

## The Effect of the Acquisition of English on Japanese Communicative Style and Values

### Abstract

It is anecdotally said that the acquisition of English alters the communicative style, behaviour patterns and values of the Japanese native speakers. This research explored this phenomenon by interviewing nine Japanese-English coordinate bilinguals and analysing the context of the acquisition of English of each subject. This resulted in some hypotheses regarding factors which cause the alteration.

These factors were used as independent variables for a questionnaire, whose results were obtained from seventy-eight Japanese-English coordinate bilinguals. Dependent variables were two sets of questions related to the changes of Japanese communicative style and values towards the Anglophone culture.

Bivariate tests identified significant factors related to the change of Japanese communicative style and values. The positive factors for change in the direction of English communicative style were the duration of stay in Anglophone countries, the amount of interaction with native speakers and the amount of reading English newspapers and magazines.

### The Object of This Research

It has been anecdotally reported in newspapers and talked about among Japanese interested in foreign language learning that the experience of learning to speak English or living abroad alters the communicative style, behaviour patterns and values of Japanese native speakers in the direction of Western equivalents. There are also many anecdotal stories mentioned by so-called Japanologists about differences between Western and Japanese communicative styles, which are often based on personal experiences and hearsay. The aim of this study is to shed light on these issues.

### The Acquisition of a Second Language and Personality Shift

If students of a foreign language want to learn it

successfully, they have to learn the culture of the target language too. Lambert (1967) argues that integrative orientation towards the culture of the target language is an important factor for successful language learning.

Language is not only a means of communicating information but also a vehicle to transmit culture. When people learn a new linguistic item, they acquire not only the association of it with its semantic content, but also learn the association of it with the whole environment, including paralinguistic content, facial expression, tone, behaviour and the setting. Observant students quickly learn the typical use (i.e. social

rules) of a second language. (Hymes, 1972 & Hudson, 1980)

This learning does not remain only on the cognitive level as language functions as an intrapsychic system that acts as a mechanism for self@control and self@direction and for transforming such intrapsychic phenomena as images (visual, auditory, olfactory), fantasies, dreams and ideas into conscious and communicable form (Hodge, 1978: 2). Ingram (1979) maintains that second language learning entails personality modification. Titone (1983) also claims that language behaviour is a definite stand of the individual's total personality in its deepest dynamic structures. Therefore, in order to learn a new language successfully, students have to take on a new identity (Guiora, 1975) and the new self has to be developed in the new language (Curran, 1976).

However, "a review of research on bicultural learning indicates that linguistic considerations predominated over sociocultural factors" (Vanikaa, 1985: 439). Few researchers deal with language learning in adults in natural setting (Aga, 1991). Research on the relationship of personality change and acquisition of a second language has been scanty and often substantiated only with anecdotal evidence (Hull, 1987).

#### Difference in Communicative and Values Style between Japan and Western Countries

The role of language in conveying truth is perceived in the totally different light in the Western world and Japan. Lucas (1984: 4) states that "In Japan, the people seem to show a general distrust and dislike of people skilled in oral communication." There are abundant anecdotal stories about these differences mentioned by Japanologists (Koestler, 1960;

Condon, 1980; Ishii, 1980; Ramsey and Birk, 1983; Lucas, 1984; Shimazu, 1984; Wagatsuma, 1984 and Loveday, 1986).

Barnlund and Uehara made substantial studies on these differences. Barnlund (1975) surveyed 120 Japanese students and the same number of American students and found that on whichever topic and to whomever, Japanese rarely talk about themselves in more than general terms. Uehara (1987) surveyed 151 Japanese returnees and found that about 65 percent of them became more flexible in the choice of clothes and became more positive about the idea of individualism and that 81 percent became more direct in expressing their opinions.

The difference in communicative style and values between Japan and Western Countries to be formulated into question items are as follows.

In Western communicative style,  
to say 'Yes' or 'No' more clearly  
to express one's opinions more  
to express one's opinions more directly  
to talk about oneself more  
to enjoy discussion more  
to express disagreement with others more frequently  
to express disagreement with senior persons more frequently  
to use modest understatement about oneself less often  
not to deny others' praise

to use more eye contact  
to use more gestures in conversation

In Western values  
to pay more respect to the ideas of individuals  
to mind others' perception less  
to give more priority to your own preference in the  
choice of clothes than to the perception of others.

### Research Methodology

The first tentative questionnaire was sent to and collected from eight subjects (who were interviewed later) in order to facilitate the interview and to test the appropriateness of the questionnaire. The result of the first questionnaire and the interview yielded some hypotheses on the relationship between change of Japanese communicative style and subjects' context of social activity and learning English, which was used as independent variables for the second questionnaire. Dependent variables were two sets of questions related to

change of Japanese communicative style and values.

