studied Japanese students in the U.K. In her study, Japanese students

showed negative feelings about their life in the U.K., and those students tended to have more Japanese friends than other nationalities, and not to ask for help from the local students for everyday life. In the case of JESs in Jyväskylä, the Nihongo Meeting is the glue between them and the local students, and helps them to gain positive attitudes towards FSs.

Another positive effect of the Nihongo Meeting is the help that JESs can receive from other Japanese students who have stayed in Finland longer than they have. Thus, Nihongo Meetings are also the place for JESs to meet other Japanese people. This situation helps them to feel psychologically secure in a new environment, in line with Ethnic Group Strength by Kim (2001). In this way, JESs can acquire feelings of security both from hosts and the same ethnics in Nihongo Meetings.

Besides their positive attitudes, FSs agree that Nihongo Meeting works as a place for them to meet local people, and hope that a place similar to the nihongo meeting exists when they are exchange students in Japan or in other countries. In the context of the University of Jyväskylä, FSs recognize themselves as a host group and feel responsible for JESs to settle down smoothly in Finland and also to experience authentic Finnish culture. This FSs' attitude appears to correspond to Kim's (2001) Host Receptivity, which describes how open and welcoming the hosts are towards new comers. The welcoming attitude that FSs have comforts JESs who are in a new environment. Also Korkalainen (2009) describes the importance of openness and friendliness of the hosts towards strangers. While FSs welcome JESs, they feel that JESs should experience authentic Finnish culture more than they have done so far with FSs. FSs did not feel that JESs need to acquire the Finnish language or dress like the people in Finland do which was described by Kim (2001) as Host Conformity Pressure.

The attitudes toward Nihongo Meeting from both two groups of students are shown in Table 4. Also the functions of Nihongo Meeting are shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Attitudes toward Nihongo Meeting

	To JESs	To FSs
Nihongo Meeting - what it means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Feel secure to be able to receive information in Japanese to settle down in Finland</li> <li>-A place to meet local students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A place meet JESs and other students who are interested in Japan</li> <li>-A place to host JESs during their stay in Finland</li> <li>-A core of a group of friends who are connected with the similar interests</li> </ul>
Related ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Functioning as the core of a host environment</li> <li>-Providing JESs with chances to be friends with local students and to have positive attitudes towards a host environment</li> </ul>	

Table 5. Functions of Nihongo Meeting

	Host Receptivity	Host Conformity Pressure	Ethnic Group Strength
Functions of Nihongo Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Responsible to host JESs</li> <li>-Provide JESs with as much opportunity as possible to experience authentic Finland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-JESs should be interested in Finnish culture</li> <li>-Important for JESs to make connections with Finnish people to settle down easily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enables JESs to received information in Japanese</li> <li>-Makes JESs feel at home -</li> <li>-Reduces some stress JESs have in everyday life</li> <li>-Feelings of security</li> </ul>

In addition, the examples of mind maps (1, 2) show the changes in a JES's feeling of closeness towards the people in Finland. This change may be in line with what Sassenberg & Matschke (2010) stated. The more time JESs spend in a host environment, the closer or more similar they will feel with the people in a host environment.

However, JESs' situation might be somewhat different from what Kim (2001) finds. At the time of the second interviews, they appreciated FSs' for what they had been doing for them, but at the same time they were seeking for broader networks of friends. Even though they are the strangers in Finland, their time there is limited so that they actively try to gain new experiences as much as possible during their stay whereas the strangers in Kim's study are



supposed to stay in a new environment without any clear time limitation.

The fact that JESs have limited time in Finland generates little frustration which FSs feel about not being able to find enough time to spend with them and let them experience the authentic Finnish culture more. JESs felt quite helpful and comfortable about Nihongo Meeting, and they had much expectation for receiving something from the meeting. Besides JESs' being busy with activities with other exchange students, the fact that they did not have much knowledge about what they could contribute themselves to the meeting could be one of the reasons for this unbalanced feelings between two groups of students. Broadening people's network all over the world is what JESs hope to do as much as possible while they are in Finland as exchange students. At the same time, FSs seem to expect more contributions or attentions from JESs in the time they share. This might be a dilemma that JESs and FSs face every year.