The second questionnaire was given to 102 Japanese-English coordinate bilinguals. Seventy-eight subjects returned the questionnaire. Two cases were judged to be extreme on one variable and excluded from the analyses. The SPSSx Regression procedure was employed for the analyses.

Subjects for interview were selected by the following criteria:

- \* Subjects are Japanese native speakers who have lived in Anglophone countries more than one year and have not live there more than three months before the age of eighteen.
- \* They have a certain standard of English ability, by having been enrolled in universities in Australia, or having worked in a situation where they had to use English for their job.

Subjects for the second questionnaire were selected by the same criteria except that English proficiency was self<sup>TM</sup>evaluated.

#### The Result of the First Questionnaire and Interview

In the first questionnaire subjects were asked ten questions on whether they agree to change in the direction of Western communicative style. Table 1 shows the mean score of each subject. The following points were given to each response;

1:strongly agree      2:agree      3:undecided  
4:disagree            5:strongly disagree.

TABLE 1

S 1	2.2	S 5	2.8
S 2	2.0	S 6	3.2
S 3	1.6	S 7	3.1
S 4	3.1	S 8	3.1

(The total number of responses to 'agreement' or 'strong agreement' was 34. The one to 'disagreement' or 'strong disagreement' was 16.)

S1, S2 and S3 were highly proficient in English and used it a great deal in their working situations. S4 and S5 were moderately proficient. S6, S7 and S8 were not very fluent. S5, S6 and S7 had small children and did not have time to

socialise with English-speaking people.

S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5 were well aware of the difference of communicative style between English and Japanese while S6, S7 and S8 were not. S6 and S7 have never had a full-time job. S4 and S6 were married to a native-speaker of English and spoke English at home.

These results led to the following hypotheses:

\* the duration of stay in Anglophone countries, the amount of interaction with native speakers, the amount of exposure to English, the amount of use of English in working situations and the proficiency in English are positive factors for change in the direction of English communicative style;

\* being married to a native speaker and speaking English at home is not a strong factor for change in communicative style.

## The Result of the Second Questionnaire

### i) Change of Japanese Communicative Style

Subjects were asked twelve questions on whether their Japanese communicative style has changed towards the Western equivalent after acquisition of English. TABLE 2 shows the results of regression analyses for change of Japanese communicative style.

TABLE 2

Variables	Correlation Coefficients
Age (AGE)	.1325
Sex (SEX)	.0030
Years of Stay in Anglophone countries (YOS)	.2926*
Years of Job in which they used English (YOJ)	.1060
Amount of interaction with native speaker (FRI)	.2309*
Amount of reading newspapers and magazines (NEW)	.2457*
Amount of watching TV (TV)	.1942
Being married to a native speaker speaking English at home(MAR)	.0178
Proficiency of English	.2172

R = .3860      \*P < .05  
R(squared) = .1490

The squared R (= .1490,  $p > .2$ ) for the relationship was not

significant. Thus, the IVs did not combine to successfully predict change of Japanese communicative style. However, several significant bivariate correlations between single IVs and the DV (with YOS, FRI, NEW) were identified.

### The Result of Bivariate Test

TABLE 3 indicates the result of bivariate test between single IVs and individual questions, revealing correlation coefficients of significant IVs. It also shows percent of the responses for each score.

(+2: have changed, +1: have change a little, 0: no change  
@1: have changed reversely a little, @2: have changed reversely)

TABLE 3 ( \*\*p <.01, \*p <.05 )

score	Number	Percent	Sum of Percent Scoring 1 & 2
After acquiring English, I have come to			
Q.11: to say `Yes' or `No' more clearly.			
0	28	36.8	63.2
1	30	39.5	
2	18	23.7	
YOS: r=.3343**, FRI: r=.3380**			
Q.12: to express one's opinion more.			
-1	1	1.3	56.5
0	32	42.1	
1	23	30.3	
2	20	26.3	
YOS: r=.2718*, TV: r=.2801*			
Q.13: to express one's opinion more directly.			
-1	2	2.6	61.9
0	27	35.5	
1	29	38.2	
2	18	23.7	
YOS: r=.3465**, FRI: r=.3170**, NEW: r=.3504** ENG: r=.2921*			
Q.14: to talk about oneself more.			
-1	2	2.6	40.8
0	43	56.6	
1	19	25.0	

2 12 15.8

Q.15: to enjoy discussion more.

-1	4	5.3	39.4
0	42	55.3	
1	15	19.7	
2	15	19.7	

NEW:  $r=.2479^*$ , TV:  $r=.2440^*$ , ENG:  $r=.2564^*$

Q.16: to express disagreement with others more frequently

-2	1	1.3	44.8
-1	2	2.6	
0	39	51.3	
1	23	30.3	
2	11	14.5	

Q.17: to express disagreement with senior persons more

frequently

-1	1	1.3	39.4
0	45	59.2	
1	22	28.9	
2	8	10.5	

Q.18: to use modest understatement about oneself less frequently

-1	4	5.3	31.6
0	48	63.2	
1	18	23.7	
2	6	7.9	

YOS:  $r=.4355^{**}$ , NEW:  $r=.2495^*$

Q.19: not to deny others' praise.

-1	2	2.6	51.3
0	35	46.1	
1	25	32.9	
2	14	18.4	

YOS:  $r=.2533^*$ , YOJ:  $r=.2658^*$

Q.20: to use more eye contact.

-2	1	1.3	53.9
0	34	44.7	
1	22	28.9	
2	19	25.0	

YOS:  $r=.2462^*$ , NEW:  $r=.2380^*$

Q.21: to use more gestures.

0	27	35.5	64.9
1	33	43.4	
2	16	21.1	

Q.22: to behave less formally.

-1	1	1.3	53.9
0	34	44.7	
1	27	35.5	
2	14	18.4	

YOS:  $r=.3385^{**}$ , NEW:  $r=.2878^*$

More than fifty percent of the subjects admitted the change towards Western communicative style in seven question items out of twelve and about forty percent of them did so in four items out of the remaining five. The lowest was Q.18, being 31.6%. On the other hand, less than five percent of them scored towards Japanese communicative style in eleven question items out of twelve. Only in Q.15 (to enjoy discussion more), 5.3 percent of the subjects scored negatively. It may be because their English proficiency was still limited.

YOS has a correlation at  $p<.01$  in four items and at  $.01<p<.05$  in three items. NEW has a correlation at  $p<.01$  in one item and at  $.01<p<.05$  in four items. However, MAR does not have a correlation at  $p<.05$  in any item. For Q.21 (to use more gestures), 64.5 percent of the subjects scored positively, but it did not have a correlation at  $p<.05$  with any IV.

These results indicate that a very substantial number of Japanese-English bilinguals change towards Western communicative style after acquisition of English.

## ii) Change of Value

TABLE 4 indicates the result of questionnaire on value change. The format is the same as TABLE 3.

### Change in Value

	Score	Number	Percent	Sum of Percent Scoring 1 & 2
Q.31: to pay more respect to ideas of individuals	-1	1	1.3	59.2

0	30	39.5
1	23	30.3

Q.32: to mind others' perception less.

-1	4	5.3	53.2
0	31	40.8	
1	26	34.2	
2	15	19.7	

NEW:  $r = .2262^*$

Q.33: to give more priority to one's own preference in the choice of clothes than to the perception of others.

-2	1	1.3	47.4
0	39	51.3	
1	19	25.0	
2	17	22.4	

AGE:  $r = .2727^*$

#### Worry about Negative Evaluation

Q.34: to worry about the negative evaluation by Japanese.

0	57	75.0	25.0
1	16	21.1	
2	3	3.9	

59.2 percent of the subjects tend to be more individualistic after living in Anglophone countries (Q.51). About fifty percent of them mind less about others' perception (Q.52 and Q.53). None of the three question items had a correlation at  $p < .01$  with any IV. Q.52 had a correlation at  $p < .05$  with NEW. Japanese who can read English newspapers and magazines are well-educated and may have confidence in their own life-style and find it easier to accept a new life-style. Q.53 had a correlation at  $p < .05$  with AGE, which is plausible because the choice of clothes for members of the older generation is more restricted in Japan. Only twenty-five percent of them worry about negative evaluation by Japanese. Most of them have a job and are settled in Australia and do not have to worry about the evaluation by the Japanese community. If they had to go back to Japan and had to live there, many more of them might worry about it.

#### Conclusion

It is popularly believed that having a native-speaker spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend is the best way to learn a foreign language. However, the result of this research disagree with

the belief. In the result of intercorrelations among IVs ENG has a correlation with YOS( $r=.352^{**}$ ), YOJ( $r=.376^{**}$ ), FRI( $r=.332^{**}$ ), NEW(486 $^{**}$ ) and TV( $r=.327^{**}$ ) but with MAR at  $r=.251^*$ . It appears that people acquire only survival level English and do not pay much attention to communicative style in intimate situations.

The result of this research revealed that the change of communicative style and values occur to about fifty percent of Japanese-English bilinguals if not to all and that duration of stay in Anglophone countries, the amount of interaction with native-speaker friends and the amount of reading English newspapers and magazines are more significant than being married to a native speaker and speaking English at home.

## Appendix 1                      The First Questionnaire

### PART A

The following questions are to ask how you have changed after acquiring English and living in English-speaking countries. Usually, your first impression is the best. Please do not spend too much time on each question. Please circle one of the five choices.