Despite the gaps between JESs' attitudes for the Nihongo Meeting and FSs' willingness to have more interactions with JESs, the Nihongo Meeting is still the place for both groups of students to meet and establish friendships, and has been helping JESs to settle down comfortably in a new environment. It has been revealed from the interviews with both JESs and FSs that a meeting like the Nihongo Meeting functions very well for a stranger to settle down in a new environment. Ayano (2006) suggested that universities should create opportunities for international students and local students to interact with each other, whereas the Nihongo Meeting in the University of Jyväskylä have been playing the role of host for JESs for over a decade.

## 7 Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that effects from the environment have been making JESs change their ways of thinking towards people around them as well as their communication behaviors. In addition to the effects from the environment JESs are in, their cultural backgrounds also play an important role to their communication behaviors in a new environment.

The relationships between JESs' self-construals and their communication behaviors from this study is different from Kim (2001)'s study. She claims that a person's self-construal has an effect on his / her communication behavior, which does not match with the results from JESs in this study. JESs, who have spent 3-4 months in a new environment, did not show a change in their self-construals while they showed changes in communication behaviors which they accommodated themselves according as how the environment and the people around them performed.

The divergence between previous studies and this study may have arisen because of the differences in the target groups' status and duration of their stay in new environments. The facts that this study focused on only 5 JESs and 4 FSs and the duration of the study was one academic semester have to be taken into account as a study on specifically small scale, but this can be said that self-construals do not change as quickly as communication behaviors.

On the other hand, JESs' preference in face-to-face communication stayed the same even after they got used to communicating with people via technologically mediated communication. The idea of Confucianism that lies in people's lives philosophically and culturally (Yum, 1988) and group-oriented communication that has been nurtured throughout their period of growing up in Japan can be the key element for JESs' communication behaviors and self-construals in a new environment.

Moreover, Nihongo Meeting itself has played an important role for JESs' life in Finland. Being able to make them understood and to collect important information in their mother tongue helps them to feel at ease and stable in a new environment. Not all of them go to the meeting regularly, but they all agree that acknowledging that there is a place where they can go to ask for help is a great ease. Also establishing networks of people via Nihongo Meetings have been a noteworthy part of their life in a new environment. Again some cultural aspects which JESs are familiar with such as group-orientedness and Collectivism and Confucianism might suit well to the existence of the Nihongo Meeting to provide them with a feeling of belongingness.

On top of all the elements that have effects on JESs' communication behaviors, the friendships that they have made with other exchange students, FSs and many other people in Finland serve as decisive effects on their future and their whole life as Rawlins (2008) states. Their cultural backgrounds and the new effects from a new environment may stimulate each other, and blossom into something new.

## 7.1 Evaluation

The participants of this study are 5 JESs and 4 FSs, which is rather small in number. Therefore, it is impossible to make generalizations of phenomena or tendencies from the interviews with them. However, the fact that I could spare quite more than one hour for each interview and the participants seemed comfortable in talking about their opinions and experiences helped this study to find broader results than expected. The only concern about the method was the time of conducting the interviews. The interviews with FSs were carried out at the end of October, and it seemed too early to ask about current JESs. Even though FSs had met all JESs by the time of the interviews, FSs' memories with the previous JESs were much stronger than the current ones. Therefore, when FSs were asked about current JESs, they did not seem as confident as they talked about Japanese students in general. The time of the interviews could have been about the same time as JESs' second interviews or later, or could have been conducted twice as JESs did to see the flow of their attitudes towards them.

In addition, the interviews with JESs were carried out only at the beginning of their life in Finland and after 3-4 months being there. Although the focus of this study was the changes of their communication behaviors during a semester in Jyväskylä, I would like to follow how they might change after another semester in Jyväskylä and after they go back to Japan.

## 7.2 Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study was to find out how Japanese Exchange Students communicate and how their interpretations of their communication behaviors would be impacted by the environment they would be in. From the interviews with JESs and FSs, some significant results came out as presented and discussed in the previous chapters. JESs' changes of their

communication behaviors such as expressing themselves more directly and using more nonverbal languages were not only consequences of the people around them, but also their own cultural background like group-oriented communication and Confucianism that teach people to give precedence to other people and groups first. This implies that although JESs accommodate their communication behaviors according to their surroundings in a new environment, their changes are not just for the environment's sake, but their cultural backgrounds also function as an element of the changes that JESs experienced. Also, their self-construals did not show much change from interdependent self-construal, which again explains how effectively their cultural backgrounds function in a new environment.

As explained in the context of this study, Nihongo Meetings have played a key part for Japanese students and Finnish students in Jyväskylä. From this study, it has become clear that the Nihongo Meeting and the people participating in the meeting help JESs not only physically but also psychologically. The meeting itself is the place where JESs feel comfortable and secure from the beginning of their stay in Jyväskylä. Since the Nihongo Meeting does not have any organizer or any specific topics to talk about and it consists of mainly Finnish students who have been there for a long time, it has been difficult to attract new participants. JESs come every year, but they also leave after one academic year. Hence, at some point it is necessary for each participant to think about the meaning of this meeting and to try to invite new people who are interested in Japan and Japanese language.

Finally, a group like the Nihongo Meeting gives great ease and comfort for the new comers to a new environment. The Nihongo Meeting enables the new comers to acquire information about living in Finland and tips that only hosts would know. Since the people who participate in the meeting are both Japanese and Finnish students, the meeting can function not only as a host group but also as a same ethnic group. The meeting started with the students who were studying Japanese and were interested in Japan almost 10 years ago without any official support or any organizers, and it now still stands and works as a central place for both Finnish and Japanese students. It might not have been formed for the purpose of hosting Japanese students first, but nihongo meeting has been playing an important role for Finnish students and Japanese students with the combination of hosts and strangers supporting each other in Finland. This is a good example of host group for new comers in a new environment.

All in all, having done the interviews with JESs and FSs, I learned many interesting aspects such as how JESs observe people around and what FSs expect from the relationships

with JESs and what they hope to do with them. JESs are very enthusiastic about acquiring new ways of thinking and living, and they observe the environment they are in and the people around them quite carefully and accommodate themselves to situations smoothly while their self-construals stay as interdependent. As Japan's Ministry of Education and Technology hopes for Japanese individual to have more experience abroad and broaden their abilities and views, current JESs in Jyväskylä are learning and experiencing new ways of thinking and living, and on top of it, broadening their network with many friends from all over the world. On the other hand, FSs are ready to welcome JESs every year and are willing to provide as much information and opportunity for JESs as local students. Indeed, there are some habits that JESs have and FSs think them typical of Japanese, and they seem to enjoy this uniqueness that JESs present every year. FSs' positive attitudes towards JESs and their openness towards new experiences in a new environment may have helped JESs to spend quite a comfortable time in Finland.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Questions to Japanese Exchange Students in the first interview

1. Have you had any experience abroad before coming to Finland? What kind of experiences are they??
2. Why did you decide to join this exchange program? Why did you choose to come and study in Finland?
3. Which self-construal do you feel you have, an interdependent or an independent? (Self-construals)
4. Please explain your relationships with all the people and the groups in your mind map, and also how you communicate with them now. (Communication behaviors of JESSs)
5. Which do you prefer face-to-face communication or online communication? (Communication behaviors of JESSs)
6. How has your life been since you arrived in Finland and in Jyväskylä?
7. Have you attended Nihongo Meeting? What kind of impressions have you had from the meeting and what would you like to do with the meeting from now on? (Functions of Nihongo Meeting)

### Appendix 2: Questions to Japanese Exchange Students in the second interview

1. How has your life been after a semester in Finland?
2. Which self-construal do you feel you have, an interdependent or an independent?(Self-construals)
3. Please explain your relationships with all the people and the groups in your mind map, and also how you communicate with them now. (Communication behaviors of JESSs)
4. Which do you prefer face-to-face communication or online communication? (Communication behaviors of JESSs)
5. Do you recognize yourself change in aspects of communication behavior? (Communication behaviors of JESSs)
6. How often do you attend Nihongo Meeting? What have you done in the meeting? What would you like to do more there? (Functions of Nihongo Meeting)
7. What is your plan or hope for the rest of your stay in Finland?

### Appendix 3: Questions to Finnish Students in the interview

- Why did you start learning Japanese? What made you interested in Japan?
- How often do you meet Japanese Exchange Students? What do you do with them?
- Have you received any surprises or impacts from Japanese Exchange Students' behaviors?
- What characteristics do you think Japanese Exchange Students have in their communication behaviors?
- What do you think Finnish Students mean to Japanese Exchange Students?
- What does Nihongo Meeting mean to you and to Japanese Exchange Students?