A five-point scale is used where

SA : Strongly Agree

A : Agree

U : Undecided

D : Disagree

SD : Strongly Disagree

Please consider the change in yourself in speaking Japanese before and after acquiring English.

1. I have come to say 'Yes.' or 'No.' more clearly.

SA    A    U    D    SD

2. I have come to express my opinions more directly.

SA    A    U    D    SD

3. I have come to talk about myself more.

SA    A    U    D    SD

4. I have come to express disagreement with others.

SA A U D SD

5. I have come to express disagreement with senior persons.

SA A U D SD

6. I have come to use modest understatement about myself less often

SA A U D SD

7. Suppose someone says "You are very good at .....". I have come to admit it, if I believe it to be true.

SA A U D SD

8. I have come to use more eye contact.

SA A U D SD

9. I have come to use more gestures in conversation.

SA A U D SD

10. My behaviour has become less formal.

SA A U S SD

11. I sometimes worry that I may be negatively evaluated by Japanese because of the changes mentioned above.

SA A U S SD

## Appendix 2

### The Second Questionnaire

#### PART A

Please supply the following information about yourself ©

1. Age:

2. sex: 1. Male 2. Female

3. Approximate period of stay in English-speaking countries:

Example: U.S.A. 3 years, Australia 2 years

Country( ) Duration( ), Country( ) Duration( ),

Country(    ) Duration(    )

4. How long approximately have you engaged in kinds of work for which you have to use English (including studentship) ?

Example: student 2 years, company employee 3 years,  
Occupation(    ) Duration(    ), Occupation(    ) Duration(    )  
Occupation(    ) Duration(    )

5. How many close friends (whose English is at a native™speaker level) have you had to date ?

Friend 1 (    )years, Friend 2 (    )years, Friend 3 (    )years  
Friend 4 (    )years, Friend 5 (    )years

6. How often have you read English newspaper and magazines, while living in Anglophone countries ?

( Please circle one of the choices.)

1. Rarely or not at all.    2. Occasionally.    3. Often.

7. How often have you watched English TV programs, while living in Anglophone countries ?

1. Rarely or not at all.    2. Occasionally.    3. Often.

8. Is your spouse a Japanese male ?

1. Yes.    2. No.

(males, unmarried persons, persons who are married otherwise. Please tick No. 2)

9. If you are married to a person whose English is at a native@speaker level and speak English at home, please tick 2. If not, tick 1.

1.    2.

10. How do you evaluate your competence of English ?

1. I can barely speak English.

2. I can communicate in English at a survival level for such purposes as shopping, buying tickets for train and buses and so on.

3. I can talk a little about topics of daily life, such as travelling, movies, restaurants, food and so on.

4. I can express my opinions a little about topics, such as social problems, cultural differences and so on.

5. I can express fully my opinions about various topics, such as politics, social problems, cultural differences and so on.

## PART B

Please consider the change of your communicative style in speaking Japanese before and after acquiring English. Usually, your first impression is the best so please do not spend too much time on each question. Please circle one of the five choices.

A five-point scale is used where 0

+2: have changed.

+1: have changed a little.

0: no change.

-1: have changed reversely a little.

-2: have changed reversely.

11. Have you come to say 'Yes.' or 'No.' more clearly ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

12. Have you come to express your opinions more ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

13. Have you come to express your opinions more directly ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

14. Have you come to talk about yourself more ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

15. Have you come to enjoy discussion more ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

16. Have you come to express disagreement with others more frequently ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

17. Have you come to express disagreement with senior persons more frequently ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

18. Have you come to use modest understatement about yourself less often ?

+2          +1          0          01          02

19. Suppose someone says "You are very good at .....". Have you come not to deny it, if you believe it to be true ?

+2          +1          0          ①          ②

20. Have you come to use more eye contact ?

+2          +1          0          ①          ②

21. Have you come to use more gestures in conversation ?

+2          +1          0          ①          ②

22. Have you become less formal ?

+2          +1          0          ①          ②

### Part C

The following questions are to ask how you have changed in your values and lifestyle after acquiring English and living in English-speaking countries.

31. Have you come to pay more respect to ideas of individuals ?

+2. more.    +1. a little more    0. undecided    ①. a little less    ②. less

32. Have you come to mind others' perception less or more ?

+2. less.    +1. a little less.    0. undecided.    ①. a little more.    ②. more.

33. Have you come to give more priority to your own preference in the choice of clothes than to the perception of others.

+2. more.    +1. a little more    0. undecided    ①. a little less    ②. less

34. I sometimes worry that I may be negatively evaluated by Japanese.

+2. much.    +1. a little.          0. no.

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